PSYCHOLOGY REVIVALS

A Psychology with a Soul

Psychosynthesis in evolutionary context

Jean Hardy

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‘Call the world if you Please “The Vale of Soul-making”. Then you will find out the use of the world. … I say “*Soul making*” Soul as distinguished from an Intelligence – There may be intelligence or sparks of the divinity in millions – but they are not Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. I(n)telligences are atoms of perception – they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God – How then are Souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them – so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each ones individual existence? How, but by the medium of a world like this?… I will call the *world* a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read – I will call the *human heart* the *horn Book* used in that School – and I will call the *child able to read, the Soul* made from that *school* and its *horn-book*. Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul? A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways!… As various as the Lives of Men are – so various become their souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls, Identical Souls of the sparks of his own essence – This appears to me a faint sketch of a system of Salvation which does not affront our reason and humanity.’

Letter from John Keats to his brother George 21 April 1819

Foreword

by Piero Ferrucci

As far as I know, Roberto Assagioli is the only individual who has participated personally and actively in the unfurling of two distinct and fundamental revolutions in twentieth century psychology.

The first revolution was the birth of psychoanalysis and depth psychology in the beginning of the century: Assagioli, then a young medical student, presented his MD dissertation on psychoanalysis, wrote in the official *Jahrbuch* side by side with Freud and Jung, and was part of the Zurich Freud Society, the group of early psychoanalytical pioneers. The idea of unconscious processes in the mind made a lasting impression on him, an impression which he later developed into a variety of hypotheses well beyond the boundaries of orthodox psychoanalysis.

The second revolution in which Assagioli participated was the creation of humanistic and transpersonal psychology in the 1960s. A. H. Maslow was the pioneer of these new developments. The main idea was simple: rather than focusing on pathology in order to define the human being (as psychoanalysis had all too often done), or on the structural similarities between the human and the animal nervous system (as behaviourism suggested), the humanistic and transpersonal point of view, while not denying the findings of the other schools, put the main emphasis on the organism's striving for wholeness, on the human being's potential for growth, expansion of consciousness, health, love and joy.

Richness in contacts and interchanges was quite important in Assagioli's background: consider such diverse acquaintances (some of them brief, others lasting) as Italian idealist Benedetto Croce,

Russian esotericist P. D. Ouspensky, German philosopher Hermann Keyserling, Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, Sufi mystic Inhayat Khan, Zen Scholar D. T. Suzuki, Tibet's explorer Alexandra David Neel, plus psychologists Viktor Frankl, the founder of logotherapy, Robert Desoille, creator of the guided daydream, and C. G. Jung himself, before and after his break with psychoanalysis. Such contacts, coupled with a life of experimentation and reflection, provided an undoubtedly wide perspective for Assagioli's creation, which he called psychosynthesis. Many contributions in this system are worth mentioning:

- the multi-polar model of the human psyche, with its various 'subpersonalities' (as opposed to depth psychology's bi-polar or tri-polar traditional structure);
- the central position of the self as focus of coordination and integration of the personality;
- the importance of the will, and of being a conscious centre capable of choice and purpose, in the midst of the apparently chaotic and contradictory events of life;
- the existence of the transpersonal realm: the higher unconscious as source of inspiration, ecstasy, creativity, intuition, and illumination;
- the pathology of the sublime: the occurrence of psychological disturbances of a spiritual, rather than psychological, origin and nature;
- the use of a wide range of active techniques for everybody to use on his or her own to further their personal and spiritual development;
- the use of imagery for the exploration of the unconscious, the transformation of neurotic patterns, and the expansion of awareness;
- the concept of a natural tendency towards synthesis and 'syntropy' (the opposite of entropy), that is, towards the spontaneous organization of meaningful and coherent fields within the psyche.

This is all abundant material for investigation and discussion.

However, psychosynthesis has not won to date an academic acknowledgment equal to its success among those in the helping professions who look for effective tools with minimum working hypotheses, and among seekers who look for a religiously neutral, psychologically oriented approach to the higher realms of consciousness. The reason for this difference lies probably in the pragmatic orientation of psychosynthesis: in its outlook, results (educational, therapeutic, spiritual) are what counts. Nonetheless, practical success should be balanced by a clear understanding of the place of psychosynthesis in contemporary psychology and in the history of ideas. For this reason *A Psychology with a Soul* is to be welcomed as a most needed contribution.

In reading this book one is struck – among other things – by an apparent contradiction: psychosynthesis claims to be an experimentally and scientifically based psychology; on the other hand, it appears to have an affinity with the esoteric traditions – a perspective widely divergent, if not opposite, to the scientific approach. How can this contradiction be explained? The answer is simple. Esotericism and empirical science are undoubtedly at two ends of a spectrum: esotericism starts with universal statements about reality, and ends up with the particular and the contingent. Empirical science, instead, starts from the particular and the contingent and ends up in the universal, i.e. in general laws and principles. Esotericism is based on faith and intuition. Science is based on experience. The two outlooks are, in fact, symmetrically opposed.

Psychosynthesis follows the attitudes and the methods of science, insofar as science can be applied to the study of human consciousness. Psychosynthesis has been slowly and gradually built up through experiment and observation; people approaching it will not find in it a credo, rather a set of techniques and hypotheses. No unquestioning acceptance is required, nor the following of a teacher. Only personal experience is the guiding principle here. And whereas esotericism and religion offer specific directions for one's conduct in life, psychosynthesis views its task as that of merely enabling an individual to envisage a wider range of choices and values; what to pick is up to him or her alone.

One point here needs to be made, however: it is commonly

accepted by those who study scientific methodology that scientists (even those in the hard sciences) use all kinds of hypotheses, analogies, and visual images to support their investigations. In the field of psychology, for instance, Freud was inspired by Greek tragedy; Jung found alchemy a useful heuristic device. However, psychoanalysis is not Greek tragedy and analytical psychology is not the same as alchemy. Assagioli was interested in the great spiritual insights and teachings of all times: this influence certainly had a deep effect on his perspective and his choices; it was a source of inspiration, and helped him emphasize the spiritual element, the 'soul' or Self, in the development of psychosynthesis. However, this spiritual or transpersonal perspective was subject to empirical verification in the lives of everyone; it was a way of expanding the scope of observed phenomena, not an imposed dogma nor a compulsory key for interpreting reality. Assagioli always made it clear that he considered psychosynthesis a development of twentieth century psychology, and, as such, independent of any religious or esoteric belief: people of all backgrounds (including atheists) could use it to live more satisfactorily and develop their potential.

If we keep this point in mind we can fully appreciate the novelty of psychosynthesis and its endeavour to introduce mystical and spiritual – or as Assagioli calls them, 'transpersonal' – experiences as a legitimate object of inquiry in the field of psychology.

A Psychology with a Soul provides an excellent framework for understanding these issues and many others. We should be grateful to Jean Hardy for providing a comprehensive view of the relationship of psychosynthesis with contemporary culture as well as with ageless traditions. Comfortably and competently moving in such diverse fields as philosophy, mysticism, esotericism, psychology, and the history and methodology of science, she has given a vivid picture of the rich background into which psychosynthesis was born.

Piero Ferrucci

Florence, April 1986

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General introduction

Psychosynthesis is a transpersonal, or spiritual, psychotherapy, a phenomenon of the twentieth century Western world. It is a theory and practice of individual development and growth, though with a potential for wider application into social and indeed world-wide settings; and it assumes that each human being is a soul as well as a personality.

It was founded by Roberto Assagioli, an Italian living in Florence for much of his long life from 1888 to 1974. Dr Assagioli was a psychiatrist who was involved in the development of psychoanalytic theory at the very beginning of his career, but who worked out his framework for psychosynthesis simultaneously and independently.

Psychosynthesis was initially described in outline in Assagioli's paper 'La psicologia delle idee-forza e la psicagogia' in 1908. He worked as a psychiatrist and doctor in the First World War, and in 1926 set up the Istituto di Cultura e Terapia Psichica in Rome. He survived Mussolini's years of power in Italy with some hardship, being once imprisoned in 1938 and forced to flee to the countryside. He continued developing his theories, writing articles and practising as a psychiatrist after the Second World War, but it was only in the 1960s that psychosynthesis became internationally known. In 1961, the Istituto di Psicosintesi was founded in Florence. Centres have now been developed all over the world and the theory and practice is well known and respected in the humanistic/transpersonal field.

Roberto Assagioli was a 'thief' (he said) in his use of the many fields of study with which he was conversant. He lists many of these in his book *Psychosynthesis* published in 1965 – the psychodynamic movement (Janet, Freud, Adler, Jung, Rank, Horney), psychosomatic medicine, psychology, psychiatry and

anthropology; also the psychology of religion (William James, Evelyn Underhill) and the investigations of the 'superconscious' and 'holism' (Bucke, Ouspensky, Maslow, Progoff, Smuts, Keyserling); and the study of parapsychology, though he was careful to use this material with discretion. He was most interested in the many techniques of individual psychotherapy, and psychosynthesis is well known for its flexible use of a large number of techniques: these include Gestalt, guided fantasy, meditation, group psychotherapy, use of art, music and writing, work on meaning and purpose as well as on problems.

The sources that he lists in *Psychosynthesis* are those which he regarded as scientific. Like Freud, and indeed most psychiatrists today, he was determined that his work should pass muster and be accepted as a respectable scientific theory. In the twentieth century, a scientific study of the unconscious has just begun. But psychosynthesis, like psychoanalysis, was developed outside the universities, in a 'school'; it is still not widely accepted or known by academics whose work is based firmly in the scientific tradition, the predominant paradigm of formal knowledge for the past 300 years in Western society: there is a clear and unbridgeable distinction between science and religion.

Assagioli's work, however, in its assumption of the existence of the soul, harks back to a wide-ranging literature of religious and spiritual mysticism, both Western and Eastern, to neoplatonic theory, to the many mystics of the Middle Ages in Christian and Jewish thought – Dante, Eckhart, St John of the Cross, the Kabbalah, to the schools of knowledge founded in the West before the split between science and religion, to Buddhism and Hinduism, and to classical Greek philosophy, particularly Plato. At the beginning of the twentieth century, and also in the last twenty years, there has been access to and fascination with many forms of hitherto generally hidden knowledge, now made widely available. Assagioli was brought up in sympathy with this wide range of material – his mother became a follower of theosophy, an esoteric school founded in America in 1886, with a branch founded in Italy in 1902. And the twin commitments to scientific work with the unconscious, and religious and mystical knowledge based on personal experience, were present from his first writings.

He explicitly kept these mystical interests separate from psychosynthesis, but clearly his wide knowledge of many centuries of spiritual thought is relevant to the theory and practice eventually developed in psychosynthesis – though this is rarely acknowledged in his therapeutic writing. This split has made the job of tracing the influences on psychosynthesis quite difficult, and sometimes speculative.

The immediate question that this study addresses concerns the origin of the ideas in the psychosynthesis framework. Where do the underlying ideas come from? How does Assagioli come to incorporate the idea of a soul into his psychology? What are the basic assumptions of the many techniques used in the system, emphasizing symbol, myth and imagery? Why did his notion of the unconscious develop so differently from that of psychoanalysis? So the tracing of ideas from his own account, from experience of psychosynthesis training, and from a study of his own library which is still open to the public in Florence, is the first piece of detective work that is attempted here.

The second question is on the nature of the knowledge in psychosynthesis. Is it scientific, as Assagioli maintained? How far can therapy be 'scientific' in any case, and what does the word mean in this context? What is the significance of Assagioli's lifelong interest in spiritual material, and how far can that be related to the theory and practice of psychosynthesis? Are there different kinds of knowledge incorporated into such a system? And how can we understand these questions within the framework of the history of ideas, which attempts to trace the social and intellectual origins and movement of thought?

Finally, how is it that a transpersonal, or spiritual, psychotherapy comes to exist and then to develop in the twentieth century? Is this the *only* time that such a phenomenon could have occurred? What is its significance? And can the twentieth century split between psychology on the one hand and theology on the other be healed through such a framework? Or is the attempt an inauthentic one, in the sense that it cuts across the boundaries of disciplines which are widely accepted as different? And what is the connection between Assagioli's theory and practice of personal therapy and his notion of the 'synthesis' of humanity, the vision of

a 'whole' world as well as a healed person?

A question for a researcher of the origins of the theory, which combines in such a magpie way so many concepts from all parts of the world and from most historical epochs, is its authenticity. Keen, in an article on 'The golden mean of Roberto Assagioli' published in *Psychology Today* in December 1974, asked frankly whether psychosynthesis 'is a marriage of the best in modern psychology or an eclectic mishmash that boils down to a game of words?' My own judgment is now, on the basis of both my research and my personal experiences of psychosynthesis, that out of his wide reading in mysticism and his own mystical experience, his capacity for feeling and work with people, and his originality of mind, Assagioli has woven a theory that makes deep and sane sense.

Assagioli produced two books, *Psychosynthesis*, published in 1965 and composed largely of a series of articles, and *The Act of Will*, published in 1974. There are also numerous unpublished papers written throughout his life and mostly undated. His own writing, however, does not really convey the width and origins of his work, or set it forward in any systematic way. And because of his predominantly psychological and practical approach to psychosynthesis, the most deeply philosophical issues are just not discussed in his work – the practice is presented as an already created whole, without much explanation of the context of ideas which are so wide and deep. This present study, in examining this context, should at least provide the beginnings of a study of the wider framework, which is in its own right most fascinating, and significant to our present situation.

Keen, in his article, contrasts the self-confidence and optimism of psychosynthesis with the Christian tradition, which accepts the 'fallen' nature of mankind, and comments, 'in the Christian tradition healing comes from accepting our brokenness, not from synthesizing our parts into a perfect whole.' He adds, 'the idea of wholeness, realizing the full human potential, transcending contradictions, achieving enlightenment, intrigues me.' The potential involved in the theory is intriguing, both in practice and in the roots from which it springs. But Keen offers an unreal

distinction, because the theory of psychosynthesis postulates that in accepting and working with our brokenness and fragmentation, we have the means of becoming whole.

Both the concepts of transcendence (God being experienced as the 'other') and immanence ('the God within') are drawn on in psychosynthesis, and both, Assagioli believed, could work towards the fuller potential of the individual. The more the person becomes what he or she could be, the more the unique individual becomes truly part of the whole. These elements are found in all mystical religions, with some placing more emphasis on transcendence and dualism (the differentiation of spirit and matter, and the journey towards contact with the spirit being the goal of the aspiring person), and others on immanence and monism (the recognition and realization of the Self, the soul within). Assagioli insisted that psychosynthesis was religiously non-specific, and both concepts are implicit in the theory and practice.

Psychosynthesis, then, can be thought of both as part of the development of scientific theories of the nature of the person in psychology and psychotherapy, and as part of the long mystic tradition, traceable over thousands of years. It is in tracing this material that I attempt to answer the questions raised earlier.

This research into psychosynthesis was triggered by my considerable curiosity about the origins of the ideas in the framework Assagioli presents but which he does not explain: as the spiritual origins of much of the source material became clearer, and more intriguing, the relationship between Assagioli's self-identification as a scientist and a clinician and this material became most interesting, and the relationship between science and mysticism became part of my search: the emergence of 'trans-personal psychotherapy' seemed to me more clearly a twentieth century rewriting of much older patterns, tackling a split that now exists between psychology and religion. This search has led me into fields of knowledge I did not know existed, and has uncovered to me older frameworks of theory and experience, which throw much light on our present struggling theories of the nature of the person, and maybe of the development of the human race. Perhaps it is true that in the twentieth century we have forgotten much of what people in the past once knew. The idea and experience of

‘synthesis’ may have compelling relevance to us on many levels of understanding and over many historical periods.

I

Psychosynthesis: History and Concepts

Introduction

Psychosynthesis is rooted in the early part of the twentieth century. It was founded on the theory of the person based on drives and instincts which was current at that time, and on the discoveries about working with unconscious material promulgated by Freud and Jung in their great psychoanalytic international conferences held before the First World War. But from the beginning, both Jung and Assagioli held that the unconscious is potential as well as problem, and that the two are related: it is in working through the past, the defences that are no longer useful, and the Shadow, that the potential can be reached: creativity springs from these areas beyond the rational and the everyday mind.

Psychosynthesis, like any other living theory, has developed over time and will continue to evolve. The term 'psychosynthesis' had been used before Roberto Assagioli adopted it as the most appropriate description of his scheme of transpersonal, personal and social therapy. In the Freud/Jung letters,[16:47] Jung mentions the first system of psychosynthesis, advanced by Bezzola and reported to the Amsterdam Psychoanalytic Conference in the year 1907. Freud irritably remarked that this earlier version of psychosynthesis was just the same as psychoanalysis – 'after all,' he wrote, 'if we try to analyse to find the repressed fragments, it is only in order to put them together again'.[167:18F] Assagioli used the Italian 'psicosintesi' when he opened his first Institute in 1926, but in English he translated the term as 'psychosynthesis'. His synthesis is distinguished from almost all other therapies, including Jungian, by its specific and explicit techniques to put the 'repressed fragments' back together again.

In Chapter 1, I will describe first of all Assagioli's life-story as it relates to the formulation of psychosynthesis as a method of

working – the early years in contact with the beginnings of the psychoanalytic movement; the long period of time working in Italy founding and developing the theory and practice, from about 1913 to the mid-1950s, forty years at least, in relative obscurity; and the final flowering from the late 1950s to his death in 1974. Psychosynthesis continues to flourish in its many centres around the world, and some of its old forms give way to new ones, influenced most particularly by new theories of scientific knowledge, and a renewed acknowledgment of the feminine.

The next three chapters (Chapters 2 to 4) give the 'egg-shaped diagram', the picture of the nature of the person that Assagioli used from at least the 1930s onward, and which has links both with the Kabbalah and with the philosopher's stone. I am presenting this material following as closely as possible the way that Assagioli gave it, but am throughout concerned to pick up the assumptions contained in this work, and both the roots of these assumptions and how they may be changing. Chapters 3 and 4 similarly go on to consider in more detail the theory of subpersonalities and of the superconscious energies, looking at the origins of the models and their developing use.

Chapters 5 and 6 move more explicitly to a consideration of 'the unconscious' as a concept: the way it has developed, and its roots in symbols, dreams and fairy-tales, and then the use of particular techniques used over time to get in touch with this material, from projective techniques to Gestalt. The development of so many techniques is an indication of a technological and scientific age – though spiritual disciplines have always been used throughout history as a method of self-development and guides along the spiritual path.

The final chapter in this section is on the idea of synthesis as developed by Assagioli – not only personal self-development, but the extension of the idea to social forces, in couples, families, groups, whole societies, and, in fact, the whole of the human race in its relationship with the world in which it lives. This vision is always implicit in Assagioli's material and springs from his wide reading in spiritual views of the universe. This whole account of psychosynthesis, contained in Chapters 2 to 7, is a description given, as it were, from the inside. The purpose is not to evaluate

the theory at this point, but to offer it as a starting point for the investigation of its roots, and of its significance as a framework for understanding and working with the human situation.

By the end of this part of the work, the two strands of mysticism and spirituality, and science and technology, will already have appeared. The next part of the book will go on to investigate some of the deep roots of these two strands of thought as they most influenced Assagioli, and as they stretch back through the centuries.

1
The history and development of psychosynthesis

The early period 1888–1926

Roberto Assagioli was born Roberto Grego on 27 February 1888 in Venice. His mother was Elena Kaula (1863–1925), who married Grego or Greco (Christian name unknown); Grego died when Roberto was very young, and his mother married Alessandro Assagioli, whose surname Roberto assumed. He was often known, in fact, as Roberto Grego Assagioli.

He was brought up in a cultured upper-middle-class Jewish family. His education was a typically classical one, including five years of Greek and eight of Latin, together with the study of several other languages. In his own home, Italian, French and English were all spoken and he was always comfortably trilingual. He also undertook German when he was 8, and Russian and Sanskrit at the University of Florence after 1906. Like all Italian schoolchildren, he was very familiar with Dante Alighieri's work, particularly the *Divine Comedy*, and it is recorded that he was particularly impressed by his teacher of Dante. The influences of Plato and Dante show directly in psychosynthesis, and were a constant source of inspiration to him throughout his life.

He lived in Venice until he went to medical school in Florence in 1906. Throughout his childhood he was devoted to his parents, who encouraged him to visit many European countries, including Russia. It was to this early exposure to many great cultures and ways of living that he felt he owed the width and depth of his own perception. His mother became a Theosophist, and this opened up

to him the fields of spiritual and esoteric knowledge early in his life. He was interested in Jewish culture and continued to receive Jewish newspapers and belong to Jewish organizations for most of his life. He also became a mountain climber – a key image in psychosynthesis.

Assagioli trained as a medical student in Florence from 1906 and lived for much of his life in this city. Both in Venice and in Florence, the great artistic achievements of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance constantly surround the citizen. That particular synthesis of Greek, humanistic and religious ideas, resulting in supreme painting, sculpture and architecture, encouraged his strong appreciation of music, art and nature. It was also a synthesis he attempted in his own work.

In an article, which is undated and unsigned, on the history of psychosynthesis, it is stated that Assagioli was writing and publishing articles on psychological disciplines and therapies in the early 1900s. He was also studying Max Muller's translations of mystical and Theosophical writing at this time. His first article we know of, written in 1906, was entitled 'Gli effetti del riso e le loro applicazioni pedogagiche' – 'On the effects of laughter and its relation to education': this later became known as his paper 'Smiling wisdom'. At this time Assagioli seems to have been working on the boundaries of medicine, education and religion, a combination of interests which were to form the basis of psychosynthesis. It is recorded that he attended international conferences on the history of religions (William James's book on the varieties of religious experience had come out in 1902) and on moral education, in England in 1908, and his contributions were reported in the review *Scientia*. He met there many orientalists including Coomarasswamy. In that year he also gave a paper at the International Congress for Philosophy on the similarities between the German mystic J. G. Hamann and Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American transcendentalist.

The early years of the century were an exciting time in the development of knowledge. Religions and religious knowledge were being re-examined: scientific and technological knowledge was burgeoning in every field – Einstein was just beginning to publish material; education was being questioned and re-assessed

by people such as Froebel, Montessori, and later Steiner; Eastern philosophies and religions were recognized by some groups as having an ancient wisdom to offer the West; and the nature of the person was being investigated, and the unconscious being scientifically studied, particularly of course by Freud. The first International Congress for Psychiatry was held in Amsterdam in September 1907. Throughout his life Assagioli used material from an enormous range of disciplines and interests, and this seems consistent with the great growth of new knowledge in many fields which he experienced during this formative period.

That Assagioli was clearly among the people identified with psychoanalysis at this early stage is confirmed in the Freud/Jung letters. Jung wrote to Freud in 1909,

> The birds of passage are moving in, i.e. the people who visit one. Among them is a very pleasant and perhaps valuable acquaintance, our first Italian, a Doctor Assagioli from the psychiatric school in Florence. Professor Tanzi assigned him our work for a dissertation. The young man is *very* intelligent, seems to be extremely knowledgeable and is an enthusiastic follower, who is entering the new territory with proper brio. He wants to visit you next spring.[167:151J, n.3]

There are further reports of Assagioli in the letters. In 1909 he contributed an abstract to the *Jahrbuch für Psychoanalytische und Psychopathologische Forschungen*, the psychoanalytic journal, on psychoanalytic activity in Italy; in 1910, Freud reports that he had 'received a letter from Assagioli in Florence, in perfect German, incidentally',[167:171F] and later on in the year Jung reported both that Assagioli would contribute to the *Jahrbuch*, and also that he formed one of his 'group' of nineteen members, which acted as a study group.

In 1910 Assagioli produced his doctoral thesis, a critical study of psychoanalytic theory, presumably the dissertation assigned to him by Tanzi: this, Assagioli later said, was received 'with benign indifference'. In the obituary printed after his death in 1974, it is stated:

> In 1910 Assagioli, the young medical student, introduced the important discoveries of Sigmund Freud to his professors in Florence… he

> simultaneously – in 1910 – laid the groundwork for a critique of that same psychoanalysis. He saw that it was only partial. … Assagioli's purpose was to create a scientific psychology which encompassed the whole of man – creativity and will, joy and wisdom, as well as the impulses and drives. Moreover, he wanted psychology to be practical – not merely an understanding of how we live, but an aid to helping us live better, more fully, according to the best which is within us.[23]

After taking his doctoral degree, Assagioli trained in psychiatry with Bleuler. Eugen Bleuler was the Director of the Burghölzli, a huge hospital in Zürich at which Jung had worked (also under Bleuler) from 1900. Bleuler and Jung had a rather wider range of patients here than Freud, as the hospital took all classes of people and was residential. Bleuler was the director, with Freud, of the aforementioned *Jahrbuch*, with Jung as editor; in 1911 he coined the word 'schizophrenia' to denote the 'splitting of the mind' as it was then perceived.

At the time when Assagioli was training with Bleuler, Bleuler was increasingly critical of Freud. It is worthwhile quoting one of Bleuler's letters to Freud, as the letters indicate something of the schisms of the early psychoanalytic movement, and of issues about the nature of the knowledge that was being produced in psychoanalysis. Bleuler wrote to Freud on being pressed to rejoin the International Psychoanalytical Association,

> There is a difference between us which I decided I shall point out to you, although I am afraid it will make it emotionally more difficult for you to come to an agreement. For you evidently it became the aim and interest of your whole life to establish firmly your theory and to secure its acceptance. … For me, the theory is only one new truth among many truths. … For me, it is not a major issue, whether the validity of these views will be recognized a few years sooner or later. I am therefore less tempted than you to sacrifice my whole personality for the advancement of the cause.

Within a few months he was to add that while

> . … the principle of all or nothing is necessary for religious sects and for political parties… for science I consider it harmful. …

Two years later he was to be even more specific.

> Scientifically, I still do not understand why for you it is so important that the whole edifice (of psychoanalysis) should be accepted. But I remember I told you once that no matter how great your scientific accomplishments are, psychologically you impress me as an artist.[57:293–4]

This theme of the validity and basis of psychotherapeutic knowledge was thus an issue, and seen as one by some adherents, from the start. Freud, Jung and Assagioli all believed themselves to be scientists; and yet their theories, even without the added complication of spiritual knowledge, have also been called elaborate metaphors, drawing on a different kind of truth from the rational Western tradition. There is considerable evidence to say that Freud wished at all costs to protect his theory *in toto*; Jung was more speculative throughout; and Assagioli accepted that his whole theory was provisional. The nature of the knowledge at the base of all psychodynamic theories has throughout this century been contentious.

After his training, Assagioli practised as a psychiatrist in Italy, where he continued to develop his particular understanding of therapy. From 1912 to 1915 he published a series of articles in *Psiche*, a Florence-based journal which he founded and which stopped publication in 1915 because of the war. After the war he published most of his work in the journal *Ultra*. It is stated in the paper on the history of psychosynthesis that his articles tended to have a somewhat 'explosive' effect on the culture of the time.

During the First World War, Assagioli served as a doctor and non-combatant. He lived in Rome during the period between the two wars. He met and married his wife, Nella, a Roman Catholic and a Theosophist, in the 1920s. They were married for forty years and had one son, Ilario.

The consolidation of ideas up to the Second World War

Assagioli continued his own wide research throughout the period

between the wars; he was in touch with, amongst others, Croce, Tagore and Inayat Khan, a Sufi leader. He was influenced by Steiner, Suzuki and Ouspensky. He grew particularly close to Alice Bailey, an English spiritual leader, and they formed part of a circle of friends committed to a study of the spiritual basis of life.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Assagioli was meeting or in touch with such leading thinkers as Jung, Keyserling and Buber, to whom he felt particularly close. His concerns grew outward from individual therapy and education to concern with the social situation of the world. The forces of fascism and war were gathering, and from 1922 to 1943 Italy was ruled by Mussolini.

In 1926 the Istituto di Cultura e Terapia Psichica – the Institute of Psychic Culture and Therapy[27] – was founded by Assagioli in Rome. It was based on psychosynthesis for individual therapy and in relation to education, 'to foster new guidelines in the field of education'.

In 1927 the Institute published a book in English called *A New Method of Treatment – Psychosynthesis*. The historical article already quoted gives an outline of the aims, which are addressed 'in particular to all those who suffer in mind or body'. This includes those with physical ailments who can combine psychosynthesis with other treatment; people with neurotic or nervous symptoms; 'the shy, the sensitive, the emotionally polarised, the despondent and the discouraged who aspire to become calmer, stronger and more courageous'; those who wish to 'strengthen the memory' and also to exert more awareness and control over their own feelings; those disturbed by drug-taking or addictions, or those tempted to suicide; and 'those desirous of learning how better to educate their children or pupils'.

The motto for psychosynthesis at that time was 'Know thyself – possess thyself – transform thyself'. Annual courses of lectures were given at the Institute: the 1928 theme was 'The energies latent in us and their use in education and medicine', which was about the possible reconciliation of the conflicting elements in the personality, being then harnessed to a higher synthesis. The interests in the relationship of mind, body and spirit, and in education, have continued in the psychosynthesis centres up until

the present.

The work continued in the 1930s. Assagioli published two major articles during these years which later became the first two chapters of his book *Psychosynthesis*. The *Hibbert Journal*, a prestigious quarterly review of religion, theology and philosophy, published in England and making available the work of many well-known writers in these fields, offered both these articles in English.

'Dynamic psychology and psychosynthesis' appeared in the edition of 1933–4.[4(4)] Assagioli describes something of the last forty to fifty years of the small but growing group of people investigating 'the phenomenon and mysteries of the human psyche'. He discusses Janet, Freud, Adler and Jung ('who even admits a transcendental self between the ordinary and subconscious selves') and their exploration of unconscious material. He is also interested in describing developments in psychobiology, in investigations of psychic phenomena, in William James and Evelyn Underhill and their publications on religious experience and mystic states, and in Keyserling with his synthesis of Eastern and Western thinking.

It is in this article that his 'egg-shaped diagram' of the human psyche was first published in English: this picture of the nature of the person is used up to the present time in psychosynthesis and is fully described and discussed in the next chapters. In the diagram he clearly links together work with the unconscious with a realization of the Self, a continuing dominant theme in psychosynthesis. He offers psychosynthesis as a framework for people who want to live their lives with freedom and control and 'who refuse to submit passively to the play of psychological forces which are going on within them'. He extends his analysis from the individual to the social:

> Thus, inverting the analogy of a man being a combination of many elements which are more or less coordinated, each man may be considered as an element or cell of a human group; this group, in its turn, forms associations with vaster and more complex groups from the family group to town and district groups and to social classes; from workers' unions and employers' associations to the great national groups, and from these to the entire human family.

His emphasis throughout is on synthesis rather than analysis.

'Spiritual development and its attendant maladies' appeared in the *Hibbert Journal* in 1937–8.[4(24)] In this article Assagioli discusses the alternative to 'letting yourself live' by searching for a meaning and a spiritual awakening. He describes the traps (such as being led into psychic investigations) and the despair that can attend the searcher's journey: he describes the melancholy that can be experienced, 'the dark night of the soul', but also the potentiality of a vision of glory. Assagioli writes that there is a possibility of therapy at every stage of this journey. It is a journey that many people, trapped by an uninspiring model of normality in our present society, will not make; but the search for meaning in every human being is fundamental and can be activated – often by pain and loss – and aided. This article later became the chapter 'Self-realization and psychological disturbances' in the book *Psychosynthesis*.

At this time, of course, the fascist organizations were well in power in Italy and Germany. In 1936 the Istituto di Cultura e Terapia Psichica, also known as the Istituto di Psicosintesi, aroused the suspicions of the Italian government, 'whose growing hostility towards his humanitarian and international activities made his work increasingly difficult and eventually forced him to close the Istituto in 1938.'[20] Freud was forced to leave Vienna in 1938, and psychoanalytic organizations were closed down. Assagioli, also Jewish, now in his fifties and living under an increasingly repressive regime, had at times to take refuge from the Italian authorities. He was imprisoned in 1938 for a month because of his interest in peace and internationalism, and both he and his son Ilario had to hide for a period in the Italian countryside. His son died in the early 1950s from tuberculosis of the bones, probably contracted during this period.

From the end of the Second World War up to 1974

From 1946 psychosynthesis became more international, both in terms of conferences and of internationally published articles. From the selected list in *Psychosynthesis*, Assagioli published work in Italy, America and France during the 1950s. In 1958, the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation was opened in the USA at Valmy near Delaware, teaching and publishing psychosynthesis material until 1976. The Istituto di Psicosintesi resumed its work, this time based in Florence, with branches in Rome and Bologna. In 1959 and 1960, conferences were held in Paris and London, with Assagioli attending and speaking.

In 1960, the Greek Centre for Psychosynthesis was founded by Triant Triantafyllou, and publication of material began in Greece. In 1960 also, the first international week of psychosynthesis took place in Switzerland, with representatives from nine nations present. In 1961, the new Institute in Florence took an active part in the Fifth International Conference of Psychotherapy in Vienna, with Assagioli giving a paper on 'Psychosynthesis and existential psychotherapy' and chairing a symposium on psychoanalysis. The second international week of psychosynthesis was held later in 1961, followed by a third a year later.

Psychosynthesis seems to have been more classically psychodynamic in technique in the 1950s and 1960s than it is now. However, a considerable range of techniques were then being developed and were clearly of interest to other therapists during this period. In an incident in 1954 mentioned by Laura Huxley in her introduction to Piero Ferrucci's book *What We May Be*,[81] her patient freely entered into some mystical state. Laura Huxley knew that Assagioli was an expert in the relationship of the soul to the personality.

One indication of the difference in emphasis and range, comparing the 1920s psychosynthesis with that of the 1950s and 1960s, is the statement of aims of the old and new Italian Institutes. In 1961, the work was to be systematized into five different fields:

(i) individual culture, constituting the necessary preparation for functioning in all other fields;
(ii) the psychotherapeutic field: as a training for doctors and therapists;

(iii) the educational field: for parents and teachers, concerned with better and more modern educational matters;
(iv) the field of interpersonal relations: particularly relating to couples – marriage, parent and child, teacher and pupil, therapist and patient;
(v) the field of group and social relations: concerned with polarities between individual and group, between different social groups, 'having in view the psychosynthesis of the whole of humanity'.[27]

This could still be a description of the concerns of psychosynthesis. Work with the individual is the most thoroughly developed, but the wider concerns are clearly there. Assagioli was increasingly concerned with the state of the world as well as with the individual, with seeing the relationship between the two problems.

In his contact with the United States in the 1960s, Assagioli came to know of and sympathize with the work of such therapists and writers as Fromm, Rogers and Maslow. His work became more international in every sense. At the end of his life he really seems to have experienced an extended Indian summer, and an appreciation of his work greater than he had so far received. As his obituary states: 'it was only in the late sixties that, with the suddenness born out of great and massive need, his book and other writings were taken up by thousands.' The reason for this and for the sudden growth of psychosynthesis will be part of the discussion at a later point in this study.

In the mid-1960s, an international conference was held by the Institutes on the education and problems of young people and particularly very able children: Assagioli was particularly gifted in working with children. Centres in psychosynthesis were also opened at this time in India, Japan and Argentina.

Several attempts seem to have been made to set up an Institute in England, following conferences in London and Assagioli's frequent visits to England. In 1964–65, a centre called 'psychosynthesis in Education, An Association for Personal and Spiritual Integration', was established in London by Dr William

Forbes Robinson, but this seems to have been quite limited. Involved in this first attempt to establish psychosynthesis in England were Dr Martin Israel, Geoffrey Leytham who is a Trustee of the present Trust, Sir George Trevelyan, and Dr Cirinei from Italy. The present Trust for the Furtherance of Psychosynthesis and Education was a re-establishment in 1980 by Lady Diana Whitmore, who had trained with Dr Assagioli, of the original foundation. In 1974 a second organization, the present Institute of Psychosynthesis, was set up in London, at Mill Hill, and is now based in Central London.

Centres were formed in the 1960s and 1970s in Padua, Italy, and in many places in the USA – California, Vermont, Kentucky, Boston, etc. Other groups have formed in most European countries, notably Holland. Both Canada and Mexico have founded groups. Assagioli was against centralization and control, and it is now difficult to know even the number of psychosynthesis centres in the world and to keep track of their opening and occasional closure. Contacts seem to be informal, personal and between particular Institutes. It is a network rather than a formal international organization. It continues to develop and evolve, and both theory and practice are modified from Assagioli's original forms in the many centres in the world. In 1980 there was an International Conference in Italy, and in 1983 a further one in Toronto.

It is similarly difficult to sum up what psychosynthesis is or may mean. One author writes:

> Neither a doctrine, nor a 'school' of psychology, nor an exclusive method of self-culture, therapy and education, it could be defined principally as a general attitude, a tendency towards, and a series of activities aiming at, integration and synthesis in every field. No one can claim to be its exclusive representative; it cannot therefore be represented by any 'superorganization'. Its external organization can be regarded not as a solar system, but rather as a constellation.*27*

In the organization, as in the theory, Assagioli refused to tie himself down, or to impose a framework.

Thus psychosynthesis, after being conceived in the intellectually exciting and buoyant period at the beginning of the twentieth

century, went through a long period of gestation in Italy, being always developed by Assagioli through practice with clients. He wrote many short articles through this period, and some were published, in Italy and elsewhere. It was not until the 1960s that the theory and practice became thoroughly international again, then spreading to many countries in a network of Institutes. It was only towards the end of his life that Assagioli was persuaded to publish his two books, in 1965 and in the year of his death, 1974.

He was always in touch with a wide range of fellow philosophers and therapists, and collected books on a most catholic range of interests in a library which is still open to the public in his house at Florence. Towards the end of his life he was visited by countless people of many nationalities as a man of wisdom, humour and originality: and he is written of with great love and respect.

2
The nature of the person

Every social theory has an implicit view of human nature. When psychology began as a discipline at the end of the nineteenth century, it was based in an analytic, biological view of social science: interest was in the component parts of the person, and particularly in the biological 'realities' of brain, memory and so on, that could be empirically studied. When psychoanalysis emerged during the early part of the twentieth century, it produced the notion of 'personality', about the reality of someone's presence in the world. As the century has progressed, 'personality' as a notion has changed and modified with every new school. Some psychologies and psychotherapies have drawn maps of the nature of the person, a diagrammatic and necessarily static notion of a complex living reality: all have proposed conceptual statements to define what a person is.[88]

In psychosynthesis, the person is a soul and has a personality. Each personality, as in all other theories, is that complex combination of drives, defences, roles, learned adaptations and consciousness, that lives in the world and is a unique being; in some quite remarkable way each person is unlike any other being that exists, qualitatively different – and yet is subject to universal laws, social and biological causes, and learned behaviour that is common to all, and which makes for patterns of action, describable and analysable illnesses, cultures and similarities of behaviour across cultures that are discernibly 'human'.

Most psychologies and psychotherapies are interested just in the personality. It is only in recent years that a variety known as 'transpersonal psychotherapy' has emerged, which combines, or perhaps reintegrates, psychology and the personality, with

theology and the soul – two disciplines and two concepts that have been firmly separated in our materialistic Western world.

In psychosynthesis I say that the person *has* a personality and is a soul, because that relationship is basic to the map of the person that Assagioli first published in the 1930s and used for the rest of his life. However, personalities in the world are obvious to us all: souls are only present for those with eyes to see. Assagioli's view of synthesis is of becoming more and more aware of soul, not only in oneself but also in others. His view, which is the view of most spiritual disciplines, is that soul is basic and enduring, and that personality, though essential for being in the world, is relatively superficial and changeable – though often, of course, only with a good deal of difficulty. The soul is the context, the home, the 'unmoved mover': the personality is full of content, learned responses, and is dynamic. It is easy to recognize and relate to the personality, both in oneself and in others: the soul may in many people never be recognized in any explicit way. This applies not only to the soul of the individual person, but the soul of all humanity – 'the still, sad music of humanity', as Wordsworth wrote.

The classic psychosynthesis 'egg-shaped diagram' (Figure 2.1) was first published in English translation in the Hibbert Journal in 1933–4.[4(4)] Assagioli describes the drawing as

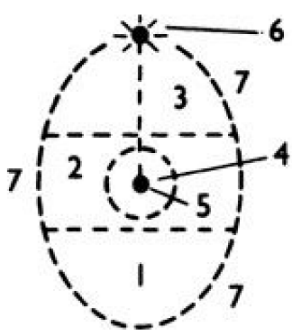
> a conception of the constitution of the human being in his living concrete reality. ... It is, of course, a crude and elementary picture that can give only a structural, static, almost 'anatomical' representation of our inner constitution, while it leaves out its dynamic aspect, which is the most important and essential one... it is important not to lose sight of the main lines and of the fundamental differences; otherwise the multiplicity of details is liable to obscure the picture as a whole and to prevent our realizing the respective significance, purpose, and value of its different parts.[1:16]

In other words, like any good map, the diagram is presented as a tool to the reader, an over-simplifier of complex reality, and good enough until something better emerges. This follows the earlier twentieth century models of the person, which also inevitably used simplifications. It is still used as a basic conceptual tool in

psychosynthesis training. Piero Ferrucci describes the diagram as representing 'our total psyche'.[81:43]

In this rather complicated looking picture, there are three main parts: consciousness, which is our everyday reality, and which includes 'the field of consciousness'; unconsciousness, which is spatially speaking the greater area in most people – consciousness may be to unconsciousness the tip of the iceberg; and awareness and soul – the 'I' and the Higher Self.

Assagioli's assumption is that most people live within a relatively small field of *consciousness* – the less aware a person is, the smaller this field will be. He depicts the *unconscious* as being divided and hierarchical – the lower unconscious is the past, past patterns, the basic drives, and past adaptations, the higher unconscious or superconscious is potential, and the collective unconscious the history of the human race that we carry with us unconsciously, as well as consciously through historical knowledge. *The 'I'* is our personal centre of awareness, a centre which many people are hardly aware of but which is highly developed through self-awareness and self-knowledge: and the *Higher Self* is the potential which is aligned with the 'I' and of which the 'I' is a pale reflection. The conscious personality is only the field of consciousness, and it is this area that is generally dealt with by conventional psychology. Any psychology that draws on an assumption of the existence of unconsciousness would be concerned with sections 1, 2, and perhaps 7 in Figure 2.1. But it is really only transpersonal psychologies that are concerned with the superconscious and the Higher Self. The 'I' is variously dealt with in different psychological maps of the person in the different schools of psychotherapy.



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 Self (or Soul)
7 The Collective Unconscious

Figure 2.1 A map of the person[1:17]

In the model there is a dotted line between all the aspects of the person. This is to indicate that there is movement between them, that they can affect one another. And of course the different proportions change within a lifetime, particularly in a person concerned with spiritual growth and awareness.

The field of consciousness (4 in Figure 2.1)

This is our living, everyday reality, the part 'of which we are directly aware: the incessant flow of sensations, images, thoughts, feelings, desires, and impulses, which we can observe, analyse, and judge'.[1:18] Assagioli holds that this can be the total of which an unreflective person is aware. He writes:

> the 'man in the street' and even many well-educated people do not take the trouble to observe themselves and to discriminate; they drift on the surface of the 'mindstream' and identify themselves with its successive waves, with the changing contents of their consciousness.[1:18]

Consciousness is often unreflective, determined by the many personal and social forces which have formed us.

He points out that we, in this unaware state, are largely at the mercy of these forces. 'We must realize that we are all the time possessed, even obsessed, by all the conditioning of our background and current life.'[4(27)] We seem in many ways to be almost entirely the product of our genetics, our personal environment and the society in which we live. We seem more like the creatures of our environment than the creators of it, in the grip of forces much stronger than ourselves and which we do not understand, whether these forces be biological, psychological or social. Indeed, it is often difficult for an ordinary person to see where his or her sense of freedom could originate: many people have, in fact, little or no sense of freedom in their lives.

This part of the personality could easily, without reflection, be regarded as the whole, because it is most accessible to us. But the

development of depth psychology in this century has made it clearer and clearer that consciousness is only a small part of the whole. There has been an acknowledgment throughout human history that awareness beyond the conscious is possible for the individual human being, through dreams, religious experience and creativity of every kind; this is where the field of consciousness relates to unconscious material. Also it is clear that people can change and grow with awareness; this is where the field of consciousness becomes more attuned to and guided by the 'I'. It is part of psychosynthesis theory that the field of consciousness, through processes of reflection, can change and grow, and the whole of consciousness can become imbued with a different quality – no longer asleep and no longer merely determined by conditioning.

The middle unconscious (2 in Figure 2.1)

This is the most immediate layer of unconscious material and is sometimes called the preconscious. It is, in Freud's view, the anteroom of consciousness. Assagioli described it as being

> formed of psychological elements similar to those of our waking consciousness and easily accessible to it. In this inner region our various experiences are assimilated, our ordinary mental and imaginative activities are elaborated and developed in a sort of psychological gestation before their birth into the light of consciousness.[4(27)]

It is in this area that memories that are easily brought to mind are stored, that our everyday lives are routinely processed. It is the first step into that other world beyond the mundane and the everyday.

The relationship between the field of consciousness and this first area of unconsciousness is well described by David Stafford-Clark in writing about Freud: 'consciousness is the spotlight which, sweeping the arena, lights up just that area on which it falls. Everything outside its illumination, but within its range, is

preconsciousness.'[217:115] The boundary between the ordinary everyday world and this region is thin and flexible.

The lower unconscious (1 in Figure 2.1)

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before Freud, and with the values of the Enlightenment and the idea of progress, it was assumed that the human being was becoming more and more rational, and fully civilized. Dark forces were acknowledged, of course, but it was generally assumed that with the progress of science and rationality, the fully reasonable person would appear – indeed was already there in civilized society.

It was this assumption that Freud questioned, with his systematic ability to discern and get in touch with the unconscious processes in people. He saw the significance of dreams as a real communication of the unconscious to the conscious; slips of the tongue, mistakes, and illnesses manifested in ordinary living began to be acknowledged as effects of processes going on beyond our consciousness. Many hitherto unexplained phenomena came to be seen as part of the war between the strong libidinal sexual forces of the id (the drives) and the superego (the conscience). Most of Freud's work, and most of psychoanalysis, is concerned with what Assagioli came to define as the lower unconscious.

The lower unconscious is connected in all sorts of ways to childhood. In childhood all unconscious is one. As Sue Patman writes:

> In the beginning, at our birth, the unconscious is both the lower and the higher unconscious. There is no division and no consciousness with which to make a division or a separation between them. As consciousness forms, however, and the differentiation is made between conscious and unconscious, so time becomes a reality and with the experience of time comes the division between the lower unconscious and the superconscious, past and future, what is and what was and what could be. What is, is consciousness; what was, is the lower unconscious; what could be, is the superconscious. The aim of synthesis is to reduce this trinity back to a fully conscious oneness.

She describes how the different parts separate through the long years of childhood in order for the person to develop his or her own personality and individuality – and separateness and isolation. She goes on:

> We enter into the lower unconscious *via* childhood experiences because that is where we come from. The lower unconscious is not our *childhood*, but our childhood is the path we took from our unconscious state to our conscious state. Memories of childhood are therefore a very powerful tool we can use to return to the unconscious with our consciousness and carry our healing.[21]

It is particularly interesting to link awareness of time – indeed the very concept of time – with the division into the conscious or unconscious experience. It is these deep dark regions, usually envisaged as a sea or a cave, in which our roots seem to lie – and also from which our problems both personally and as a species seem to spring. But it is also from here that our life force springs.

Assagioli took a hierarchical view of the person and reckoned this element of the personality to be definitely 'lower'. He writes that the lower unconscious contains

> the elementary psychological activities which direct the life of the body; the intelligent co-ordination of bodily functions; the fundamental drives and primitive urges; many complexes, charged with intense emotion; dreams and imaginations of an inferior kind; lower, uncontrolled parapsychological processes; various pathological manifestations such as phobias, obsessions, compulsive urges and paranoid delusions.[1:17]

Assagioli would no doubt have agreed with the description of the Freudian 'unconscious' (the 'lower unconscious' of psychosynthesis) as the cellar of the house of the personality: in other words, it is only the foundation of the whole person, and there are still the main rooms to be explored, as well as the attic with the window open to the sky. Maslow wrote in 1968, 'it is as if Freud supplied to us the sick half of psychology and we must now fill it out with the healthy half.'[163:7] In older spiritual philosophies this part of the person was seen as primeval, as 'the beast', from which strength but also evil sprang: both exist together and are intertwined.

The higher unconscious or superconscious (3 in Figure 2.1)

This is potential, an area to which many people only have occasional access. It is glimpses of 'what we might be' if we lived more from the soul and less from the personality. It is the window into the sky. Assagioli writes that it is

> from this region we receive our higher intuitions and inspirations – artistic, philosophical or scientific, ethical 'imperatives' and urges to humanitarian and heroic action. It is the source of the higher feelings, such as altruistic love; of genius and of the states of contemplation, illumination, and ecstacy. In this realm are latent the higher psychic functions and spiritual energies.[1:17–18]

In Assagioli's picture, the superconscious is a reflection from the Higher Self of all goodness, to which we can have greater and greater access with awareness. This picture assumes that human nature is basically good, which is a view diametrically opposed to the Freudian assumption, and different from the Jungian, in which the forces of good and evil are rather evenly balanced. In Assagioli's model, forces from the superconscious are available to us all our lives, but they often become distorted: for instance, sensitivity in early childhood can easily become transmuted into fear – many people carry with them a 'frightened child' for much of their lives: or a person can have a vision of greatness – it is certainly arguable that Hitler did – but it can become mixed with forces of hate and cruelty. Assagioli's view is that at the roots of all actions are good intentions: even within the worst manifestations of the human spirit, there is a superconscious force that has become distorted. Erich Fromm wrote a book on *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, in which he maintained that destruction is basically 'unlived life', good instincts that have not been able to be lived in a straightforward way, and have turned sour. It is life, he maintains, that is not lived from the aware centre, the 'I', but from a place where actions emanate from unconsciousness. This is near to the fable of the angel who falls