

Psychosynthesis and transpersonal psychology

Roberto Assagioli

Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974), the founder of Psychosynthesis, in his conception of the whole human being included both the discoveries of psychoanalysis and the wisdom of spiritual traditions. He saw that, although psychology and spirituality are distinct domains, those engaged in a spiritual search often need psychological help in integrating their experiences. Conversely a psychology which does not honour the spiritual dimension cannot speak for the whole person.

He recognised the spiritual longing of persons in our present cultural wasteland. In connection with this he said:

"One major reason why the Self is coming back into currency is the tremendous search for self identity. Formerly an individual took himself so to speak for granted. He accepted himself as he was, or, more frequently, he identified himself with the group to which he belonged, family, tribe, clan, class, or nation or, if he was religious, with some great Being or God. But in our time, which may well be a time of total crisis, all these identifications fall away and the individual is thrown back on himself. This baffles him, he does not know who he is and this is the chief reason for the widespread 'existential anguish'."

Assagioli. talked of psychosynthesis as essentially an attitude, an inclusive approach to the psyche which began from the premise that the whole is. We do not make ourselves whole. In potential we are already whole and this unbroken wholeness within each of us can be recognised. Rather than trying to untie the knots of our alienation, we could create a new perspective for our identity by shifting our attention away from the habitual patterns of conditioning to the underlying wholeness of who we essentially are. In many ways he was reiterating what spiritual teachers have said over centuries, namely that we are asleep to our true nature and we need to 'Wake up!'

Psychosynthesis offers a vision of 'What We May Be', as Piero Ferrucci has entitled his book. In this way Assagioli was seeking to give an optimistic and encouraging message about the capacities of the human psyche. This was in marked contrast to Freud's pessimistic conclusions about human nature as at best a compromise between our instinctual needs for gratification and social demands.

Yet although he was dissatisfied with the Freudian approach Assagioli himself never intended to set up a separate school of psychology, but more of a wider perspective within which Freud's contribution would have its place. In a much quoted letter to Binswanger, Freud described his work as limited to exploring the ground and basement of the 'house', leaving the attic to be explored by others. Assagioli did just that and often described his work as 'Height Psychology'.

In looking at the bias towards height in psychosynthesis it is important to place Assagioli's contribution within its historical setting. The beginning of the twentieth century marked the phenomenal success of science in explaining the world and the rise of technology in controlling nature. In a Promethean whirl of excitement with 'his' new found powers, 'man' was set to conquer all - even his own psyche. If the infant science of psychology was to be taken at all seriously, it needed to have scientific pretensions. Despite Freud's own artistic

inclinations he embedded psychoanalysis in a mechanistic framework of drives and used hydraulic metaphors to explain the relationship between the conscious and unconscious.

Psychosynthesis is an expansionistic psychology rather than a reductive one. Instead of reductively analysing the psyche to a supposedly basic trauma in the past, Assagioli aimed to expand the client's awareness to include more of who they were. If psychology was losing its soul to the scientists, here was a movement in the opposite direction to link psychology with spirituality.

Assagioli was clear that psychosynthesis could not pretend to be a spiritual teaching, but it could attempt to re-interpret universal spiritual wisdom into psychological insight. Although, like many spiritual teachers he made much of testing things out through experience rather than just believing them, his was not truly an empirically based psychology - despite claims to the contrary by such as Ferrucci. He took key principles from different esoteric spiritual approaches and put them into a psychological context. Assagioli based psychosynthesis on esoteric psychology and the work of Alice Bailey in particular.

This is part of what gives psychosynthesis that strange sense of revealed truth. New students intuitively recognise much of the archetypal ideas that are being presented but little is acknowledged about the roots of these ideas. It is as if these notions dropped out of the sky or in more modern terms were channelled. Yet for those who have studied the relevant esoteric literature, Assagioli's sources are clear. The power and beauty of psychosynthesis ideas and principles come from their spiritual roots and not from any empirical explorations.

This may be no bad thing in itself, but it has its dangers. Freud warned Jung against the murky depths of occultism and his fear of the occult may not have been all neurotic. Hillman has written on how the nature of the Spirit and that of the Soul are so different that a spiritual psychology may be a contradiction in terms. More particularly when the spiritual roots are hidden, a secret is installed that can distort power relationships and lead to the mythologisation of an individual. Despite the dangers and difficulties there is great value in the psycho-spiritual link that Assagioli initiated, provided that the ancestry of the ideas is acknowledged and not forced into the shadow.

A few words about Dr. Assagioli by Piero Ferrucci, a student of Dr. Assagioli and a prominent psychosynthesis teacher and author in his own right. From his foreword to *A Psychology with a Soul* by Jean Hardy, 1987 Routledge & Kegan Paul, London & New York.

"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 psycho-logy.

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 behaviorism 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 Inayat 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.

Influences on Assagioli:

Freud

From Freud, Assagioli absorbed the basic dichotomy of conscious and unconscious.

C. G. Jung

Assagioli was strongly influenced by Jung's concept of the process of individuation and the integration of the personality through the experience of the Self. He also worked with Jung's idea of complexes, but assigned a new term – subpersonalities – to the multiplicity and autonomy of the personal unconscious.

William James

From James Assagioli got the basic premise of the reality of mystical states.

Victor Frankl

Frankl (1975) proposed that there is a human desire for understanding of the self and of the purpose of life. This can be discovered through the conscience, which he believed was given transcendently, and consists usually of concern for others. Frankl is famous for surviving Auschwitz and for helping others to survive there rather than committing suicide. He later called his method "logotherapy".

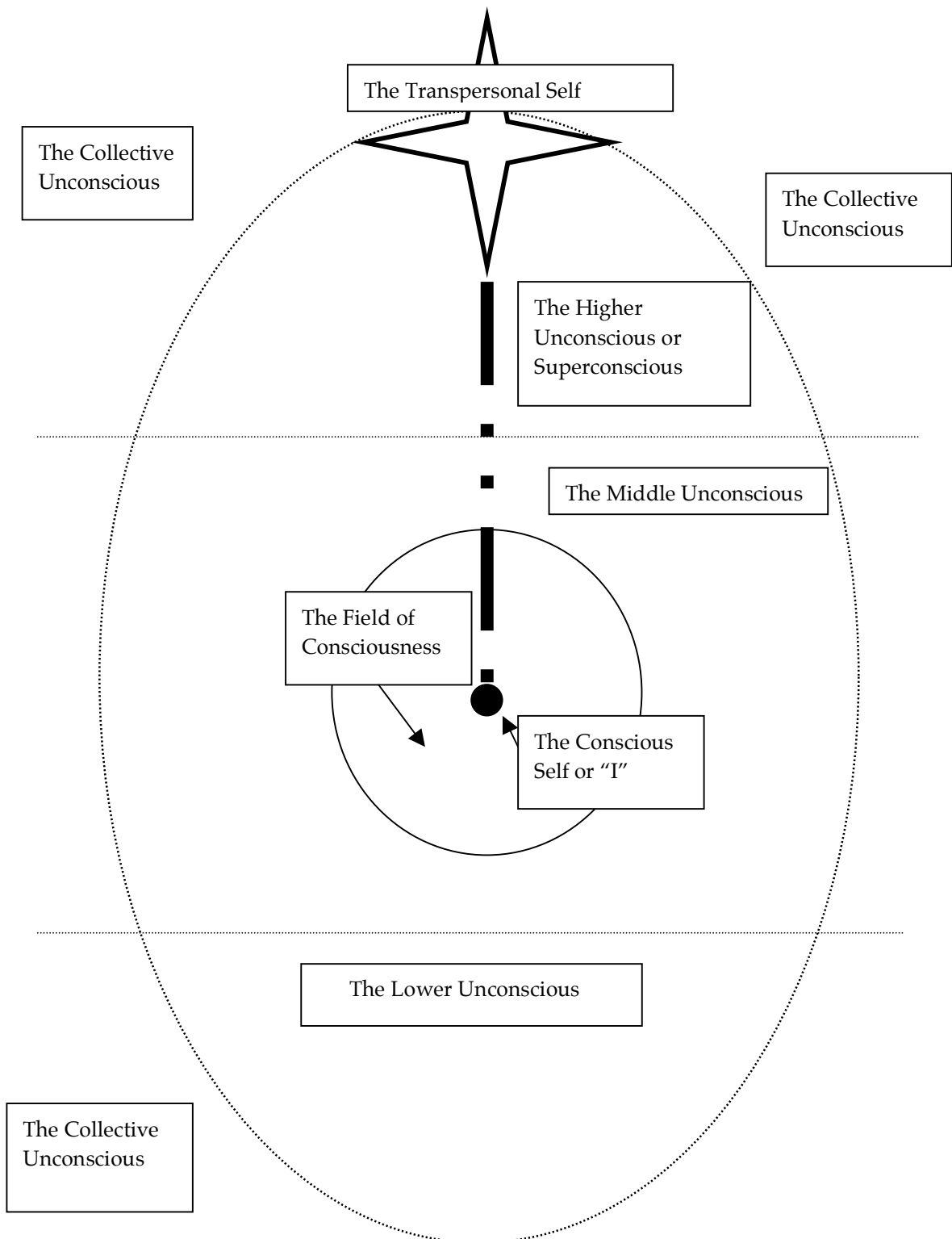
Abraham Maslow

Maslow proposed that when "lower" needs such as safety, physiological needs, and social and esteem needs, had been satisfied, some individuals advanced to a need for self-actualisation. Such people tended to have "peak experiences", which included religious experiences. Those who had such experiences found life meaningful as a result.

Alice Bailey

Although he was careful to avoid making his links with Bailey and Theosophy public, Assagioli was deeply committed to Bailey's ideas. This is known through Ian Gordon Brown, who worked with Assagioli and formed the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology with Barbara Somers in the early 1970s.

Assagioli's "Egg Diagram"



Howard Sasportas on astrology and 'subpersonalities'

'Every subpersonality has an archetype at its core.'

– Howard Sasportas, "Subpersonalities and Psychological Conflicts" in Liz Greene and Howard Sasportas, *The Development of the Personality* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1987), p. 169

'Subpersonalities are 'psychological satellites' which co-exist within the personality...Every subpersonality has an archetypal core...Deep within a subpersonality – what gives rise to and builds up a subpersonality – is an archetypal drive, urge or principle. A particular principle will draw to it different personality elements or different ways of being in order to fulfil itself. It is the archetypal centre of a subpersonality which holds together various personality elements so that the subpersonality can express itself...Planets and signs represent archetypal drives and principles. Subpersonalities build up around archetypal drives and principles. Therefore, subpersonalities can be seen to build up and form around the various signs and planetary placements in the chart. Ian Gordon-Brown, one of the co-founders of the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology, was very struck by this. He wrote: 'My colleague Barbara Somers and I ran a workshop in Transpersonal Psychology for a group of astrologers. We did our usual exercises to help the group identify their subpersonalities, based on images. We were fascinated to find that in a significant number of cases the subpersonality structures that emerged seemed to represent or symbolise some of the key configurations in the birth chart...There is room for important and fruitful research here which would benefit both astrology and psychology. I emphasise that the exercises that raised the subpersonality material were nothing to do with astrology.'

– Howard Sasportas, 'Transpersonal Psychology', Faculty of Astrological Studies Diploma Course

'Now I have to confront the difficult task of trying to define what is meant by "the Higher Self" or what some people call the Transpersonal Self or the Pure Self or just the Self with a capital S...Earlier we talked about the pre-personal state or feeling that we are the whole universe, which we experienced to some degree in the womb (or even at some point in between lives, if you believe in reincarnation)...One of the first things in life which we register is this sense of universality and wholeness with all of life. Even after we are born and take on a body and a separate existence, something within us recalls that our deepest and innermost nature – our Pure Self or Higher Self – is unbounded and infinite. Consciously or unconsciously, we still long to reconnect to that lost wholeness...So the Higher or Transpersonal Self is both our innermost essence as well as that part of us which is universal. All-encompassing and more powerful than the ego, the Self ultimately guides and oversees our fullest possible unfoldment...The Self sends messages through the superconscious. Dreams, symbols and insights come from the Self via the superconscious...[The astrological] Jupiter has to do with the drive to find meaning in life, and represents the symbol-making capacity of the psyche...Jupiter symbolises both the urge to grow and the need for a belief system [and can be associated with Maslow's higher-order needs].'

– Howard Sasportas, 'The Quest for the Sublime', in Liz Greene and Howard Sasportas, *Dynamics of the Unconscious* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1988), p. 174

From William James, *The Varieties of Mystical Experience* (London: Viking Penguin, 1982 [1902])

One may say truly, I think, that personal religious experience has its root and centre in mystical states of consciousness...First of all, then, I ask, What does the expression 'mystical states of consciousness' mean? How do we part off mystical states from other states?

The words 'mysticism' and 'mystical' are often used as terms of mere reproach, to throw at any opinion which we regard as vague and vast and sentimental, and without a base in either facts or logic. For some writers a 'mystic' is any person who believes in thought-transference, or spirit-return. Employed in this way the word has little value: there are too many less ambiguous synonyms. So, to keep it useful by restricting it, I will do what I did in the case of the word 'religion,' and simply propose to you four marks which, when an experience has them, may justify us in calling it mystical for the purpose of the present lectures. In this way we shall save verbal disputation, and the recriminations that generally go therewith.

1. Ineffability.- The handiest of the marks by which I classify a state of mind as mystical is negative. The subject of it immediately says that it defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others. In this peculiarity mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect. No one can make clear to another who has never had a certain feeling, in what the quality or worth of it consists. One must have musical ears to know the value of a symphony; one must have been in love one's self to understand a lover's state of mind. Lacking the heart or ear, we cannot interpret the musician or the lover justly, and are even likely to consider him weak-minded or absurd. The mystic finds that most of us accord to his experiences an equally incompetent treatment.

2. Noetic quality.- Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time.

These two characters will entitle any state to be called mystical, in the sense in which I use the word. Two other qualities are less sharply marked, but are usually found. These are:

3. Transiency.- Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Except in rare instances, half an hour, or at most an hour or two, seems to be the limit beyond which they fade into the light of common day. Often, when faded, their quality can but imperfectly be reproduced in memory; but when they recur it is recognized; and from one recurrence to another it is susceptible of continuous development in what is felt as inner richness and importance.

4. Passivity.- Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances, or in other ways which manuals of mysticism prescribe; yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power. This latter peculiarity connects mystical states with certain definite phenomena of secondary or alternative personality, such as prophetic speech, automatic writing, or the mediumistic trance. When these latter conditions are well pronounced, however, there may be no recollection whatever of the phenomenon and it may have no significance for the subject's usual inner life, to which, as it were, it makes a mere interruption. Mystical states, strictly so called, are never merely interruptive. Some memory of their content always remains, and a profound sense of their importance. They modify the inner life of the subject between the times of their recurrence. Sharp divisions in this region are, however, difficult to make, and we find all sorts of gradations and mixtures.

These four characteristics are sufficient to mark out a group of states of consciousness peculiar enough to deserve a special name and to call for careful study. Let it then be called the mystical group.

In his *Varieties of Religious Experience* William James observes:

"Some years ago i myself made some observations on [the basis of a personal] nitrous oxide intoxication. . . . One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that . . . [O]ur normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence but apply the requisite stimulus and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded." (pp. 378-379)

In 1953 Huxley took the psychedelic drug mescaline under the guidance of the Canadian psychiatrist and researcher Humphrey Osmond. In 1954 and in light of his first psychedelic experiences, Huxley published *The Doors of Perception*. The mescaline experience led Huxley to write two essays, *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*. The following quotes are from the opening pages of the latter:

"Like the earth of a hundred years ago, our mind stil has its darkest Africas, its unmapped Borneos and Amazonian basins. In relation to the fauna of these regions we are not yet zoologists, we are mere naturalists and collectors of the specimen . . . Like the giraffe and the duck-billed platypus, the creatures inhabiting these remoter regions of the mind are exceedingly improbable. Nevertheless they exist, they are facts of observation; and as such, they cannot be ignored by anyone who is honestly trying to understand the world in which we live." (p. 71)

"A man consists of what I may call an Old World of personal consciousness and, beyond a dividing sea, a series of New Worlds -- the not too distant Virginias and Carolinas of the personal subconscious and the vegetative soul; the Far West of the collective unconscious . . . ; and, across another, vaster ocean, at the antipodes of everyday consciousness, the world of Visionary Experience." (p. 72)

Transpersonal Psychology

Transpersonal psychology is intended to build a bridge between the sacred and the psychotherapeutic.

Early pioneers were William James (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1961), Jung, Victor Frankl and Abraham Maslow. Roberto Assagioli is the most influential in terms of astrology through his “psychosynthesis”. Equally influential are Huxley, Alpert and Leary, Grof, and the gurus of the 60s, 70s and 80s, such as Rajneesh. Equally important although never quoted are the “epiphany” experiences of the ancient mystery cults, plus the drug-induced altered states written about by *fin-de-siècle* poets such as Rimbaud.

No one is certain where the term was coined. In a letter from Abraham Maslow to Stanislav Grof, Maslow states:

“The main reason I am writing is that in the course of our conversations we thought of using the word “transpersonal” instead of the clumsier word “transhumanistic” or “transhuman”. The more I think of it, the more this word says what we are all trying to say, that is, beyond individuality, beyond the development of the actual person into something which is more inclusive than the individual person, or which is bigger than he is.” (quoted by A. J. Sutich in *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 1976)

However, Ira Progoff used the term in 1955, and Dane Rudhyar used it in relation to astrology in the 1920s.

“Transpersonal psychotherapy includes the full range of behavioural, emotional and intellectual disorders as in traditional psychotherapies, as well as uncovering and supporting strivings for full self-actualisation. The end state of psychotherapy is not seen as successful adjustment to the prevailing culture but rather the daily experience of that state called liberation, enlightenment, individuation, certainty or gnosis according to various traditions.” (from James Fadiman and Kathleen Speeth in “Transpersonal Psychotherapy”, from *Handbook of Psychotherapy*)

“From this perspective, transpersonal psychotherapy differs from the traditional approaches not so much in method or technique as in orientation and scope. There may be technical innovations such as meditation, visualisation and awareness training, borrowed from the spiritual traditions of the world, but the essential difference lies in the attitudes of the therapist, attitudes that shape the course of therapy. He neither avoids the issues of value and meaning in a human life nor places them outside the bounds of therapeutic work...Without the transpersonal perspective, traditional psychotherapy gives an implicit message of pessimism.” (from *Transpersonal Psychotherapy*, Seymour Boorstein)

The traditions of the mystery cults of the ancient world form the antecedents for what is now known as transpersonal psychology. The mystical quest of the Middle Ages, and the vast literature dealing with peak or transcendent experiences, has also fed this body of research. The philosophies and techniques of Eastern religion, the explorations of artists, the experiments of Huxley, Leary and Alpert, and the immense popularity of the spiritual communes, have equally contributed.

The mystical or “peak” experience as defined by transpersonal psychology

- The “existential crisis” often awakens the search for meaning, and may be accompanied by a transpersonal experience of some kind (dream, vision, illumination, etc.)
- The existential crisis is precipitated by an increasing flow of superconscious or transpersonal energy directed by the Self toward the personality (Assagioli, 1965).
- The peak experience occurs when superconscious energies spontaneously become conscious.
- A crisis of duality often occurs after this crisis, when the person now needs to integrate the transpersonal vision into ordinary life. This may generate fanaticism and messianic fervour, resulting in depression and disillusionment when the world does not respond.
- Frankl’s Logotherapy consists of working with the individual as tripartite: physical, psychological and spiritual. Transpersonal psychology, especially that of Assagioli, attempts to integrate psychological with spiritual.
- Types of peak experience:
 - a) oceanic (feelings of oneness, love, compassion for all, loss of sense of isolated self)
 - b) illumination (realisation or knowledge of the interconnections of all things)
 - c) purpose (realisation of a mission or life purpose as part of a dedication of service)
 These three are roughly equated with Alice Bailey’s three Rays (will, love and mind).
- Other types of peak experience may involve physical healing, recollection of past lives, release of grief and subsequent sense of healing and freedom, and other experiences which do not easily fall into the three main categories.

The Psychology of the New Age

1. As a psychological phenomenon, what might the “belief” in a New Age imply about the individual and the collective?

There is nothing at all new about the New Age. It encapsulates mythic themes which have existed in every millenarian movement throughout history. One of the characteristics of New Age thinking, as it developed particularly during the 1960s, is its emphasis on a return to the earth and earth-values. This kind of focus on what is felt to be a gross imbalance in cultural values is in part, on a causal level, the result of a gross imbalance in cultural values. But the gross imbalance is itself mythic, imaged in the old king who has grown corrupt or is wounded and weak and failing; Eliot’s *Waste Land*, or Parsival’s quest for the Grail. In other words, there is a kind of archetypal inevitability about it. As we develop along particular lines as individuals and as a society, we become weighted on one side of the personality and ignore or starve other aspects. These tend to erupt in the form of the kind of vision equated with the New Age. The same motif appears in most fairy tales as well as innumerable myths. In the case of the present one, the emphasis on all that is “natural” and “holistic” makes its own very clear statement. The rise of the “goddess” movements and the interconnected ecosystem of the planet reflect this sense of an absence of the feminine. There is also an emphasis on transpersonal states or altered states of consciousness, in contradiction to the scientific or rational world-view, and this transformed consciousness is characteristic of all spiritual utopias; on “sharing” rather than capitalism, which is characteristic of all political utopias; on “freedom” as a reaction against what are felt to be chains of the obligations of daily material and emotional life, which is also characteristic of both spiritual and political utopias.

From this perspective, the emergence of the current New Age attitude, which utilises astrology as its “justification”, is not in the least surprising, given the context of the last century as a causal factor and the archetypal themes as an acausal factor. Whether astrology really is a justification is not here the issue; it may well be; but it is a symbolic reflection rather than a cause. Astrology as a lingua franca is also an aspect of the psychological patterns of the New Age, since it implies that very holism and inclusiveness and cosmic unity which it is felt has been lost. The sense of something being “lost” through corruption or blindness or evil is characteristic of all the cyclical New Age belief systems. Astrology in itself becomes a kind of unifying image, a holy grail which facilitates reconnection and the recapturing of what has been lost. So do other symbolic systems such as the Tarot cycle and the Kabbalistic Tree of Life.

2. Are there any psychological models which could offer us further understanding, apart from the sociological ones of equating belief in a New Age with a time of economic downturn or the widespread distress of collapsing social structures? Might the collapsing of social structures be the result of something, synchronous with the aspiration toward a New Age, rather than the cause? And even if the very real lopsidedness of society is in part connected, is this really causal or is it synchronous or merely natural?

There are two psychological models which are worth exploring. Those who are in any way wedded to the idea of the New Age as a concrete reality will not like the first one. But both are of value. The first is Freudian; the second is Jungian and transpersonal. The first, in the context of psychoanalytic theory, is applicable to individuals; but I believe it can be extended to the collective. The second is applicable to both.

The first model: Primary narcissism and the ego ideal. Alexander Lowen in his book *Narcissism* describes the whole of post-war society as suffering from narcissism, so Freud’s description of narcissism and Alice Miller’s portrayal of the narcissistic wound in *The Drama of the Gifted Child* apply not just to the damaged individual but to all of us. It is a cultural or collective wound, like the Waste land through Parsifal pursues his quest.

a. The fusion of the experienced parent with the mythic image of the all-loving, all-powerful, all-protecting deity and source of life. This, in psychoanalytic thought, is the initial state of the newborn infant. The fusion is as erotic as it is mystical; body and feelings are indistinguishable, and not yet separated. There is not yet an ego; the mythic world of Paradise, Eden, is the image of the pre-birth state. No suffering, separation, loneliness, hunger or death.

b. Psychoanalytic writing after Freud is primarily concerned with the initial stages of the formation of individual identity.

c. The ego ideal. Freud introduced this concept in 1914. It is one of the most fundamental aspects of psychoanalytic theory. The lost narcissism of childhood, describing fusion between infant and mother, is never fully overcome, according to Freud. Many manage to come to terms with it sufficiently so that the gap between personal reality and lost omnipotence and fusion does not generate torment. But some do not manage, and the vision of a future salvation or state of perfection becomes addictive. This is, in psychoanalytic terms, a result of childhood damage. But if we extend this idea to a larger collective, and consider that the same psychological laws apply to the collective as to the individual, then a

“damaged” collective will seek its “ego ideal” in a vision of a new society modelled emotionally on that primary state of fusion, no matter what political, spiritual or economic mask it wears.

d. Jung and the collective psyche. Movements in the collective reflect inevitable shifts and evolutionary stages toward wholeness. They are reflected in mythic images which recur throughout history, regardless of the outer dress. The New Age reflects the archetypal theme of renewal, expressed in many different mythic forms throughout history. The dying and reborn king which Frazer describes is only one image. Alchemy is full of images of this kind of renewal and transformation, always necessary after a time of staleness, stagnation, blockage of the life force, lopsidedness or exclusion of some necessary dimension of the psyche. Modern New Age themes echo many of the themes of alchemy and the transmutation of substance to reveal or release the lapis or alchemical gold. The grail imagery is another myth which is medieval in origin but is alive and well today (even Dan Brown has made millions on it). Thus New Ageism contains the kernel of an archetypal and eternally recurring theme which erupts in the collective when any particular stage of development has been “finished” or “overdone” to the point where wholeness and the link with the larger psyche has been lost.

e. The grail, lapis, Self, etc. is also the object of the New Age quest – spiritual enlightenment, unification of the human family, universal love, transcendence of the ego. The idea of “lost” knowledge or a secret which can now be found or has been found is characteristic of this mythic pattern: the rediscovery of the Self and the unity with the divine. According to Jung, symbols of unity and totality are characteristic of the Self, and so are the images of New Age pursuits.

f. Jung’s understanding of the astrological symbolism of the New Age is that the ages have symbols which describe the perception of the Self by the collective during that time, i.e. the god-image. The Fishes as a symbol of Christ are also a symbol of the Self as perceived during the Piscean epoch. This also coincides with the proliferation of redeemer-cults at the dawn of this epoch, e.g. Orpheus, Mithras, Attis, Jesus. The collective is gripped by an archetype, which presides over roughly 2000 years.

g. In this model, an archetypal image which best personifies the collective experience of Self or deity is constellated at regular intervals, synchronous with the precession of the equinoxes, and the images of deity change accordingly and begin to express the values inherent in the mythic astrological image. This is not the result of a disturbed society, but rather, is the root of the disturbance which is usually identified as the cause of New Age fantasies and yearnings. Factors such as the calendar millennium are only incidental; whether or not we were in a literal new millennium, the vision of the New Age would arrive anyway because it is simply due and inevitable as the cyclical outgrowth of a time when a particular archetypal image dominated and finally began to grow stale.