

# SYNTHESIS



**SYNTHESIS**

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(1888-1974)

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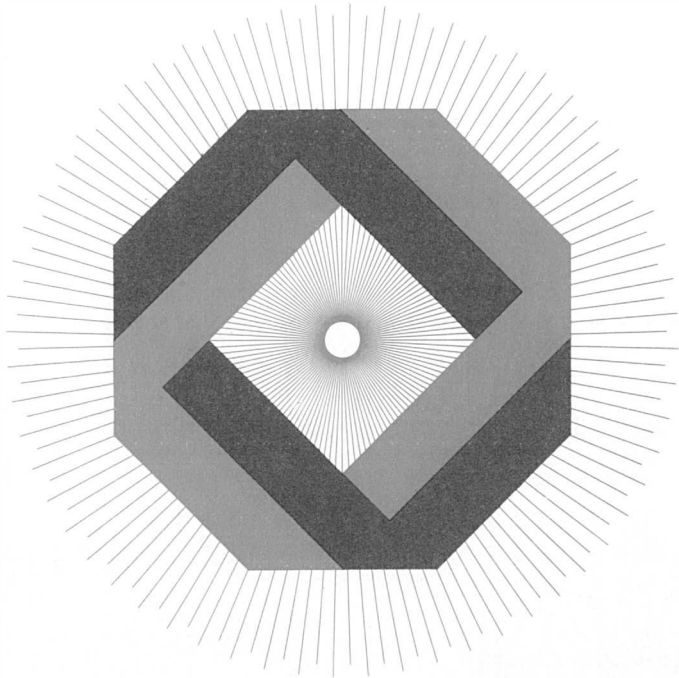
**CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** The *PSYCHOSYNTHESIS WORKBOOK* has been prepared in collaboration with the Psychosynthesis Institutes of the Synthesis Graduate School for the Study of Man, San Francisco, London, and Rotterdam. ● **ILLUSTRATIONS:** Photograph, p. 4, by Enrico Ferorelli. Photographs, pp. 26, 32 and 39 by John Nakles. Calligraphy, pp. 23, 24, 33, 35, 36, 38, and 40 by Abby Seixas. Photograph, p. 49 from *Yoga Art* by Ajit Mookerjee. Sketch, p. 59, after a cartoon by James Thurber. Calligraphic image, p. 88, by Peter Bailey. "The Recording Angel," p. 136, etching by William Blake.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** Charter Subscription (begins with *SYNTHESIS 1*): one year, \$10, two years, \$18; Regular Subscription: one year, \$12, two years, \$20; Outside U.S. add \$1.50 per year. (Canada and Mexico, add \$1). Air Mail rates to overseas countries available on request. Single copies: \$6. Quantity discounts for ten or more copies of one issue available to educators, psychotherapists, associations and groups. ● **CONTRIBUTIONS** should be submitted in duplicate, double spaced. ● *SYNTHESIS* is published twice a year. Copyright© 1975, 1978, The Synthesis Press, 830 Woodside Road, Redwood City, California 94061. ● Distributed in Europe by *SYNTHESIS*. Highwood Park, Nan Clark's Lane, Mill Hill, London NW7, England. ● The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent, but permission will usually be given on request. ● First Printing, 1975. Second (revised) Printing, 1978. ● *SYNTHESIS* is operated on a non-profit basis. Paid circulation 45,600.

Library of Congress card number 76-55040

ISBN 0-918590-03-5

ISSN 0098-8634



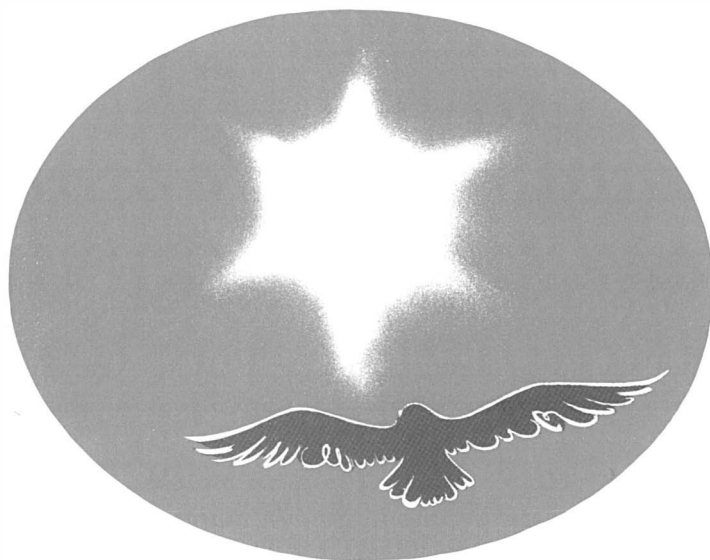
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**The Realization of the Self**



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# Roberto Assagioli

## 1888–1974

Roberto Assagioli died quietly on August 23, 1974. His spirit, his thinking and his active collaboration formed the basis of *SYNTHESIS*. We remember him with deep gratitude.

His life had a wholeness offered to few men or women; whole, in the sense that the bold innovator born nearly a century ago lived to see his ideas take form in hundreds of articles, books in many languages, students in numerous countries, a body of theory pregnant with new implications and consequences, and centers continuing to develop his work in the United States, Canada, England, Italy, Switzerland, France, Greece and Argentina.

Such outer completeness, the struggle well-won, and the legacy left to his fellow men would be enough. But there was – and equally precious for those who knew him personally – an *inner* wholeness about this man that was itself a continuous, living triumph over death. He had the achievement of joy, of a dynamic serenity and wisdom. And he was complete in that he himself did not fear death: so vital, he never worried his passing, despite his own physical frailty during the last twenty-five years. It was as if he sensed that nothing important would be taken away, as if, in the joy he achieved, there was some personal knowledge of immortality.

Be that as it may, the achievement of the man, both public and personal, recalls our attention and deserves to be remembered.

Roberto Assagioli was born in Venice in 1888. To the west of Italy Queen Victoria ruled the Empire, and to the east a Viennese physician was already mining the foundations of Victorian culture. In 1910

Assagioli, the young medical student, introduced the important discoveries of Sigmund Freud to his professors at Florence. His name appears in the histories of psychoanalysis as one of the first two or three Italians to pioneer in bringing the courage and rationality of the psychoanalytic insight to bear on the frequent shallowness of Victorian life. This alone would, and did, make him noteworthy.

The remarkable thing, however, is that while embracing the radical new currents of psychoanalysis, he simultaneously – in 1910 – laid the groundwork for a critique of that same psychoanalysis. He saw that it was only partial, that it neglected the exploration of what Maslow, some sixty years later, would call “the farther reaches of human nature.” Assagioli’s purpose was to create a scientific approach which encompassed the whole man – creativity and will, joy and wisdom, as well as impulses and drives. Moreover, he wanted this integrative approach to be practical – not merely an understanding of how we live, but an aid in helping us live better, more fully, according to the best that is within each of us. This conception he called psychosynthesis.

He was very early. Who was there to hear such a large and balanced statement? Not many people in the twenties, not in the thirties, not in the forties, not in the fifties, were ready. It was only in the late sixties that, with the suddenness born of deep and massive need, his books and other writings were taken up by thousands. Almost sixty years needed to elapse, so far was he ahead of his time.

He was never alone, of course. He was always a well-known figure, even prominent in Roman culture before the Second World War. He had correspondents and friends, colleagues and co-workers, all over the world – Jung, Maslow and Tagore among them. But the real work of those many years was a work of preparation; of patient thinking, studying, and learning the ways of the human psyche, of writing and rewriting. It was as if he were called to nurture, in a relative quietness, the outline of a theoretical and practical view of the human being that men and women of the seventies and beyond could use.

Of his personal goodness, his patient understanding of co-workers, students, and clients, his brilliant and seasoned wisdom, his compassion and selfless giving of himself in service to others – much could be said. Here though, the note that we wish to sound is the one he himself always sounded – the note of joy. Claude Servan-Schreiber wrote of the first visit she and her husband made to the aged

Florentine Doctor: “For a long moment we looked at each other, all three of us, without speaking. Assagioli smiling, his eyes astonishingly vital within a face lined by great age, moving over us, going from one to the other. Was he submitting us to an examination? It was, instead, the opposite. He was allowing us to discover him leisurely, to establish a connection with him, without us even realizing this was happening. It was a climate of communication where words find their place later, while something like a current was developing between us. His face was shining with an extraordinary, radiant, inner glow, such as I have never encountered in an octogenarian, and rarely in men much younger. This message of joy, perceived immediately, communicated immediately, is the finest memory which I keep of the numerous meetings which we later had with him. ‘All is possible and accessible *to you*: joy, serenity, I offer them to you as a gift.’ ”

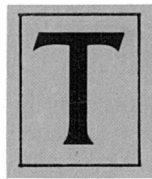
The sources of his joy were deep within him, and he shared them freely, showing many others a way toward the freedom of such joy. He found joy in the experience of what he called the Self – the inner core, dynamic and transcendent, radiant with consciousness and powerful with will, immutable, universal. He found joy in his own Self and the Self he could see in everyone else. He elicited the joy of Self-realization in those who came to see him. He found joy in the contemplation of beauty, of art, of ideas, of service, of science, of nature. It was the joy of this knowing that must have made the years of his waiting easy. This was a far-seeing joy, one that grew on his love of contemplating from his garden the vast and starry reaches of the Italian sky – the endless worlds, the living cosmic miracle of what is and what is becoming. We can miss such a man, but it is hard to mourn you, Roberto, you with your face in the stars!



# THE SYNTHESIS OF NATIONS

Donald Keys

Individual and  
national change



THE PLANETIZATION OF OUR CONSCIOUSNESS—expressing our oneness with humanity and accepting the whole planet as our home— involves a process of change to be undergone both by ourselves as individuals and by our largest functioning groups, the nation states. *The stages of this process are essentially the same for individuals and for nations.* In both cases, this change is manifested by the gradual emergence of the same qualities: community-mindedness, inclusiveness, and shared responsibility.

As individuals, we must struggle to end the “divided house” of conflicting goals, wishes and desires within our personal lives. We must struggle to harmonize and integrate our many subpersonalities—the local dominions within ourselves— whose conflicts dissipate our energy, by preventing its effective focusing and expression.

The same is true with nations. For example, divided energies in the national life may be represented by the many internal groups which have different and conflicting values, concepts or goals. Thus, the energy of an ethnic or minority group which has urgent unmet needs will be largely lost to the nation until that group is accommodated and its reasonable needs satisfied.

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Adapted from an address to the VII Menninger Conference for the Voluntary Control of Internal States, Council Grove, Kansas.

Or, powerful special interest groups can be laws unto themselves in the corporate personality of national life. Thus, for instance, economic interests with narrow and self-oriented goals often wield sufficient power to convince the leadership of a nation that their wishes and well-being represent the interests of the nation as a whole. They “impose” their value system on the society and interfere with the direction and utilization of energy, distorting the note sounded by that nation. In this instance — and, too often, in general — the leadership of a nation is narrowly *identified* with a particular group or tendency. It is the same as with an individual whose personal center, or sense of self, is habitually identified with only one, or at the most a few, of the many elements or tendencies within the personality.

**Disidentification  
is needed**

In both cases — individual and national — *disidentification* is needed, and leads to the emergence of the true identity: one that is capable of accepting and integrating all separate elements.\* Only when such an integral self-identity is established and a self-actualization process entered into — whether consciously or not — can the individual or the nation begin to climb the Jacob’s ladder of more appropriate energies — those with higher intensity and value content — and to express them in the individual life or in the world community.

The qualities or energies which nations present to the world and to each other give clues to the “place they are coming from” collectively speaking — to when the dominant emphasis is on the personality wishes and desires of the nation, and when it is beginning to show evidences of response to some deeper pull within the national being; when the nation is fundamentally materialistic and self-centered, and when it is identified with the good of the whole.

It may be very difficult, looking from within a particular nation, to distinguish among the tendencies in other nations, for precisely the same reasons that a self-centered personality cannot secure an accurate impression of those around him, but rather projects his own attitudes on others. From a transnational vantage point such as that afforded by the United Nations, where the behavior of each member state is easily seen, it is not as difficult.

Many of the large and industrialized states are primarily interested in the maintenance of privilege. Many of the smaller and newer

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\*See “Identity and Personal Freedom,” p. 56, this issue. [ed.]



Emerging planetary  
values

nations are naturally interested in a world system which would supply them more equity and justice than the present one does. Some newer countries tend to exhibit a spontaneous idealism and concern about the world community as a whole. And a few are unique in their commitment to general world well-being, often at considerable sacrifice to themselves. Their enlightened international policies are based on the will of populations which support world-order values and goals. These countries particularly, and others, show evidence in specific and important respects of the birth of a planetary sense of responsibility – which a very wise person has said is “the first indication of divinity.” A comparison of the voting behavior of the member nations at the U.N. will easily demonstrate the values by which nations live and through which they express themselves in the world community – which often, unfortunately, is at variance with their public pronouncements.

To what extent are nations prepared to relate to the world through values of caring and sharing? To what extent are they prepared to express communion rather than charity? Planetary identification rather than separative selfhood? By these measures one can determine when nations are still using old energies marking the nation-state as tribal god, and when the newer energies related to the human community as a whole.

World crises – a  
positive perspective

The condition of nations presently is often not very encouraging; and if we were to measure progress toward planetary consciousness only on the basis of national behavior, we might often be down-hearted. Not so long ago I had a good visit with one of the top people in the Secretary-General’s office, an extraordinarily ebullient person, especially for someone who’s been with the U.N. for about twenty-five years. He said, “You know, Don, I’ve never been so optimistic.” “Optimistic?” I said. The Middle East was about to flare up again, the Vietnam war was in full swing at the time, things had been going from bad to worse at a number of different places. He said, “Ah, but you don’t understand – these are the frictions brought about by the shrinkage of the globe which we’re experiencing. They are inevitable surface confrontations. These are not the long-term, deep-lying trends. The deeper, persistent trends have to do with all this business of knitting the world together, of growing transnational activity which is beyond the control of any special group.”

Fortunately there are many elements to the picture and many processes in motion which individual nations do not and cannot

Transnational  
trends

control. Some of these factors are historical and technological; others are psychological and even transcendent. Together, they are fostering the emergence of a new consciousness. We are, as a result, facing a situation absolutely unprecedented in human history:

It is an amazing thing that in less than a million years the human species has succeeded in covering the earth, and not only spatially. On this surface that is now completely encircled, mankind has completed the construction of a close network of planetary links, so successfully that a special envelope now stretches over the old biosphere. Every day this new integument grows in strength. It may be clearly recognized and distinguished in every quarter. It is provided with its own system of internal connections and communications, and for this I have for a long time proposed the name “noosphere.”<sup>1</sup>

The noosphere in fact physically requires for its maintenance and functioning, the existence in the universe of a true pole of psychic convergence: a center different from all the other centers, which it supercenters by assimilation: a personality distinct from all the other personalities it perfects by uniting with them. The world would not function if there did not exist somewhere ahead in time, in space, a cosmic “Point Omega” of total synthesis.<sup>2</sup>

No one has more adequately or more eloquently sketched the existing situation than did Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, in the above words, written prophetically many years ago. Mankind is clearly moving, willy-nilly, towards that one united body, through the construction of a seamless web of planetary interconnections which is beyond the domination of individual nations. Man, the species, is in the amazing process of becoming self-knowing and self-aware. He is waking up as a global entity – a Rip Van Winkle who has been asleep for millions of years. For the first time in all human history we as individuals can consciously participate in human-Humanity relationships. We have the possibility to describe, delineate and experience the participation of the individual within the global entity. This is, without doubt, the most staggering event of human existence. Man, the magical weaver is spinning out of himself the planetary nervous system – the neural network. He is traveling anywhere at a planetary constant – the speed of sound. He is communicating anywhere at a universal constant – the speed of light. He is no farther from any member of his race than the electrical distance of his finger from his brain. The same time span for communication is all that is required. What is immanent as a result is the organization and birth of a new entity – World Man.

The global  
organism

The sudden discovery and understanding of planetary ecology is intrinsic to this development. Ecology is nothing less than the science of the wholeness and relatedness of all planetary life. We



find ourselves the custodians of a living spaceship, and understand for the first time the real meaning of the world being round. Man the individual set off across the globe, and now he has met mankind coming back. His new meaning, his deeper meaning, lies in the whole of which he is inescapably a part. The activation of the noosphere — the neural envelope of the Earth — and the discovery of ecology mean that mankind as a whole is on the “path of return:” he is *consciously* engaged in simplification and in reintegration into that of which he was at one time an unconscious part, and then later

an estranged and prodigal son—reintegration into planetary life.

The evidence of this interrelationship and the obsolescence of separateness are everywhere to be found. Most dramatic have been the object lessons resident in environmental degradation and depredation: the bathtub ring around the Mediterranean, the acid snows of Sweden caused by sulphuric clouds from the Ruhr; radioactive fallout raining across the globe; exhaustion of fishery stocks; extinction of animal species; the energy crisis; the depletion of mineral resources. The newly discovered limits to food and natural resources and a host of other factors all indicate the sensitivity with which mankind will have to regulate his planetary interference and stewardship in the future. While World Man slept, spaceship Earth was on auto-pilot. In a half-waking state, he pressed some technologically augmented controls which have thrown the ship seriously off balance. Now in a full waking state, Mankind must accept the responsibility for his actions and consciously control and guide the planetary craft.

**Toward global  
responsibility**

A positive response to the new interrelatedness and its consequences has begun. A U.N. World Population Conference took place this year to sensitize the world to the limits of population expansion. Later in the year a World Food Conference was held in Rome to begin the long process of facing up to the question of dwindling stocks, diminishing arable lands and spreading famine. A Law of the Sea Conference has been convened to establish laws and a mechanism for the governance of seventy percent of the earth's surface and to provide for equitable use of its resources beyond the limits of national jurisdiction as the "common heritage of mankind." A major world conference on human settlements to treat the increasingly inhumane problems of urbanization—as serious for the developing countries as for the developed—is planned. A special session of the United Nations General Assembly—only the sixth such session to be held, was devoted to initial conceptualization of a new and more adequate world economic system. The rapid growth of multinational or transnational business corporations which are beyond the control of nations has caused the United Nations to develop a program for monitoring their activities and for elaborating a body of law governing such activities. This is not to say that the best deliberations of any of these efforts will be immediately and enthusiastically implemented by governments. Those which feel they have more to gain from the status quo in the short run (among which are many of the present heavily industrialized nations) will

Planetary  
synthesis based  
on purpose  
and love

obstruct and delay such implementation. But in the end they will have no other choice.

The integration of World Man as a functioning being presupposes and implies a supercenter, as Teilhard de Chardin says, and a new energy which embodies centripetal, relational and purposive characteristics as well as inclusive love. Where do we look for these?

As regards a world supercenter integrating the localized centers of human action and organization, the United Nations is its representation in human affairs. The United Nations is an imperfect and partial manifestation of that transcendent supercenter, largely because the member nations are not yet ready, prepared or willing to see the U.N. become its fuller manifestation.

Nevertheless, the U.N. itself has become a vast drafting board for sketches and plans of a future world order. These plans are under preparation less because of any farsighted initiatives of member nations than because there are a large number of conscientious, world-minded *people* working in and contributing to the secretariat who share a common vision of a more effective and just world order. The United Nations is in fact elaborating a series of "departments of planetary management." They are embryonic, they are half-starved, but they exist; and at any time that nations can summon the global will to implement them, they can be brought into full function and full size. With some of them we have long been familiar, such as the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the U.N. Development Program, the International Labor Organization, and the U.N. Children's Fund. Others, such as the U.N. Environmental Program and the U.N. Fund for Population Activities, are very new. The Regime for the Sea Bed is the most important new department currently projected. The sheer inability of nations to deal effectively any longer with any of their major problems on a unilateral basis, whether it be energy and resources, the world monetary system and inflation, peace and disarmament, or population and food, is forcing a turn toward development of international organization and to processes related to and centered in the United Nations. The imperatives of the human condition and world conditions are forcing mankind along the path his idealism and vision have shown him long ago.

Is there also a special impingement of higher energy upon the United Nations as a vortex of human unification, representing goal and purpose for human and planetary life? Can it be recognized, can



it be tapped, can it be utilized? The answer is yes, beyond all doubt.

The appearance  
of a new energy

It is appropriate and useful here to take a concept from General Systems Theory and to note that when discrete individual organisms are approaching a time of organization into a superorganism, a new system of which they will henceforth be constituent members (as nations are now preparing for participation in a planetary structure), they create a unitary field upon which newer and more cohesive, inclusive, goal-oriented energies can impinge. Such energies must, by their very nature, be attuned to a higher goal, one that is new and as yet incomprehensible and unknown to any of the separate elements. The U.N. is the precise location where enough “inter-nation” substance is lodged so that it can provide a focus for the downflow and expression of such energies.

A quantum jump

The preparation of such a “field” or focus is deceptively simple. Quite apart from the surface phenomena of the United Nations, the crises, conflicts and confrontations that get headline treatment, there is something else occurring which might hardly occasion comment, but which has a magnificent subjective component. It is the simple fact that the elements of humanity physically meet at the U.N. For the first time in human history elements of all humanity can be found continuously in the same spot. The representatives bring the multihued waters of their national, ethnic and cultural lives and pour them into a common crystal bowl. Thus, the U.N. is a place where we can experience the first intimations of what humanity itself as an entity and a species really is. Humanity as differentiated from this person, that person, group, tribe or nation is a quantum jump different from anything heretofore experienced. It is not uncommon for visitors or short-term delegates to experience a sudden, overwhelming realization of *Mankind*—very similar to that which has struck moon-traveling astronauts.

In the United Nations secretariat staff we find mainly unconscious representatives of the energies of human unification. They are animated by it, act on it, but are not given to lives of contemplation or speculation. Their work, to which a large number are utterly dedicated, can be equated to continuous meditation on human unification, not in the abstract, but in action. Among them are the grand Karma Yogis\* of the age, who hear nothing, see nothing, feel

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\*Karma Yoga is the path to enlightenment and Self-realization through selfless and dedicated action. [ed.]

nothing, apart from what they are doing to manifest the vision of planetary justice, freedom, order and peace.

Occasionally, there are conscious representatives of that process and of those energies. One most notable, who anchored the six-ton lodestone of pure crystalline iron ore in the U.N. meditation room, was Dag Hammarskjöld. Do you think he was not conscious of his inner reality and its relation to his world-serving role? Hammarskjöld wrote:

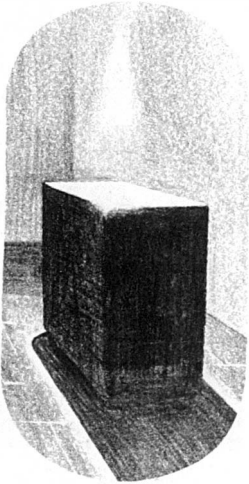
You are not the oil; you are not the air; merely the point of combustion, the flashpoint where the light is born. You are merely the lens in the beam. You can only receive, give, and possess the light as a lens does. Sanctity either to be in the light or to be self-effaced in the light, so that it may be born. Self-effaced, so that it may be focused, or spread wider.

The uncarved block. Remain at the center, which is yours and that of all humanity. For those goals which it gives to your life, do the utmost which at each moment is possible for you, without thinking of the consequences.<sup>3</sup>

Thus Dag Hammarskjöld, second Secretary-General of the United Nations, wrote in his spiritual diary, shortly before he was killed on a mission trying to bring peace to the Congo.

Another conscious server of the greatest stature, and nearly unknown in the western world for the magnificence of his inner dimensions was the late U Thant, the third U.N. Secretary-General. U Thant, who skillfully and quietly guided the U.N. through the most difficult decade of its existence, was a devout, practicing Buddhist, who deeply searched himself in meditative practices native to him every morning before he went to the Secretary-General's office on the 38th floor of the U.N.

The energy of synthesis focusing in the United Nations, seeking to make its harmonizing, relating, integrating, goal-oriented impact, now has another champion. He is Sri Chinmoy, a dear friend, a colleague and teacher, who in addition to his offerings to young people seeking the golden door of freedom, has accepted a responsibility in relation to the United Nations. As director of the U.N. Meditation Group, he is undertaking to construct a consciously cooperating meditative network throughout the U.N. of persons training themselves to be better representatives of the soul of the U.N. and better receivers to manifest and dispense the energies of human unification. Sri Chinmoy conducts meditations in the United Nations, attended by delegates, staff, and representatives of non-governmental organizations, and once a month gives a lecture in the



Servers of  
humanity

Dag Hammarskjöld auditorium on some aspect of the significance and subjective life of the U.N.\*

A quote or two from lectures by Sri Chinmoy on the United Nations will provide something of the flavor of his presence there:

A spiritual  
goal for the  
United Nations

A spiritual goal for the United Nations is practical. Without the least possible hesitation I venture to say that it's highly practical. It is not only practical, but also practicable: something more, it is inevitable. We have to know what the spiritual goal for the United Nations is. Its goal is to become ultimately the savior of the world's imperfection, the liberator of the world's destruction and the fulfiller of the world's aspiration. My heart tells me that the United Nations has a divine ideal. My soul tells me that this ideal is going to be transformed into reality. Soulful concern is the essence of the United Nations ideal. Truthful patience is the substance of the United Nations ideal. Supernal fulfillment will be the essence of the United Nations reality. Today's United Nations offers hopeful and soulful advice to mankind. Today's United Nations feels truth and light in its loving heart. Tomorrow's United Nations will offer fruitful and fulfilling peace to mankind. Today's United Nations feels truth and light in its loving heart. Tomorrow's United Nations will manifest truth and light in its all-embracing soul.<sup>4</sup>

This meditation is not only for the United Nations but for the world at large. This meditation is for the God-lover and the man-lover. If we really love God, and if we really love mankind and consciously believe that we are responsible for mankind, then we feel that our aspiration and dedication to the soul of the United Nations and our Inner Pilot are of paramount importance. Please feel that it is your own aspiration that will expedite the vision for the United Nations. And when the vision is transformed into reality, the Inner Pilot will know our contribution whether or not the world ever recognizes it . . .<sup>5</sup>

Magnetic pull of  
the new vision

The little people and the big people are important in implementing the United Nations' vision. Every year the U.N. receives hundreds of thousands of applications from highly qualified people that it cannot possibly employ who are responding to the magnetic pull of the new vision of global mankind. Two incidents related to U.N. peacekeeping also show the instinctive (or if you like, intuitional) response to the meaning of the United Nations. The first occurred at the transfer of British troops on Cyprus to U.N. command. There was some concern among the officers as to how this would be received by the Tommies. After review the new commander

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\*Although the meetings of the U.N. Meditation Group are open only to those closely associated with the U.N., Sri Chinmoy conducts other meditation meetings which are open to the public. For information, write: Sri Chinmoy, P.O. Box 32433, Jamaica, New York, 11431. [ed.]



asked, "Any questions?" He became apprehensive when one soldier said, "Yes, sir." But the question was, "When do we get the blue U.N. berets?" The same unit petitioned for, and received permission to wear them back to the United Kingdom for one final review before they were retransferred.

Recently, when a terrible earthquake struck Peru and disaster units were needed, Sweden asked U.N. permission to send a contingent it had trained for U.N. peacekeeping missions, which wished to serve in disaster relief as a U.N. unit. Permission was granted.

Another aspect of U.N. life is almost totally unknown. The U.N. Charter, which begins with the words, "We the Peoples . . ." not governments, has made room for direct citizen participation in its affairs. Qualified NGO's (non-governmental organizations) may become consultants to U.N. agencies and to the Economic and Social Council, and may make statements or circulate their views to some U.N. bodies. Several hundred citizen groups have accepted this opportunity, and have a direct and important impact on what the U.N. is doing.

Direct participation  
of people

We are watching in the United Nations the vivification of a new center and the manifestation of a new energy. We are participating in the organization of a new entity: *Mankind*. This is not only a hopeful prospect. It is in the process of occurring.

The integration of the human individual in his physical, emotional, mental and transpersonal aspects, and world unification are not separate processes. They interact and reinforce each other. The soul of man and the soul of mankind are not separate. Marked in the substance of each one of us are the gashes and scars which afflict mankind, resulting from discrimination, tyranny, injustice, inequity. We will always be incomplete until the song celestial of World Man is finally heard. The individual human bells will not ring perfection by themselves. If you seek deeper or higher self-linkages, if you undertake meditative or spiritual practices as part of your personal life, you will soon find that the partitions in the "farther reaches of human nature" are thin, and discover your essential identity with all persons and with Mankind.

The inner and the  
outer merge

If, on the other hand, you decide to act on behalf of human need and in support of planetary unification — the next step for mankind — you will also discover your relationship to the whole: if you give your life to selfless service to mankind, you will find that you yourself are also on a path of self-transcendence and spiritual

Each can contribute

growth, because you will find the necessity for drawing on ever deeper aspects of yourself. The two approaches, vertical and horizontal, to our Soul and to Mankind, are not at all separate paths. No matter which one you take initially, they will soon converge and eventually coincide. That they were ever separate was an illusion. They were one path from the beginning. Furthermore, every individual, no matter how obscure he may feel, and regardless of along which arm of the cross he enters into the process, will, as he grows and works, contribute far more than he may realize to the process.

There is something every person can do, beginning from where he or she presently is, by following the wonderful old aphorism of "Advance without, retreat within."

You will begin to act out your responsibility not from duty, not from zealotry or even the search for martyrdom, but out of the spontaneous integralness of your own nature, which is Humanity. So you can assist in the interception, reception, circulation and re-radiation of the newly arriving energies of human unification. Your resonant achievement will be Mankind's blessing.

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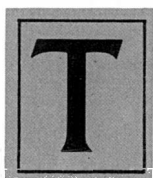
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## THE MEETING OF EAST AND WEST: A Conversation with Haridas Chaudhuri



*THE NEED TO BRING ABOUT A CONTINUING UNIFICATION of Eastern and Western culture is of fundamental moment for all of us. Politically, we have suffered during the last decades three mighty wars which have set Asians and Westerners against one another. Culturally, we experience the partiality of Western materialism and rationality, and the partiality of the tendency seen in the East to withdraw from matter, action and concrete thinking. Personally, we know that the "East within ourselves," full of the morning light of wisdom and intuition, will emerge in human fullness only when united with the light of practical reason and with steadiness of activity. So the unification of East and West is, in these and other ways, an urgent task for both individual development and human evolution.*

*Foremost among the many working for this goal was the great sage Sri Aurobindo. He developed a system for bringing about inner and outer unification which he called "Integral Yoga." Born in India in 1872 but educated at Oxford until his twenties, Aurobindo worked throughout a long life (d. 1950) to bring about the union of East and West. A spiritual genius, a gifted poet, a major philosopher, a political activist during World War II, a leader of India's movement for independence, Sri Aurobindo exemplified in his life a working*

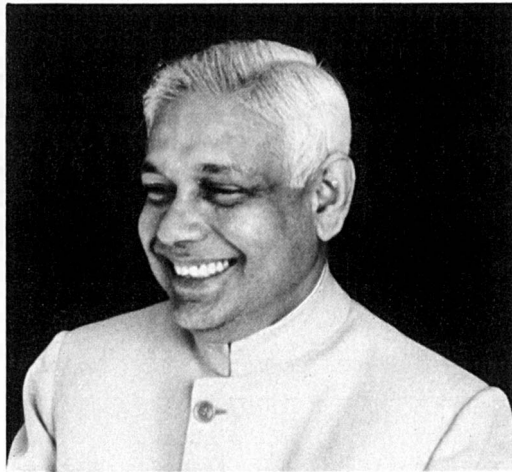
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*This interview was conducted by Betsie Carter-Haar and Stuart Miller shortly before Dr. Chaudhuri's untimely death at the age of 62.*

*synthesis of Eastern and Western qualities which has been taken as an ideal model by many in the East and the West alike. His thirty volumes of collected works, widely ranging over all his fields of interest and involvement, are an important resource of information, inspiration, and method for those who seek to make a similar synthesis. His work is carried forward in India at the Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, at the emergent international city of Auroville, which was inspired by his vision of unification and transformation, and at various centers throughout the world.*

*Perhaps Aurobindo's chief heir in the United States was Haridas Chaudhuri. Like his teacher, Aurobindo, Professor Chaudhuri combined a Western and Eastern education. Chaudhuri was Professor of Logic, Philosophy and Religion at various colleges in Bengal, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Krishnagar College, and Professor at a number of American Universities and Institutes. He was the author of fifteen books in English and several in Bengali. He combined his interests as a philosopher with his role as the spiritual director of a religious organization, The Cultural Integration Fellowship dedicated to East-West understanding. Administrator and educational leader, he was founder and president of the California Institute of Asian Studies in San Francisco.*

*The interview with Professor Chaudhuri which follows shows more than the breadth of its subject's interests and personality. With an engaging openness, Chaudhuri was willing to respond to questions about the development of his own life, particularly his inner, spiritual evolution. In Chaudhuri's presence — his office lined with books, a few photographs of Ghandi and Aurobindo, fan-shaped straw chairs, a massive rosewood desk — there was a felt combination of intellectual vivacity and deep radiating joyousness. It was a privilege to inquire into the development of that unusual combination of qualities, and to try to draw from the man the meaning his personal evolution could have for others seeking similar integrations.*



SYNTHESIS: You have been involved in philosophic, psychological and spiritual concerns for many years. It may be useful to our readers to know about your personal journey. We would like to begin, then, by asking you how you first became interested in the spiritual life.

Early peak  
experience

CHAUDHURI: In 1934, when I was a high school student, I began to have some spiritual aspiration. Near my school in Calcutta was the Ramakrishna Vedanta Center. I used to read their books and talk with some of the members. One day, when I was reading a particular book — Swami Vivekananda's *Jnana Yoga*, which means “yoga of knowledge,”\* the knowledge-approach to self-realization — I was deeply moved, and for a few days I was in a different kind of world.

SYNTHESIS: What Maslow or other psychologists might call a peak experience?

CHAUDHURI: Yes. It was a peak experience along the line of the knowledge tradition in India. It lasted in a very intense form for three or four days, and then at a lower level for a few days after that. It changed my life. The spiritual ideal came to the forefront of my consciousness and I began to reorganize my whole life on this new basis.

SYNTHESIS: How old were you when this happened?

CHAUDHURI: Thirteen or fourteen. There was a feeling of great joy, of oneness with Being — “Brahman” as we call it. And there was a resulting feeling of alienation from the ordinary, material world.

SYNTHESIS: So it was a painful experience, too?

Existential  
questioning

CHAUDHURI: In the beginning it was not painful; that would come later. (laughs) In the beginning it was a feeling of bliss, and it began to influence me, to structure my life. You see, when I began reading *Jnana Yoga* I took it very existentially. I was looking for guidelines for life.

SYNTHESIS: So you were questioning life already at thirteen, and having important spiritual experiences. I think that thirteen year-olds in the West have such questions, but find it much harder to ask them fully or to get such fully experienced and comprehended answers. What you report would have been much less likely to happen over here — at least not until recently.

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\*For a description of the various types of yoga, see p. 45 of this issue. [ed.]

Childhood  
in a spiritual  
atmosphere

CHAUDHURI: Yes, you know, this is very interesting, and maybe it is a little difficult for you to visualize the difference in atmosphere. The atmosphere in India has a spiritual *charge*, as it were. When I was a little boy, for example, five years old, my grandmother would tell me stories, as grandmothers all over the world do. But frequently she would tell me stories about spiritual things. For instance, once she told me a story about a powerful king. He was marching triumphantly through all parts of his country with hundreds of soldiers and courtiers. Cities turned out to honor him. But when marching through an obscure part of his kingdom, all his horses and men suddenly came to a total, unexpected stop. And where was it? At the humble cottage of a sage, a "rishi," who was deep in meditation!

It was all very impressive to me then, that the mighty king with all his soldiers and horses was stopped. What power could the sage

*"I believe that the organic relationship to society is an essential ingredient of the structure of a person's being."*

have? He was, apparently, doing nothing, just sitting there in meditation but he had tremendous power. This impressed me. "What is this power?" I asked myself. The profound impression of medi-

tation and spiritual power which my grandmother conveyed remained with me all through the years, at the back of my mind. And then, at about age ten, I had a very small personal experience which was also inwardly important. We were playing outside. Nobody had a watch on, and someone wanted to know the exact time. I suddenly said what time it was. They went to check inside the house, and it was exactly the time I had said. So I was surprised. How could I do that? (laughs) I began to notice that when there was a special "state of the mind" I could do certain things. But when that state was not there, I could not. Gradually, I realized how much of life depends on one's *inner consciousness*.

Importance of  
the inner state of  
consciousness

These little incidents reinforced my interest in meditation. I began to think, "Well, if so much depends on the condition of consciousness, then inducing the right condition is of paramount importance in my life." It is important because in that condition one can function so much better.

I became very interested, therefore, in finding techniques for inducing the proper consciousness. Then once, when I was studying descriptions of different meditation techniques and reading about

the experience of oneness with Being, with the ground of all existence — suddenly I *became* it. With my whole being I responded to it. All the different pieces of experience fit together into a whole, a very meaningful whole.

This state of consciousness continued for some time. Then, gradually, problems began to develop. This experience produced alienation from the outside world — I found myself sometimes very absent-minded, you see. (laughs) The family would give me some chore to do, but I was so absent-minded that I didn't do it properly, and this caused me some embarrassment from time to time. I was, to use that amusingly accurate phrase, living in a different world. I also began to feel an alienation from what we may call the instinctual self, my physical existence.

SYNTHESIS: Would you explain that last point, about alienation from your physical existence?

Conflict between  
two worlds

CHAUDHURI: As I have said, my whole life schedule — study, meditation, and so on — had become constellated around the new experience of Being I had had. But then I found there was not too much room, in that earnest schedule of mine, for enjoying life. And that, I did not like.

SYNTHESIS: I see you laughing at this now but I imagine that you went into this schedule with all of the singleminded energy of adolescence.

CHAUDHURI: Right, total, because it had been a “big-bang” experience! It was fine, it was very exciting, that I had an experience of the kind Vivekananda talked about. That made me feel good. But then I began to feel bad, because of the growing awareness of my alienation from my instinctual, physical existence. Because I have, along with my strong spiritual interest, a strong vital nature, a

*“Enlightenment means not only expansion of consciousness... but also deep inner value consciousness.”*

passionate nature. I have the will-to-enjoy, you see. So I said to myself back then, “This doesn't seem to be very good — why should one deprive me of the other? Why not have both?” I wanted to enjoy this world, and I wanted to enjoy the spiritual

world. That is how it should be! (laughs)

Then a friend gave me a small book from the library, Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother*. I read it and it was another important experience. I felt in touch with a great mind. His was a novel

approach, and he became right then and there my guru, my personal teacher. He lived in a very far-away part of India but I decided to seize the first opportunity to visit him and in the meantime prepare myself by reading more of his books.

SYNTHESIS: Did Aurobindo give you a sense of a path on which you could reconcile the spiritual with critical thinking and with enjoying life?

CHAUDHURI: Aurobindo said renunciation, asceticism and self-suppression do not lead to total fulfillment in life. I became very enthusiastic about his views and took them to heart, because they seemed to fit in with my own interests. I was interested in everything from body-building and enjoying life, to knowing truth and Ultimate Meaning. I did not want to exclude any part or aspect of life.

My reaction against renunciation was so strong, however, that as the years passed and I went on to college I lost faith in religion and spirituality altogether. What was meaningful to me was the humanistic, rational approach – participation in life and the development of whatever potential and possibilities one may have: physical, vital, mental. Religion and mysticism seemed like very dreamy stuff – insubstantial. It was quite a change. Still, of course, at the back of my mind, was the thought that there might be something to it, the urge to know truth, the ultimate meaning of life, but first I had to explore what was uppermost in my mind. Maybe later on, I thought, I will have a second look at these other things.

SYNTHESIS: Would you say, Professor Chaudhuri, that this evolution you described so far – early intimations in childhood of spiritual power, the adolescent peak experience with a real thrusting into another dimension, then losing that and developing the critical faculty in the direction of secular humanism – would you say this is a typical pattern? Have you seen others go that way?

CHAUDHURI: Yes, I know of people who have gone that way. Many authentic spiritual leaders have gone through a period of skepticism and negation. I think this is good. Someone who does not go through a period of doubt cannot wholeheartedly realize God in the true sense of the word. Without going through this period of interrogation and challenging, his realization is founded on naive faith. I don't think unquestioning acceptance has much substance.

One sees, for example, certain people becoming excited about meditation or Zen or whatever, without exercising their critical

Including all  
aspects of life

The function  
of skepticism  
and doubt





faculties at all. They go overboard into emotionalism and total dogmatic acceptance. One can see that their belief and practice is not the result of their own inner conviction. It is rather an escape, a flight from the reality of their own lives. There's nothing much one can do about it, because if you bring in a critical note they'll think that you don't know anything. (laughs) I find it best in these cases to wait until they feel the need for guidance, and then to seize the opportunity to help them with their questioning.

And then of course, I have seen those who are brought up in a certain tradition and their spirituality is a travesty, a mockery. One part of them has some faith, another part goes along. There's an inner division, but they're so obedient and unquestioning.

SYNTHESIS: So you see this emotionalism and dogmatism as a stage?

CHAUDHURI: Yes. If the person is sincere, it will not last long. I believe, of course, in the growth process, and, I might add, the *individual* growth process. In the spiritual heritage of India it is very much emphasized that there is *no set pattern of growth, no standardized path*, which all are supposed to, or should follow. The main Indian tradition in such matters takes into full account the different psychological types to which people belong — the character structure or psychic makeup of different individuals. There are four

Individual paths  
of growth

or five main psychological types which are considered, and four or five main paths.

SYNTHESIS: What are these psychological types, in the Indian tradition?

Five levels of  
the human psyche

CHAUDHURI: In Indian psychological thinking, the total human psyche has, broadly speaking, five interrelated aspects or dimensions or levels of consciousness. These are, first, the physical level, the body; then the instinctual, vital, energetic aspect; then the aesthetic, emotional, perceptual; then the intellectual or rational, including such higher mental functions as abstract thinking, philosophical thinking, up to the gnostic vision of the universe as a whole. These are different gradations of the rational-intellectual activity of the psyche. And then, finally, comes the highly intuitive, the pure spiritual, transcendental aspect. Within these levels, *sub*-gradations are also distinguished.

Naturally, all these different functions or aspects of the psyche are interrelated and interpenetrating — one cannot completely separate them. When we make a classification, we do not mean that they are watertight compartments that are mutually exclusive. But roughly corresponding to these five aspects, we can speak of specific ways to self-realization. In the Indian tradition there is, for example, the approach of knowledge (Jnana Yoga), the approach of action (Karma Yoga), the approach of love (Bhakti Yoga) and the approach of self-analysis (Raja Yoga). There are many traditional approaches, that each person can use singly or in combination, according to his or her psychological type.

SYNTHESIS: What type are you? Are you a karma, or action, type?

CHAUDHURI: In terms of the psychological types, I am a karma and jnana combination. My beginning was jnana, you see, and karma came later. As for my approach, I am a Purna Yogi, which means Integral Yogi, and which is an integration of karma (action), jnana (knowledge) and bhakti (love).

Integral Yoga

SYNTHESIS: Before we go on with your story, would you tell us about Integral Yoga, and what it is like to be an Integral or Purna Yogi?

CHAUDHURI: The first aspect of Integral Yoga is taking into full account the unique nature of the individual and his specific makeup. I am completely against giving advice or trying to help without taking into account the unique fullness of the individual. There are various traditional approaches, as I have mentioned. An individual

can choose any of these approaches, and the only essential thing is that at the start the goal is clear to him. Where is he going? What is his direction and what is his purpose? With a clear understanding of his goals, a person can begin wherever he likes; with whatever rings a bell in him.

Participation in  
society is essential

The second aspect of the Integral path is one's organic relationship to society or to the human family: the human aspect. When I say this I'm fully aware of what I'm rejecting, because many spiritual systems think of the individual as a spiritual atom, a self-sufficient entity which can have spiritual fulfillment outside society. I don't believe this! I believe that the organic relationship to society is an essential ingredient of the structure of a person's being. A person mutilates himself, to a certain extent, by completely withdrawing from society, and his spiritual fulfillment will not be complete. Aurobindo very much believed this and practiced it. During the Second World War, he was highly criticized for making public statements in favor of the Allies and giving a very handsome donation to the Allied War Fund. People said, "What business have you as a yogi to interfere with politics?" But for Aurobindo, politics and yoga were *one*. This was at a time when Hitler was going from victory to victory, and people thought the Axis powers were going to win. But Aurobindo said, "To my inner vision, the power behind Hitler and Mussolini is already crushed. It is a question of time until that is manifest, and there is no doubt in my mind that the Allied forces will win. And that will be good," he said, "because in spite of all their limitations, the Allies are walking in the direction of evolution." So, this is the second aspect of Integral Yoga, being organically related to society, to humanity, to human evolution.

The final aspect is existential restructuring: every individual has unique potentials and unique limitations. These will be developed as part of the self-actualization of the individual. We each have a unique contribution to make to society and the world if we wish, if we can actualize our potential.

Becoming  
fully human

SYNTHESIS: Perhaps you could describe what a person who was fully integrated would be like, if there has ever been such a person.

CHAUDHURI: I don't know if in the absolute sense that can be said. But there are approximations, you know. Such a person manifests both transcendental and humanistic consciousness. It is transcendental consciousness which gives you real rootedness in the *ground*

of all existence, which brings you spiritual liberation. It is this consciousness which gives you organic relationship to humanity, to human evolution and to the cosmic process as a whole. Here we each play an active role, making our own little contribution, participating.

Freedom and  
fearlessness

You see, self-actualization is not the end. It must be supplemented by humanistic participation in evolution. And in back of it all is full freedom. I mean full freedom from all forms of attachment. It is transcendental realization which brings the light of full freedom to an individual, so he can be absolutely *fearless* in his life, in his self-expression.

In the life of Buddha I see this. In the life of Tagore I see this. In these lives I see very close approximations to the Integral way of living. Also in Lao-Tse, Zoroaster, Albert Schweitzer, Moses, Jesus, Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Martin Luther King.



SYNTHESIS: But how did you get so involved personally in Integral Yoga, even becoming an Integral Yogi? The last we heard you had given up meditation and lost faith in spirituality.

CHAUDHURI: Well, yes, I entered college in that frame of mind. Rational, critical thinking was all-important and spirituality seemed to be an escape from the problems of the world. But through all my vicissitudes, I had felt an inner guidance — a vague and yet definite awareness of my future, a sense of purpose, of what was to

Unwavering  
purpose

be done. There was not much wavering in that. For example, in my college days I had a feeling that I would come to the West, and I studied those subjects which would be useful for this purpose: for example, traditional Western philosophy and also the Western philosophers of the day — Whitehead, Russell, Bradley, Gentile, and so forth.

After graduation, the desire which had been suppressed so long — going to see Aurobindo in far-away Pondicherry — returned. I wrote to Aurobindo, telling him how I had long been interested in his philosophy. At the same time I mentioned that I had no faith in

religion or mysticism. "I don't believe in that. I believe in two things. One is free, independent, critical thinking – thinking things through. The other thing is self-discipline and creativity."

He wrote back, inviting me to come to Pondicherry. So, in 1937, I took the train, accompanied by another philosophy professor and his wife. When the train arrived in Pondicherry they were both very happy: they told me how fortunate it was that we were just in time to participate in the evening meditation at the ashram. I was not interested in meditation and did not understand their excitement. However, I decided to go along with them.

A time of  
silence

During the meditation I watched everything very carefully, the atmosphere there, the attitudes of the different people who came to meditate. The first thing that much impressed me was the *massive* silence. There were about two hundred people there. But there was silence, silence reigning supreme in the whole place. No one uttered a word. They came and sat in perfect silence, and then, Aurobindo's spiritual co-worker, the Mother, as she was called, came and conducted the meditation.

Renewed interest  
in meditation

The first three days there, I was all eyes: I met different people, trying to find out what they were doing, why they were there, what they had received. I saw some of the papers written by Sri Aurobindo in answer to their questions or problems. So for the first three days I did research. And I got more knowledge about meditation. When as a schoolboy I had first practiced meditation, I did not have much knowledge about it. So I practiced it mechanically, and soon gave it up. But now because of this new information about the technique and the core of meditation, on the fourth evening I thought, "Well, what's the harm? I always believe in adventure, exploring new paths without closing the mind to anything. Maybe it is time to give a second try to meditation and see what may happen." So, on that fourth evening I made a sincere attempt, and it was very good!

It was my first good experience in meditation and it was important to me. I became interested in meditation again. Now I understood for the first time what true meditation meant. And so people were surprised to see that from that time on I was the first to come to the meditation place, and the last to leave. (laughs) Naturally after you have that glimpse, that fleeting experience, you want to consolidate it. I became interested in it with my total being. Gradually, meditation allowed me to reach towards the transcendental dimension of life, the realm of profound ineffable things, the pure spiritual dimension.

SYNTHESIS: From your story I get a feeling of cycles: at five, then at thirteen, and again in your middle twenties there was a return of this spiritual impulse, each time at higher levels. Do you see something like this in people generally?

CHAUDHURI: Yes. I have given some thought to this point. Even outside of the spiritual life we see such alternations. We start our lives as children with a kind of immediate participation in the world, doing things according to social mores and our likes and dislikes, in general conformity to society. But gradually our likes and dislikes emerge more and there comes a kind of negation or rebellion. We are supposed to conform to some social standard or law and we rebel against it. We feel a clash between our personal selves and all this authority. Then later on, hopefully, we mature and reconcile both on a higher level: our need for social laws and our awareness of their limitations. We integrate them into our life without seeing them as the final standpoint. This is the socializing stage of development.

The dialectical  
rhythm of growth

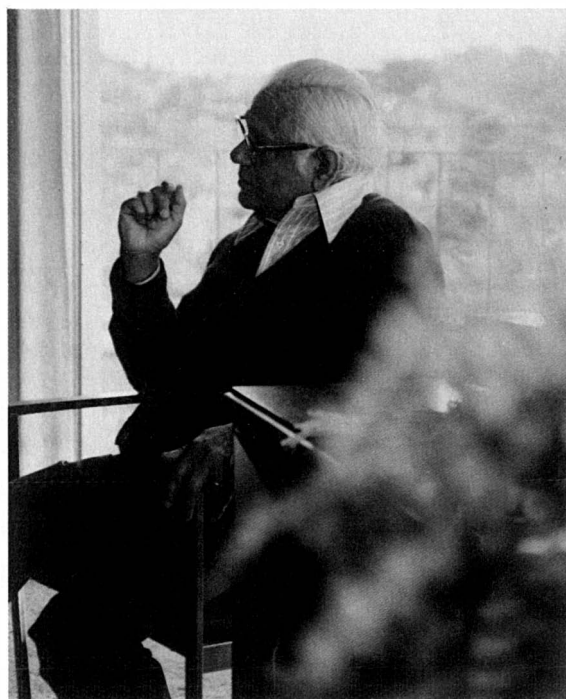
In the life of spiritual seekers there is also this *dialectical rhythm*. It goes through affirmation to negation, thesis to antithesis, and then that which was rejected comes back in a new form.

From the spiritual standpoint, the dialectic process *includes* the socializing stage of development. After this stage, the triad of spiritual thesis-antithesis-synthesis begins: a great moment comes and one becomes thoroughly disenchanted with this whole “samsara” (the flux of empirical existence, the external reality of the world with its social and ethical laws and rules). The whole thing loses its significance. It is all samsara, a big game, without ultimate truth in it. This is the moment of alienation, of disenchantment with all this world. Before you were part of it, adjusted to it, did not like much of it but wanted some of it, and so on. Then, suddenly, one day the whole world looks like a farce, a circus. With all your being you are hungry and thirsty for some deeper reality. This is the existential crisis. It is the same kind of thing that Arjuna experiences on the battlefield of life in the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

Facing the  
existential crisis

Then comes the true renunciation. Like the Indian prince who became the Buddha, this is the time when the person “leaves his kingdom” and goes in search of truth. He is disenchanted with the world as a whole.

Many times, after my experience at Pondicherry, I would enter the stage of alienation. I would have a strong urge, for example, to give up my professorship, leave everything and move to Pondicherry. But every time I entertained that idea, I heard another, deeper voice



within me saying, “No, both have to be integrated.” It became clear that this was the better way – that the thesis of the world and the antithesis of its renunciation had to be synthesized.

But it was difficult. At times I would become so submerged in duties and professional responsibilities, that I would long to give up everything. I had no time for the things I enjoyed, like meditation, study, and so on. I had to do unpleasant things I didn’t like, spending boring days going through examination papers. I would become fed up – why waste so much time? Then, I would remember Sri Aurobindo saying that the principle of *karma yoga*, the way of action, acknowledges that there are many unpleasant things in life. I would recall that in *karma yoga* one must accept the unpleasant with the pleasant, the boring with the exciting. This unpleasantness is only a habitual, accustomed *response*. If one has the right attitude and orientation, then that which appears unpleasant can become pleasant. There can be a *transformation* which takes place with the change of your attitude.

So long as our mind is as it is, it always sees the dualities: pleasant-unpleasant, exciting-boring, sublime-vulgar. Sometimes these polarities become truly oppressive. But they are only relative to our attitude at a particular stage of evolution. Later these polarities are

Changing attitude  
transforms  
our experience

transcended, and we have the experience of divine joy. We see the inner essence of a thing, whatever it is, and it gives us joy.

SYNTHESIS: So the karma yoga you came to follow is a yoga of everyday life. One doesn't need to go to a monastery in order to follow a spiritual path.

CHAUDHURI: Yes, that's it. On the other hand, a man can create a physical separation from the everyday world and still be attached to it. He can go to the remotest mountain cave and still carry the whole world with him. You see, *where there is the right inner attitude, physical, external renunciation is not necessary*. This is the truth which I have found written unambiguously in the different scriptures, and if it is so then we need to act accordingly.

SYNTHESIS: So it is letting go of the personal attachment, not of the actual thing itself.

CHAUDHURI: Right. Because whatever I am now seeing to be unpleasant, boring, not good, or undivine is a relative thing. And that relativity can be conquered by change of consciousness.

For example, at one time I was appointed examiner of the university, which meant that I had to read a thousand examination papers: just imagine! It was so boring, so much wasted time! Then I

*"A man can create a physical separation from the everyday world and still be attached to it.*

*He can go to the remotest mountain cave and still carry the whole world with him."*

caught myself, "Well, this is relative to my way of looking at it." One of the basic principles of karma yoga is that whatever you do, however small and insignificant it is, you do it in the spirit of self-offering to the Divine. You do it as an instrument of the

Supreme Being. Then you are attuning yourself to divine consciousness, and even your smallest action is sanctified by the divine touch. So I said to myself: "For me grading papers is boring, but for the student whose paper I am reading now it is very important. It will mean so much to him, the mark I give him, and if I am careless in the matter because I am bored he will suffer. I will do my best and by rendering a real service to him I am also serving God."

SYNTHESIS: I know many people who would argue that this sort of attitude institutionalizes the boring, that this is suppressive or repressive and enforces a "topdog" attitude, an authoritarian attitude



towards oneself. They would think it better to find a way to evade such apparently boring tasks.

CHAUDHURI: Well, we always have to weigh the pros and cons and make a decision. For example, when I accepted this kind of task I made up my mind that I would never spend the whole day just doing this. There were certain fundamentals in my life which I would not sacrifice. Time for meditation, for example: I would not sacrifice that. I had an order of priorities, you see. When it came to the point that I had to sacrifice all, then I would not go that far. I would say, well, every day I will do fifteen papers, and accordingly I would make a schedule. There has to be sufficient joy and happiness in life. Then we can accept some amount of unpleasantness alongside of it, and hopefully transform it. And we have the additional satisfaction of doing something for the sake of others. There is a service orientation: in serving man you're serving God. It's a way of offering to the Divine through the serving of God *in* man. And seen *as a part of the whole*, it's fine, it becomes a part of yoga.

Serving God in man

SYNTHESIS: Your view runs counter to certain philosophical and spiritual traditions, both Eastern and Western. In India, for example, one finds the belief that the essence of spiritual liberation is liberation from the concerns of the world. How do you view such questions from a philosophical standpoint?

CHAUDHURI: Along with Aurobindo, I disagree with certain currents in the Indian tradition. For example, there is the story of Vivekananda and his guru Ramakrishna, two great nineteenth-century Indian saints, which had a profound effect on Aurobindo. Vivekananda had great spiritual potential, and in only a short time of study with Ramakrishna he attained a very profound experience. Some other disciples of Ramakrishna asked, "How do you view the future of Vivekananda?" Ramakrishna said, "Well, he has a lot of things to do in this world, and he will do them and accomplish his mission so long as he does not attain *complete* self-realization. As soon as he has attained that he will give up his body and depart." Aurobindo questioned this, and it became the starting-point of his thinking. He questioned this leaving of body and world. Was there really, he asked, a fundamental disparity, contradiction, incompatibility between spirit and nature? The Upanishadic\* seers did not see

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\*The *Upanishads* are among the most ancient and authoritative scriptures of the Hindu tradition. [ed.]

this dichotomy! In the golden age of India there was no notion of it. The ancient sages were not monks. Those who were the authors of the most sacred books of India—the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*—were people who lived life abundantly, going through all the phases of life.

Man-made  
dichotomy

So Aurobindo pointed out that this cleavage, this dichotomy was introduced in the Indian Middle Ages, because of the sociological and political changes in the whole Indian landscape. Indian spirituality then went into a different channel, along ascetic lines.

So the question is that if this dichotomy is a product of our ignorance, how do we bridge it? The answer of Integral Yoga is that there is a creative power in the spirit of higher consciousness which is capable of actually *transforming* this apparent “burden” of body and world into a perfect image of the Divine. And when that transformation takes place, instead of appearing as a prison-house, or a burden, the body and the world become temples of the inner divinity.

Aurobindo calls this creative and transforming power the Supermind. He considers it as one of several levels of higher consciousness. Some of these levels broaden your perspective and world-view but do not have a true transforming power. Aurobindo says that the

*“There is a creative power in the spirit of higher consciousness which is capable of actually transforming this apparent ‘burden’ of body and world into a perfect image of the divine.”*

Supermind is that level which not only broadens your mental horizons but also has the ability to actually transform inconscient physical existence. He saw this transformation as the next step in evolution. We are still in the transition period of this step,

The next step  
in evolution

but there are indications from all sides that we are approaching the next stage. There is, for example, a new awakening towards higher values, towards more inclusive consciousness. There is a growing realization that these are very important for effective and lasting solutions to the basic problems of humanity, that they are of paramount importance to transform our inner being. Change of the externals of life, such as the economic structure of society or of political arrangements, making international pacts, or restructuring the judicial system, these are fine: they are needed steps in the right direction. But changes in the externals of life are not enough, because in the last analysis it is people who will operate even the best political-social machine. The man behind the machine is of fundamental importance. However ideally we may change the structure of

society, as long as the inner man does not change, we will not solve our basic problems. What is needed is to change our inner being toward a wholly integrated consciousness – the resolution and harmonization of all our inner dichotomies and polarities.

SYNTHESIS: Are you saying this is the ultimate goal of Integral Yoga?

CHAUDHURI: No. Here again Integral Yoga differs from traditional approaches. Many of them seem to imply that in the course of your inner growth you eventually achieve an ultimate goal. This is called “samadhi,” and is considered to be a state of absolute knowledge. In Integral Yoga instead, there is a hierarchical scheme of life where knowledge occupies a lofty position, but it is *not* ultimate. After knowledge must come the translation of your inner vision into your life. If you don’t do anything about it, then it is not real samadhi. I don’t like calling things ultimate; everything is unfinished business, still evolving. I think our human spirit is a continuous process: ever-widening horizons with increasingly fruitful self-expression.

You see, it is this kind of talk – selecting a particular condition as “ultimate” – that makes a person dogmatic. It is a blind alley.

*“However ideally we may change the structure of society, as long as the inner man does not change, we will not solve our basic problems.”*

It’s a very luminous alley, but a blind one! (laughs) Transpersonal experiences for example, have great value, but I do object to the ultimatistic thinking that is often used when people speak about them. Various people speak

and write of *ultimate* positions, experiences, ideas, endpoints, needs, drives, and a tendency to “ultimate states of being.” Ultimatistic thinking is another version of *absolutist* thinking. It creates dichotomy, which creates dogmatism. The concept of “higher” I do go along with, but not “ultimate.” Because however high man goes, there’s still beyond.

This ultimatistic thinking is based on a *static* view of samadhi. Aurobindo says that when you enter samadhi you begin a new journey. All that nonsense about enlightenment as a one-time flash and then it’s all OK! (laughs) Not at all. It is *the beginning of a new life*, a life of enlightenment. And it is a new *process*. Aurobindo says that when the groping for the light of truth ends and you enter into that light, then you begin your real journey. Plato also says that it is a process of progressively seeing into the immeasurable vastness

Not ultimate goals  
but ever-widening  
horizons

Open-minded  
enlightenment

of the truth. He doesn't say that you just see it and that's all.

Let me give a concrete illustration. Gandhi was right in the forefront of power politics and different parties would come to him. He would say, "Let's not hurry to a decision." He would go into silence and meditate. Then he would come out and say, "I have seen the inner light; here is my decision." But having made the decision, he would still keep an open mind: he would never dogmatize and say, "This is the absolute truth I have received in meditation, the Voice of God." (laughs) It was for him a dynamic interplay between intuition and critical thinking. There was a wonderful synthesis here of humility and open-mindedness, and at the same time he followed his decision, because at the given moment it was the best that he knew.

SYNTHESIS: So many people in the West are concerned with debunking ultimates or absolutes, tearing down false gods and so on. But frequently this leads to a sense that all things are equal, your trip is as good as my trip—and then to valuelessness, purposelessness, anxiety, despair, and so on.

Mistaking the part  
for the whole

CHAUDHURI: Sure. But much of this sense of meaninglessness arises because those who are denying absolutes frequently have a way of reintroducing them by the back door. For example, there are certain spiritually oriented psychologists who say they don't believe in absolutes, but in the next breath they tell you they're looking for such and such an experience and everything else is meaningless. They're not aware of the self-contradiction. As soon as you equate a condition of consciousness with the absolute, you are massacring the absolute. (laughs) Every state, or condition, is a state or condition. It is part of the flux of time. It cannot be absolute. *All experiences are partial manifestations of the absolute.* The absolute is the all-embracing totality. The absolute isn't even evolution: it *includes* evolution. When you choose something for an absolute, you set up an absolute division. "That is the absolute; all this is false." Then all your other experiences—your human relations, washing dishes, eating food—become unclear to you, can indeed begin to seem meaningless. This happens whenever we equate an aspect of reality with the absolute. Many people who have perfectionist strivings fall into a similar absolutist trap. When we strive for perfection, we are thinking that absolute perfection is something that can be attained. In the process, we can accumulate a lot of nervous tension which results in psychological damage. No state of existence is perfect or ultimate. Man is a process. All human life is a process.

Letting go of  
superconscious  
experiences

There is a very good principle which can help us to steer clear of the ultimatic trap. That is the practice of *nonattachment*. \* Many people here in America, as soon as they have a nice experience, become attached to it, and then make strenuous efforts to recapture that delightful experience which never comes again. It becomes a very pitiable condition. As we meditate, for example, different experiences will come, and we observe them, we learn from them, but we must not let ourselves become attached to them. When they come, we understand, we are absorbed – when they go, we let go. Such nonattachment gives you dynamic freedom. It leaves you poised in your own self. Being firmly entrenched in your own being, you refuse to be carried off by alluring experiences. This is the principle.

The important thing from the Integral standpoint is not “What experience? What power?” but “What are you going to do with it? How are you going to use it?” Therefore operate from the center of your being, from which you can judiciously use the power that comes and the experiences that come.

In the course of self-development certain powers will probably come – ecstasy, even psychic powers. The warning and advice of all

*“The important thing is...not,  
‘What experience, what power?’  
but, ‘What are you going to do  
with it?’”*

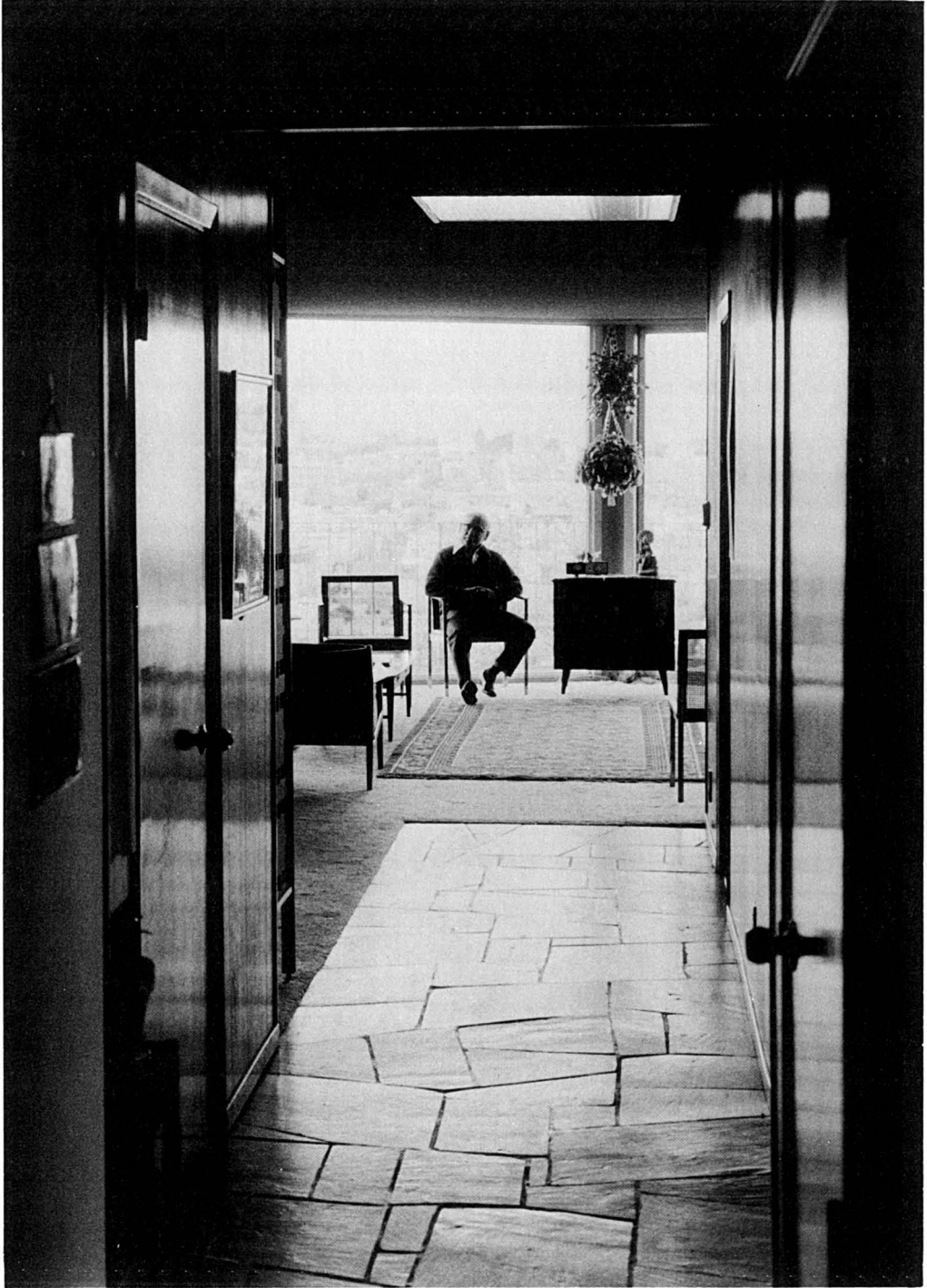
great yoga teachers has been not to pay too much attention to them, or make premature use of these powers. Not until one reaches true enlightenment. Enlightenment means not only expansion of con-

sciousness, broadening of horizons, but also deep inner value-consciousness. No matter how much power a person may have, he may still be a devil’s disciple if his value-consciousness has not been purified. This is the essence of spiritual realization: value-consciousness. Otherwise there is always the danger of exploiting power for self-aggrandizement.

I have seen some good, nice people, who do not have the right understanding, get confused about such things, psychic powers and so forth. They get mixed up. For example, knowing that I am a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, some people have come saying, “I have received a message from Aurobindo, and this is how it should be

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\*Nonattachment, as well as renunciation, are closely related to disidentification. See “Identity and Personal Freedom,” p. 56 of this issue. [ed.]



done.” They wanted to dictate to me because they thought that Aurobindo’s voice was speaking through them.

This is a distortion of the sort of thing that happened when Aurobindo gave darshan.\* A special transfer of energy took place

*“The ideal guru is one who helps the individual realize his own inner guru.”*

during this time. A spiritually enlightened person has accumulated spiritual power and energy within him, and there is an emanation, a transfer of energy between him and

someone who goes to meet him in a state of receptivity. It is a power, an energy which inspires you and gives you something. In the Indian tradition, a true guru is one who can do this and does this.

But the ideal guru is one who helps the individual realize his own *inner* guru. Now, unfortunately, many people have become guru-worshippers, devoting themselves entirely to the outer guru. So I tell them, “You must remember, the real goal is not *guru*-realization. It is *self*-realization.”

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\*A period when the guru allows his disciples to see him and to sit with him. Sometimes questions are asked and answered, or a brief talk is given. The basic element, however, is being in the *presence* of the guru. The guru can use his energy to *temporarily* lift the disciples to a higher state of self-realization—their next step of development. Afterward, the disciple reverts toward the initial state. But this higher state which the disciple has experienced becomes a source of guidance and inspiration in his life. It becomes an “ideal model,” toward which he can consciously aim and gradually reach, through his own resources. [ed.]

## THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

Alyce Green



IN THE PHILOSOPHY AS WELL AS IN THE LIFE OF INDIA, man is conceived to be spiritual in nature and is related to a universe also spiritual in essence. The concept that reality is ultimately one carries within it the connotation that matter and spirit are essentially one. Under this concept the universe is seen as the manifestation of spirit in substance, in an ascending series of many levels or planes. Ranging from most dense to most subtle substance, matter is seen as a form of veiled life, life is seen as a form of veiled mind, and mind is seen as a veiled form of the higher states of consciousness. Thus consciousness is understood to extend throughout all the planes, from the atom, to the plant, all the way to man and beyond.

If spirit and matter are seen not as the highest and lowest ends of a progressive series, but instead as a strict dichotomy of pure transcendent spirit on one hand, and mechanical, unintelligent nature on the other, the inevitable outcome seems to be either the denial of nature as an illusion of the senses, or the denial of spirit as an illusion of the imagination. The human mind is dissatisfied with either extreme view, for in reality man experiences himself as a dual being—he experiences himself as matter *and* spirit—as nature *and* soul. In his book *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo says:

The whole problem of life resolves itself into this one question—“What are we to do with this soul and nature set face to face with each other, this Nature, this personal and cosmic activity, which tries to impress itself upon the soul, to possess, control, determine it, and this soul which feels that in

The dual  
nature of man



some mysterious way it has a freedom, a control over itself, a responsibility for what it is and does, and tries therefore to turn upon Nature, its own and the world's, and to control, possess, enjoy. . . . The whole of human philosophy, religion, science, is really nothing but an attempt to get at the right data upon which it will be possible to answer this question and solve . . . the problem of our existence.

But how are we to get at the "right data"? Aurobindo suggests two possible ways: the first, through the application of Western scientific disciplines to the study of life and of mind, each on its own level, and the second, through the application of disciplines to seek illumination "from within" of life, mind and spirit.

According to Aurobindo, man in his present state is not the summit of evolution.



The animal is the living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious cooperation she wills to work out the superman, the god. . . . We cannot then bid her pause at a given stage of her evolution, nor have we the right to condemn with the religionist as perverse and presumptuous or with the rationalist as a disease or hallucination any intention she may evince or effort she may make to go beyond.

Although man evolved in the bodily life, his intelligence is, at present, the predominant principle in him. But this intelligence is largely occupied with material existence as apprehended through the senses. This "sensory materialism," at first an evolutionary necessity, becomes forged into a chain which binds man and holds him to his beginnings.

In the West such concentration on the experience of the senses has tended toward the affirmation of the external, material, objective reality as the only reality, and objective knowledge as the only reliable knowledge. Physical existence is assumed to be the fundamental, "real" existence, and all else, whether it be called "consciousness," "mind," "soul," or "spirit," is viewed merely as an effect of the physical. Aurobindo contends that such a view looks at only one small area of existence and leaves all the rest unexplained. He adds:

Misconceptions  
of reality

If pushed to its extreme, it would give to a stone or a plum-pudding a greater reality and to thought, love, courage, genius, greatness, the human soul an inferior reality, or even an unsubstantial and evanescent reality.

An inherent paradox in such simplistic materialism is that, in fact, man has no way of knowing the *objective* universe except by *subjective* consciousness. The physical senses, even with all their

Modern obscur-  
antism invalidates  
the future

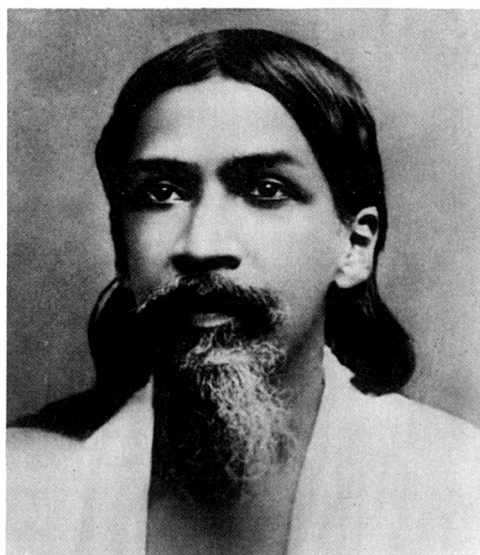
scientific extensions, are only instruments. It isn't the ear that hears, and it isn't the eye that sees, it is only the *aware consciousness* that hears, sees and experiences. If reality is conceded to awareness of physical objects, why should reality be denied a priori to awareness of suprapersonal objects? Aurobindo suggests that such a denial is an obscurantism as prejudicial to the extension of knowledge as was the religious obscurantism which opposed the extension of scientific discovery in Europe. And that the axiom according to which all truth must be referred to the judgment of rational analysis, and must be verifiable by a common, objective experience, is a restrictive, lopsided standard giving sovereignty to the normal, and excluding the supernormal experience.\* By emphasizing the present and

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\*The position taken by Aurobindo is also prevalent in Eastern thought and in the Western mystical tradition. It does not in any way advocate the rejection of the mind. Thomas Merton, one of the foremost Western contemporary mystics, said that rejecting the mind while proceeding along the path of self-realization is "tantamount to spiritual suicide." And Aurobindo is equally emphatic on this subject. The point is fundamental. Confusion comes from not appreciating the difference between what is *irrational* and what is *suprarational*.

Simple common sense tells us that if an insight, experience or idea is irrational – that is, appears clearly incorrect upon rational examination – we should not accept it or act on it. And no method of growth can be safe and effective if it forces us to go against our common sense. But some insights and concepts are suprarational: rational examination cannot prove them to be either correct or incorrect. And it is when dealing with the suprarational that we often get into trouble. We may decide that because our mind cannot prove such a concept to be right, then it must be wrong. This "rationalistic" position cuts us off from valuable data, and eventually can lead to a sterile materialism. Or we may decide, quite rightly, that a suprarational concept is true on the basis of an inner sense of certainty, or practical life experience, although our reason cannot confirm it. But then we may believe as a result that *our reason* is invalid, and not to be trusted. This "a-rational" position, in turn, deprives us of our foremost instrument of guidance – of the central means to collect the fruits of our experience. Without using our reason, we proceed blindly, "feeling" our way, but without actually being able to see it.

What is needed to avoid these extremes is the appreciation of both the capabilities and the limitations of the mind, and the recognition that there exist insights and experiences which are beyond where the mind can reach. This understanding has been a cornerstone of the major approaches to spiritual development and is now being more and more accepted in the field of personal growth and self-realization. Some of its practical implications are dealt with in "Dialogue with the Higher Self," under the headings of "Discrimination" and "Interpretation," pp. 131-135, this issue. [ed.]



the past, it blocks and invalidates the future. It gives support to the false notion that the level of consciousness and the relation between mind and body created by the past evolution are the only right and healthy conditions and that anything that would go beyond this relation and this level of consciousness is morbid, an hallucination, or insanity. Aurobindo continues:

The greatest inner discoveries, the experience of self-being, the cosmic consciousness . . . cannot be brought before the tribunal of the common mentality which has no experience of these things and takes its own absence or incapacity of experience as a proof of their invalidity or their non-existence. Physical truth or formulas, discoveries founded upon physical observation can be so referred, but even there a training of capacity is needed before one can follow the mathematics of relativity or other difficult scientific truths.

Verification  
of spiritual  
experience

All reality, all experience must indeed, to be held as true, be capable of verification by a same or similar experience; so, in fact, all men can have a spiritual experience and can follow it out and verify it in themselves, but only when they have acquired the capacity or can follow the inner *methods* by which that experience and verification are possible.

It is of supreme importance for the human spirit to be free to sound the depths of inner reality, of spiritual and of what is still *superconscious* reality, for in that way alone can come liberation from the Ignorance in which our mentality dwells and a release into a complete consciousness, a true and integral self-realization and self-knowledge.

It is toward such a release and such a consciousness that the student of *Integral Yoga* works.

A synthesis  
of yoga

Integral Yoga is the name given by Aurobindo to his synthesis of yoga.\* When, after years of study and discipline, he sought to form such a synthesis—an *integral* yoga—he realized that an attempt to combine all the yogas, either en masse or in successive practice, could lead only to confusion. He began then a comparative examination of the methods of nature and all the methods of yoga, for to him all life is a vast Yoga of Nature striving to realize her potentialities.

Conscious  
striving for  
fulfillment

The concept of existence from which Aurobindo proceeds is that of the fulfillment of spirit as it manifests through matter, in all its forms and levels. But the movement is twofold. Because matter or nature, in turn, responds with a thrust toward spirit, a yearning for unification with it. This striving for fulfillment, this Yoga, is subconscious, slow, and dispersed in the lower forms of nature, but gains increasing momentum and swiftness at each succeeding step of the evolutionary ladder, culminating in man, where it becomes self-conscious.

The individual human soul is a particular becoming of the Universal Soul, therefore it can govern, respond, reject. “This power of the soul over its nature is of utmost importance in Yoga,” Aurobindo

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\*The term “Yoga,” often taken in America to refer merely to Hatha Yoga (the practice of disciplining the body through various physical postures and exercises) is here used in its more fundamental sense. Yoga means literally “Union, the state of a man when his life of action and thought is entirely in harmony with the very source of his being” (E. Wood, *Yoga Dictionary*). There are a number of specific “Yogas”—more precisely, paths to achieve yoga, which are procedures, or ways through which one can reach toward unification with the central source of life and of being.

Among the major ones, Bhakti Yoga is the yoga of the emotional nature, of devotion to divinity. Jnana Yoga is the yoga or path of knowledge, based on the mind’s desire for the truth. Karma Yoga aims at perfecting the human being by bringing his inner and outer action in harmony with his highest nature. Finally Raja Yoga, the “royal road to unification”—traditionally considered to be the most inclusive and powerful yoga—aims at harmonizing the whole human being by means of meditation practices and the cultivation of appropriate personality attitudes.

For further information on Raja Yoga, we suggest the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, translated by Swami Vivekananda or Ernest Wood; *The Light of the Soul* by Alice Bailey; the works of Shankaracharya; and, as a most practical source, *Raja Yoga* by Ramacharaka. [ed.]

says, "if it did not exist we could never get, by self-conscious endeavor and aspiration, out of the fixed groove of our present imperfect human state; we should have to wait for Nature to perfect it in her own . . . process of evolution."

By "perfection" in Integral Yoga Aurobindo means "a transforming of our imperfect state into the fullness of our real and spiritual personality." Four necessities for such perfection are (1) "a perfect equality,"\* (2) "the heightened, enlarged and rectified power of the instruments of our normal nature," the body, the emotions, and the mind, (3) the proper use of the universal, spiritual energy, and (4) an understanding of the relation between spirit and matter.

"Finally," Aurobindo says, "the body must develop a . . . power to hold whatever force is brought into it by the spirit . . . without spilling or wasting it . . . without any part of the mechanical instrument being agitated, upset, broken or damaged by the inrush or pressure — as the brain, vital health or moral nature are often injured in those who unwisely attempt Yogic practice without preparation or by undue means, or who rashly invite a power they are intellectually, vitally, morally unfit to bear. Thus filled the body must have the capacity to work normally, automatically, rightly"— as an effective instrument of the indwelling being. "This faculty of holding and right use of force . . . in the physical consciousness and machinery is the most important perfection of the body." To achieve it, the follower of Integral Yoga does not depend on physical, postural, or breathing exercises nor on tantric practices, because inherent in them is the danger of subjugation of the inner being by its physical mechanism. Aurobindo suggests that at first the student must develop trust in the power of the mind to influence the body. Thus perfection of the body is achieved through the action of the mind, and later of the will. Eventually, the will learns to call in the appropriate energy, for as the consciousness becomes more subtle it can feel "concretely with a mental sense" the more subtle energies and command them.

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\*Aurobindo describes "perfect equality" as a calm poise that enables one to witness all the happenings and relations of existence without disabling reactions and without being overborne by the stress of personality desire. This he sees as the first condition of self-mastery. (This is essentially the same as the "attitude of observer" described in "Identity and Personal Freedom," p. 56, this issue.) [ed.]



Perfection of the body through action of mind and will

Emotional  
perfection  
through will to  
universal good

In a similar manner, the emotional nature must also be perfected. Imperfect, it is a confusion of mixed feelings, happy and unhappy, good and bad, intense and dull. It must be brought to a peaceful, serene state. There are three aspects of its perfection. The first includes the development of such qualities as openness, calmness, clarity. The second includes strength, enthusiasm, intensity, and others of an active, compelling kind. Their perversion we know well: anger, violence, authoritarianism, etc. Furthermore, the inability to have and to handle emotional force is also an imperfection, leading to laxity, self-indulgence, flabbiness and inertness of the emotional and psychological being. We may feel that in today's world serenity, calmness and love are not enough, but we don't know how rightly to combine them with what Aurobindo calls the other side of this perfection, "a self-contained and calm unegoistic power . . . the energy of the strong heart which is capable of supporting without shrinking an insistent, an outwardly austere, or even where need is, a violent action." To achieve this combination, or synthesis, we must develop the third element of the perfection of the emotional nature. This is a "belief in, and will to the universal good." For even though our understanding can accept the idea of the unity and oneness of all things, without the belief in that which makes for good behind all experience, the heart cannot open into a wide and intense universal love – that highest perfection of the emotional and psychic nature which can unite the other seemingly opposing elements.

The liberated mind  
is a clear  
mirror of truth

Still to be considered is the perfection of the mental nature. This is the most delicate and difficult of all. The mind must be freed from desire, which imposes itself on truth; it must be freed from the emotions, which color, limit and distort truth, and it must be freed from its own defects, inertia, narrowness, unwillingness to open to new knowledge, and intellectual unscrupulousness. "Its sole will," Aurobindo says, "must be to make itself an unsullied mirror of truth . . . capable of all variety of understanding . . . brilliant with all the flame and various with all the colors of the manifestations of Truth, open to all its forms . . . an instrument ready and capable for whatever work is demanded from it by the Purusha."\*

The perfecting of the body, emotions and mind gives the per-

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\*Purusha is the Sanskrit word for "Higher Self" or "Spirit." [ed.]

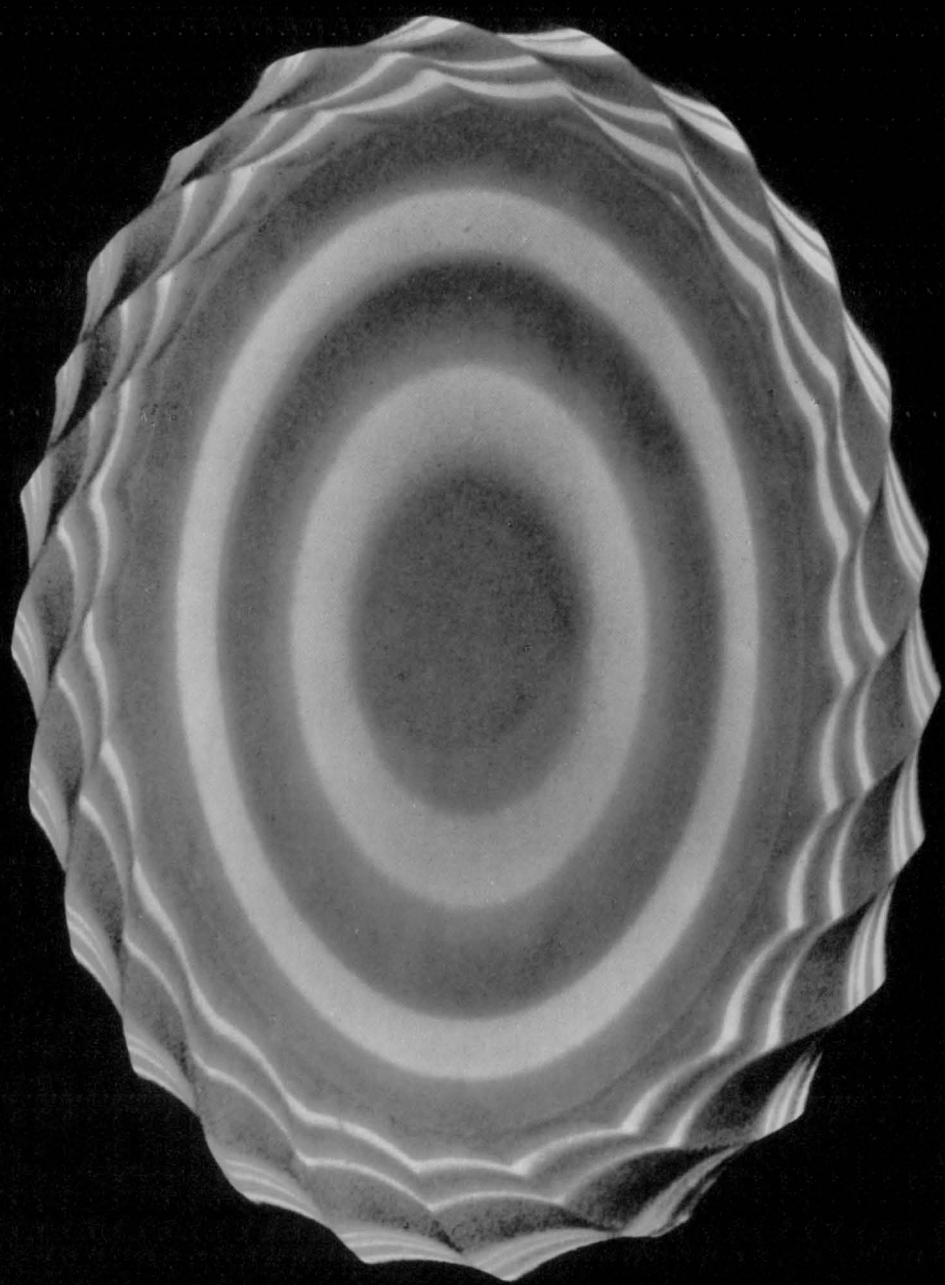
fection of the personality, the instrument of the Self. Still to be accomplished is its transformation into superconscious awareness and action. The principal conditions for this transformation are — as for the first — will, self-observation, self-understanding, and a constant practice of self-modification and development.

It is as these conditions are understood and met that we will achieve a culminating evolutionary step, and move forward into a realm of joyful cooperation and true community.

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# Psychosynthesis Workbook

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# How to use it

The *WORKBOOK* section of *SYNTHESIS* is the reader's opportunity to apply the major ideas presented in each issue toward the practical task of his or her own personal development. It is a chance for you to take such concepts as synthesis, identity, or values, and to work with them in your life in a systematic way.

Each *WORKBOOK* deals with a different topic, and can stand on its own. But each topic is also a piece of a broader picture

and the *WORKBOOKS* are arranged in a general sequence which has proven useful. Accordingly, new readers of *SYNTHESIS* may want to also study the *WORKBOOK* in *SYNTHESIS 1*, which is about the sub-personalities in each one of us – our inner cast of characters. If you have used that *WORKBOOK*, the present one is a chance to build on what you have already done, and move forward in your own process of self-discovery and integration.

This second *WORKBOOK* deals with the fundamental problem of our individual identity. It is a truism to observe that much of the pain and confusion in the contemporary world comes from our not really knowing who we are. Sometimes this is experienced as an unsureness about our identity, sometimes it is experienced as a lack of meaning in our lives, and in some cases it is experienced as a sense of powerlessness – a sense of being overwhelmed by an environment stronger than we are. All these concerns and problems have their roots in the fundamental problem of our identity – of discovering who we are. This act of discovery is not usually a simple one-time event. It is not something that happens and is finished. Nor is it a question with a simple answer. Rather, it is a process of discovery, marked by certain distinct stages. This *WORKBOOK* considers the question of personal identity and provides practical tools for embarking on the process.

The specific ideas and techniques presented here have proved their usefulness over a long period of time. They have been used by many people – lay persons as well as professionals in psychology, education, medicine, social work and

other fields—with good results. As you have seen in the Table of Contents to the *WORKBOOK*, it is divided into a number of sections. The “Principles” section, “Identity and Personal Freedom,” deals with such central concepts as the process of “identification,” “disidentification,” the self, and others. It details the function and relations of these experiences, and gives actual accounts of people evolving through them toward a clearer grasp of their identity. The “Practice” section, which follows, forms the most practical part of the *WORKBOOK*. It begins with two exercises which you can use to make the concepts of identity and identification both real and useful in the context of your own life. A third technique, Keeping a Psychological Journal, provides a basic vehicle for enhancing the effectiveness of techniques for personal growth in general. “What is Psychosynthesis?,” the final section, describes the general framework underlying all the *WORKBOOKS*.

Different readers will want to use the *WORKBOOK* in different ways. Some people may be familiar with part of its content, and will want to pick and choose. Other people may already be fruitfully following a specific, well-defined path in their self-development, and may choose to integrate what they find here with their own approach. Still others may want to make a full and systematic use of the *WORKBOOK*. Each reader must make his or her own judgment about what to use, and in which order to work with the separate sections. But as a suggestion, we recommend the following general

sequence. First, do the brief “Who Am I?” exercise on page 54. This exercise will give you a feeling for the many facets of your own process of identification. The same exercise was also a part of the first *WORKBOOK*. If you have done it before, it is of real value to do it again, both because it relates directly to the matter of identification, and because the differences in your answers, over time, can be a useful indication of how you have changed.

After this we suggest you read the “Principles” section, which presents an inclusive view of how we identify ourselves with various things in life, how we can learn to choose our identifications, and eventually learn to identify with our self, our personal center. Next, go to the “Practice” section. This, in a personal sense, is perhaps the most important part—the one which actually gives you a chance to introduce in your everyday living, and thus make your own, the concepts you read about. These exercises are most useful if done in a regular way, and we suggest that you continue working with them on an ongoing basis, establishing your own routine. We suggest also that, after some practice, you go back and study the “Principles” section with some care, because it is designed to provide ongoing guidance in your efforts. You may also want to re-read the article “Subpersonalities,” in the first *WORKBOOK*, in the light of what you have learned about identification. You will see that the various aspects of identification are implied in all phases of subpersonality work.

# Who Am I?

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### A PSYCHOSYNTHESIS EXERCISE

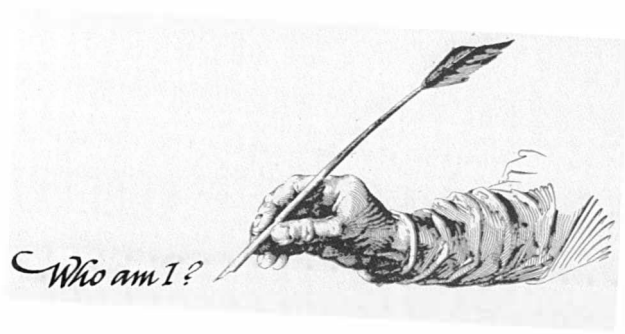
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Find a place where you can work quietly and undisturbed. At the top of the next page, write the date. Then, ask yourself the question — “Who Am I?” and write down your answer. Ask and answer it repeatedly, writing your answers to this question as freely and honestly as possible. Be sure you ask yourself the question each time. You alone will see the answers. You will probably find that you come up with a long succession of differing answers. That’s good. Write as long a list as you like. Five to fifteen minutes is a reasonable time to complete the exercise.

\* \* \*

After doing this brief exercise, you should have a feeling for some of the many personality elements, subpersonalities, roles and other personal and social forms with which you identify your *self*. This awareness will be helpful in relating the following article on identity and personal freedom to your own life.

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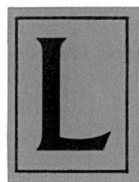
Principles:

Identity  
and  
Personal Freedom



## IDENTITY AND PERSONAL FREEDOM

Betsie Carter-Haar



ISA IS A WOMAN IN HER MID-THIRTIES who is vital, outgoing, loving and creative. She's a wife and mother who has written two books and has a third in progress. Her own paintings hang on the walls of her home, and although there is always something going on she is calm and cheerful, rarely losing her sense of humor.

She wasn't always like this. When I first knew her, she was quite depressed and withdrawn. The change over the past six years, although gradual, has been remarkable. I asked her to describe this process of change as she experienced it.

I know that the change in me has taken years to work out and become real, but there was a central moment — one point in time — when something happened to me. I saw something about myself, really understood it, and from then on I had something that couldn't be lost. It has never been the same since.

My relationship with my husband had been really bad. He was not a kind man, and had troubles of his own. He felt embarrassed and ashamed of me, and was always putting me down. My father, too, had been excessively critical of me in my childhood, and I guess I was trying to make up for not having won his love and approval by winning Ralph's, instead. As the years went by I felt more and more that I was a terrible, inadequate, wrong person. This hurt me deeply — I was always hurting so much during those years. I had to deaden myself, so I wouldn't feel the pain and could cope.

But I kept sinking into the pain and depression anyway. One day I began to think about suicide. That shocked me — like an electric shock. I remember that I sort of jumped back from myself and said, "My God,

Freedom of choice

what am I doing? Where am I?" It was as if a veil had been lifted from my eyes. I could think clearly. I felt like I was waking up from a sleep. And then I had a sudden, striking realization: "I don't *have* to be like this. I can *choose* not to be this way!" *That was it.* That was the moment.

I saw that the problem wasn't that Ralph or my father or anyone else was causing me all this pain. *I was allowing it to happen*, playing right along, acting my role of "victim" perfectly. Oh yes, I was very good at it. I was sunk in this pattern of behavior, submerged in it. It was as if I were trapped. I truly believed that I *was* this "Victim."

But in that instant I realized that I was not a Victim — it was only a role, and *I could choose to play any role I wanted*. I understood that I, myself, was in some very profound way, distinct from all my roles and all my characteristics and possessions. It was as if I were stripped of everything that I had thought was "me." This was what I had imagined dying would be like, yet there I was, more alive and more awake than I had ever been in my life. I don't really know how to describe it. I was just "I," solid, whole, *there*.

So that was how all these changes began. Now I have a deep sense of wholeness and OK-ness inside, and even when I feel hurt and confused I *know* that I'm really not these feelings — I am *me*!

Of course I still have to work at remembering all this, that I am not a put-upon, put-down Victim. And it isn't always easy. At times, I get caught up in it again. But every time it is quicker and easier for me to come out from under. Since I've begun working on this, I've discovered all sorts of good things about myself, and it's exciting just to be alive, to be me.

Disidentification

Experiences like Lisa's, experiences of liberation or *disidentification* from a specific, restrictive state of consciousness, are not uncommon. Yet they often go unrecognized. Many people have had similar experiences, though they are usually less dramatic, and so less easy to understand for what they are. Because of this lack of understanding, many miss the opportunity of applying them and making such lasting changes in their lives as Lisa did.

Furthermore, when these experiences are not understood, they may be disturbing. When we are completely identified with any one thing, we think, feel, and act accordingly. We then believe that we *are* for example, "rational," or we *are* a "victim" or we *are* "strong," and we begin to feel that we are this *to the exclusion of all else*. The prospect of letting go of what we are so strongly identified with can then become frightening, even inconceivable. We feel as if it is our very self that will be lost.

Protecting our sense of self

For our sense of self, of "I-ness," of personal identity, is perhaps the most precious thing we have. So we often fight against ourselves and against our urge to grow in order to preserve this

sense of self untouched, even if it is restricted by specific identifications.

Identifications are  
self-perpetuating

Years ago, if someone had told Lisa that she was not really a victim, but had become identified with playing that role, she would have felt extremely threatened. Her identification with *being* a victim was so total and so complete that she could not see beyond it. She was submerged in “victimhood.” She related to other people, to situations, to objects, as a victim. She felt and thought as a victim. One could say that, for all practical purposes, she *was* a victim—down-trodden, unfairly wounded, persecuted. Even her posture reflected it. And to a large extent her identity was self-perpetuating: because she looked and acted like a victim, people tended to treat her like one. This reinforced her self-image, maintaining the status-quo.

Her perception of other people and of her environment was also limited by her identification. She gazed out at the world through “victim-colored” glasses, and all the data she gathered from her environment had to pass through this filter of victimhood. So the happenings around her became distorted and misinterpreted to fit with her identity as a victim, reinforcing that identity. And because Lisa’s perception of the environment was distorted by her self-image, so too were her responses. She was not responding to what was really happening, but to the “victim’s” perception of it.

Awareness of  
identifications leads  
to freedom

While Lisa’s situation was rather extreme, it applies to some extent to most people. One is often identified with something, and tends to respond to his or her own filtered perceptions, rather than to what is actually there. But we can become aware of our identifications. And the more we are aware of what we are identified with, the clearer our perceptions of the world become. *Awareness of an identification is the first step to becoming free from its restrictions and distortions.* With this awareness, we can learn to choose at will, and according to our need, to identify with, or disidentify from the many inner and outer elements and qualities that surround our “I,” or personal self. This is the basis of real freedom, and of realizing our true identity.

### VARIETIES OF IDENTIFICATIONS

Identification with a variety of diverse elements occurs in everyone. It is a natural psychological process. According to Jung, “one or another basic instinct, or complex of ideas, will invariably con-

The many "pulls"  
on our awareness



concentrate upon itself the greatest sum of psychic energy and thus force the ego into its service. As a rule the ego\* is drawn into this focus of energy so powerfully that it identifies with it . . .'<sup>1</sup> In other words, we experience a variety of pulls on our awareness, originating from many different sources. And in general, as long as we are not aware of our identifications *we tend to identify with whatever has the greatest "pull" on our consciousness*: whatever we perceive as most interesting, most important, most central. This could be whatever makes us feel more alive, more ourselves — whatever best allows our energy to flow, or whatever fulfills our strongest desire, need or urge. Thus we can identify with objects, such as our house; with roles, such as being a mother; with specific psychological formations, such as the victim; or with one of our basic personality functions, such as the mind, or feelings.

Because these identifications are usually unconscious, we may identify with something that, if we thought about it objectively, we would *know* is not really us. For instance, I know a man in his late forties who almost seems *to be* his car. It's a very expensive foreign model, and he spends most of his free time with it. He talks to it, tunes it, waxes and polishes it. Then he drives around town and shows it off.

One Sunday afternoon he came out of a friend's house to find his parked car scratched on the outside front fender. He was very disturbed, and felt physically uncomfortable driving his car all that day. Not until he could take it into the body shop the next day did he feel at ease. And one time when the muffler became too noisy he was mortified. He felt ashamed, awkward and unpresentable. He felt that he couldn't "go out this way," he didn't "look right." He drove on the side streets to avoid being seen and took a taxi to a cocktail party. If the car is insulted, *he* feels insulted. And

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\*Although Jung's use of the term "ego" is here synonymous with the term "I" as used in psychosynthesis, this is not the case in most psychological systems. Insufficient understanding of the phenomenon of identification has caused most of the confusion surrounding these various terms, for few Western psychological thinkers have seen through the identifications of the "I" to the "I" itself.

So one often finds that the word "ego," or "self" is used to indicate a variety of theoretical constructs, and to it are attributed characteristics, needs, and qualities that actually belong to the personality which is organized *around* the self. Sometimes the word "self" is even used to refer to the specific personality element that one is identified with.

## The masquerade of “self-expression”

if the car is praised, *he* feels praised. It’s not clear to him where its boundaries end and his begin.\* He once said, only half-jokingly, “If anything were to happen to this car I think I’d be thrown into a full-blown identity crisis.”

Similarly, homemakers can become identified with their homes, collectors with their collections, artists with their creations, and so forth. Such identifications with material objects are often masquerading as “self-expression.” True self-expression is valuable, of course. But when we invest much of ourselves in objects, when we feel in some way threatened at their loss or change, then there is something other than self-expression happening. When we seem to have an *inappropriate* amount of ourselves at stake concerning some object, we are likely to be identifying with it. Our boundaries may have begun to include it. And instead of expressing ourselves, we begin to express *it* — we become the servant of the object with which we identify.

Besides identifying with material objects, we can identify ourselves with the groups we belong to — whether cultural, racial, religious, ideological or political. We frequently identify ourselves with our functions and careers in life, such as being a parent or a doctor, a son or an accountant, and so on.

## The trap of identification

Lisa gave us an example of a more subtle kind of identification. For Lisa was identified with a developed, powerful, and highly energized *subpersonality*.\*\* She was consistently identified with this subpersonality, to the exclusion of all else. Like Lisa, people can be “stuck” in such an identification with a specific subpersonality. Depending on what that subpersonality is like, they can be dissatisfied and hurting, like Lisa was, or relatively content and free from conflict, although limited to only a part of what they can be.

Other people *shift their identification* among a number of subpersonalities. We all have experienced how, for example, “we are different” when we are with our children than when we are with our parents; or how we have been in some stressful situation where “we are not ourselves.” When people shift their identification in

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\*A conscious experience of change in boundaries as the result of a new identification is described in “Fat Self, Thin Self,” *SYNTHESIS 1*, pp. 152-153. [ed.]

\*\*A full description of subpersonalities, including techniques to work with them, is the central topic of the *WORKBOOK* in *SYNTHESIS 1*. [ed.]

Reactive behavior

this way, they often do so *reacting to the demands of the situation they are in*. They are drawn — largely unaware — into the subpersonality that is “suitable,” that can best act “as is expected of them.” Increasingly, they feel boxed in, powerless, controlled by the expectations of their environment and the demands of their personality, and caught in the ambivalence, confusion, and conflict that exist among their many subpersonalities.\* So the mere reactive shifting of identification can be just as restricting as a single identification — *until we learn to choose and shift our identifications at will*.

### THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFICATION

We have seen that identification occurs as a largely unconscious response to the pull of a variety of needs and urges. And that any identification with only one aspect of our personality is restrictive and possibly distorting. So an identification can be a source of difficulty; but depending on the circumstances, there can also be a useful aspect to it.

Because of the very fact that it is restrictive, *identification is specialized*. So it can help us stay focused in a particular direction, increasing our awareness and effectiveness. When we identify with any one part of ourselves, we are able to experience it fully, without being distracted. We feel the way it feels, see the way it sees, for it represents a particular, specialized state of consciousness. Our outlook on life changes, our perceptions and sensations alter. Our energy flows through it and this “feeds” it and makes it grow. It is thus that — often without our awareness — specific facets of ourselves are nurtured and developed, as imagination through an artist subpersonality, or determination through a leader subpersonality.

Identification —  
a learning and  
growing experience

Through specific identifications we can develop and refine a quality, or an attitude; we can learn when a certain behavior or response is useful, and when it is inappropriate. Each one of our identifications provides therefore, in some way, a *learning* and *growing* experience. In fact, a great deal of our early learning and growing takes place primarily through *an unconscious process of successive identifications*. For many people this unconscious or

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\* See “Subpersonalities,” *SYNTHESIS 1*, pp. 55-56 and 61-62. [ed.]

Unconscious  
growth can be  
unbalanced

unplanned mode may remain the central means of growth throughout their lives.

But as long as this process is unconscious, it has a great drawback. For while the development of a new quality can *complement* the qualities we already have, leading to a more well-rounded, more inclusive and effective personality, it can become *exaggerated* if we are caught for too long in a particular identification. Personality development is then lopsided, causing conflict, imbalance, and the inhibition of other important and useful qualities. So, depending on the circumstances and on its duration, any identification can be beneficial or harmful, growth-producing or restricting. Or, more precisely, at different times each identification helps and hinders personal growth in different ways and in various proportions.

For example, being identified with a “Conscientious Worker” subpersonality may help a person develop competence and efficiency, but could prevent him or her from developing playfulness and humor, compassion and sensitivity to fellow workers, calmness or the ability to relax when appropriate. On the other hand, being identified even with something as painful and restrictive as the Victim can eventually bring about positive results – such as greater understanding and empathy for the sufferings of others. So we need to learn first to become aware of our identifications, and then to choose, consciously and in the moment, which identification we believe to be most in line with our purpose and most useful to our growth. Once we have gained whatever is to be gained from a particular identification, it is time to move on: we must release ourselves from it in order to continue growing. Otherwise our identification will become restrictive and control us, limiting our further growth.

But releasing ourselves from an identification does not mean abandoning or rejecting it. For once we disidentify from something that we have fully experienced and mastered, it can be a most effective tool of awareness, expression and action, always available to us whenever we need it.

What we have said up to now implies *three stages* of growing awareness and skill in dealing with the aspects and elements of our personality.

Unconscious  
identification

In the first stage, the process of identification is unconscious, and largely beyond our control. Our identification is with one or

another personality element (such as a feeling, a subpersonality, a role) and will change responding to the pressure and demands of inner and outer conditions much more than to our desires and aims.

Choice

As we become aware of our identifications, we reach the second stage. We can now consciously *choose* to shift our identification from one personality element to another. As we have seen, this mode gives us a greater range of expression, and a more balanced development.

The true center  
of identity

There is, however, yet a third stage that is possible. Lisa alludes to this stage when she speaks of her experience of a gradually emergent “sense of wholeness.” For we don’t always have to be identified with a subpersonality or other personality element. On the contrary, as will become clear further on, we can learn to disidentify from all of these, and to identify as the “I,” the personal self, our true center of identity and awareness. We now have an even greater range of expression available: we can choose when it is more appropriate to identify with any personality element, and when to be identified as the “I.” As the “I,” we not only have experience of personal identity and individuality, we can also be most objectively aware of our psychological life and our interactions in the world, and can therefore guide our actions and development with the greatest effectiveness.

In actual practice — as is usually the case for psychological processes — the three stages are not discretely separate in time. For example, we can learn to disidentify from personality elements and also to identify with our “I” gradually and simultaneously. Progress in one stage reinforces further progress in the other. The following case study of “Mike” more extensively illustrates progress along these three stages, through Mike’s increasing understanding of the process of identification.

The Striver

Mike had been identified with a dominant subpersonality, the “Striver,” for most of his life. He was the only child of older parents who had great expectations of him. High achievement was presented to him as a prerequisite for parental love and acceptance, and his childhood was characterized by efforts to win their approval. He got good marks in school and became an award-winning boy-scout. A youthful businessman, he was diligently earning money at age seven with a lemonade stand and a paper-route, and later with snow shoveling and gardening jobs. His parents’ attitude was that his efforts were good — but “could be better.” Their approval was promised as a reward for his future achievements, and became like



Hollow  
achievements

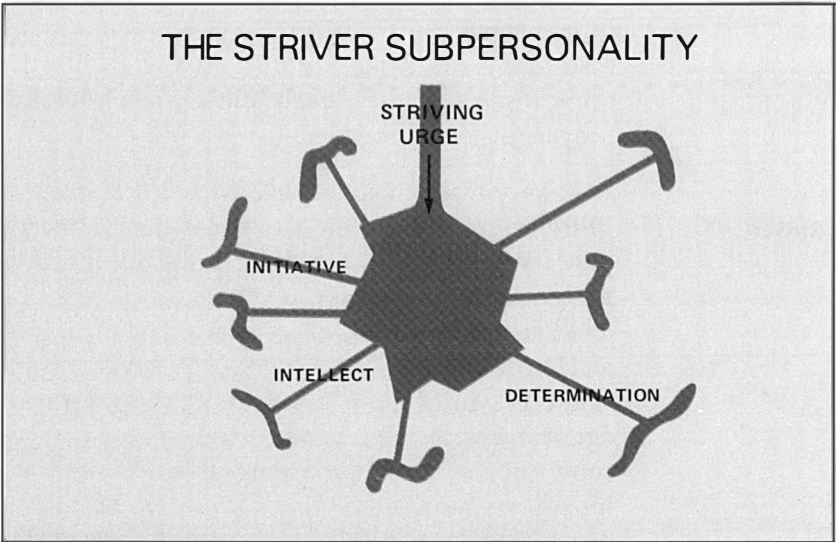
the carrot that entices the donkey to move forward. So Mike's striving pattern was firmly set early in life.

In adolescence, Mike strived for a high grade average and athletic leadership, which were considered by his peer group to be signs of success. He achieved both, and graduated from high school as valedictorian. He continued striving through college, and although the goals he set himself were reached one by one, they seemed to lose their meaning as soon as he attained them. He never felt satisfied. Eventually, this dissatisfaction and continued striving landed him in serious medical trouble (a difficult ulcer).

But there was a positive side to it too. From the time he was small, Mike's urge to strive stimulated the differentiation and development of many useful functions, traits and abilities. He had to learn how to be trustworthy and dependable, how to make himself get up on cold mornings, how to handle money, how to take initiative, and so forth. He exercised his intellect and his will, and learned early about choice and values. He taught himself how to harness and direct his energy and how to persist in what he chose to do. Through his skill at evaluating situations, making decisions, and carrying them out, he earned the respect and trust of many people.

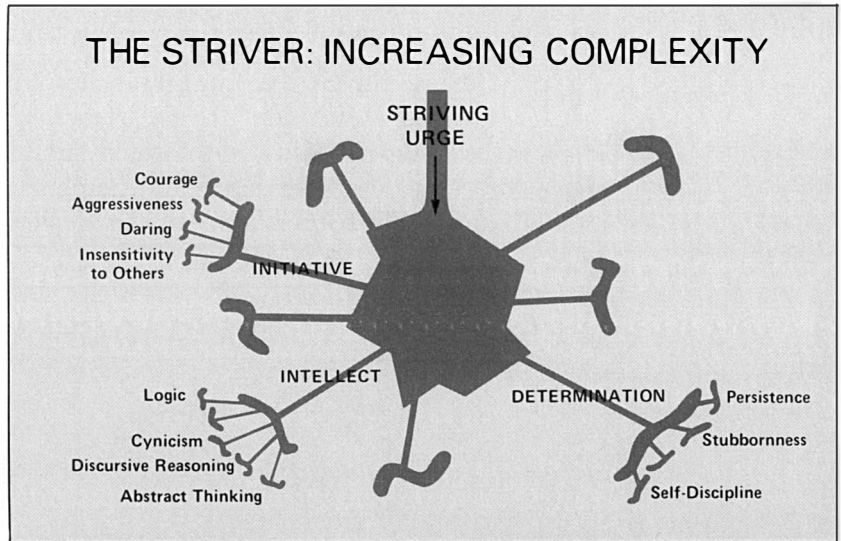
A partial  
unifying center

Early in his life, the striving urge became the nucleus, the *partial unifying center*, around which these many important elements of Mike's personality came together, developed, and were integrated. And the Striver subpersonality was born. As Mike grew, the com-



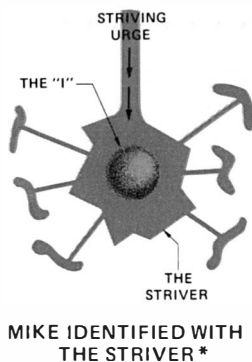
plexity of organization around the Striver kept increasing. Eventually it evolved into a complex psychological structure, which included a large number of personality elements and systems.

But although the Striver had helped Mike develop many valuable and useful abilities which he otherwise might never have learned,



we have already seen that Mike was at its mercy. He could not control the Striver. In fact, the Striver was in control of Mike and was limiting him.

Where were Mike's feelings, for example? Where were his receptivity and gentleness? Humor was only present as cynicism, and his higher values were being ignored. Such functions as imagination and intuition were stunted, and his inner life was altogether barren. Mike knew little of beauty, love, serenity or peace.



Mike's identification with the Striver began to be restrictive during his mid-twenties. He ceased to grow and fell into stasis. He was unaware of his gradually increasing crystallization at the time, and was at a loss to understand the anxiety and sense of futility which he began to feel. He had reached the limits of the Striver, which instead of being a vehicle for growth, was now becoming a trap.

The core of the Striver, as of all subpersonalities, was a drive, urge or need – in this case, the urge to strive. Mike was aware of this urge, but he assumed it was an intrinsic personality trait, an

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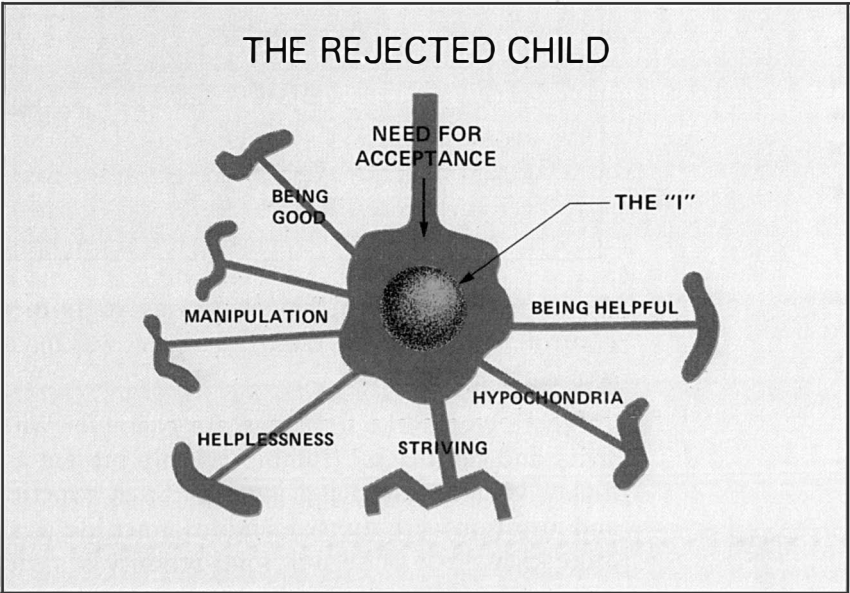
\*The "I" was omitted from the previous diagrams for simplicity.

unchangeable part of his nature. And he was not at all displeased with this “trait” because, as the Striver, he felt in control of himself, capable, and with a strong sense of personal identity.

An earlier need

But behind the Striver subpersonality, pushing to be recognized, was a deeper, earlier need that Mike had lost touch with. This was the need for acceptance and approval – a vitally important need which had not been sufficiently met in his childhood.

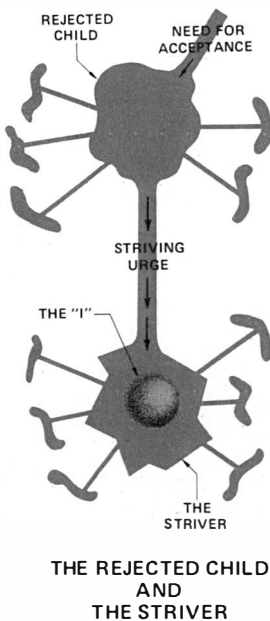
Long before the Striver subpersonality came into being, this need controlled Mike’s life. It had itself become the core of an even earlier subpersonality with which Mike had been identified. This subpersonality Mike later – in the course of therapy – came to call the “Rejected Child.” As the Rejected Child, Mike had



Striving to be accepted

tried many different ways to be accepted and win love, attention and approval – such as being good, being helpful, manipulating, pretending to be sick, to need help, as well as striving for various achievements. Because of his family environment and his own specific talents, striving turned out to be by far the most effective way of being accepted. So it was striving that became his habitual behavior. And it was in this way that Mike’s striving urge, in turn, became the core of the Striver.

After its formation, the Striver became Mike’s major channel of expression in the world, his main subpersonality. And Mike became



more and more identified with it. The earlier subpersonality, the Rejected Child, soon was repressed, as its qualities, particularly the need for acceptance, were quite incompatible with the strong, self-sufficient style of the Striver.

From then on, although Mike was given a great deal of approval for striving, it never reached him. For it was given to him while he was identified with the Striver, who could not receive it. Because ironically, the Striver, which was originally formed to fulfill the need for acceptance and approval, now obscured that very basic need and actually *prevented* its satisfaction. The Striver subpersonality was organized and unified around the urge to strive, and its very identity depended on striving. So its deepest fear was that if it ever reached the original goal of its striving – to have Mike feel accepted and approved of – its very reason for being would be threatened.\* Speaking with the voice of Mike's parents, the Striver would say, "You can do better," and with this it invalidated all approval from the environment and any lasting gratification for having achieved a goal – forcing Mike to turn immediately toward the next goal to be reached. It became impossible for Mike to feel anything but constant dissatisfaction while he was identified with the Striver. And not only did the Striver shut *itself* off from approval, more importantly, it prevented any approval from reaching the Rejected Child, who was now in a worse situation than before the Striver came into being. Not only did it feel rejected by the environment, but it was rejected by the Striver as well.

This created a double-bind situation for Mike: he couldn't stop but he couldn't win. The only way he knew to get approval was through striving, but the more he strived the more approval became distant and empty. What Mike really needed was to accept the Rejected Child within himself, whether successful or unsuccessful, irrespective of any achievement.

Though his personal growth had largely ceased in his twenties, and though anxiety troubled him, Mike had continued striving. Or, more accurately, the Striver had kept Mike diligently moving forward. By the time Mike reached his early thirties he was a highly promising junior vice-president in a large corporation – with an

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\*But in reality if the goal could have been reached, the Striver would not have disappeared nor have been destroyed. Mike would have simply disidentified from it. To the limited awareness of the Striver this was seen as tantamount to death.

Untenable  
situation

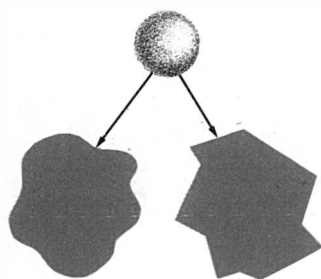
ulcer that refused to heal. He strongly resisted slowing down, feeling that if he took any pressure off himself, he'd collapse. His invalidating of all approval, combined with the constant fear of lack of inner worth, gnawed away at his achievements.

Mike had not been consciously aware of the deep conflicts within him – though he experienced the resultant pain. The situation was becoming critical. If he had continued in the same way, he probably would have brought a serious crisis on himself – a major crisis of identity, with the likelihood of severe physical side effects.

## INTEGRATION

Instead, Mike decided to seek help. In the course of therapy, he learned about disidentification. Gradually he was able to disidentify from the Striver, and uncover and temporarily identify with the Rejected Child. He became aware of the deep pain, sadness and anger at having felt rejected, and was able then to let himself express these feelings within the therapeutic setting. He was also able to recognize his need for acceptance, and to understand what had happened to him. At the suggestion of the guide, he began practicing self-identification.\* While doing so, he disidentified from the Rejected Child as well. Like Lisa, he began to cultivate the sense of his personal existence, unhampered by any activity, any desire, any identification. As he put it in those first days of discovery: "I was just myself, a person, Mike." In this way, he gradually freed himself from his overwhelming need for acceptance from others, realizing that while it was an important and deep part of his personality, *he was not it*. It still needed to be satisfied, of course, and now he was in a more effective position to do this. So Mike *himself* learned to give to the Rejected Child within him the full and unconditional acceptance that it needed and had been unable to find in the world.

As Mike was increasingly able to direct his own growth process, the deep need for acceptance was becoming satisfied and the Child began to grow and transform. Its latent traits and qualities



MIKE DISIDENTIFIED  
FROM  
BOTH SUBPERSONALITIES

Evolution of the  
Rejected Child

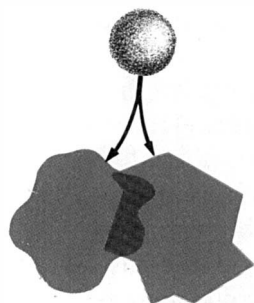
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\*Exercises for this purpose are presented in the "Practice" section of this *WORKBOOK*. [ed.]

## Mellow Mike

blossomed, and it became an adult subpersonality, complementary to the Striver – creative, relaxed, playful, funny, with a great deal of empathy, affection and warmth toward other people. Mike called it “Mellow Mike.”

Mike saw that it was important not only to express the newly available qualities of Mellow Mike, but also to combine them with those of the Striver by fusing the two subpersonalities.\* This would bring him far greater personality integration. And he wanted his life to reflect and facilitate this synthetic process. At this point he began to feel that his job held him back and was no longer satisfying. After considering the issue for several months, he left his firm and returned to school. He is now working toward a doctorate in education, relying often on the considerable talents of the Striver in his studies, while teaching in a creative environment where Mellow Mike can find ample opportunities for expression. The fusion process is well on its way. He said recently that his long-term goal is to contribute innovations and improvements to the educational system.



FUSION OF THE STRIVER  
AND MELLOW MIKE

Through Mike’s experience we have seen the process by which we can move toward a more inclusive state by freeing ourselves from restrictive identifications. But this experience also suggests an internal mechanism which pushes aside experiences and aspects that are not compatible with such restrictive identifications. This mechanism can be described as *disowning*.

## DISOWNING

When we are strongly identified with something, such as a major subpersonality, most of our energy flows through it. And our energy is filtered by it as well. In other words, only energy of a quality compatible with the basic quality of that subpersonality will be allowed to flow. This means that whatever we are identified with controls the acceptance and rejection of our experiences. For instance, suppose a businessman is identified with a “Loser” subpersonality – one which has acted as a unifying center for negative experiences, feelings of inadequacy, and so forth. And let us say

Selective  
energy flow

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\*On the fusion of two subpersonalities, see “Subpersonalities,” *SYNTHESIS 1*, pp. 84-89. [ed.]

that something positive happens – the boss congratulates him on a project he’s just completed. Does he hear him and believe him? No. He distorts (“He was being sarcastic”), or invalidates (“He was just trying to build my morale”). Or he immediately “forgets” it happened, and blocks it out of consciousness.

Positive experience  
can be threatening

A positive experience is simply not acceptable to the “Loser” because its quality is different from, and inconsistent with, that of his self-image. But it goes even further: a positive experience is actually threatening. What if he were not really a Loser? Who would he be then? As we saw earlier, this fear of loss of identity, of a deep void or inner emptiness, if not correctly understood is often too overwhelming to be faced. In such a situation it frequently seems less painful to have a negative sense of self than no sense of self at all. So as in the case of the man identified with his Loser, positive experiences are excluded from consciousness and become invalidated, distorted, or repressed. More precisely, the energy content of a positive experience is of an *opposite quality* to the energy that makes up the core of the Loser subpersonality. So if the experience were accepted by the Loser, the incoming energy would neutralize an equal amount of energy in the subpersonality core, thus *reducing its intensity*. This would be experienced by the Loser as a diminished sense of self, as something directly threatening to its own identity and existence. Therefore it is unacceptable.

Disowning protects  
our identity

But when energy that is opposite to the dominant subpersonality develops within ourselves, and is repressed, where does it go? What happened, originally, to Mike’s emotions, humor and intuition? What became of Lisa’s inner strength, self-assertion, and ability to nourish herself? These qualities, as well as many others, being incompatible with the qualities of the identifications – the Striver, the Victim – were disowned. By disowned we mean *unconsciously repressed, consciously suppressed, ignored or otherwise discounted*. And to the extent that there is disowning, personality development and integration will be held back.

But we cannot really get rid of portions of ourselves. Whether repressed or suppressed, they do not go away; they remain with us at some level. Their energy accumulates in the unconscious and emerges in various forms – often disguised – such as dreams, symbolizations, sudden urges and desires, various “neurotic” manifestations, and so forth. As Abraham Maslow writes, in accordance with Freud’s formulation, “those portions of ourselves that we

The problems  
of disowning

reject or repress . . . do not go out of existence. They do not die, but rather go underground. Whatever effects these underground portions of our human nature have . . . tend to be unnoticed by ourselves or else felt to be as if they were not a part of us, e.g. 'I don't know what made me say such a thing.' 'I don't know what came over me.'"<sup>2</sup>

As time goes on, disowning takes ever increasing energy to maintain. Eventually this becomes a vicious circle: the more one is troubled by unwanted parts of oneself the more forcefully will they be rejected, and the more forcefully one rejects them the more trouble they will be.

An opposite  
subpersonality  
is created

Frequently these disowned qualities and experiences "feed" a subpersonality that is opposite to the dominant one — or, if such a one does not exist, they create it.\* And as this opposite subpersonality grows and develops, it gains access to more and more energy. Eventually it may come into real conflict with the dominant one. Usually the conflict is unconscious at the beginning, and the emerging subpersonality expresses itself indirectly — perhaps even somatically, as in the example of Mike's ulcer.

But such a conflicting subpersonality is not a hindrance, something undesirable, to be avoided — although it may appear so at first.\*\* Because it is opposite, it is also *complementary*, and through it we gain access to a broad range of valuable qualities not before available.

Disowned qualities  
are valuable

In other words, the disowned emotions, thoughts, desires and experiences which make up such a subpersonality are not necessarily harmful or "bad." On the contrary, many of these disowned ideas or urges can be towards growth, or towards altruism and "sublime" qualities. Maslow describes our "unconscious fear and hatred of the true, good and beautiful" in his theory of our defense against our own growth, which he terms the "Jonah complex."<sup>3</sup> Frank Haronian, in his article "The Repression of the Sublime,"<sup>4</sup> discusses the tendency to repress the goodness, nobility and beauty of human nature as well as the sexual and aggressive drives. Thus, contents of our consciousness are usually disowned not on the basis of their actual value, but because whatever that content is, it

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\*See for example "Subpersonalities," *SYNTHESIS I*, p. 85. [ed.]

\*\*This is explained in "Subpersonalities," *SYNTHESIS I*, pp. 78-79. [ed.]



is incompatible with our — often unconscious — sense of who we are. And, as we have seen, the sense of who we are is determined, in each moment, by whatever we are identified with.

### RELEASE

Pain: a means  
of release

When we are identified with something that has become restrictive, how do we manage to release ourselves? Mike's identification with the Striver was only broken after the resulting inner conflicts and tensions caused much pain, anxiety, and even an ulcer. And it was only after considerable suffering that Lisa spontaneously "stepped back" from her identification, experienced her "I," and became aware of the Victim.

People often maintain an identification until it becomes too difficult, too painful, or impossible to do so. But a *permanent* identification with any function, subpersonality, or other personality element is jeopardized sooner or later by the simple process of life and time. Eventually it will be impossible to maintain, and the individual's life situation may become precarious. He or she may experience a sense of loss, futility and despair, as might a student who must leave school, a businessman who must face retirement, or a spouse whose partner grows steadily beyond where he or she was when they married.

The same crisis also comes to people whose identifications have become too restrictive because of inner growth, even though their external life conditions remain the same. We have seen examples of this in Mike and Lisa.

Crisis as  
opportunity

Although this crisis is quite common, its real nature is seldom understood. Many go through it blindly and powerlessly, while with a clearer understanding they could deal with it less painfully, and use it as an opportunity for growth. For a crisis is a message that says: "Let go! You are identified with something that is now too small for you." So the first step to surmount a crisis is to look for the restricting identification that one needs to let go of. In this way the crisis is seen suddenly as an *opportunity* rather than a setback. And this crucial insight points the way to the resolution, showing the means to reach it with greater effectiveness and far less struggle.

Yet disidentification need not be precipitated by crisis. *It can be achieved through a conscious, deliberate act of will.* Nor must

one fear that achieving disidentification will *lead* to a crisis. If the need for it is recognized in time, disidentification can be calm, smooth, painless, and will bring about increased harmony and freedom.

However, recognition of our restrictive identifications can be difficult because we often do not realize that we are identified with anything. An exploration of our personality\* can bring to light many of our identifications. Another – and complementary – approach is to disidentify “en masse” from the three main aspects of the personality: body, feelings and mind. This will eventually release us from our more specific identifications,\*\* and give us the freedom to identify with our true center, the “I.” This latter approach is the basis for the Identification Exercise presented in the “Practice” section of this *WORKBOOK*.

But recognizing an identification is only the first step. For we may recognize an identification but not the need to let go of it. For instance, we may be identified with a strong and evolved subpersonality which helps us to be very one-pointed, focused and effective in some particular purpose. To others and to ourselves, we may seem “centered,” actualized and integrated. There is little conflict in us; we seem calm and strong. And we *are* centered, but only around a *partial* unifying center. As we have seen, such a center is partial because only the parts of our personality which are consistent and compatible with the basic quality of that center can be integrated around it.

If, after freeing himself from the Striver, Mike had not proceeded to identify with his “I,” he might have been drawn instead into a permanent identification with Mellow Mike, and eventually would have become restricted again. He would have owned what he had previously disowned as the Striver, and developed whole new areas of his personality – and this would have been good and

Partial unifying  
centers

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\*For example along the lines indicated in the “Practice” section of the previous *WORKBOOK*. See *SYNTHESIS I*, pp. 91-107. [ed.]

\*\*While identifications with objects, roles or even subpersonalities are often not difficult to recognize and deal with, the identification with a basic personality function – such as the mind, or the feelings – is deeper, and can be more elusive. It is often expressed through identifications with one or more corresponding subpersonalities, such as those which are primarily of an intellectual or emotional nature. Examples might be respectively, “the scholar” or “the frightened child.”

### The basis of integration

valuable for a while. But, in turn, as Mellow Mike *he would have disowned the Striver* and all that made it up. He would have disowned much of himself that was skilled, capable and effective. Instead, by accepting that he had *both* the Striver and Mellow Mike within him, that he had many different qualities which were not mutually exclusive but rather complementary, he prevented another crisis in the future. And not only was this preventive, it was also constructive and integrative. For he laid the foundation of a higher order subpersonality, one that will include both the Striver and Mellow Mike.

### DISIDENTIFICATION

#### Disidentification: a deliberate practice

What did Mike do to bring this about? First of all, he deliberately practiced disidentification. Disidentification is an experience which most people have had at one time or another; it is an empirical fact which you can probably recall or observe in your own experience. Have you ever been alone in a thunderstorm and felt a little frightened, and found that fear “disappeared” and courage took its place when one of your children ran in to seek reassurance from you? Your identification *shifted* from a frightened-child part of you to a protective-parent part. Or you may have had the experience of talking to one person and feeling that you are — indeed, have always been — confident and sure of yourself. Then you talk to another person and you feel that you are — and have always been — inadequate and unsure. Again, your identification shifted between two parts of your personality.

#### Directing identification at will

So we all know something about disidentification, yet many of us have never thought of it as a deliberate practice, as something we can consciously *decide* to do. As we have seen earlier, many people — perhaps most — shift their identifications in this way, unconsciously; it just seems to happen to them. They go through the day shifting from one identification to the next, in response to outer conditions and inner processes, like a boat adrift on a stormy sea. They are not in control of the shifting, and often not even aware of it. But they can learn to be; they can train themselves to choose, to *direct* their identification at will.

A person who has — and uses — this directing ability takes increasing responsibility for him or herself in actions, words, thoughts and feelings. Such a person will begin to truly live in accordance

with his or her values. Choosing our identification in this way is *an act of will*, just as is where to turn our eyes, what sound to listen to, or what to think about. We can exercise this power of choice, or we can let our awareness—and then our “I”—wander toward what attracts it most. This choice is extremely simple in principle, although in practice we are limited by how developed and strong our will is, and by our skill in using it.\*

The functions  
of the “I”

While the core of a subpersonality is an urge, desire, or drive, that has a specific quality, or color, the “I”—which is the core of the whole personality—is a spark of pure being, without qualities in the ordinary sense. But though it has no qualities, it has functions, and its two main functions are *consciousness* and *will*. Through *self-identification*—or identification as the “I”—we gain the greatest freedom to use that consciousness and that will—or more exactly, we re-own what are in fact *our* consciousness and *our* will. When we use our consciousness while remaining identified as the “I,” we take the attitude of *observer*. Similarly, when we use our will, we take the attitude of *director*.

The observer and director are not subpersonalities, and as such they are not colored, but *clear*. They are limited in how far they reach, but, in their pure form, they are not biased and do not distort. They are attitudes we take, or functions we use when we are

The role  
of the will

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\*As we said earlier, each content of our consciousness—anything that we are aware of—exerts a pull, a “magnetic attraction.” And we tend to identify with whatever has the greatest pull. To prevent this automatic identification from happening, we need to use our will to neutralize that attraction. Let us say that a certain subpersonality has the greatest pull. If our will is strong enough—stronger than the subpersonality—we can apply it directly, freeing ourselves from the subpersonality’s influence, and remaining identified with the “I” or choosing any other identification.

But if our will is not strong enough to do this, we can still disidentify, by using the *technique of substitution*. (This technique is described in Assagioli, *The Act of Will*, Viking Press, New York, 1973, pp. 57, 67-68 and 75.) In other words, we choose another subpersonality that has a fairly strong pull, and is more in line with our needs than the first subpersonality. Then we use our will to identify with it. This is possible provided that the pull of this second subpersonality and the strength of our will *combined* are stronger than the pull of the first subpersonality. It is this combined strength that makes shifting identification between our main subpersonalities easier than identifying with the “I.”

identified as the “I.” Accordingly, they can be distinguished from subpersonalities such as the “Dictator,” or the “Critic,” which at first can be confused with them. As observer, we are disidentified from all elements of our personality, and are simply looking at them. From this position, we are able to see ourselves and our environment objectively, without distortions or “colored glasses.” This is the stable place from which we can look at ourselves without self-criticism, with full acceptance and clear perception. As director, drawing on our awareness as observer, we can use our will to express ourselves according to our values and our purpose, and to effectively harmonize and bring together the many elements of our personality into one coherent unit.

It was as observer that Mike became aware that the Striver was only a subpersonality and not his real self. And it was as director that, later, he was able to begin to bring the Striver and Mellow Mike together as parts of a larger whole.

Acting as observer  
and director

The following report of “Jane” is a good illustration of a person who disidentifies from personality elements and acts both as observer and director at the same time.

Jane is a middle-aged wife and mother who recently returned to college to work towards a Master’s Degree in Art History. She reports here the results of her use of the Identification exercise.

Let me tell you about an experience I had that will perhaps best illustrate how I use disidentification. I had been practicing the exercise for several months, even though I didn’t really understand it at first. When this incident occurred, I felt that I finally knew what it was all about.

It is a hot summer night and I am at the airport checking in for one of those cheap midnight flights to New York where I will make a connection with my long-awaited charter flight to Europe. I have arranged my entire summer so I can have three weeks to visit museums and cathedrals.

There is only one airline clerk on duty and a long line ahead of me. Time is running out. The clerk is tired and irritable. When I reach him, he tells me that the airline has no record of my reservation and that the flight is full. He already had to turn a few people away.

He says there are no other flights to New York until the morning. I check those out but they will arrive too late. All those months of anticipation, saving money, plans and charter club dues are about to be lost. The fate of my entire trip appears to rest with this irritable clerk.

Familiar pulls

Now I have many subpersonalities which have conflicting ideas about what I should do. The strongest subpersonality at this point is “Queen Jane,” who wants to imperiously demand her rights and tell the clerk off. Next strongest is “Baby Jane,” a helpless feminine girl-child who manipulates through fluttery weakness.

Recognizing the familiar pull of these subpersonalities, I try to disidentify from them as much as I can, and take the attitude of observer. From this angle I survey the situation and I can imagine the consequences of expressing either of those subpersonalities. As observer, I can also keep the most important aspect of the whole situation clearly in mind: how can I get to New York in time?

I know that Queen Jane would probably only further irritate the clerk, who then won't be disposed to help me at all. In fact he might even pass over possible alternatives just to get rid of me. Baby Jane might work, but I am not sure. The clerk is so grouchy he might well be disgusted by a show of helplessness, and there may have been so much of this sort of thing in his career of dealing with people that he can see right through it. And even if it worked, I would be making "bad vibes" and manipulating, which I don't want to do. In the past, I would have automatically become Queen Jane first, and if that didn't work I would have fallen into Baby Jane. This would all have been unconscious; I used to think it was "just me" and that I was simply responding to a situation. These subpersonalities used to control me so completely that I didn't even realize I was being controlled.

So I decide to steer away from an emotional appeal, as the clerk seems to be so identified himself with his negative feelings. I decide instead to appeal to his best nature as objectively as possible.

### A new attitude

I tell the clerk in a calm way that I am sad and upset. That the trip to Europe has been planned for many months, and if I miss my charter flight I will not be able to go. I made reservations a long time ago for this flight to New York, and perhaps in the space of months in between my reservation was misplaced. I understand *he* is not personally responsible, but the trip really means a great deal to me, and I would very much appreciate any alternative the clerk can suggest.

The clerk, listening to me, has spontaneously disidentified a bit from his grouchiness. There is still irritation in him, of course, but now he is paying attention to another part of himself, the reasonable and good-willed part I appealed to. Now he and I are working together toward a common goal. Eventually, he manages to reroute me through Chicago in time to make my connection.

This incident showed me something important. When I disidentified from my panicked subpersonalities, I was able to calm down and get some perspective. I saw that I had a choice between two things; venting my frustration and pique at the clerk, or honing in on getting myself to New York. Venting my feelings probably wouldn't have worked and wouldn't have been fair. I feel really good about the way I dealt with this.

### Disidentifying from feelings and moods

Jane's account illustrates how effective and practical disidentification can be. It also illustrates the valuable ability to disidentify from *feelings* and *moods* such as hurt, frustration or impatience, and purposefully identify as observer. This can refresh us, enabling us to gain a clear perspective. It can also enhance our creativity. "Shelley," a research scientist in her mid-thirties, writes:

I believe I have been disidentifying most of my life. It's become automatic, like focusing my eyes. When I experience myself as confused, troubled or hurt, or when I have been analyzing a problem to death, I step back, and from this quiet place I can begin to see what's going on. I find access to deeper and broader awareness, and there is a different kind of creativity or problem-solving ability which becomes available. Afterwards I feel both serene and energized.

Many people use the same approach as Jane and Shelley. They have learned to disidentify from troublesome or confusing subpersonalities, identify as observer, then, as director, carry out the most appropriate course of action. They can shift identification and express various subpersonalities at will. They know how to step out of painful, destructive or overpowering moods and feelings so that other, more positive states become available. They have attained a sense of perspective, and can act in the most effective and rewarding fashion. This is possible because identification as the "I" brings freedom. It gives us the freedom to choose at any moment to become fully identified with any part of ourselves—an emotion or habit pattern or subpersonality—to be involved in it and experience it deeply. Or, on the other hand, it gives us the freedom to observe and to act while remaining fully disidentified from it—or to choose any intermediate degree of identification between these two extremes.

Identification  
as the "I"  
brings freedom

### THE "I" IS NOT REPRESSIVE

Sometimes people resist the idea of identifying as the "I" because they fear that with such "detachment" the richness of life will fade away and be lost. They fear that both strong and subtle emotions, such as passion and aesthetic appreciation, will give way to a dry and impersonal attitude; that spontaneity and merriment, harmless mischief and pleasure will be eliminated. But the loss of these would be signs of a repressive, critical subpersonality at work. The "I" within is never moralistic. Therefore, it does not eliminate. As observer it accepts, as director it regulates, transforms and harmonizes.

It is important that the "I" not be confused with any kind of repressive agent. As the "I," we are able to accept ourselves, including all our faults and limitations, all our negative and immature



Enjoying a more  
spiritual life

subpersonalities.\* The following report by “Ron,” a graduate student in Eastern Philosophy, illustrates the difference between the activity of the “I” and that of a critical, repressive subpersonality.

For many years I thought I was centered when I was able to achieve a spiritual, flowing, idealistic state of consciousness. I thought I had identified with my personal self and even my Transpersonal Self. When I was into this state, I felt a gap between the usual, daily me and this higher me. And I was very critical of what I believed to be my shortcomings toward attaining enlightenment. For instance, I wasn’t meditating regularly, or keeping a pure diet. In fact—and you may laugh at this—I really loved hot fudge sundaes. I had to be very hard on myself to prevent myself from “slipping” and eating one. When I did slip, I berated myself for it for weeks afterwards.

Doing the Identification exercise the first time amazed me. I moved fairly easily to what I had believed was “my center” and then found I could disidentify even from that. What I had thought was my center turned out to be a spiritually oriented *subpersonality*. I saw this subpersonality clearly for the first time in my life.

Now I use disidentification frequently, especially when I feel that spiritual subpersonality telling me that I *should* live up to its demands. I disidentify from it and for me that means realizing that I have a choice to follow its urgings or not. That I’m free to choose and won’t necessarily be struck by lightning or denied grace if I decide not to do what it says at any given moment. So, I’m eating those hot fudge sundaes now—not just eating, but *enjoying*—though I don’t seem to want them so much anymore. My “center” used to tell me I was too attached to sundaes. But now I know that what I was too attached to was my “center.” Anyway, the effect of all this on me has been a lessening of anxiety and the beginning of a more clear-headed and, I think, more genuinely spiritual life.

Often, as in Ron’s case, once we take the attitude of observer, we recognize that many tendencies we had considered to be undesirable are in fact harmless, or even valuable, and can be freely expressed. But what about impulses that are truly harmful, dangerous, or otherwise inappropriate? As observer, we do accept them, as we would accept any other element in us. This does not mean, of course, that we will freely act them out.

We know that often strong urges and emotions which are deemed potentially hurtful and destructive (e.g. rage) are suppressed and repressed. As we have seen, repressed urges do not disappear,

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\*Accepting our limitations does not mean accepting the status quo. On the contrary, recognizing and accepting what is in us is a necessary prerequisite to changing it. The function of acceptance as a stage of personality development is presented in “Subpersonalities,” *SYNTHESIS I*, pp. 78-81. [ed.]



The limitations of  
“acting out”

but remain active in the unconscious, becoming a source of difficulty. Sooner or later they emerge in semi-disguised form, expressing themselves indirectly or becoming somaticized, and in general causing much conflict, discomfort and pain. There is a widespread belief that the only other alternative to repression is to “act out” these disowned elements. It is true that acting out may at first give substantial relief, particularly if the repression was a deep and severe one. But this is seldom enough to clear the problem, and may be unnecessary. When we act out a feeling, or urge, we usually identify with it. We are then dominated and controlled by this identification, and feed it new energy as we release the old. So it becomes very difficult, if not impossible to work the problem through completely. Rather than either blocking the energy of an inappropriate feeling, or acting it out, we can, from the vantage point of the “I,” regulate and guide that energy toward a more appropriate purpose, thus utilizing it and, at the same time, transmuting and gradually refining it. The *transmutation of energies* is an important technique with a broad range of applications — another powerful tool that becomes available to us through disidentification and self-identification.\*

Reorientation  
of undesirable  
tendencies

### THE “I” AS THE UNIFYING CENTER OF THE PERSONALITY

The integrated  
personality

As we learn more and more to identify as the “I” and to act as observer and director, we become increasingly able to coordinate and integrate our subpersonalities. We can use the clarity of our awareness and the power of our will to effectively harmonize the many elements within our personality into one coherent whole: the *integrated personality*. So the “I” has a synthetic effect upon the personality, and becomes its unifying center: the focal point around which a new, all-inclusive organization is created. This process is not merely the formation of a “bigger and better” subpersonality, but is a major step forward in personal unfoldment. It is a *higher order* process because the “I” is of a different nature

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\*The principles and practice of transmutation of psychological energies are described extensively by Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis, A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, Viking Press, New York, 1971, pp. 267-277, and by Crampton, “Psychological Energies and Transformations,” Synthesis Graduate School, San Francisco. [ed.]

than the *partial* unifying centers which are the core of each of our subpersonalities.

The "I" is  
all-inclusive

Let us look at this in terms of energies. We have seen that in a subpersonality the urge or drive that constitutes its core has a certain quality, or "color." Therefore it will attract, and act as a unifying center for, all that is compatible with that quality, but it will repel anything that is not. The Striver for example attracts diligence, power, efficiency, and repels sensitivity, compassion and so forth. The "I," on the other hand, has no quality as such: its "color" can be compared to white light, which contains all colors and is the *synthesis* of all colors. Therefore it can act as a unifying center for the *whole* personality. There are no elements of the personality which are of a quality incompatible with the "I." For the "I" is not *of* the personality, rather it *transcends* the personality, just as it transcends the limitations of specific qualities. Thus all personality elements, all functions and all qualities can be brought into integration around it. Once we are able to identify as the "I," we can express ourselves through a personality composed of many interrelated elements, and any inner sense of limitation and fragmentation is increasingly replaced by variety, richness and wholeness.

Integration:  
a gradual process

It would be unrealistic to expect, however, that identifying with the "I" will produce "instant integration" of our personality, or even "instant harmony" between any conflicting parts of ourselves. It is true that no element of the personality is incompatible with the "I." Yet a personality element may well be incompatible with another such element, or with that portion of the personality already integrated around the "I." We have seen this incompatibility between two personality elements in the case of Mike, where the Rejected Child was, at first, incompatible with the Striver. From the vantage point of the "I," however, we can understand the causes of such incompatibility within ourselves, see what changes are needed to resolve it, and then guide our inner processes toward a fruitful resolution. But the actual integration of that particular element will be possible only *after* the necessary changes have taken place.

In many cases, this may take relatively little time and energy. But occasionally considerable work or time may be required before a particular element can find its place within the integrating personality. We may need to transform that element

A fundamental principle of synthesis

so that it will fit the existing personality pattern,\* or we may need to *wait* until the personality itself is transformed so as to be “ripe” for it—until other needed elements have been added and are themselves sufficiently integrated. So we see that *personality integration, like any other form of synthesis, proceeds according to a specific pattern and a specific sequence. Therefore the needed elements must come together according to a specific order, or “plan,” which is unique for each individual.*\*\* This is a fundamental principle of synthesis. It can be seen not only in the integration of the individual personality, but also within groups of individuals, within the many organizations and structures of our society, within the nations of our planet and within humanity as a whole.

Furthermore as a synthesis proceeds, and more and more elements are integrated, there will be some elements that create much conflict, and seem most at odds with the emerging pattern. In some cases considerable time needs to elapse, and much energy needs to be spent to produce the changes that are needed before these elements can be allowed to become a part of the emerging entity. But it is often these most difficult elements that contain some of the qualities that are most valuable to, and needed by the organized whole.

\*This is the essence of *Coordination*. See “Subpersonalities,” *SYNTHESIS I*, pp. 82-84. [ed.]

\*\*Note to professionals: This explains why, at times, unusually high resistance on the part of a client is best dealt with by the guide’s “backing off,” rather than by trying to have the client achieve a breakthrough. Resistance of this kind may be an indication that things are not yet “ripe” in that particular area, and that the best course of action is for the guide to allow life experience and the client’s higher nature to continue fostering the process at their own pace, trusting that the opportunity for resolution will come at the appropriate time. In the meantime, the guide can be just as effective assisting the client’s growth in other, more open areas.

In general, the basic dichotomy between “directive” and “non-directive” forms of guidance can thus be bridged through an approach that *is* directive, but which follows the direction and patterns of growth and integration produced by the influence of the client’s own higher nature. As we understand more and more that this higher nature is the fundamental agent—the prime mover—of growth and integration, it will become increasingly clear that the most effective guidance is done by paying attention to the natural process of growth and to the higher emerging trends of the individual, by fostering this process and cooperating with those trends, rather than by attempting to impose an external model of what the individual should become.

Cooperating with our higher nature

## THE EXPERIENCE OF IDENTITY

The “I” looks  
at itself

When we identify as the “I” and take the attitude of observer, we can gain much useful awareness about our personality. Taking the attitude of director enables us to bring our personality into harmony. But, even more important, *the “I” is self-conscious*: it can “look at itself.” And it is then that we can realize our true personal identity – our individuality.

This experience of identity is not cognitive in the sense of grasping a concept or understanding a principle. It is an immediate, direct, *supra-rational*\* knowing.

So the nature of the “I” cannot be fully described, but must be experienced. Sri Aurobindo writes: “There is something beyond to be known, and it is when the knower of the field [the “I” in its observer function] turns from the field itself to learn of himself within it . . . that real knowledge begins, the true knowledge of the field no less than of the knower.”<sup>5</sup>

What follows is a transcript of a young housewife being guided to turn her attention inward from the contents of her awareness, to the experience of the “I” itself:

*Guide*: Close your eyes . . . relax . . . take some deep breaths . . . (pause) . . . What are you aware of right now, Natalie?

*Natalie*: I’m aware of my whole body, especially my back, and my breathing. I’m aware of my feet and how they feel . . . my legs . . . all the parts touching the chair. I’m aware of my face and some tension around my eyes. I’m aware of my hands.

*Guide*: Okay. Focus on all these awarenesses . . . (pause) . . . now tell me, who is aware?

*Natalie*: The middle of my head.

*Guide*: Tell me more about that.

*Natalie*: It’s a big space. I think it’s empty. (laughs)

*Guide*: Can you tell me more about that space?

*Natalie*: Yes . . . it’s white. The main thing about it is that it seems empty.

*Guide*: Okay. Now, who is aware of that space?

*Natalie*: The part that notices everything.

*Guide*: What is that part like?

Who knows the  
knower?

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\*See footnote, p. 43, this issue. [ed.]

A sense of  
permanence

*Natalie:* I don't know. It's not like anything else.

*Guide:* How do you know it's there?

*Natalie:* When I'm aware, there's always something that is the same. And it's this something that is perceiving — knowing.

*Guide:* And who is that?

*Natalie:* (pause) Wow, (laughs) I can't say.

*Guide:* You are aware of it, though. . . . Can you get in touch with it now?

*Natalie:* Yes . . . I like just accepting that it's there. It's hard for me to understand — just intellectually, it's hard for me to believe.

*Guide:* What the mind says is important, but now it gets in the way of your awareness. Let's come back to it later. Now just go back to your awareness of the one that notices everything.

*Natalie:* (pause) Yes . . .

*Guide:* Who is aware?

*Natalie:* I . . . I can't describe it . . . it's just awareness. . . . It's . . . It's me! I am this! I am aware.

*Guide:* Stay with this awareness. . . . Have you experienced yourself this way before?

*Natalie:* Yes, it's familiar. But I didn't realize it was me . . . and that I could make it happen.

*Guide:* You can always come back here.

*Natalie:* Yes, and I will. I just need to remember to come back here. . . . (pause) . . . That was beautiful.

The process of “turning inward” described by Aurobindo can be clearly recognized in Natalie's experience. It is realized in two phases. The first is to take the attitude of observer. A simple way to begin is to observe objectively what we are aware of in the moment.\* It is useful to try this with eyes open and with eyes closed, to see which way is easier. We then ask ourselves, “Who is observing?” and, avoiding any intellectual construct but rather focusing on direct experience, we can become aware of *being* the observer. Then we can distinguish the *observer* from the *contents of consciousness*, the “Knower” from the “Field of Knowledge.”

At times, it may take several steps to do this. In Natalie's experience, the first “observer” was the “space in the middle of her

Recognizing the  
knower

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\*Observing what we are aware of is different than “thinking about it” — although it can include the observation of one's thoughts. How to take the attitude of observer is explained in detail in the exercise “The Observer and the Consciousness of ‘I,’” p. 94, this issue. [ed.]

Reflected  
consciousness  
becomes  
self-aware

head.” But it was the observer of that “observer” who turned out to actually be the “I.” We can conceive of this sequence of observers as stepping stones, by means of which we can travel “upstream,” along the river of our awareness, toward its source. When we eventually reach the source – the “I” – the second phase of this process occurs. This is the *reorientation of our awareness toward its source; it is consciousness turning back on itself and becoming self-aware*. It is when consciousness is reflected back on its source – thus becoming true *self*-consciousness – that we can finally realize our individual identity – “It’s me . . . I am this . . . *I* am aware” – and become one with it.

Understanding  
what to do

This fundamental reorientation of our awareness becomes perfectly natural, and also extremely simple – once we realize how to do it and practice it. Some people have found out gradually, on their own, how to achieve it. Others are able to do it, but don’t practice it because they do not know that it *can* be practiced, or do not recognize the value of doing so. Others still – probably a majority – can learn after a certain amount of practice with appropriate exercises. In actuality, it often turns out that learning how to identify with the “I” is more elusive than difficult. In other words, for many people it is a matter of understanding *what* to do rather than *developing the capacity* to do it. It is true that focusing our awareness toward the “I” requires an act of concentration – an effort of will – and if one’s will is not sufficiently strong, it needs to be developed.\* But for many people the will is already capable of the task, and all that is lacking is knowing how to use it. This is because from birth we are impelled to turn our awareness away from our center toward the *contents* of consciousness – inner as well as outer – and we have become used to this, accepting it as the only possible mode of awareness.\*\* To experience the “I,” however, we must reverse direction. So it is not surprising that this re-orientation may seem strange at first, even unnatural, and that we may not know quite how to proceed. Using the metaphor

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\*A broad range of techniques and exercises for developing the will can be found throughout Assagioli, *The Act of Will*, Viking Press, New York, 1973. [ed.]

\*\*With rare exceptions, this is in fact the only mode of awareness we are capable of up to the time of adolescence. After age 15 or 16, self-identification becomes increasingly possible, and can be practiced advantageously. Until then, children and adolescents can learn to shift their identification at will among their subpersonalities and other personality elements.

of the river of our awareness, when we first begin traveling towards its source, we do so while looking backwards. We face downstream while we paddle ourselves upstream. We perceive our movement as *away from* where we are, from the familiar, and don't yet see where we are really going.

This usually happens because we do not know what the source — our “I” — is like, how to recognize it, in what direction it lies, or even, sometimes, that it exists at all. And understandably so. Because the “I,” being transcendent to the personality, cannot be fully or accurately described. So it can only be truly known when it is experienced. That is why reading about it, for example, is no substitute for actively and steadfastly seeking to reach it by means of such methods as we have indicated here and elsewhere in this *WORKBOOK*.

### THE “I” AND BEYOND

If, as we travel towards the “I,” we try to imagine it, we are likely to be led astray. Yet enough can be said about the “I” and how people have experienced it to help us recognize what it is *not*. With this knowledge, we are able to step back from anything that is not the “I,” and thus proceed towards it, so to speak, “backwards.” Eventually, by this process, when we reach the “I” we will be able to recognize it for what it truly is.

One of the first things people say about their experience of the “I” is that it is permanent and unchanging. Natalie said, “When I’m aware, there’s always something that is the same.” This is very much in contrast to the constant state of change and flux of our personality elements, and of the contents of our consciousness. While the life of the personality — the myriad thoughts, emotions and sensations — go on, the “I” is changeless: it is experienced as “a stable point,” “always there,” “immutable,” “permanent.”\* Some people have been able to identify with the “I” simply when asked to “be aware of whatever within you is always the same.” In the words of Clark Moustakas: “The individual self, or being, is

The “I”  
is changeless

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\*Although the experience of the “I” can change in *intensity* — from strong to very faint — at different times, this is a change of our awareness, not of the “I” itself.

an ultimate core of reality which remains unchanged throughout changes of personality qualities or states.”<sup>6</sup> The “I” is like the hinge of a door: the door opens and closes or swings back and forth, while the hinge remains stable – and, at the same time it sustains the door itself.

Transcendence  
of duality

There is another aspect to the experience of the “I” that many people find remarkable. The “I” is self-conscious, aware of itself, and in this awareness *there is no duality*. In normal consciousness, one is aware of something which is other than oneself. In other words, there are three elements to normal awareness: the one who is conscious; the object or content of consciousness; and consciousness itself, which is the bridge that links the two. But in the experience of pure self-awareness there is no object, or content. There is no observer-observed duality. There is only *undifferentiated consciousness* – consciousness which is not restricted to the awareness of any specific feeling, sensation, process, pattern or quality of any kind. So people who have fully identified with the “I” often try to describe its nature through paradox: “empty but full,” “nothing but everything,” “one moment but eternity.”

Perhaps one of the most beautiful portrayals of both the permanent nature and the transcendence of duality that are characteristic of the “I” is given by T.S. Eliot in his poem, “Burnt Norton.”

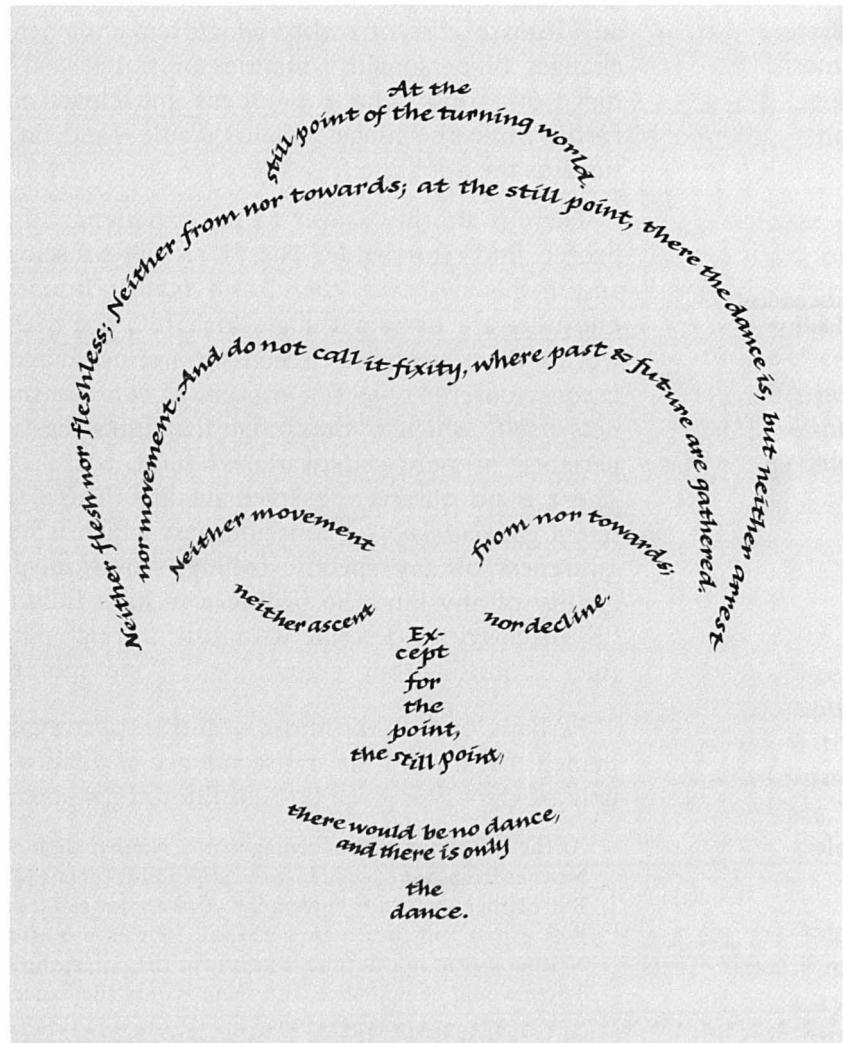
At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.<sup>7</sup>

The initial experience of the “I” may come as an intense flash lasting only an instant, or it may be a slow change, so gradual that we do not recognize it for quite a while. Occasionally, it comes as a spontaneous realization, as was the case with Lisa. This occurs most often when a deep and long-standing identification is suddenly released.

Practice leads to  
the experience  
of the “I”

However, one does not need to wait for a spontaneous experience. Many people have discovered the “I” as the result of deliberate introspection, or by practicing appropriate techniques of self development. The Identification exercise in this *WORKBOOK* is a modern presentation of a technique which has proven fruitful through the ages.





The source of  
our true  
humanness

The discovery of the “I,” and even a very brief moment of identification with it, can have a profound effect. In the realization that *we are* that “permanent core of reality within” lies our true humanness, our sense of identity, of individuality, our power to become masters of our lives. While we are identified with the “I,” we are no longer immersed in a current of emotions, a stream of thoughts, or the loud clamoring of subpersonalities. The sense of inner conflict and fragmentation ceases. Feelings and moods which many had to learn to live with, such as guilt, fear or semi-conscious anxiety, are dissipated the way frightening figures in a wax museum lose their power when the lights are turned on—for we realize that we have been seeing things out of proportion.



A new beginning

So the “I” becomes a source of perspective, of peace, of absolute security – the unshakable ground that underlies our existence. A writer tells the story of his experience in the Los Angeles earthquake some years ago which illustrates this quite literally. In his life he had difficulty trusting people and his environment. But somehow, he had experienced a certain reliable grounding in the earth itself. He always “trusted” the earth to be there underfoot – reliably solid and real and safe. But he was on the sixth floor of a large hotel in downtown Los Angeles the morning of the earthquake, and was shaken to the core by the realization that not even the earth was “real and safe.” What could he trust? Was there nothing, then, to rely on? That experience led to an extended crisis. And then a year and a half later, while meditating, he experienced “that there is something inside me which can’t be touched, maimed or destroyed. There is no exact way that I can give voice to this experience because it was at once perfectly soundless and yet it implied all sound. It can be described – in an imperfect way – as an experience of endless restfulness combined with vast dynamic power. Thus a profound dynamism, coexistent with perfect calm. One seeks for poetry, for a language beyond the precision of language. It was the experience of my absolute being and, at the same time, of the absolute being of everything. Like a funnel which we enter from below: inside is outside; thou art that. It was this realization of my own absolute being that made me realize the absolute being of everything else. And it gave me a kind of serenity, and a confidence that things will work out. And, at a deeper level, a confidence of eternal being.”

In this experience, he reached the “I” and went *beyond* it. For identifying with the “I” is not the final goal: like every culmination, it is a new beginning. It is like awakening from a dream and opening our eyes for the first time. With our eyes open, we see the world in a new and clearer light, and can begin to live our lives accordingly.

Eventually this fuller life, lived *as* the “I,” leads to a greater culmination: the experience of the *Transpersonal Self*. Roberto Assagioli refers to “. . . the direct awareness of the Self, which culminates in the unification of the consciousness of the personal self, or ‘I,’ with that of the Transpersonal Self.”<sup>8</sup> The Transpersonal Self can be reached from the “I” because the “I” is in fact a projection, a spark, an intrinsic part of the Transpersonal Self. It is as much of the Transpersonal Self as we are able to experience at the time.

### Blending individuality and universality

Reaching towards the “I” gives us a true sense of our identity, uniqueness, and *individuality*. As we reach toward the Transpersonal Self we experience *universality* – yet at the same time, paradoxically, the sense of “I-ness” – of identity and individuality – is enhanced. Eventually, individuality and universality blend, into the true experience of *Being*.

While maintaining such a state at will is a very, very distant goal for the great majority of people, a first glimpse of the Transpersonal Self – as can be seen in “Burnt Norton” and, more clearly, in the writer’s earthquake experience – may occur at times spontaneously, or while following certain types of meditation, and especially as the result of practicing self-identification.

The experience of the self – whether personal or Transpersonal – has been often compared to returning to our true home. It is, as Assagioli has noted, a joyous experience: “. . . the realization of the self, or more exactly of *being a self* . . . gives a sense of freedom, of power, of mastery which is profoundly joyous.”<sup>9</sup>

Such a realization may be lasting or it may remain for only an instant, but the knowledge of it always stays with us at some level. In the course of daily living, we may be drawn away from it and may even “forget” that it exists; yet if we were to sit down to recollect the experience and even to relive it, we would find it present, fresh, real. But how often do we remember to do so?

### The practice of self-identification

For this reason, the *practice* of self-identification is of the greatest value. Through practice, we learn to disidentify from the field of our awareness and identify more and more with our true nature. It is a gradual, sometimes slow process. Yet it is through this gradually increasing self-identification that we can fully actualize ourselves in everyday living.

And here is the paradox again. For it is only by realizing our unique individuality that we can begin to take our places as fully functioning, effective *parts of the greater whole* – be that our family, a group, a community, a nation, or the larger life and destiny of the planet itself.

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# Practice:

This section of the *WORKBOOK* contains three exercises: "The Observer and the Consciousness of 'I'," the "Identification Exercise" and "Keeping a Psychological Journal." The first two are practical means for working with the concepts of identification, and are designed to help you discover and experience your true personal identity. Both of these exercises have a series of steps to complete. One way you can work with them is to read one step at a time, complete that step, and then read and complete each succeeding step until you have finished. Or you may want to read the exercise through a few times, and then do the whole thing from memory. If you have the opportunity, the easiest method may be to have another person read the exercise to you slowly, step by step, as you do it. Or you can tape-record yourself reading the exercise, and then play it back as you do it. In this case, be sure to leave long enough pauses for you to actually do what is called for.

The exercise, "The Observer and the Consciousness of 'I,'" has proven basic for most people in evoking the experience of self-identification. It is generally recommended that it be done first. This exercise evokes the experience of "I-consciousness" through the intermediate step of taking the attitude of the *observer*. The second exercise, "Identification," is somewhat more advanced. It evokes and intensifies the experience of self-identification through affirmation: in it one *affirms* that one *is* the self. In order to do so most effectively, one must have already had some experience of self-identification, or at least be willing to accept it as a possibility. It is for this

reason that people often find the “Identification” exercise most valuable after they have worked for a while with the “Observer” exercise. But some may prefer to work with the “Identification” exercise right away.

It is vital to the effectiveness of both these exercises to complete each in one time period rather than doing it piecemeal. Stopping in the middle of an exercise interferes with the momentum, interrupts the awareness and the realizations that can emerge. However, in the “Observer” exercise, Stage I and Stage II can be treated as two successive but distinct exercises that can be done at different times. When doing them—in fact when doing most of the exercises presented in the *WORKBOOKS*—it is useful to establish a steady routine. This means, whenever possible, practicing them everyday, in the same quiet place, and preferably at about the same time. A routine of this kind builds up a continuing pattern of experience where insights from one day can more easily evoke and feed successive ones.

The third technique, “Keeping a Psychological Journal,” is a guide to an ongoing program of writing about the important aspects of one’s inner life. Keeping such a journal of personal reflections and experiences is a valuable activity, one which can yield significant long-term benefits. It allows us to get the very most out of the exercises in these *WORKBOOKS*—indeed out of all the inner work we may be doing. The psychological journal enables us to reflect more deeply on our life experiences, and over time, provides an increasingly rich

locus for the consideration and refinement of our process of growth.

The experience of individual identity, or “self-identification” is accessible to different people in different degrees. Some people report that they have had an active sense of their “I-consciousness” all their lives, and are surprised to learn that many have not. For other people, this experience has been more transient, something they have not been able to hold. And still others are tentative at first, finding the concepts and the exercises new to them. These differences are related to a person’s psychological type, his or her past experience, level of integration, environment, and a variety of other factors.

Interesting also is the fact that although the facility in achieving the experience of individual identity differs greatly among different people, once it is achieved, it is almost invariably described as “familiar.” One often hears an exclamation like, “Oh yes, it’s *me!*” But while the experience of self-identity is simple and familiar, it is often elusive. If this is so for you, using the *WORKBOOK* should help you, over time, to sharpen and maintain that experience at will. If, on the other hand, self-identification comes easily for you, the *WORKBOOK* will provide useful guidance on how to apply it most effectively in your life.

As the cases reported in the “Principles” section have shown, the intentional, deliberate act of self-identification can be a powerful tool—indeed the most powerful tool—to consciously direct and accelerate our growth.

# The Observer and the Consciousness of “I”

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A PSYCHOSYNTHESIS EXERCISE

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Many people have been able to find within themselves the center of identity which is uniquely them. As the article “Identity and Personal Freedom”<sup>\*</sup> has shown, Lisa, Natalie, Mike and the others were able to *disidentify* from the various contents of their consciousness — such as feelings, thoughts, sensations, and images. With practice they were able, as well, to disidentify from their subpersonalities — some troublesome, some useful — and to find the awareness of *self*, the inner still point that they experienced as truly themselves.

Now it should be said at the outset that, in a certain sense, all of us have already had this experience of self or “I.” It is nothing new. But what we normally experience is a *mixture*, in varying proportions, of our sense of “I” with the myriad contents of our consciousness. So

we confuse one with the other; we mistakenly perceive our “I” to be the same as the contents of our consciousness. What *is* new to many people is to experience “I-consciousness” in a relatively pure form, and to be able to evoke that experience at will.

The following exercise was designed to help you in this purpose. It uses the powerful tool of our imagination, as well as our ability to focus and heighten our awareness, to set the ground for the experience of “I.”

The exercise is presented in two distinct stages. This has been found useful to capture and enhance the often elusive experience of “I.” The first stage is the basic form. In it we take the attitude of observer, and become aware of specific sensations and images. We then reach towards the experience of *self*-awareness — distinct from any images, forms, qualities or other contents of consciousness.

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<sup>\*</sup>This *WORKBOOK*, p. 56. [ed.]

## The Observer and the Consciousness of “I”

progressively toward a clearer, more intense and more stable self-awareness. Then, from the vantage point of this “I-

consciousness,” we turn our awareness toward our body, our feelings and our mind, and their relation to the “I” itself.

### STAGE I

1) Sit quietly and comfortably. Look around you and become aware of all that you see. *See* it in all its detail, as clearly and as vividly as possible. Take a few moments to do this. . . . Now close your eyes, and breathe in slowly. As you inhale, *take in this vivid, visual awareness*. Then exhale and, as you do so, ask yourself “*WHO IS AWARE?*”

2) With your eyes closed, become aware of what you *hear*. *Listen* to the sounds, or to the silence around you. . . . (pause) . . . Now take a deep breath, and as you exhale slowly, ask yourself “*WHO IS AWARE?*”

3) Still with your eyes closed, imagine that you are drawing a white circle with chalk on a blackboard. Look at the circle . . . be aware of it. . . . (pause) . . . Then take a deep breath, and as you exhale, ask yourself “*WHO IS AWARE?*”

4) Now let the circle fade away and, breathing rhythmically in and out as you have been doing, stay with the awareness of *your self* as the one who is aware. . . . (pause) . . . Really experience *being* your self. . . . Try to get as clear a sense as possible of this experience. Take all the time you need to do this.

In this exercise, the experience of self-identity is obtained through the intermediate step of taking the attitude of observer. This latter experience is essentially a simple one which many people have had spontaneously. Yet it often needs to be practiced, before it can be achieved *at will*. The following accounts underscore the simplicity and the famil-

ilarity of the observer experience, once it is clearly realized.

“Being the observer is nothing exotic — it is being in that place behind my eyes, either when I’m looking at something like a problem in logic, or calmly watching my child asleep: it is the experience of my own personal consciousness.”



Another person says it this way: “It’s like looking at something in the world, but calmly, serenely, from the consciousness that is uniquely yours.”

It is clear from these quotations that it is but a step from being the observer to the awareness of *who* is doing the observing. Another person adds these thoughts: “There is a purity about the experience . . . not an ethical purity, but a purity of consciousness. For then I am not caught in feelings, thoughts, plans, desires, expectations—as I usually am. I observe, simply, and I am *me*. Much of my life used to be submerged in fears, worries and the expectations others had of me. But now that I know how to be the observer, close to my real self, it’s like being

in a sunny clearing in the woods, without underbrush. I used to be a troubled person—very emotional, anxious, fearful. But when I got it clearly, the experience of observer and then of my self, I took a deep breath and remembered: Yes, it’s *me!* So it was familiar, even though I hadn’t had it before.”

These quotations not only express the simplicity and the familiarity of the experience, but also affirm the sense of liberation it brings.

After you have had enough experience with Stage I of this exercise to feel comfortable with it and confident that you can use it with some ease to achieve “I-consciousness,” go on to the following.

### STAGE II

1) Again sit quietly and comfortably. Look around you and become aware of what you *see* in all its detail, as clearly and as vividly as possible. Now close your eyes, and breathe in slowly. As you inhale, *take in the awareness*. Then exhale and, as you do so, ask yourself “*WHO IS AWARE?*”

2) With your eyes closed, become aware of what you *hear*. *Listen* to the sounds, or to the silence around you. . . . (pause) . . . Now, take a deep breath, and as you exhale slowly, ask yourself “*WHO IS AWARE?*”

3) Still with your eyes closed, imagine that once again you are drawing a white circle with chalk on a blackboard. Look at the circle . . . be aware of it. . . . (pause) . . . Then take a deep breath, and as you exhale, ask yourself “*WHO IS AWARE?*”

4) Let the circle fade away and, breathing rhythmically in and out, stay with the awareness of *your self* as the one who is aware. Really experience *being* your self. Take some time to do this.

5) Now try to get as clear a sense as possible for what it is like to be your self. . . . Try to become aware of the stability of the self, its permanency. Try to experience it as the stable state of consciousness that is always reliably there. You will find that while all else changes, it remains. It is available always, as a source of stability and of clear perception in the midst of change.

6) With the awareness of being your unchanging self, turn your attention to your body. . . . (pause) . . . Your body changes. The sensations of your body are different now than they were a few moments ago . . . and they will be different again a few moments from now. Your body itself is different now than it was when you were a child, and it keeps changing as you grow older. But your self does not change.

7) Now, focus once again on the awareness of being your self, the one who is aware. And as that unchanging self, become aware of your feelings. . . . (pause) . . . Your feelings also are changing all the time . . . even the depth with which you feel changes. But your self does not change.

8) Focus once again on being your self, the one who is aware. And as that unchanging self, become aware of your mind. . . . Your thoughts change with great rapidity. They jump from one idea to another . . . and, as you grow, you use different ways of thinking. But your self, your true nature, does not change.

9) Focus once again on being your self. Then become aware of your body, your feelings, and your mind. Be aware that you *have* these three aspects . . . they are *yours* . . . they are your valuable means of expression in the world, and you have the capacity to direct and regulate them at will. But they are not you. You are your self, the one who is aware. . . .

Let us recall here that the core of this exercise is an experience which is very simple but which may be elusive at first for some people, and transient for many. It is typical of some personality types to achieve it easily, and for others to find it

more difficult. So it is good to keep in mind that ease in assuming the attitude of observer, or in achieving self-identification is not necessarily, in itself, a mark of advanced development or character, nor is difficulty an indication that one is

lagging behind. If you can do it right away, fine; and if you can't, keep practicing this and the next exercise in the *WORKBOOK*, as well as following the complementary route of successive disidentifications. Though for some this may take time and patience, it is a noble route which many have walked toward the experience of self.

### Other Applications

Taking the attitude of observer—the clear and stable vantage point from which to view your life and your surroundings—can be useful in many circumstances that occur in daily living.

It is helpful as the first step toward disidentifying, when appropriate, from whatever may be happening within you or around you. But, just as important, by actively cultivating the attitude of observer you can avoid being caught in unwanted identifications in the first place. With practice, the attitude of observer becomes a habitual “resting mode” which you can instantly recover whenever you choose, and the situation warrants. We can see an example of this in Jane’s account of her difficulties with the irritable airline clerk (p. 76). By taking the attitude of observer, she caught herself just in the moment before she was about to identify with “Queen Jane” or “Baby Jane” and alienate the clerk past all help.

The attitude of observer is also useful to see the processes of our inner world with a clearer and more true understanding. For example, we can observe our subpersonalities without judging them and in this way discover as much as possible of their qualities and their interactions. The observer attitude is taken in

“The Door” exercise (*SYNTHESIS 1*, p. 93): once our various subpersonalities emerge, we observe what they do for some time *before* deciding to become involved with them. The observer attitude is also an integral part of the “Evening Review” exercise (*SYNTHESIS 1*, p. 103) which calls for the “calm and objective registering in consciousness of the day’s pattern and meaning.”

**Groups.** This exercise is effectively done in groups as well as individually. In a group setting, the leader reads the exercise aloud, while the others listen and follow the instructions given. It is suggested that after Stage I has been completed, the leader allow time for a general discussion. The group can then proceed to Stage II.

After both parts of the exercise have been completed, it is of real value to encourage group members to share what doing the exercise was like for them. During this discussion, it is particularly useful for the leader to ask those who are already experienced in achieving the attitude of observer and “I-consciousness” to tell the group how they *use* it, to talk about what practical part it plays in their lives.

### Patterns to Guard Against

**Images.** Sometimes in doing the exercise, when the question “Who is aware?” is asked—and, in general, when attempting to turn our awareness toward the “I”—some *image* may spontaneously emerge. This can take many forms, such as a white dot, an eye or a symbolic figure who sits and watches, or even the

image of yourself being aware. Such an image may at times be useful as an intermediate step toward our goal. But it is important to remember that any image—whatever it may be—is not the self, and should not be confused with pure, contentless "I-consciousness." Should such an image appear, observe it and ask yourself the further question: "Who is aware of that image?" This will help you to step back from the image and move toward the pure experience of the "I." If another image appears, it too can be dealt with in the same fashion. An example of guiding an individual in such a step by step way to "the one who is aware" can be found in this *WORKBOOK*, pp. 83-84.

**Superconscious Experiences.** With this exercise, or the one which appears next in this *WORKBOOK*, some people find themselves penetrating, to some extent, into what is called the superconscious\* or transpersonal realm. In its higher aspects, this can be a profound experience characterized by a sense of unity with all life, by love and peace and joy, by deep insight and clarity of vision, by a secure faith in the evolution towards the good, even by a sense of being somehow beyond the limitations of time and space. This is an uplifting and exceedingly valuable experience to each of us as individuals, and by extension, to the whole human family. The next *WORKBOOK* will develop the theme of the transpersonal dimension and will present exercises designed to help reach toward our superconscious nature, and integrate it with the "normal" consciousness of daily living.

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\*See diagram in "What is Psychosynthesis?" p. 117, this issue. [ed.]

In the meantime, there is an important point to be made. An adequate foundation is the key to the effective and safe use of these higher states of consciousness.\* This foundation should include a certain measure of personality integration, and at least some facility in identifying with the "I." If people get in touch with the superconscious dimension before having achieved a steady "I-consciousness," they are frequently "drawn upward," so to say, and are tempted to skip any further development of the "I-consciousness" itself. But "I-consciousness" is a step which should not be skipped. For there is an intimate relation between the "I," or personal self, and the Transpersonal Self—which is at the apex of the transpersonal realm. The personal self is the anchor point for the downflow of transpersonal energies, and the integrated personality is the means through which these energies can be expressed in the world. So in doing this exercise and the one which follows, do not by-pass the experience of "I-consciousness." If at some point in the exercise you find yourself moving into experiences of a transpersonal nature before you have been able to focus on, and experience your "I," don't hold yourself back—but afterwards, practice the exercise again, making sure to deliberately focus on the "I" experience. Patience at this stage will be repaid by the devel-

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\*For advice on how to deal with the difficulties caused by premature or very intense transpersonal experiences, see "Self-Realization and Psychological Disturbances," by Roberto Assagioli, to be published in the next issue of *SYNTHESIS*. [ed.]

## PSYCHOSYNTHESIS WORKBOOK

opment of a stable and effective individuality, capable of fully expressing one's highest values.

### Questions Frequently Asked

*Sometimes I have trouble deciding whether to take the attitude of observer or to get really involved in what's happening. It seems that both are important.*

You're right, both *are* important. But in most of our practical life situations, it isn't a matter of deciding to do *either* one *or* the other. It is rather a matter of determining what *proportion* of each is appropriate at any given moment. Let us take the example of a therapist working with a client. When he is doing therapy, he must be involved to a certain extent with his client. Without this involvement there can be no empathy, and he cannot be in touch with what his client is experiencing. But, at the same time, he needs to take the attitude of observer to a certain extent, in order to be objective and to understand the patterns and processes behind what his client is experiencing. So in this case, as in most of our day to day experience, both observing and

being involved are going on at the same time. And the proportion of each will change moment by moment, depending on what is happening within us and around us: on our needs, our perceptions, the demands of the environment and many other factors. The goal, then, is to become aware of this process, and to learn to choose consciously how much of each element is appropriate in the moment. But to do so, we must first have accessible the whole range between the two extremes. And for this, in turn, we must be able to be fully involved, or to fully take the attitude of observer, at will.

Interestingly enough, being able to take the attitude of observer at will increases one's ability to more fully experience inner and outer events. Ordinarily, when we hold ourselves back from being fully involved in things, it is because we are afraid, consciously or unconsciously, that we could become overwhelmed by our involvement. But with a well-practiced ability to take the attitude of observer, the roots of this fear are cut. We develop an inner freedom to experience because we know we can distance ourselves from unwanted experiences whenever we desire.



*"We are dominated by everything with which we become identified. We can master, direct and utilize everything from which we disidentify ourselves."*

# Identification

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## A PSYCHOSYNTHESIS EXERCISE

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The fundamental experience of self-consciousness, the discovery of the "I," is implicit in our human consciousness.\* It is that which distinguishes our consciousness from that of the animals, which are conscious but not self-conscious. But generally this self-consciousness is "implicit" rather than explicit. It is experienced in a nebulous and distorted way because it is usually mixed with, and

veiled by the *contents* of consciousness.

This constant input of influences not only veils the clarity of consciousness – it also produces spurious identifications of the self with the *content* of consciousness, rather than with *consciousness itself*. If we are to make self-consciousness explicit, clear and vivid, we must first *disidentify ourselves from the contents of our consciousness.*

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Adapted from the "Self-Identification Exercise," Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, Viking Press, 1965, pp. 111-125, and *The Act of Will*, Viking Press, 1973, pp. 211-217.

\*"Self-consciousness" is used here to mean being aware of oneself as a distinct individual, and not in the more customary sense of ego-centric or even neurotic "self-centeredness."

More specifically, the habitual state for most of us is to be identified with that which has the greatest pull on our awareness: that which seems, at the time, to give us the greatest sense of aliveness, to be most real, or most intense.

This identification with a part of ourselves can take many forms. Some people are identified with their bodies. They ex-

perience themselves, and often talk about themselves, mainly in terms of sensation; in other words they function as if they *were* their bodies. Others are identified with their feelings; they experience and describe their state of being in affective terms, and believe their feelings to be the central and most intimate part of themselves. Thoughts and sensations are perceived as more distant, perhaps somewhat separate. Those who are identified with their minds are likely to describe themselves with intellectual constructs, even when asked how they *feel*. They often consider feelings and sensations as peripheral, or are largely unaware of them. Many are identified with a role, such as “mother,” “student,” “businessman,” or a subpersonality, such as “seeker,” “victim,” “striver,” and they live, function and experience themselves accordingly.

This identification with only a *part* of our personality may be temporarily satisfactory, but it has serious drawbacks. It prevents us from realizing the experience of the “I,” the deep sense of identity, of *knowing* who we are. It excludes, or greatly decreases, the ability to identify with all the other parts of our personality, to enjoy them and utilize them to their full extent. Thus our “normal” expression in the world is limited at any one time to only a fraction of what it can be. And the conscious—or even unconscious—realization that we do not have access to much that is in us can cause frustration and painful feelings of inadequacy and failure.

Finally, a continuing identification with either a role or a predominant function leads often, and almost inevitably, to a precarious life situation resulting

sooner or later in a sense of loss—even despair—such as in the case of an athlete who grows old and loses his physical strength; an actress whose beauty is fading; a mother whose children have grown up and left her; or a student who has to leave school and face a new set of responsibilities. Such situations can produce serious and often very painful crises. They can be considered as more or less partial psychological “deaths.” No frantic clinging to the waning old “identity” can avail. The true solution can only be a “rebirth,” that is embracing a new and broader identification. This sometimes involves the whole personality, and leads to an awakening or “birth” into a new and higher state of being.

The natural process of entering into more inclusive identifications often occurs without a clear understanding of its meaning, and so is achieved haltingly and with considerable difficulty. But a conscious, purposeful, willing cooperation with this process can greatly facilitate and hasten it.

This can be best achieved by a deliberate exercise of *disidentification* and *self-identification*. Through this willed act, we gain the *freedom* and the *power of choice* to be identified with, or disidentified from, any aspect of our personality, according to what seems most appropriate in each situation. Thus we can learn to master, direct and utilize all the elements of our personality, in an inclusive and harmonious synthesis.

This exercise is intended as a tool for achieving the consciousness of the self, and the ability to focus our attention sequentially on each of our main person-

ality aspects, roles, subpersonalities, etc. We then can clearly examine their qualities while maintaining the attitude of observer, and recognizing that *the observer is not that which he observes*.

In the form which follows, the first phase of the exercise — *disidentification* —

consists of three steps dealing with the physical, emotional and mental aspects of awareness. This leads to the *self-identification* phase. Once some experience is gained with it, the exercise can be expanded or modified according to need, as will be indicated further on.

\* \* \*

Sit in a comfortable position, relax your body, and take a few deep breaths. Then make the following affirmation, slowly and thoughtfully:

*I have a body but I am not my body. My body may find itself in different conditions of health or sickness, it may be rested or tired, but that has nothing to do with my self, my real "I." I value my body as my precious instrument of experience and of action in the outer world, but it is only an instrument. I treat it well, I seek to keep it in good health, but it is not my self. I have a body, but I am not my body.*

Now close your eyes, recall briefly the general substance of this affirmation, and then gradually focus your attention on the central concept: "*I have a body but I am not my body.*" Attempt, as much as you can, to realize this as an *experienced fact* in your consciousness. Then open your eyes and proceed the same way with each of the next two stages:

*I have emotions, but I am not my emotions. My emotions are diversified, changing, sometimes contradictory. They may swing from love to hatred, from calm to anger, from joy to sorrow, and yet my essence — my true nature — does not change. "I" remain. Though a wave of emotion may temporarily submerge me, I know that it will pass in time; therefore I am not this emotion. Since I can observe and understand my emotions, and then gradually learn to direct, utilize, and integrate them harmoniously, it is clear that they*



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are not my *self*. I *have* emotions, but I *am not* my emotions.

*I have* a mind but *I am not* my mind. My mind is a valuable tool of discovery and expression, but it is not the essence of my being. Its contents are constantly changing as it embraces new ideas, knowledge, and experience. Often it refuses to obey me! Therefore, it cannot be me, my self. It is an organ of knowledge of both the outer and the inner worlds, but it is not my *self*. I *have* a mind, but I *am not* my mind.

Next comes the phase of *identification*. Affirm slowly and thoughtfully:

After disidentifying myself from the contents of consciousness, such as sensations, emotions, thoughts, *I recognize and affirm that I am a center of pure self-consciousness, a center of will*. As such, I am capable of observing, directing, and using all my psychological processes and my physical body.

Focus your attention on the fundamental realization: *I am a center of pure self-consciousness and of will*. Attempt, as much as you can, to realize this as an *experienced* fact in your awareness.

\* \* \*

The purpose of the exercise is to achieve a specific state of consciousness. So once that purpose is grasped, much of the procedural detail can be dispensed with. Whenever it feels right, you can therefore simplify the exercise by going swiftly and dynamically through each of the stages of disidentification, using only the central affirmation, and concentrating, at each stage, on its *experiential* realization.

I *have* a body, but I *am not* my

body—I *have* emotions, but I *am not* my emotions—I *have* a mind, but I *am not* my mind.

You may find it valuable at this point to make a deeper consideration of the stage of self-identification along the following lines:

What remains after having disidentified myself from my body, my sensations, my feelings, my mind? Who am I then? I am the permanent factor

in the ever-varying flow of my personal life. I am that which has a sense of being, of permanence, of inner balance. I am a center of identity and pure self-consciousness. *I affirm my identity as this center.*

(pause)

I recognize and affirm that as this center I have not only self-consciousness, but also creative, dynamic power. I recognize that as this center, I can learn to observe, direct, and harmonize all the psychological processes and the physical body. I will to achieve a constant awareness of this fact in the midst of my everyday life, and to use it to give increasing meaning and direction to my life.

Later, as the ability to experience this *state of consciousness* is increased, the identification stage can also be abridged, using the central affirmation:

I am a center of identity, self-consciousness and will.

The goal is to gain enough facility with the exercise so that you can go through each stage of disidentification and achieve the “I-consciousness” swiftly and dynamically, and then maintain it for as long as you choose. You can then—*at will* and at any moment—disidentify from any overpowering emotion, annoying thought, inappropriate role, etc., and taking the attitude of observer, gain a clearer understanding of the situation, its meaning, its causes, and the most effective way to deal with it.

To reach this goal, it has been found most effective to practice the exercise daily, preferably during the first hours

of the day. Whenever possible, it is to be done shortly after waking up, considering it as a symbolic *second awakening*. It is also of great value to repeat it in its brief form several times during the day, as a means to remain in touch with your “I-consciousness.”

### Variations

The exercise may be modified appropriately, according to your own purpose and existential needs. In addition to disidentifying from the three fundamental personality functions (physical, emotional and mental), you can also disidentify from other functions such as desires, impulses and imagination, or from subpersonalities and roles, or even material possessions. Some examples follow:

*I have* desires, but *I am not* my desires. Desires are aroused by drives, physical and emotional, and by many other influences. They are often changeable and contradictory, with alternations of attraction and repulsion; therefore they are not my *self*. *I have* desires, but *I am not* my desires.

I engage in various activities and play many roles in life. I willingly play them as well as possible, be it the role of son or father, wife or husband, teacher or student, artist or executive. But these are roles, important but partial roles, which I, myself, am playing. I choose to play, and can observe myself playing. Therefore *I am not* any of them. *I am my self*, and I am not only the actor but *the director* of the acting.

### Other Applications

The exercise, up to this point, has been

presented as a means to disidentify from various aspects and functions *in general*, from emotions in general, roles in general, subpersonalities in general, and so on. But it can be used to disidentify from *specific* elements, such as from one kind of emotion (e.g. fear), or from a particular subpersonality. For example, a person identified with a “Victim” subpersonality can supplement—or even, for a period, replace—the general disidentification with a more specific one, such as:

*I have* a Victim subpersonality, but *I am not* this Victim. The Victim feels persecuted and interprets reality in this light. The Victim also has sensitivity and depth of feeling. I am aware that there are both limitations and promise in this subpersonality, but it is not me. *I have* a Victim, but *I am not* this Victim.

Again, as you become able to realize this as an *experienced* fact in your awareness, you can drop the long form. Affirm, simply and dynamically:

*I have* a Victim, but *I am not* this Victim.

Concentrate on the experiential realization that this is so.

This leads to a most useful goal: the ability to disidentify from the specific element at will and *in the moment*, as the situation demands. With practice, it then becomes possible, for example, to disidentify from the Victim, to *know* that one is not the Victim, in the very midst of the kind of situation that the Victim subpersonality had always found most threatening.

This form of the exercise can be

adapted to fit whatever subpersonality or other element you are presently working with.

**Groups and Clients.** The Identification exercise can be used very effectively in groups, educational settings,\* or by a therapist with a client. The leader or guide begins by voicing the exercise as the group or client listens with eyes closed, reflecting on the significance of the words and attempting to grasp their meaning experientially. It is useful to follow this with a discussion of what was experienced. After this, the client or the individual group members can continue to practice the exercise at home. Any person who wishes to use the exercise with others is urged to practice it him or herself as well, in order to understand experientially the state of consciousness which the exercise evokes, and thus be best able to help others to achieve it also.

## Patterns to Guard Against

In certain circumstances, knowing one has the ability to disidentify can encourage a tendency to suppress whatever we are disidentifying from. This happens most often when people have been caught for a long time in a particularly painful identification. In this case we are likely to develop an aversion for it, and naturally, once we have learned to disidentify from it, we may feel like pushing it away, hoping to “never have to deal with it again.” Here we risk pushing aspects of

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\*As was said in “Identity and Personal Freedom,” (see p. 85n), self-identification can usually be achieved only after about age 15—although disidentification is possible earlier. [ed.]

ourselves into our unconscious where they can play tricks on us without our knowing it. Furthermore, as explained in the theory paper, suppressing whole aspects of ourselves causes a loss of the potential energy and richness available to us. But it is relatively easy to counteract this tendency. Just as we have disidentified from the painful element, *we can also disidentify from our aversion toward it*. Then we can realize that, having mastered the technique of disidentification, we no longer need fear being trapped or hurt by it, and that there is no need to push it away. This frees us to focus on the positive aspects of that element—on how it can be good and useful once we have mastered it (see *SYNTHESIS 1*, pp. 78-81). So while disidentification can make suppression easier, *it can also be used to eliminate the need to suppress*.

We have frequently observed that although disidentification may occasionally cause suppression to increase at first, if it is practiced correctly, the tendency to suppress will soon decrease substantially—and much material previously repressed will gradually emerge and be integrated.

A special case of the tendency to suppression is the person with a pronounced, conscious and deliberate tendency to withdraw from the world, or from some aspect of the personality. For example, individuals with a “mystical” temperament are sometimes at odds with their body. Here the Identification exercise as given might tend to increase the split. To counteract this tendency, it has been found most useful to reverse the emphasis in the disidentification phase of the exercise, as in this example:

*I am not a body, but I have a body.*

Even though my body is only an instrument, it is a precious instrument of experience and of action in the outer world. Therefore I treat it well, seek to keep it in good health and respect and value it. *I am not my body, but I have a body.*

This reversal of emphasis allows self-identification to be promoted but avoids promoting the disowning of a vital and useful personality element. On the contrary, it encourages the integration of the personality element itself. Similarly, in the identification phase of the exercise, the emphasis can be placed on the *directing* aspect of the self:

I recognize and affirm that I am a center of self-consciousness and will, capable of observing, directing and harmonizing all my psychological processes and my physical body. I will to achieve a constant awareness of this fact in the midst of my everyday life, and to use it to give increasing meaning and direction to my life.

### Questions Frequently Asked

*Isn't there a danger that in practicing disidentification we are running away from our problems and responsibilities rather than facing them squarely?*

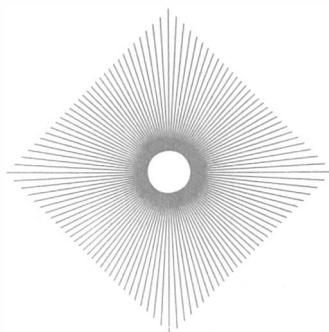
Yes, there is that danger. Any tool can be misused. But it should be stressed that disidentification is a natural human function. One observes it more and more among self-actualized people. The “running away” you speak of can be seen as a debased version of this natural process—a distorted and therefore harmful attempt

to realize the freedom that comes from true disidentification. We run away from things for a tremendous variety of reasons: because we don't understand them, because we don't yet know how to handle them, because we fear being hurt, and so on. At the core of all these avoidances is our lack of a safe place from which to view our problems, our responsibilities — and our opportunities. When we can genuinely disidentify, then we no longer have to run away, because we know we can deal with things from above, from a centered place, from a position of power. So disidentification is, in fact, the responsible and creative alternative to avoidance.

*I have been practicing the Identification exercise, and have not had any real problems with the disidentification part, but I can't find my "I" or seem to identify with it.*

First, be sure that you're not trying to find something to fit *your image or idea*

of what the "I" is like. This would be a sidetrack, because the "I" isn't like anything. We suggest you reread the "Technique of the Observer," and reread pp. 83-86 in "Identity and Personal Freedom." In general, people have found that the most effective way to learn to identify as their "I" is first to learn and practice taking the attitudes of observer and director. When you are skilled in doing this, it will be easier to then turn your awareness toward "the one who is aware." As we have said earlier, this is a subtle process, and initially identification with the "I" may be a fleeting, evanescent thing. Patience and a detached or "sporting" attitude are often needed to achieve the goal. In time, the sense of having hold of the "I," or more exactly of *being* it, will become stronger, and more easily available. At a certain stage of practice, achieving identification with the "I" becomes a state of consciousness that is instantly possible.



# Keeping a Psychological Journal

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## A PSYCHOSYNTHESIS EXERCISE

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One of the most useful means for long-term self-development is the systematic use of an ongoing workbook, diary, or journal. Such a journal, thoughtfully done, can provide a structure to assist us in paying closer attention to our lives and in evoking and developing our understanding of ourselves and others. It acts as a “reflector” of the inner course we are charting day by day, and can give us the stimulation and support which many seek from the outside world.

Some people, when presented with the idea of keeping a journal, or diary, remember their adolescent years and think of it as a place for the recording of trivial accounts of daily activities, or, perhaps, of bittersweet memories. The Psycho-

logical Journal is something like a diary, for in it you will record your innermost thoughts, and it is there for you to read, to learn from and enjoy. But unlike a diary, what is written is guided less by external and sometimes trivial events, and more by *internal themes*.

Although outer events may be recorded as well, the purpose of writing about them is to reflect upon their *meaning* for your internal life, to become aware of their *significance* in regard to your inner processes. The focus of a Psychological Journal, therefore, is on your unfolding awareness of yourself and the world, and on the new meanings, values and interrelationships you are discovering.

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Prepared by Sara Unobskey Miller. Sara Miller was formerly a Director of the Institute for the Study of Humanistic Medicine, San Francisco.

There is much value in keeping a journal of this sort. The act of writing helps us to *formulate and clarify* our thoughts, feelings and observations. It

increases the interplay between our more concrete and more abstract mental processes, enhancing the power and the precision of our thinking. Also, writing helps us to *commit* ourselves, to a greater extent, to our own conscious unfoldment. We are taking a step beyond simply thinking something when we make the effort to write it down. Yet another function, and a most important one, is that, because we cannot write down all our thoughts, we must *choose* the ones that are most important. Thus we develop, and get more in touch with, our sense of values. Furthermore, in the process of clarifying our thoughts through writing, we are obliged to consider and *choose* between alternate points of view. We are thus less likely to deceive and confuse ourselves by holding contradictory views without being aware of it. And, if we are in a position of ambivalence or confusion, perhaps one of the greatest functions of a Psychological Journal is that, through a structured program of writing, we are frequently able to *define, work through and resolve* our problem. The writing of this process not only helps to resolve the problem, but serves as well, as a *document* which describes the manner in which similar problems might be dealt with.

The act of writing is a great stimulus to creativity. When we are grappling with a problem, it is a common occurrence that in writing down our conscious thoughts on the question, useful associations and new ideas begin to emerge. Writing the immediate thoughts makes more “room” for new avenues of thinking, new possibilities we may not have considered before. Frequently, writing allows our mind to

explore more freely since we do not run the risk of losing our previous thoughts. We are sometimes amazed to discover the depth of insight and understanding within us, just waiting to be expressed. It is almost as if our unconscious had already elaborated the solution — of which our conscious thoughts are the forerunner — and that the act of writing them down makes space in our mind for the solution itself to emerge.

The Psychological Journal can serve also as a harmless and effective technique of *catharsis*, by giving us the opportunity to express in writing whatever powerful or disruptive emotion we may have bottled up inside us. The process of “letting off steam” through writing is one that many have found extremely productive, for not only does it discharge tension, it also enables us to become aware of some of the underlying issues *behind* such tensions. Through written exploration we can find ways to deal with the deeper issues and create healthier situations for ourselves. Cathartic writing has been experienced by many people as a valuable aid to overcome shyness, for the Psychological Journal can serve as a fully accepting friend. It allows us the opportunity to express ourselves, to take risks, to increase our creativity. It gives us a structure for our inner experience and strengthens various psychological skills, such as imagination, will, concentration, and so forth.

In addition to written material, *drawings and other visual material* can be an important part of your journal. These may be, for example, images which may come in the form of dreams, fantasies, or visualizations; more abstract types of

images, patterns, and symbols; diagrams and other such graphic aids which may be useful to clarify or express your ideas. Another category is that of spontaneous drawings—drawings which are done immediately and spontaneously without any preconceived idea of what they will be like. Such drawings reflect the activity of the unconscious, and are often of considerable value in self-understanding.

Every journal is unique and personal. It develops and takes shape as the individual using it develops. So you may discover important ways of your own to express yourself in it. An architect, for example, inserted in his journal schematic sketches of the dream houses and towns which he fantasized. A doctor has developed a section for his own internal prescriptions, such as: "Courage, to be taken every six hours or as needed." Others have chosen to use illustrations from magazines or the newspaper which capture the thought or image they are writing about. The possibilities are endless.

The important thing as you write in your journal is to keep looking for what is more meaningful and more central to you, for the *causes* behind the events and patterns of your life. If you already have a clear sense of how you'd like to organize your journal, it's a good idea to follow it. If you'd like some guidelines, what follows is a description of various themes and categories that have been found to be generally useful. You can choose those among them that seem important to you personally, together with any other that you may develop, and use them either as actual headings for your journal—or simply as areas to think about as you write.

**Time Perspectives:** This section can be used to help you make contact with your own life process through time—from the past into the present and toward the future. Stepping stones (bridges from where we were to where we are, or hope to be), intersections (roads taken and not taken), and memories may be noted.

**Techniques for Growth:** Your experiences with exercises and techniques that you decide to use deliberately, such as those found in these *WORKBOOKS*. Also other unplanned experiences or situations that you find helpful in your ongoing growth process, that can be repeated intentionally, as techniques.

**Hangups:** Personal weaknesses or limitations of which you are aware and on which you would like to work. Particular emphasis can be placed on the methods you can use to overcome them. Record also any strong negative reactions you have to other people as they may clarify your own unrecognized and projected problems.

**Peak Experiences:** Any "high" or "deep" experiences of peace, joy, love, expansion, awakening, etc., and their circumstances and effects.

**Emotional Awareness and Catharsis:** This section can contain the reflections on, and expression of your feeling nature, in all its aspects. As mentioned before, this can also be a place to "let off steam," to express on paper feelings that you otherwise would bottle up within you or express in a harmful way to another person.

**Subpersonalities:** Here you can write about and reflect on your various sub-



## PSYCHOSYNTHESIS WORKBOOK

personalities and their interactions, and follow the development and harmonization of the major ones you may presently be working with. You may also want to include in this section the results of pertinent exercises, such as the Door or the Pie presented in the *WORKBOOK* in *SYNTHESIS 1*.

**Identification:** What personality elements are you working to disidentify from? What is your progress in holding the attitude of observer? Of director? Also, your experience of your sense of personal identity, answers to the Who-Am-I? exercise, and the results of other relevant work.

**Dreams:** Description of your night dreams, which are most easily recorded immediately upon awakening. Also, their context, and any associations and interpretations which might occur to you.

**Imagery:** This may include images which come spontaneously, or while purposely using guided imagery techniques. They can be recorded in writing and/or through drawings. It is important to record the *feelings* and *associations* you have in response to the images (or to specific aspects of an image, such as its form, color, etc.), their meaning for you, and a tentative interpretation if possible. Give particular attention to your plans to “ground” — to express in your everyday life — whatever insights you may have gained from them. You may also record here fantasies, stories, and situations which have special meaning to you, and which may serve as seeds for further imaginative work.

**Meditation:** Note here your deeper thinking about specific ideas, issues, or

questions, as well as any “formal” meditation along the lines of some specific approach. You can include the central “seed” ideas that you used as the focus of your reflections, the direction and development of your thinking, any insights and intuitions, and other related results or effects obtained.

**Bright Ideas:** The heading speaks for itself. Many have found that simply having a section called “Bright Ideas” seems to make them come.

**Quotations:** Personally meaningful quotations you may have read or heard.

As time goes on, you will want to add or drop sections, depending on the important areas of your life concern and personal growth. Remember, it is important to date each entry in order to provide a developmental perspective as you go.

We suggest you use a loose-leaf book. This allows for adding material, ease in filing old materials, and general organization. It is helpful to divide the book into sections, with tabs to mark the separate sections. In general, the regularity with which one uses the journal tends to increase as one cultivates a more personal relationship with it.

### Variations

The *inner dialogue* is a common experience for many of us. For example, we often find ourselves carrying on an imaginary conversation with a person, or rehearsing an important event. Used consciously and deliberately, the inner dialogue can help us clarify our relationships to specific people, develop understanding,

and evoke insight.\* It is also possible to dialogue with things other than persons, for instance, with ideas and events. We can dialogue with an idea itself, or with a figure we construct which embodies the idea. The dialogue can be a useful form to use in the Psychological Journal. Some of the headings already given, such as *subpersonalities*, lend themselves readily to the dialogue format. We have seen, for example, in the subpersonality exercises in the *WORKBOOK* in *SYNTHESIS 1*, that dialogues with subpersonalities develop naturally. The following are some examples of other categories in dialogue form.

**Dialogue With Ideas:** Include here any area of vital intellectual interest in which you are trying to advance your own understanding, e.g., education, religion, mathematics, systems theory, ecology, and so forth. Some have found beginning with a simple dictionary definition a useful tool for getting started. You can also visualize an image for your area of interest, and dialogue with it. Many people have found this helpful. A physician, working with his journal, decided that he wanted to learn more about the essence of medicine to supplement his technical knowledge. He visualized an image of Hippocrates and embarked on pages of dialogue with him, writing down not only his questions but the imagined answers as well. This personal way of embracing ideas helped him move into an entirely new area of thought, and

brought a deeper level of meaning and understanding into his work.

**Dialogue With and About Persons:** This is simply writing down the internal dialogues that many of us engage in. But when we write out the dialogue, rather than merely imagining it, we can re-read it and study its content and meaning. While reading the other person's imagined part, his or her point of view may become clearer to us, and underlying motivations may reveal themselves to an extent that would not be possible in an unwritten, imaginary dialogue. A high school teacher who was particularly troubled by one student wrote down, over a week-long period, all the real and imagined conversations he had had with him. While going over his dialogues, he saw that even though their conversations were all different, the theme and pattern were usually the same. The theme was that of the teacher wanting the student to do something specific, and the student wanting to do his work *with* the teacher. The teacher found that he was unwilling to *work* with the student since he believed the student capable of doing his work on his own, but he also found that he was more than willing to spend *time* with him. So he decided to have one lunch period a week with the student, just being together, talking about anything. After another period of recording their conversations, he saw that the student's work had improved, and he himself was feeling much more positive toward him.

**Dialogue With the Higher Self:** For a full discussion of this important technique, see the article by the same name in this issue.

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\*For an excellent approach to growth based on inner dialogue, see the work of Ira Progoff, Dialogue House, 45 W. 10th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

**Dialogue With Your Body:** You can engage in dialogue with your body, or with a part of it that has special relevance for you at a particular point in time. It is especially helpful to use this technique with a part of your body that has been giving you difficulty. Dialogue with a painful, injured, weak, or otherwise troublesome body part has been investigated in medical practice and has frequently produced very interesting results.\*

As both health professionals and psychotherapists have pointed out, our body often has important information to convey to us, and the technique of dialoguing with a part of it—a sore throat, for instance—and asking it what *it* wants, can elicit fascinating responses. These can have a very broad range. One sore throat reported a need to express emotions (“I want to cry,” said the throat). Another sore throat revealed this sentiment: “I want you to express yourself through me by speaking more.” Sometimes an extended dialogue turns up a suggestion for general self-expression, as when one sore throat finally recommended: “You should take up some creative activity: singing, acting!” Naturally, the wishes of the body part must be checked by common sense and our best information before we can act on them. The point is that some of the body’s information—much of it otherwise unconscious to us—can frequently be uncovered in such inner dialogue.

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\*See, for example, *Case Studies and Methods in Humanistic Medical Care*, Mary Belknap, Robert Blau and Rosalind Grossman, The Institute for the Study of Humanistic Medicine, San Francisco, California.

### Other Applications

The Psychological Journal, drawing directly as it does on the uniqueness of each individual and his or her growth process, has been found useful in a variety of settings. Helping professionals have found it effective to request clients, patients, and students to keep ongoing journals. In addition to being useful to the client or student at home, the journals can facilitate classroom or therapeutic work. Teachers can ask students to report on recent journal work and integrate this information into classroom discussions or tutorial meetings. Psychotherapists have found that discussing journal work in sessions allows them to achieve greater depth and make more effective use of time.



# What is Psychosynthesis?

In its most basic sense, psychosynthesis is a name for the conscious attempt to *cooperate* with the natural process of growth — the tendency in each of us and in our world to harmonize and synthesize various aspects at ever higher levels of organization. Albert Szent-Gyorgyi in his article (in *SYNTHESIS 1*), describes the “drive in living matter to perfect itself.” In human beings, this drive becomes conscious — we feel it as an urge and decide to implement it, to make its progress easier.

Cooperating with evolution in this purposeful way requires conceptual understanding, a framework, and a range

of practical techniques. Psychosynthesis integrates both concepts and techniques into a broad framework, designed to facilitate the natural human drive toward development.

As an inclusive approach to human growth, psychosynthesis dates from 1911 and the early work of the Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli. Though one of the pioneers of psychoanalysis in Italy, Assagioli maintained that Freud had not given sufficient weight to the higher aspects of the human personality, and recognized the need for a broader concept of man.

## What Is Psychosynthesis?

Eastern disciplines often have tended to emphasize the spiritual dimension, while Western approaches usually have focused on the personality side. But the human being must be viewed as a whole and each aspect accorded its due importance. Psychosynthesis recognizes that each of us has a transpersonal essence, and at the same time holds that our opportunity in life is to manifest this essence, or Self, as fully as possible in the world of everyday personal and social existence.

From this beginning, Assagioli and an increasing number of psychotherapists, physicians, educators, social workers, clergymen and others have worked to develop and refine this view of human growth. The task is considered to be an open one, one that will never be ended.

Over the last sixty years, a number of conceptual points and methods have proven themselves to be fundamental. These provide a working structure for psychosynthesis.

### THE SUPERCONSCIOUS

Traditional psychoanalysis recognized a primitive, or “lower” unconscious—the source of our atavistic and biological drives. But there is also in us a higher unconscious, a *superconscious*—the realm from which originate our more highly evolved impulses: altruistic love and will, humanitarian action, artistic and scientific inspiration, philosophic and spiritual insight, and the drive for purpose and meaning. We can suffer not merely from repression of our basic biological drives, as Freud pointed out, but can be equally crippled by “repression of the sublime”—the failure to accept our high-

er nature. Thus psychology must be concerned both with integrating material from the lower unconscious and with realizing and actualizing the content of the superconscious.

The superconscious is accessible, in varying degrees, to each one of us, and can provide a great source of energy, inspiration, and direction. To this end psychosynthesis offers a wide range of techniques for contacting the superconscious, for establishing a bridge with that part of our being where true wisdom is to be found.

### THE SELF

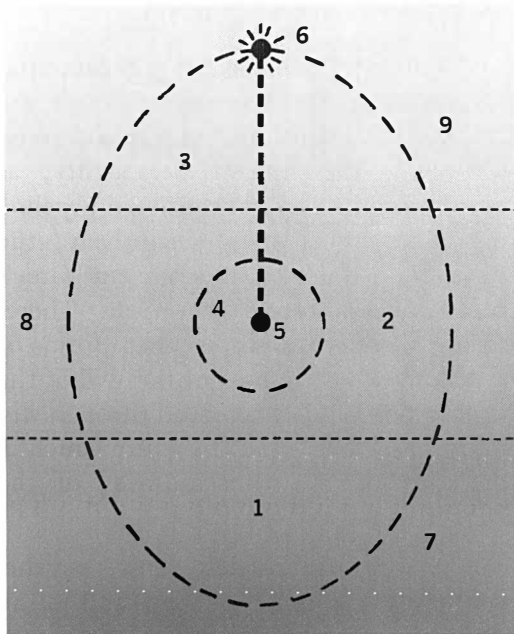
The concept of the self as an entity supraordinate to the various aspects of the personality, such as body, feelings and mind, is to be found not only in Eastern philosophy and the major world religions, but also in more and more branches of Western psychology. If we examine the concept of the self empirically, we find first of all a center of awareness and purpose, around which integration of the personality takes place. This is the “personal self,” the “I,” the center of personal identity.

The two central functions of the personal self are *consciousness* and *will*. With the consciousness of the self one can be clearly aware of what is going on within and around him, and perceive without distortion or defensiveness. This has been called the inner “attitude of observer.” To the extent that one is able to achieve this vantage point, the claims of the personality and its tendency to self-justification no longer stand in the way of clear vision and effective action in the world. There are a variety of techniques to help

gain access to this centered vantage point, from which the most fruitful work on oneself can be done.

An important distinction needs to be made between the personal self and the “Higher” or “Transpersonal Self.” The Transpersonal Self is the focal point of the superconscious realm. It is a deeper and all-inclusive center of identity and of being, where individuality and universality blend.

The following diagram illustrates some of what we have been describing.



1. The Lower Unconscious
2. The Middle Unconscious
3. The Higher Unconscious or Superconscious
4. The Field of Consciousness
5. The Conscious Self or “I”
6. The Higher or Transpersonal Self
7. The Lower Collective Unconscious
8. The Middle Collective Unconscious
9. The Higher Collective Unconscious

## FALSE IDENTIFICATIONS

To act in a centered way can be difficult, as we have all experienced. One major difficulty is the large number of *false identifications* we make with specific elements within ourselves. We may identify, for example, with a temporary feeling such as fear or anger, and thus lose or distort our true perspective. Or we may become identified with one of our “subpersonalities” — our inner cast of characters. These are semi-autonomous and often conflicting formations in our personality that are variously evoked by different sets of circumstances.

We need to recognize our subpersonalities and learn to harmonize them. We are then no longer helplessly controlled by them, but can bring them increasingly under our conscious direction. Doing this involves learning the fundamental process of “*disidentification*” from all that is not the self, and “*self-identification*,” or the realization of our true identity as a center of awareness and will.

## STAGES IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

In the overall process of psychosynthesis we can distinguish two stages — *personal* and *transpersonal* psychosynthesis. In personal psychosynthesis, the integration of the personality takes place around the personal self, and the individual attains a level of functioning in terms of his work and his relationships that would be considered optimally healthy by current standards.

In the transpersonal stage of psychosynthesis, the person learns also to achieve alignment with, and to express the energies of, the Transpersonal Self,

## What is Psychosynthesis?

thus manifesting such qualities as a broad sense of responsibility, a spirit of cooperation, altruistic love, a global perspective and transpersonal purpose.

Often the two stages overlap, and there can be a considerable amount of transpersonal activity even in the early phases of personal psychosynthesis.

### METHODS EMPLOYED IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

To be maximally effective in our own psychosynthesis or in helping others, we need to have at our disposal a broad range of methods. As each person is unique, it is important to choose, out of the range of methods available, the ones that are best suited to each person's existential situation, psychological type, specific goals, desires and path of development. A few of the techniques commonly used are guided imagery, self-identification, meditation, development of the will, symbolic art work, journal-keeping, ideal models and development of the intuition, though a complete list would be much longer. The emphasis is not on the techniques, but on fostering a process of growth that can be enduring and gain increasing momentum.

### THE WILL

As this process goes forward, it entails developing one's personal will—the will of the personal self. Through this development, we acquire the ability to regulate and direct our many personality functions. We gain the freedom of choice, the power of decision over our actions, and become increasingly able to

follow a path in accordance with what is best within each of us.

And as we reach toward the Transpersonal Self, we liberate more and more the synthesizing energies that organize and integrate our personality. We can make increasing contact with the will of our Transpersonal Self, which provides even clearer meaning and purpose in our lives. We become able to function in the world more serenely and effectively, and to relate to our fellows in a spirit of cooperation and good will.

### SYNTHESIS AND THE PSYCHE

Psychosynthesis, in its fundamental nature, is synthesis of and through the psyche. Here psyche is understood to be not only the human personality, as usually implied by conventional psychology, but much more inclusively, the Psyche or Soul of the ancient Greek philosophers: the Higher Self. Therefore *psychosynthesis* is that form of synthesis which expresses the will of the Higher Self, and is achieved through wisdom and love—the two fundamental qualities of the consciousness of the Higher Self.

Thus, in its broadest sense, psychosynthesis is a point of view and an attitude, from which to act with wisdom and love. As such it is well suited to psychology, education and medicine, and also to religion, the social sciences, philosophy, and all other aspects of society and of our world in which *the consciousness of the individual human being* plays a role.

*"Imagination is superior to all nature and generation, and through it we are capable of transcending the worldly order, of participating in eternal life and in the energy of the super-celestial. It is through this principle, therefore, that we will be liberated from the bonds of fate itself."*

IAMBlichus, c. 290 A.D.

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## PURPOSEFUL IMAGINATION

The dignity and vitality of the imagination has been celebrated by philosophers and poets from the earliest times. Its importance as a basic human function in psychological development and exploration was well known. The early statement of the Syrian Neoplatonist Iamblichus, dating from the third century of the Christian era, calls attention to the two basic functions of imagination in its purposeful use by the individual: contacting the realms of superconscious inspiration and insight, and overcoming the "fate" of our character by working through personality problems and limitations.

In our own time, this ancient understanding is being rediscovered and elaborated, and the use of the imagination is one of the most rapidly spreading new trends in psychology and education. Evidence of this broad interest can be seen, for example, in the proliferation of different terms used to describe essentially the same process: "guided fantasy," "inner imagery," "active imagination," "the directed daydream," "mental imagery," "guided affective imagery," and so forth.

It is interesting to notice that many of the modern pioneers of imaginative techniques, Hans Karl Leuner and Robert Desoille



among them, have stressed the compatibility of such techniques with all main schools of psychology. Desoille, one of the best known contemporary innovators of imaginative techniques in the French-speaking world, demonstrated in practice their broad applicability in psychology. He first used these new techniques within a Freudian framework and rationale. Later, changing his persuasion to the behavioristic point of view, he continued to use the same techniques and developed a theoretical rationale for their use within the behavioristic framework.

Despite the rapidly spreading use of the imagination in psychology — or perhaps because of it — imaginative techniques are often practiced in a haphazard and confused way. What is needed to use them safely and effectively is a good understanding of the actual principles and mechanism of the imagination itself, and of its relation to our other psychological functions.

Certainly one of the keys to the proper use of the imagination is purposiveness. Uncontrolled, or idle daydreaming is imaginative, and can have its uses, but it is often inefficient, and can even be harmful. The imagination is so powerful a force for shaping our psyche and our behavior that we are well advised to use it with clearly defined purpose. The inner struggle between our uncontrolled imagination or fantasy and our will with its purposes, is familiar to most of us. The effect of our inner images on us is enormous, and if left to themselves they can dominate our personality. But through our will we can use the imagination, working with it skillfully to achieve our goals — for example by visualizing what we will to do and to become. In this way the vitality of our imagination is added to the strength of our purpose, and both our will and our imagination are strengthened and harmonized.\*

It is with these thoughts in mind that we introduce, with this issue, an ongoing examination of the principles and the uses of the

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\*The relationship between our imagination and our will is a subject of vital importance. Roberto Assagioli described its principal aspects in his book, *The Act of Will*. (Viking, 1973). He showed that will is one of the most basic functions of our essential self. Purpose, in turn, is the first of the six stages of any willed act. And yet if imagination and will are in conflict and our will is not properly used, imagination will usually win out, and our purposes will go unrealized. Chapters V and VI of *The Act of Will* give a detailed treatment of the basic principles governing the skillful use of the imagination to achieve our purposes in daily life and in personal growth.

imagination. This feature, “The Purposeful Imagination,” begins with two articles: “Dialogue with the Higher Self,” by Stuart Miller, and “Answers from the Unconscious,” by Martha Crampton. Both these pieces show how *the imagination can be purposefully used to establish two-way communication between conscious and unconscious aspects of ourselves*. Through such means as are outlined in these articles we can gradually bring the unconscious into consciousness, thus obtaining much information useful to our lives and our development. A complementary process — carrying conscious material into the unconscious, and thereby informing and re-forming our unconscious and remedying its problems, is introduced here, and will be further developed in later issues.

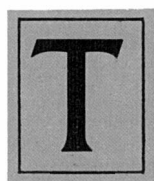
The third article in the series, appearing in the next issue of *SYNTHESIS*, will deal with another aspect of the purposeful imagination — the central role it plays in the fostering of creativity, and in harmonizing our emotional and mental natures.

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## THE PURPOSEFUL IMAGINATION

### DIALOGUE WITH THE HIGHER SELF Stuart Miller



HE LONG NIGHT OF REDUCTIONISM IS OVER. Its product, *homo reductus* — the reduced man — captive to his instincts, a mechanical toy with a computer for a brain, is losing his sway over the contemporary imagination. Increasingly, knowledgeable and sober men and women are re-admitting the higher human attributes into their visions of themselves and others. The evidence for this shift is to be found on every hand, particularly in the rising interest in the more humanistic and spiritual aspects of psychology, the study of religious experience, and the growing support for understanding and cooperation among the fellow men and women who constitute the nations of the world.

While this emerging trend is most hopeful, it can bring to the individual a new awareness of problems that the pessimism fashionable some decades ago obscured. One can be annoyed, troubled, perhaps even torn, by a sensed inner division — an inner division along a “vertical” dimension.

“I know what is right to do, but I fail to do it.”

“I know I can be a better person, but I don’t know how to get there.”

“I have a sense for the way things should go in order to be better, but I cannot translate it into a practical direction for my own life.”

“I know that the pulls of instinct and my social conditioning are often wrong, but I cannot quite see what to do instead.”

Guidance  
from within

It is as if we know that our present personalities, the sums of our lives as we have led them, are not what they could be. The task is one of discovering and developing a clearer contact with our inner source of wisdom. But frequently it is not easy to know where to start.

An extremely simple method within easy reach of most people can be used as a way of beginning. It is the technique of “Dialogue with the Higher Self.” This technique emerges out of the psychological study of various philosophical and spiritual traditions. It is a practical application of the ancient and nearly universal twin belief – that man has a higher aspect, or soul, and that this higher aspect can be contacted by the personality and asked for guidance. It has been said that the fundamental goal of psychology, one only now beginning to be realized, is the understanding of the relationship between these higher aspects of human nature and the personality as we understand it. Those who hold this view call our attention to the root meaning of the word psychology. In Greek “psyche” means “soul,” and so “psychology” means the *science of the soul*.

The technique of Dialogue with the Higher Self is, in its essence, simple and straightforward. It consists of the assumption that within each of us is an endowment of wisdom, intuition, and a sense of purpose, which can become a source of guidance in everyday life. The next step is simply to begin to dialogue with it, trusting that it is there and it will answer.

The inner light

In the Hindu tradition, this higher aspect is sometimes called the Atman. As is well known, Mahatma Gandhi, a practical and most successful political leader, used to talk of the “inner light of universal truth,” which he would consult on important matters. When confronted with such important issues, about which his colleagues were pressing him for decisions, he would retire into meditation to consult this “inner light,” and would emerge after he was rationally satisfied that with the help of this higher inner guidance, he had arrived at the best answer he could. The great Indian saint of the nineteenth century, Ramiakrishna, used to practice a similar technique, having talks with Kali, the Divine Mother. In the midst of a crisis, he would go into the temple and talk to her.

In the Eastern tradition, there has been for thousands of years an ambiguity about such dialogues. On the one hand, the various

Differing  
interpretations

deities involved are symbolized as being outside the person; but, on the other hand, they are considered to be within the person's own psychological and spiritual nature. The *Bhagavad Gita*, the most revered of Indian scriptures, is presented as a dialogue between a young man in crisis, Arjuna, and the great Lord Krishna, a major Indian deity. But interpretations of the *Gita* going back over 2500 years have described it as an internal dialogue—a dramatic presentation of the dialogue between the aspiring personality and the divine light, or Higher Self, symbolized by Krishna. Arjuna is in real-life crisis—required to take a crucial role in battle, he demurs and questions his role and destiny. In the midst of his crisis and despair, he turns to his inner light, personified by Krishna, to find a solution.

In the West, the tradition of dialogue with the Divine is at the very foundation of the Old Testament. The notion of dialoguing with a part of oneself that is attuned to the Divine is also found in the Jesuit practice of “Discernment of Spirits”—where the student attempting to decide upon his religious vocation seeks to discern, to distinguish the action of the “good spirit” within him from the selfishness that is a reflection of the “devil.” One reads, similarly, of the “indwelling of the Holy Spirit” as a psychological condition to be sought. The New Testament also speaks of receptiveness to “Divine Providence” as a technique where, having exhausted the ordinary and rational ways of wrestling with a problem, one turns to a higher source for an answer.

Expressions of  
the same reality

As we have said, such practices as these can be seen as attempts to contact an *otherness* full of power and wisdom. Or, they can be thought of as attempts to reach those parts of our own psyche that are not available in our ordinary lives. There are also more inclusive interpretations, according to which both the inner and the outer models, are, in fact, complementary forms for the expression of the same formless reality. We can say that one makes contact with universal archetypes—which are in the *higher collective unconscious*\*—by means of their reflections or projections in one's own individual superconscious. And it is the organizing and integrating energy of these archetypes that provides the mind with the needed solution.\*\*

\*See the diagram on p. 117, this issue. [ed.]

\*\*This process will be elaborated further in James Vargiu's article “Creativity,” which will appear in the next issue of *SYNTHESIS*. [ed.]

Liberating  
creative energies

Whatever the precise explanation, the answers that come may be seen as the result of letting go of our identification with the analytic mind, thus liberating creative aspects that are usually blocked. This does not mean rejecting the mind, only disidentifying from it. Certainly, the common practice among creative people of wrestling with a problem, reaching a point of frustration, letting go, and then simply waiting for a solution, is structurally similar. And in this creative process, many report that when the answer does come, they experience it as coming from “outside” themselves, with, as one writer put it, “sourceless connotations of authority.”

Uncovering our  
higher nature

So the notion that there is a source of such wisdom and guidance — a Self, or Essence, Soul, Spirit, Atman, or Ruach — is certainly not to be cavalierly thrust aside. But, as the experience of a great number of people has shown, it is not necessary to believe in a Divine organizing entity in man for the technique of Dialogue with the Higher Self to work. It is enough to accept the entirely reasonable proposition that there are aspects in each of us which are higher than many of which we are normally aware. In short, it is enough that we believe there are in us positive human potentials for more wisdom, love, strength, compassion and growth, than we have yet discovered. If we believe these are accessible and that they can be explored, that is enough.

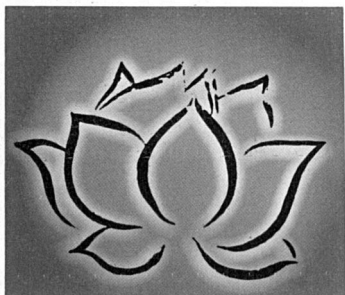
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### THE TECHNIQUE ITSELF

Assume, with many ancient traditions, that you have within you a source of understanding and wisdom that knows who you are, what you have been, and what you can most meaningfully become in the future. This source is in tune with your unfolding purpose. It can help you direct your energies toward achieving increasing integration, toward harmonizing and unifying your life.

Having made this assumption, close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and imagine that you are seeing the face of a Wise Old

Symbols — the  
language of the  
unconscious



Man\* whose eyes express great love for you. (If you have difficulty visualizing this, first imagine a candle flame, burning steadily and quietly, and then let the face appear at its center.\*\*)

Engage the Wise Old Man in dialogue, in whatever way seems best: use the presence and guidance of the sage to help you better understand whatever questions, directions or choices you are dealing with at the moment. Spend as much time as you need in this dialogue, and when you are finished, write down what happened,\*\*\* amplifying and evaluating further whatever insights were gained.

The technique has the advantage of wide variation. While this particular form is useful to many people, there are many others that can be used. The Wise Old Man is an archetypal symbol in the Jungian sense. As we have said, it can allow us to contact parts of our psyche that ordinarily may not be so accessible — that belong to our higher unconscious or superconscious. Symbols are the language of the unconscious, and there are a number of these higher symbols that can sometimes work as well as the Wise Old Man. Besides the Wise Woman, some people have used a lotus, a rose, the sun, a diamond, a flame, a silver cloud, a star, a fountain, an angel, an eagle, a dove, a phoenix, the Christ, or Buddha, among others. These symbols can also be used dynamically, and in combination. For example, many have found it very effective to imagine the bud of a lotus, or rose, that gradually opens, and then a Wise Old Man appearing inside it. Different images often emerge spontaneously to meet different needs, though the one most commonly associated with the inner source of guidance is the wise and loving old man.

A number of people who have used the technique over a period of years report that they have spontaneously developed several different symbols of inner guidance. This is experienced as the Higher Self reaching us by assuming different forms at different times. One psy-

\*Some people may spontaneously visualize a Wise Woman. While this image can also be a useful one, a majority of people have found that the Wise Old Man, the Sage, seems to be the most natural and readily accessible symbol of their own inner wisdom. The results of employing the symbols of the Wise Man and Wise Woman are likely to be different and *complementary*. The reader may want to try both and find out which is more useful for different purposes and circumstances in his or her life.

\*\*See *SYNTHESIS 1*, pp. 91-92, on how to visualize. [ed.]

\*\*\*See "Keeping a Psychological Journal," p. 113 of this issue. [ed.]

chologist reported these variations:

Usually he is a Wise Old Man who looks something like Lama Govinda, whose pictures I have seen. He is old, slender, bearded and dressed in ritual robes. He is Tibetan and ascetic, and has a very loving and blissful expression.

Another one is of fuller face and looks more like a Hindu swami. He is less ascetic, and though he is also old, he is not as old as the Tibetan.

Another person has a Moses-like appearance; he is more of the Charlton Heston type.

A fourth one is a sun symbol; round like the sun, an overlay of a face on the sun. He has eyes, a nose and mouth, but that's all.

Many expressions

Another person describes at least three varieties of her Wise Old Man:

The first is my "best self" — he is rather comic, and appears only with eyes, shoulders, and hands. He delivers a lot of "one-liners," and they are usually about things going on in the immediate situation; things like, "Forget it!" or "Keep going!" or "Hang in there!" This one usually accompanies his terse remarks with a hand gesture of a very emphatic sort. He is an old man with a great sense of amusement.

Then, there is a young man. He is dressed like a monk and talks about larger issues than the first one. He doesn't communicate in many words, either; he indicates an experience to be had. For example, if I ask him, "Where do I have to go next in my development?," he would say just a couple of sentences: "You need to integrate your personality," or "Think deeply on the meaning of the word "Love."

There is also a third kind. This is a group. They appear as a cluster of white-robed old men who talk among themselves and give me advice. They are very joyous and very supportive. They are less "high" than the second one and more interested in me — less impersonal. They give me advice about groups of individuals or groups in general. I do a lot of work with groups of people, and they are sort of specialists in groups. They are more loving than the second symbol. He is more wise, and kind of abstract.

After some practice, one may prefer not to use any visual symbols; and indeed, they are not necessary.

Communication  
through writing

An interesting variation of the technique is to write a letter to one's Higher Self and then to expect that the Higher Self will write back through you. For this, simply switch role and "answer" the original letter as if you were the Wise Old Man.\* This version is

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\*This procedure clearly has nothing to do with reported cases of "automatic writing," trance mediumship or any phenomena of that type. These are of a completely different nature. In such cases the person is unconscious or deliberately passive, while in the kind of dialogue suggested here, there is a normal, and often greater than normal, awareness and attention, and the mind can be *receptive* but is in no way *passive*.





especially appealing to people who are used to a high degree of precise verbal exchange. As can be seen from the preceding examples, however, with other people the verbal interaction with the Higher Self can frequently be very brief, and others report that the communication from the Self is often primarily visual, e.g. hand gestures indicating “Stop” or “No” or “Yes” and so forth. Still others, especially after a certain amount of practice, report a kind of direct knowing of what the Higher Self is saying, and that the interchange is then beyond both the visual and the verbal mode.

Whether symbols are used or not, whether they are animate or not, whether the exchange is verbal or not, let me stress that for the technique to work, it must be tried. Of those who have used it fruitfully, many say that the technique, although extremely simple, seemed strange to them at first, but when they gave themselves to it, the procedure worked quite well. Others already believed that they had such positive potentialities within them, but were pessimistic about being capable of contacting them. Sometimes they expressed feelings of being unworthy of such contact. In all of these cases, however, all that was called for was, in Coleridge’s phrase, “a willing suspension of disbelief.”

To put it another way, in attempting this or any other technique for self-realization, one needs to trust that it can work. As the Jaina philosophers of India have emphasized, trust is a precondition for any real progress in a given philosophy, approach, or path. Not blind trust, of course. Not trust that it will work, but trust that it *can*. Later on, one checks the preliminary results of the technique to see if the trust has been rewarded or not. All spiritual and psychological schools – from the sages of India to the Catholic mystics; from the exponents of the psychoanalyst’s couch to those of the Gestalt therapist’s empty chair – stress the limitations of efforts made without such commitment.

Accordingly, if the idea of a dialogue with the Higher Self is new, or strange to you, it may be worthwhile to begin by simply thinking through the reasonableness of the idea that there are latent parts of yourself wiser than your daily self. This kind of thinking helps to quiet skepticism and the tendency we all have, in one degree or another, to repress the sublime within us. For most people, taking this attitude of “provisional belief” is simply a matter of deciding to do so, and if they do so, they often discover that over a period of time the Higher Self provides better and better answers, surer guidance and more loving impulses. There are some people, perhaps

An attitude of  
provisional belief

Helping those  
in crisis

because of temporary crises or simply earlier conditioning, who have trouble giving even this provisional belief to a Higher Self within them. These may be people who are tormented by guilt and depression, a sense of worthlessness, and the like. Naturally, these are the people who most desperately need to cultivate an awareness of their higher inner aspects. Those in the helping professions — psychologists, counselors, teachers and others — have found it very helpful to use this technique with people in such crises, doing it first together, and recommending that they continue practicing it at home.\*

Persistence  
rewarded

The technique very often yields useful results at the first try, although occasionally it may take longer. One client got no answer for the first week after daily attempts to contact his Higher Self. He didn't dare hope such an inner Worthy would talk to him. But with the encouragement of his therapist, he persisted in the attempts. His written letters to the Higher Self during the first few days were simply emotional, despairing pleas; "Help me, Higher Self; give me your advice! Appear to me, talk to me! I need you!" Gradually, attempting to write these "letters" led from this very needed emotional release to a more reasoned approach; a detailing of the young man's real-life dilemmas, and finally his coherent examination, for the benefit of the Higher Self, of his troubles and their particular causes. At the end of the week, the young man discovered he could assume the position of his Higher Self and answer his letters.

An important first result of this work was that he began to achieve an inner position that was detached from the turmoil of his problems.\*\* One of his further discoveries was the difference between the Higher Self and his "superego." It turned out that part of his resistance to making contact with his own inner source of wisdom was owing to the fear that all he would discover in his

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\*Note to professionals: A number of therapists report that consulting their own Higher Self to activate their intuition and gain insight about their clients has been quite successful. Naturally, such insights — like all therapeutic intuitions — must be scrutinized and evaluated before being put into practice.

\*\*In general, the use of the technique of Dialogue with the Higher Self is of help in achieving disidentification from problems and in cultivating the attitude of observer. Disidentification and the attitude of observer are discussed extensively in the article, "Identity and Personal Freedom" in this issue. See also the exercises, pp. 94-114. [ed.]

The Higher Self  
and the superego

quest was not a Higher Self, but, rather, a Higher Superego—a “super Top Dog,” to use the language of Gestalt Therapy.\* In the process of attempting his dialogues with his Higher Self, however, he soon realized that the Higher Self was of an altogether different nature.

The Higher Self, insofar as I know him, is not like the superego. The Higher Self does not issue orders, he is not compelling, he is not harsh. He makes suggestions, he indicates ways—he is more mental, in a pure sense of the word. The superego, on the other hand, has a lot of emotional voltage—often negative. He pushes and urges . . .

The Self appears serene, clothed in white . . . strong (though dimly seen) and radiant—like the Christ in Fra Angelico’s “The Transfiguration.” He speaks to me. . . . He has the quality of a teacher. Interested and concerned, but detached. If he demands anything, he demands to be embraced. He opens himself to that. Take him or leave him, is what he says. He shows me directions and possibilities, leaving me to follow them or not. He is there. He is to be *chosen*.

My superego, instead, is dark, more fleshy, and even stonelike. There is a scowl on his face, a hammer in his hand. He bangs and chips away. He threatens and coerces. He exhausts me and he compels me. \*\*

Transcending  
the superego

One may look upon the superego as a reflection, a static image of the Higher Self. We develop our superegos using material from outside ourselves, from society, our parents, and so on. Such a “construct” has a role to play in our early development and is temporarily necessary. But in time it becomes rigid and restrictive, and must eventually and gradually be replaced by a much more genuine and dynamic inner source of wisdom, values, meaning and good judgment. In cultivating the dialogue with the Higher Self, therefore, one should be careful to identify voices answering our questions that are not really coming from our authentic higher selves. Sometimes this may be the voice of a subpersonality that pretends to be the Wise Old Man, or the voice, introjected from childhood, of an angry or ambitious parent, and so forth. Discrimination, then—what the Hindus call *Viveka* in their spiritual tradition—

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\*See the conversation with George I. Brown, “The Farther Reaches of Gestalt Therapy,” in *SYNTHESIS* 1, pp. 27-43.

\*\*The example illustrates a common tendency in many people to fear that their higher nature will be of a critical, authoritarian, puritanical and frequently life-denying character. This misconception is often a cause of the “repression of the sublime.” Another example of a person discovering this error is reported in “Identity and Personal Freedom,” p. 79 of this issue. [ed.]

must be used to identify other figures who impersonate the Higher Self.

## DISCRIMINATION

The role of  
the mind

When engaging in a dialogue with the Higher Self, we must test *any* message we receive in the “fires” of the mind’s critical discrimination. We must ask: is this advice really wise? Does it really make sense? This is a vital step, for it is clear that any such message can come from a variety of sources, not only from the Higher Self or from the lower unconscious, but also from many intermediate ones, where wisdom is combined with varying amounts of distortion, unmet needs and desires, unrelated thoughts and emotions.\*

Of course, the very fact that we consciously and deliberately address ourselves to the Higher Self has the result of weeding out many of the lower “voices.” And with continuing practice we become increasingly able to recognize the “voice” of our true source of wisdom and to build a reliable channel of communication with it.

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\*This discussion of discrimination provides a useful place to make a precise theoretical discrimination concerning the way we have been using the term “Higher Self” in much of this paper. The dialogue with the Higher Self is not *directly* with the Higher Self. Rather *it is with one or another element in our superconscious, which itself is activated by the Higher Self.*

An analogy will help explain these distinctions and the reasons we choose to ignore them in the rest of our discussions. When we dialogue with another person, we are not usually conversing with his essence, his person-ness, so-to-speak. He doesn’t present himself in his essence nor do we perceive him that way. Rather, he presents us with an intermediary—a subpersonality or a feeling, for example. And, in turn, that subpersonality or feeling expresses itself through still other intermediaries such as his voice, facial expressions, and so forth. So, in actuality, a large part of our ordinary dialogues or conversations in everyday life are carried on by us at two removes at least from the personal essence of the conversants.

Similarly, the image of the Wise Old Man is not the same as the energy which animates that image, and that energy in turn is not the same as its source—the actual Higher Self. But just as in ordinary conversations, it would be awkward, if not paralyzing, to keep in steady awareness of our two-fold removal from the other person in his essence, so it is generally unhelpful, in entering into dialogue with the Higher Self to keep in steady awareness that we are not in direct communication with the real article. On the other hand it is important to know, and to keep in the background of our minds, that the Wise Old Man and the “Higher Self” with which we may dialogue are not the actual Higher

But we can never be *completely* sure that we are in touch with the genuine article. This is especially so in our first experiments with the technique, or during periods of intense conflict and crisis when many of our inner voices are clamoring at the same time. So we need to treat the answers we receive just as we would the advice of a good friend. We consider it, make sure we understand it, and try to decide whether it is useful or not. If the answer is really from the Higher Self, our task is likely to be easy, because it will often have some “peculiarly good” quality. This quality may be the very essence of common sense, it may be “just the solution I would have chosen if only I had thought of it;” it may be a simplicity that is profoundly beautiful; it may be the answer accompanied by a vision of the good that will come out of it, which becomes a source of joy. In these cases, the course of action is likely to be clear.

The Higher Self  
is not coercive

At other times, it will be obvious that the source is not the Higher Self. This will undoubtedly be the case if the message clashes with our best and highest values; if following it might lead to needlessly hurting ourselves or others; if its main effect is to inflate (or deflate) our ego; if it is mostly self-serving; if it has an autocratic, dictatorial character. One student lamented that in the early days of her using this technique, what she believed to be her Wise Old Man had the quality of “a New Age Top Dog,” urging her relentlessly and heedlessly toward more and more transpersonal attainments before she had built a sufficiently steady base in the personality life of every day. She recalled that she had not been discriminating enough to reject such pushy and harsh messages, messages without the mark of a loving acceptance coupled with a desire to be of help.

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Self. This recognition helps us to have an accurate sense of proportion. For example, at times people have the experience of “becoming” the Wise Old Man. This can occur spontaneously on occasion, or it can be achieved intentionally, after practice with the technique of Dialogue. Such an experience can be an exalted one, charged with deep and beautiful feeling, and it can result in significant assistance to our growth. But as a result, people may tend to the erroneous belief that they have actually become identified with their Higher Self. It should be said, however, that the actual experience of direct contact, and eventual identification with the Higher Self is one of profoundly greater moment than these other experiences, no matter how authentic, valuable and important. The experience of contact and identification with the Higher Self in its true essence has an altogether different quality and opens the door to new dimensions of awareness that are — in experience and by definition — ineffable.

Mixed messages

There are occasions, however, when it is not immediately clear whether the message comes from the Higher Self. Such situations need to be examined carefully, especially if they deal with important issues. Some messages are “mixed,” and we need to separate what is useful from what is irrelevant, or even harmful. In such cases, the earliest and most abstract part of the message is often the valid one. The elaborations and details that may follow are more likely to contain distortions, or to be voices interjected by subpersonalities masquerading as the Higher Self. But sometimes, it is not possible to tell whether an answer is or is not valid by thinking it through. This can be because its content is “suprarational,” beyond what the mind can reach.\* Or it can be because the results of the suggested action are unforeseeable, and will be apparent only after the action is accomplished. In these cases, we must decide whether we are willing to take the chance of trying it out, taking into account any intuition or hunch we may have, our past experience in similar circumstances, the possible consequences of a mistaken action, and whatever other factor may be relevant, including – and especially – our common sense.

A scientific attitude

If we do decide to go ahead in such a situation, it is important that we do so with an openminded, scientific attitude. We are, in fact, performing an experiment: we are trying something to find out whether it will work or not. Maintaining such an empirical attitude has a value over and above the results or outcomes of our actions. This attitude allows us to learn from our choices, to better know the sources of our inner messages, to discriminate the voice of the Higher Self from other voices. In time, through repeated trials of this process, we come to have a clearer and clearer channel for the messages of our Higher Self. Such a channel can be of precious value in our future choices of action.

## INTERPRETATION

Once we have satisfied ourselves that the message does come from the Higher Self – and sometimes in the course of determining whether it does or not – we often need to “interpret” the message. For the Higher Self does not always give simple, concrete answers

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\*See footnote, p. 43. [ed.]

Different levels  
of meaning

to simple, concrete questions. Frequently an abstract, symbolic message needs to be examined to find out how it applies specifically and concretely to the issue of the moment. Or the opposite may be true: an apparently plain and simple message can hide an important insight that has broad relevance to our life as a whole. An example may make this clear. A woman was lying on her back porch and attempting to talk to her Higher Self about her life purpose. She had been thinking for a long time about changing her career, perhaps going back to school in one or another subject; but she was uncertain about how to begin, which path to follow, or even whether to make such a change. Her Higher Self answered her question about purpose with a single word, "Harmony." The woman realized this message needed to be interpreted and began thinking about harmony. She entertained various images of harmony, including herself as a Pied Piper, sprinkling musical harmonies into the world. Another image was the tuning fork, which she interpreted as tuning the personality to the soul so it could be receptive to its energy. Eventually, she came up with the abstract thought that "the personality is an instrument through which the soul plays its music." By interpreting this, in turn, she saw that the choice of one or another career pattern was not as relevant as the cultivation of an inner attitude of harmony within herself that would let her be as fully human a person as she could be. As she began to cultivate this inner attitude, problems with work, family, and friends gradually began to disappear. But for all these positive results to happen, it was first necessary for her to have sufficient determination to use her mind to think things through, and then to gradually find ways to implement the wisdom of her Higher Self.



We see from this example that a fundamental goal of interpretation is to recognize at which level of generality the answer pertains, and at which level it is to be applied. Clearly, interpreting a message as belonging to the wrong level can have harmful, even dangerous effects. Many cases of fanaticism, ego inflation, or delusions of grandeur have such a mistaken interpretation at their roots. Such a mistake is possible even for very advanced people.

A famous example of wrong level interpretation is that of Saint Francis hearing God say to him, "Go and rebuild my church." At first, Francis thought this meant he should rebuild the little ruined church of San Damiano, outside the walls of Assisi. It was only later that he realized its true import — to rebuild the venal and corrupt Catholic Church of his day, by means of examples of love, frugality

and charity. It is interesting to consider here what would have happened to Saint Francis if the message had indeed meant to rebuild the church in San Damiano, and he had tackled the entire Catholic Church!

One can also experience different levels of the Higher Self's wisdom in a single dialogue. A very busy man described the following interchange:

I was feeling very speedy, off center and unstable. So I talked with the Wise Old Man about it and at first he said things like: "You need to rest, to trust the process; everything will take care of itself. If you overwork yourself now you won't be able to do the things you're worrying about." But I simply kept waiting for more; opening myself in a kind of silent expectation.

A quantum jump

After a few minutes, I experienced a quantum jump in understanding. I saw that my worries had a purpose. The Wise Old Man enabled me to see that the worries of today were a necessary part of the "process" he had talked about. "This is where you fit now — you're irritable and strained, and that's because you're going through a *process of learning to work with people* and you don't know how to do it yet. But that process is very important in the development of yourself as a person who can give something good to the world. It is, as you well know, the necessary step beyond your sweet but ineffective idealism. It is the step to make your idealism practical and useful in the world. That's why you can be patient with yourself and even take the day off. You're doing fine."

## THE ROLE OF THE MIND

As we have seen, the use of the technique of Dialogue with the Higher Self does not in any way call for an occlusion of the mind. Far from it. The intellect can be and ought to be involved not only in the phases of discrimination and interpretation, but from the very beginning, and at every stage of the process. It is important to use the Dialogue with the Higher Self in conjunction with hard critical thinking, and not as a substitute for it.

Involvement  
at every stage

But overthinking is not necessary. It is not necessary to feel that before we deserve the privilege of addressing the Higher Self, we must carry out extensive brain-racking. As usual common sense is needed to keep the golden mean between excessive and insufficient mental work. (If in doubt, this is a good issue about which to ask the Higher Self for feedback.) For important situations it is generally advisable to think through the ins and outs of a problem as much as we can before presenting it to the Higher Self. Writing a carefully thought-out description of the circumstances, or silently





**The importance  
of preparation**

speaking the essence of the problem to the Higher Self is the best preparation in these cases. Not only does this exercise the mind, it also mobilizes the superconscious, or higher unconscious, to produce a more creative solution, and at the same time puts the mind in an expectant attitude, making it most receptive to the answer when it arrives. In the language of creativity, having dealt with the problem extensively on the “horizontal” level (at which it presently exists), one can then more effectively turn “upward” for illumination.

To take a concrete example, one man is worrying about whether to take Job A or Job B. “A” is more financially remunerative and secure; but “B” is more creative. He begins to think about the con-

A higher  
vantage point

sequences of each choice; more opportunity to grow and express himself in the creative job, but more money to save toward the education of his children in the other. Having listed all the arguments on both sides, he refers the answer to the Wise Old Man, who says, "Your main service to the education of your children will be through the quality of your being." The problem has been implicitly solved by an answer at a higher level. Duty to children and his personal growth are not contraries. Thus, his initial thinking assembles the basic information with which the Higher Self can work. Frequently this kind of deliberate thinking things through is enough for the Higher Self to offer the solution to the problem without actually being invoked.

In general, then, we may say that the most effective use of this technique occurs when the mind is well developed, or when there is the will to use it and develop it. Making contact with one's own inner wisdom through the various symbols of the Higher Self is itself a strong motivator for developing the mind. With the assurance that we have an inner core which is wise, good and loving, we have a basis upon which to build a coherent program of self-development. We experience our intrinsic worthwhileness, and we hear its gradual and gentle call. We can then increasingly align our will, our intellect, and our emotional nature to fulfill the best that is in us.

Transpersonal  
qualities

As this process continues, people report that they can turn to their Higher Self to answer more and more profound questions. They come to see that the ultimate usefulness of this technique (though not necessarily its best usefulness at first) is to pierce beyond the outer form of specific life problems (Job A or Job B), to the meaning, the principles, and the qualities behind them. This transition upwards in the use of the technique is generally a gradual thing. It is a natural transition, which can be encouraged but need not be forced. The process may start by asking the Higher Self about tiny dilemmas — "How can I make myself feel better now?" — but it will lead to seeking the underlying causes of the dilemmas. One use of the Higher Self technique that need not be reserved for later, however, is to ask it for understanding and awareness about various abstract qualities — as in the Harmony example. Other qualities to explore are Love, Joy, Wisdom, Compassion, Courage, and Serenity; in fact, any of those qualities that the wisdom of mankind has identified as being close to the center of our highest humanness. Because it is in these qualities that the real solutions to our life problems will ultimately be found.

More direct  
contact

This technique has helped many people to recognize that the dimensions beyond their ordinary selves are real and living aspects of existence. And as they come gradually to know their Higher Self more and more, they find that their lovingness and wisdom, compassion and serenity are increasingly available. Some people who have used the technique for a long time report eventually being able to dispense with symbols for the Higher Self, such as the Wise Old Man, and with instruments of communication like writing, or formal dialogue. They speak of knowing the “note,” “quality” or “flavor” of messages from the Higher Self very well, and of simply wanting to be in touch with their Higher Self, and then “being there.” For example, a number of therapists who have used this technique for some years report that when they do therapy, the voice that used to belong to the Wise Old Man talks to them spontaneously, and simply operates *in* them – at times, they are even able to let it become their voice, to have it merge with their personality and inform it.

Such levels of realization may not be quick in coming, but they are possible. One important aid in that direction is writing – the practice of writing down our dialogues with the Higher Self. This can include, as I have already noted, writing the preparatory mental considerations – the thinking through of the problem – and then recording the actual answers, the work of discrimination and interpretation, and any other mental elaboration of what the Higher Self has said. In this process of writing things down, one is attempting to establish a palpable connection between the wisdom of the higher unconscious and the conscious mind. Another useful way to facilitate the process is to imagine that one is in fact building a “channel” or “path” through which superconscious energies can flow – and to actually visualize such a path with one’s imagination.

Experiencing  
the energy  
of the Self

At times, when we pose a question, or express a need to the Higher Self, the answer comes in the form of energy of a particular quality. Thus people report a sense of joy, of illumination, flashes of light, an infusion of courage, and many other subtle and very positive experiences. But these tend to be short-lived and ephemeral, unless we “ground” them, expressing them in our actions and making them part of our everyday life. Writing and recording the insights and their later mental elaboration helps to do this, and seems to open the way for progressively higher illuminations. It is as if the work of introducing superconscious material into the activity of our lives makes room for more to emerge.

Doors to our  
higher nature

Such high experiences as feeling the Higher Self speaking through us, or seeking to build a bridge between the superconscious and the daily personality, or expressing progressively higher and higher intuitions, are ones that we have been used to imagine as being reserved for a specially gifted few. And yet it would appear, in practice, that the simple technique of affirmative inner dialogue with our best self helps open the doors of the transpersonal to many who previously had thought them locked. Many who begin using the technique of Dialogue with the Higher Self become more and more aware of the value of connecting their personalities with their higher natures. For pragmatically educated contemporary persons, it provides a fully pragmatic approach to domains that used to be reserved primarily for formalized religion. This can lead to more systematic explorations, through meditation and other techniques, for opening broader channels to the higher aspects of individuality. Eventually, this in turn may lead to an experience beyond dialogue, an experience which has been referred to as the ground of all wisdom, purpose, and love. People then will talk about the Self, the soul, the divine spark, the Atman, as an inner entity — a reality and not a metaphor, an experience of real livingness, beyond duality, the “place” where the individual and the universal are reconciled. And they will speak of such experiences as giving them a sense of fearlessness stemming from a direct knowledge of their true nature, of the ontological reality of their very souls, and of their immortality.

The double beauty of this simple technique is that while there are many who look back on it as having started them toward such exalted heights, it is just as useful in helping to solve the simple problems of everyday living.



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Stuart Miller was educated in Comparative Literature and Modern European Languages. As professor at Berkeley, Rutgers and the State University of New York, Old Westbury, he participated in attempts to find humanistic alternatives to contemporary higher education. He has written a number of books and articles, including *Measure, Number and Weight*; *The Picaresque Novel*; *Hot Springs* and “The Return of the Soul.” He was a Director of the Institute for the Study of Humanistic Medicine, and has been an Editor of *SYNTHESIS*.



## THE PURPOSEFUL IMAGINATION

*"The new developments in depth psychology have made it possible to approach the realm of the unconscious from an inherently affirmative and constructive point of view. The new holistic sense of depths is not conceived in terms of the malfunctioning of personality, but rather in terms of what man's nature requires him to become."*

IRA PROGOFF<sup>1</sup>

## ANSWERS FROM THE UNCONSCIOUS Martha Crampton



RECENT DECADES HAVE WITNESSED a revaluation of the human unconscious and the development of new methods for an expanded use of its processes. The purposeful use of the imagination is a most effective and fruitful means to explore the unconscious. It is of particular interest to psychotherapists, educators and all persons who, in their lives, seek to make use of the positive potential of unconscious processes.

In recent years numerous techniques utilizing mental imagery have been developed. They can be considered to be methods for exploring the unconscious by using the imagination under the direction of the conscious intellect and the will.

When used in such a disciplined way (as opposed to mere day-dreaming or unproductive fantasy) mental imagery offers the possibility of exploring new realms of the unconscious while maintaining contact with our rational faculties. We are able to shift gears back and forth, at will, between the direct experience of our innerworld — including its affective components — and a more rational, analytic framework from which to consider such experience. This has an advantage over the imagery of nocturnal dreams as it permits us to

Is There Not  
less control exercised  
in dreams + therefore  
more valuable.

## Answers from the Unconscious

Imagery: a tool  
for integration

work directly with the imaginal material, extracting its meaning and moving towards conflict resolution. ?

Mental imagery techniques can play a valuable, integrative role by bridging the conscious and unconscious as well as the rational and affective dimensions of our personality.

There is a broad range of techniques available. Some are best used with an experienced person who can serve as a guide, while others can be employed effectively with or without such help. Among the latter, one technique with many varied applications is the method known as "answers from the unconscious."<sup>2</sup> This method is generally used to acquire information, obtain guidance and gain better understanding of our inner processes. The basic idea is to formulate a question, addressing it to one's unconscious, and allowing the answer to emerge in the form of a mental image. Such an answer will emerge spontaneously, in most cases with surprising facility. It is important not to reject images that may seem irrelevant. Usually, given sufficient attention, their significance will become clear. And if a sequence of unrelated images emerges, often the very first one turns out to be the most meaningful. ✓

Mental receptivity

The question posed need not be held continuously in the foreground of one's awareness. Once it has been clearly formulated we can turn our attention to the answer that is about to emerge. Thus the mind takes an expectant attitude — one which is simultaneously receptive, relaxed, and yet goal-directed — much like listening for a faint sound, or being in a movie theatre and waiting for the film images to appear on the screen.

Often, people can do this spontaneously at the first try. But sometimes a beginner in the use of this method will try too hard, or attempt to "make something happen," and this blocks the process of spontaneous emergence. Or one may become anxious that nothing will happen, that there will be no images. This anxiety can be allayed if one knows that the unconscious is a vast storehouse of imagery accessible at all times, if one is reasonably relaxed and trusts the process to occur.\*

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\*Occasionally, some people have difficulty, at first, getting in touch with images because of a mistaken idea of what visualization is. If this is the case for you, we suggest you reread the explanation in *SYNTHESIS 1*, p. 91. [ed.]



The meaning of  
dreams and symbols

Many kinds of questions may be fruitfully explored, provided they are vital, authentic, existential questions for the asker. For example, you may choose to ask a question related to your personal growth, or your relationships with others. This can be illustrated by the case of a woman who closed her eyes and asked, "What is it about my behavior that makes my husband angry?" The image that emerged was that of herself playing the role of a martyr. When she had analyzed its meaning, this image helped her to understand how her behavior provoked her husband's anger. As another example, a man asked, "What is the cause of my headache?" He saw himself hitting his head with a hammer, and later hitting his mother. He realized that the severe headache stemmed from turning back on himself the childhood anger he had felt toward her. Having realized this, and ventilated his anger in harmless cathartic ways,\* his headache disappeared.

Answers from the unconscious may also be used to get in touch with the meaning of a dream image, a drawing, or other symbolic material. Simply ask for an image that expresses the meaning of that symbol. The technique may be used as well for the initial phase of "grounding,"—the relating of symbolic material to everyday life.\*\* For this purpose, you can ask for an image showing you how the message conveyed by the symbol applies to your life. In answer to such a question, you will probably see yourself in a concrete life situation. A woman who first used the "answers from the unconscious" technique to ask about the next obstacle to her development saw an image in the form of hooks, and got a feeling of wanting to clutch or grab something. She could not understand what this meant, so she then asked for an image of a real-life situation in which she had experienced that same feeling. She then saw herself clutching her husband, playing a dependent role with him and refusing to accept responsibility for her own actions.

This last example shows that it is quite possible—and very productive—to ask for an image that expresses, or that is related to, a particular feeling one is experiencing. This procedure enables us

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\*See for example Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis, A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, Viking Press, New York, 1971, pp. 101, ff., or S. Vargiu, "Psychosynthesis Case Studies," Synthesis Graduate School, San Francisco, California, pp. 8, ff.

\*\*This is described in *SYNTHESIS 1*, p. 92. [ed.]

Feelings expressed  
through images



Steps toward  
greater meaning

to further understand the meaning and causes of our feelings, to get in touch with those that are repressed and to respond to the needs and urges that generated them. It is especially powerful when the feeling is a recurrent one. This approach is also quite useful, in a therapeutic situation, when the client is not aware of anything specific to work on and a productive starting point is needed.

Answers from the unconscious are also useful for finding more constructive ways of being or acting – the next phase of grounding. One might ask, for example, “How could I act in a class so that my students would be more involved in their work?” or “What do I need to develop to overcome my fear of what others will think?” Often the answer suggests the development of a particular inner attitude or transpersonal quality such as “joy,” “courage,” “self-acceptance,” etc. which can be purposefully cultivated.\*

Sometimes when using the answers from the unconscious method, it is necessary to go through several steps in order to find a response that is really useful and meaningful. In this way, the answer to one question is used as a starting point to formulate another more precise question, and so on until one feels satisfied with the final answer. One woman who had asked “What do I need to work on?” saw a wall. The wall seemed to be too vague and general to be very useful to her, so she then asked, “What is the specific meaning of the wall for me?” This time she saw a jagged-toothed saw, which, after some reflection, put her in touch with a “cutting” quality within herself. Then, in order to more fully ground the experience, she asked her unconscious to show her how she was being cutting with people in everyday life. She then saw herself in various relationships expressing critical attitudes towards certain people. She took some time to understand how her overly critical tendencies were creating a “wall” between herself and others. Finally, in order to end on a constructive note, she asked what she needed to develop within herself in order to overcome this tendency. The answer she received was an image of an enclosure that seemed to include both herself and another person. Unlike the original wall that served to separate her from others, this image pointed the way toward taking others within her own boundary. She began to sense a way of

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\*There is a special technique designed for this purpose. See Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis, A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, Viking Press, New York, 1971, pp. 223-224.



identifying herself empathically with the needs of other people, so that she could experience others "from the inside," rather than from the outside as a critical judge. As she continued to concentrate on this image, the sense of oneness with others grew in intensity and generality. She had a peak experience, realizing the great joy and love that could come through this kind of blending.



The interpretation  
of images

This example illustrates the importance of taking sufficient time to reflect on the meaning and implications of each image so that its full impact and message is felt. It also illustrates the principle of ending on a constructive and positive note, so that one is not simply left with an awareness of blockage and limitation. Taking the process to a positive ending has a generally encouraging and vitalizing effect: it allows the person to see his positive potentials and to realize that he can turn an apparent obstacle into a stepping stone in his growth, by mobilizing the will to overcome it.

A further way of extracting meaning from the images that appear is to make a thorough rational and intuitive interpretation of their nature and function. An example is given below.

A client saw an image of himself carrying a plank with five lamps on it, connected by a cord to the East Indian shop where he had obtained it. It reminded him of a Jewish menorah or candlestick used for religious purposes, though the number of lights was five rather than the traditional seven, and the lights were table lamps rather than candles. His association to five lamps was five working days. The lamps were seen as something used in a living room where one might have a social gathering. In other words, they were lights used for a profane rather than religious purpose. The image of East Indians, he said, was associated with oriental spirituality or mysticism and ideas of inner light, but to him they were also great talkers and tended to talk things to death rather than act. This corresponded to his feeling of pride in carrying the light and a wish to display what seemed to be a sort of trophy he had won. He was then able to see that this image expressed his own spiritual pride. He had been so concerned with talking about his experience, with displaying his "accomplishment," he said, that he dispersed its energy, profaning a sacred experience in making it the object of "living room" conversation, a product of the "five working days," a personal achievement rather than a "gift from the Lord on the day of the Sabbath."<sup>3</sup>

Understanding  
through  
identification

Another valuable mental imagery technique is that of identifying with the person or other element one is visualizing, by "becoming" it in one's imagination. This approach has been used extensively by Perls,<sup>4</sup> and has been discussed by Gerard<sup>5</sup> with the name of "symbolic identification." With this approach, one is able to better understand the various elements in a dream or visualization. The elements of such symbolic productions usually represent tendencies



or characteristics of our own personality. By identifying ourselves with them in our imagination, we can sense their quality and “own” these previously unacknowledged aspects of ourselves. This will enable us to begin the process of transmutation and integration of these internal elements. It will also help us develop empathy, and avoid distorting our perception of other people by projecting erroneous aspects onto them.

**Participation in  
universal life**

Symbolic identification may also be used to expand our consciousness and to gain a deeper sense of participation in, and oneness with the universe. “Becoming” such natural symbols as a flower, a tree, a rock, a river, the ocean, the sun, or even the galaxy, can be particularly valuable for this purpose. This is especially effective and appropriate after personal work which has resulted in the elimination of some obstacle. It is possible to attempt this type of symbolic identification on one’s own, though people can generally enter into the experience more fully when some sort of guided visualization is used.

In addition to the basic visualization technique of allowing an image to appear on the mind screen, other techniques utilizing

A broad conception  
of imagery

visual imagery may be employed for obtaining answers from the unconscious. One may, for example, ask to see a word or phrase written on a chalk board instead of the more pictorial symbols that have been discussed to this point. Or it is possible to combine visual and auditory techniques, by entering into dialogue with an image after it appears. While most people tend to receive answers as visual images, some who are not strongly visual will more commonly experience auditory imagery as though hearing an "inner voice," or will even experience a kinesthetic form of imagery. Thus a variety of "channels"—either singly or in combination—may be used in obtaining the answer: in fact, what we call mental "imagery" can include the full range of our senses.\*

Inner dialogue

In exploring the elements of our imagery we may notice that some appear to be in conflict with others. This is a sign that some integrative work needs to be done. One way to begin this is to set up an inner dialogue between the elements involved, and gradually work toward greater mutual understanding. One can thus achieve greater coordination, and possibly the integration of the conflicting aspects. This process is usually deeper and more meaningful if at some point we actually *become*, in our imagination, first one and then the other element. In this way, we sense more accurately what the true needs of each part are and what message it can give us.\*\*

Integration of the warring factions is usually achieved most effectively by evoking a symbol of the "fair witness." On occasion, especially when there is a strong need to encourage self-nurturing tendencies, we may think of it as a "wise and compassionate Person" representing the "Higher Self." My own experience suggests that this designation tends to evoke more love, while the fair witness descriptor tends to evoke clarity of perception and insight into the problems involved. With the mediation of this objective element of our consciousness, we are generally able to understand more clearly what the true picture is and how the dysfunctional patterns can be corrected.

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\*Exercises to develop all sensory modalities of our imagination can be found in Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis, A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, pp. 152-163.

\*\*See for example "Subpersonalities," *SYNTHESIS I*, pp. 80-81. [ed.]

Symbols of  
inner wisdom

Evoking the image of a sage or other symbol of inner wisdom and entering into dialogue with it is a particularly powerful technique. It may bring about very meaningful insights and most valuable guidance applicable to almost any inner or outer situation. There are a variety of symbols of inner wisdom such as a Wise Old Man, a Wise Old Woman, a phoenix, eagle, or dove, a gem, a spring, fountain, flame, sun, star, or light. Sometimes these symbols emerge spontaneously, or they can be evoked intentionally. Each symbol has its own particular value, its own kind of wisdom. For example, the masculine and feminine archetypes of wisdom are often complementary, with the male symbol tending to give insights of a more guiding, affirming nature and the female symbol tending to play a more nurturing role. So it is worthwhile to experiment with several of these symbols, or allow our unconscious to choose the one most appropriate to meet our particular need at the time.

In the communication with the symbol of inner wisdom, sometimes the verbal dialogue is the most important aspect. Other times, the visual imagery plays the central role. At other times still, the experience takes place largely at intuitive levels. There is then a direct realization of certain realities without much verbal or visual exchange, and the experience can become one of contemplation, of absorption in the awareness communicated.\*

### PRECAUTIONS

Unused knowledge  
delays our growth

In evoking answers from the unconscious there are certain precautions to be observed, because — as with any other effective approach — it is not without pitfalls or limitations. It can open up to us a wealth of knowledge but it can also land us in trouble if we do not use it wisely. For example, once we are convinced of its validity, we must be prepared to apply in our everyday life the knowledge we have received. Too much unused knowledge undermines the will and dissipates energy, delaying our growth. ✓

We must also pay attention to our own rhythm of unfoldment — what is a realistic step for ourselves — for if we attempt to move too

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\*This technique of reaching for our inner source of wisdom and guidance is presented in detail in the article "Dialogue with the Higher Self," pp. 122-139, this issue. [ed.]

Individual rhythm  
of growth

fast we risk defeating our purpose. In other words, we need to be sensitive to the scope of the material we are dealing with. This is particularly important for people with a present or past history of serious emotional difficulties, or for those who are on their first steps along the path of personal growth. In general, we must use our common sense to avoid "biting off more than we can chew" at any one time, especially if we are not working with the support of a counselor, therapist or other guide — or be prepared to seek such help if this becomes indicated by the nature of the material that emerges.

In order to obtain the best answer, it is worthwhile to ask for it with our consciousness as much as possible in a "centered" place. This means detaching ourselves from the issues involved, seeing them "at a distance," by disidentifying from them, and, if we have learned how, identifying with the "I" or personal self.

Answers from  
many sources

Another important and more subtle consideration in seeking answers from our unconscious has to do with "whom to ask for an answer." The woman who wanted to know what it was about her behavior that made her husband angry could have addressed her question to her unconscious in general, or to a specific element in it. This element could have been an image of her husband, or that of a wise old man. The "husband" would likely have answered according to his own subjective perspective, while the Wise Old Man would have given a more objective response, and probably advice on improving the situation. Thus the two answers would have been different, but complementary. One would have given her a valuable insight into her husband's point of view (whether right or wrong) and helped her develop understanding and empathy for him. The other would have been more inclusive, reaching closer to the roots of the problem, and pointing to its solution.

Levels of the  
unconscious

In general, our unconscious has many levels,\* and as we have seen, different kinds of answers can come from different levels. If one chooses to address elements at different levels, such as, for example, the subpersonalities involved as well as the Wise Old Man, it is best to work with the higher element last, as it will have a more inclusive and synthetic quality and thus will help to integrate all the previous material.

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\*See diagram in "What is Psychosynthesis?," p. 117. [ed.]

A need for  
caution

But in most cases—and especially when first using this technique—it is sufficient, at least as a first step, to address “the unconscious” generally. In this case, it is important to deal with the answer on its own merits. In other words, one needs to use appropriate caution before accepting any answer from the unconscious—or any other message in life—at face value, and then acting on it. The answer may be coming from a source different from the one that was addressed, and thus be more or less objective and more or less appropriate. Therefore, we can best deal with all answers with common sense, discernment and objectivity, as we would with any advice given to us.\* But even when the answer comes from a subpersonality, or other element in the middle or lower unconscious, it can be of great value, not necessarily as something to follow, but definitely as a source of understanding of that element, of how it acts, and what it needs.

#### OTHER APPLICATIONS

These techniques for obtaining answers from the unconscious have been used effectively not only for personal growth and psychotherapy, but also in such fields as education, creative problem-solving and work with groups. They offer an effective method that can complement the purely rational approach by shedding fresh light on a situation and opening up new possibilities to examine. Mental imagery often functions with a rapidity, depth and vividness that can replace many hours of merely “talking about” something.

As a group technique, the method is effective for exploring a question of general interest or for generating personal material which can later be discussed in small groups.\*\*

Creativity and  
problem-solving

Mental imagery techniques are also being used in research and in educational and industrial settings for group problem-solving. The

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\*Much specific information about how to evaluate and interpret messages from the superconscious is given in “Dialogue with the Higher Self,” pp. 131-135, this issue. It is generally applicable to answers from any area of the unconscious. [ed.]

\*\*Specific symbols that can be used for group visualizations as well as individual therapy have been suggested by R. Desoille<sup>6</sup> and H.K. Leuner.<sup>7</sup> Some of these are the meadow, the mountain, the river, the cup, the sword, the house, etc.

Experiencing  
the physical world

“Synectics” method developed by Gordon<sup>8</sup> uses metaphors and analogies drawn from fields other than the problem under investigation to open up new ways of seeing things. In one of the steps in synectics called “personal analogy,” the group members imagine what it feels like to actually be whatever object they are considering—whether it is a bird, a windmill, or an octopus. This is essentially the same technique as symbolic identification.

In the field of education, Gordon<sup>9</sup> has also applied the synectics principles of using personally experienced metaphor and analogy as a tool in concept formation. In a lesson on Boyle’s Law, children were asked to imagine what it would feel like if they were inside a cylinder and a piston was pushed down on top of them. In coming to understand experientially the principle that as volume goes down, pressure goes up, they came up with such statements as, “Like if you were a molecule and you’re getting more and more squished between the cylinder walls and all the other molecules, you get crowded and squished” and “As things close in on me, I hit more things . . . more often.” Gordon holds that such ways of learning are more effective as they permit the child to grasp a concept from inside rather than by simply memorizing a formula. Also, there is very valuable indirect learning for the students in that they are being told implicitly that their inner worlds, feelings and experiences are important.

There are many other rich possibilities in the field of education. Techniques of visualization can be of great value in helping children as well as adults to express their creative resources. Guided imagination exercises can help people to enter a rich world of inner experience that can be expressed in many ways, including writing, drama, music and art. The “Method” school of acting and the “creative drama” approach utilize such techniques to develop dramatic imagination. Morgan<sup>10</sup> has used techniques based on imaginative evocation of sensory experiences as a way of evoking material in teaching creative writing. He suggests, for example, that students recall a childhood scene, concentrating on sensory data such as colors, textures, sounds, smells, bodily sensations, etc.

Work in the field of confluent education<sup>11</sup> is concerned with integration of the cognitive and affective domains. Mental imagery techniques could contribute to this process by helping students to get in touch experientially with material from various disciplines. The symbolic identification technique could be used, for example,

to help bring about empathy with people in diverse cultural contexts or with other life forms. Fantasy could be extended by the use of dramatic techniques. Projective imagery of the “answers from the unconscious” type could be used to explore students’ attitudes toward various issues (e.g. “Allow an image to come that reflects your perception of the role of government” or “the way you perceive Black people”).

Mental imagery  
with children

A course offered at the University of Vermont on “Myth, Symbol and Ritual” utilizes mental imagery exercises to add an experiential dimension to the theoretical material. De Mille<sup>12</sup> has developed a set of guided fantasies for younger children, designed to set free the imagination, to ventilate feelings and to open up new ways of looking at things. In the field of creative problem-solving and creativity development, the writer has worked with a number of clients to help them solve problems in a variety of disciplines, from mathematics and engineering to art and philosophy. Several people who had reached an impasse in working on research problems of a theoretical or practical nature were enabled to break through to a creative solution with the aid of this method. Objectives of working in this manner are twofold: to help people remove obstacles in the personality which block clear perception of the problem or solution, and to help them get in touch, through mental imagery, with the creative sources in the higher unconscious.

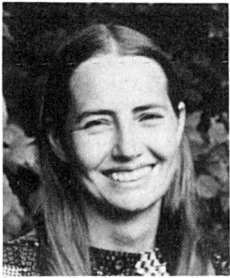
A precious tool

In summary, the imaginal world offers a vast field to explore, of endless fascination and great potential usefulness. The imagination, or “image-making” faculty, is a precious tool that we can learn to harness for human betterment and delight. Like all tools, it can be used for good or evil. It was Coué who said that when imagination and will are in conflict, imagination will win out. So we have the choice of bringing our imagination into harmony with our will or allowing it to function in a chaotic and negative way. It is a challenge to all who seek to realize their highest potentials to learn to use imagination wisely and intelligently, so that it can play its part in our growth toward wholeness.



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