

Loving What We Do: Doing What We Love

Will Parfitt

An introduction to Psychosynthesis

In this article, Will Parfitt presents the psychosynthesis vision of individual and collective responsibility as a way of furthering global awareness. As Roberto Assagioli, the founder of psychosynthesis said: 'A sense of responsibility, understanding, compassion, love, and harmlessness are all links in the chain of right relationships which must be forged within our own hearts.'

Relationship shapes our lives. There are times when a relationship is heart shaped, and times when a relationship is another shape altogether, maybe even dagger shaped. An individual mood can make all relationships conform to a particular shape, from, for instance, 'I love everyone' to 'everyone's out to get me'. Sometimes relationship not only shapes a life, it controls it. Sometimes not having a particular relationship may control a life, too. The power of relationship for pleasure and for pain is undeniable. Yet we cannot do without relationship nor would we want to. Everyone and everything in the world is truly interdependent. We belong to families, social classes, local action groups, unions, groups of work colleagues, football teams, astrological types, ethnic minorities, and so on. And we belong, as the human family, to the interdependent biosphere of all living things.

The psychosynthesis approach to life brings the spiritual into relationship with the everyday ('as above, so below'), and the inner into relationship with the outer ('as within, so without'). Psychosynthesis aims to deal with all dimensions of human existence and recognizes that relationship is rarely if ever simple. Problems arise between individuals and between different groups which are similar to those that arise within an individual. The interdependence of all the different spheres of experience needs to be recognized, individually and collectively, to create the ground for more harmonious relationships.

The essential aim of psychosynthesis is to help people discover their true spiritual nature, then to effectively utilize this discovery in everyday life. Psychosynthesis can help both the individual and a group realize creative potential, increase the ability to function harmoniously in the modern world, and improve the quality of relationships.

Psychosynthesis is not just a theory, but is a practical, working method that

integrates principles and techniques from many approaches to personal and spiritual growth. Whilst it concentrates on the personality, psychosynthesis emphasizes the value of intuition, inspiration and creative insight, including transpersonal and psychospiritual experiences. Yet, whilst it explores these areas, it in no way imposes any form of doctrine or belief system. Psychosynthesis is not a religion, nor would it ever want to be, so it is equally suitable for everyone, whatever they choose to believe or not.

Diversity is created from unity in order that all beings can find their own way to realise the source from whence they came and to which they are returning. Divided for the sake of love, we can find ourselves through love and, in finding ourselves, discover that our separation was an illusion. We have the opportunity from a place of division to form a union, to coming together with another being and be at one with him or her, or even to come together with all other beings and realise a total union. Without division no such knowledge would be possible. Whilst we are in this world of duality, we help bring more beauty and harmony into the world through a clear consciousness of loving what we do and doing what we love.

The psychosynthesis approach is not an ungrounded, 'mystical' view of life. Of course, the reality of a mystical experience which separates an individual from their mundane, earthly existence and, in a state of bliss, leads them to temporarily forget all outer reality and the environment cannot be denied. To become attached to such experiences, however, is to fall into the mystical trap. Psychosynthesis stresses the importance of avoiding this through always paying attention to bringing all transpersonal energies back to ground and finding a way of expressing them in the 'ordinary world'.

The mystical experience is not an end in itself but rather a step along the way from which the individual, who has the fortune to have such an experience, can draw creative energy and enthusiasm. Indeed, the true mystical experience brings with it the desire to come back into the world to express the energies involved and help one's fellow human beings to also experience this enlightenment. The 'mystic' who remains spaced out has missed the boat, as it were, that carries us all, irrespective of our experiences, towards the final goal of fully realised and consciously shared union.

The other mystical trap is to believe that once one has reached some sort of blissful state, or received some sense of enlightenment, that this is all there is to it. It is the experience of all the great mystics that enlightenment is neither an end in itself nor, as such, does it last forever. Nothing remains the same, everything changes, and the enlightened state is no exception to this cosmic rule. Everything that is alive is in a constant state of movement, renewing itself as it moves from moment to moment. To stop moving is, quite simply, to die (and even then this is an illusion for in death there is, at the very least, decay and a return to an energy state). Each revelation has to be grounded, expressed and also not clung to. In psychosynthesis, the true mystic is seen as the one who is working to express the

energies with which he or she has connected, not the one who remains connected and has nothing left to say, do or feel.

Many people in the modern world suffer from what is sometimes called the 'crisis of meaning'. Particularly in the western world but increasingly over the whole planet, many people live in an existential vacuum, where life has lost its meaning (beyond, at the best, the purely material). In this modern world, with its collective lack of meaning, there is much strife between people. The state of the world on an ecological level is poor due to the greed of some people and the mindlessness of others. There often seems to be such an appalling lack of care and understanding and so much unbalance, particularly in the interaction between people. Psychosynthesis helps with the healing of this 'illness' through assisting an individual to know her- or him-self. To know oneself is to bring meaning back into life which then creates a context for living a life in accord with others.

Psychosynthesis is not only a method for self realisation, but is a continuous and organic process that is happening in the psyche of everyone at all times. This process happens naturally, but it tends to become blocked. Psychosynthesis includes techniques for unblocking this process which are not used mechanically, but are applied with care and attention. They can then act as transforming agents, putting the individual and the group in touch with the natural flow of growth and development.

Psychosynthesis includes the whole person, which is composed of the personality plus the spiritual realms, including our connection to the divine, whether that is seen as some outside energy or ultimately within us. Psychosynthesis aims to develop the individual and group on all levels: as growth occurs in the personality, more effective ways to experience life and to express ourselves are found. As growth happens in the connection to the transpersonal realms, more positive, beneficial qualities are unleashed into life. More effective ways of utilizing creative energies are discovered. Creativity, in the psychosynthesis sense, is not just about drawing, painting, making music, sculpting or whatever (although it is these things as well), but acknowledges the fact that everyone is creative in their own ways. With the right attitude, it is as equally creative doing housework as in painting a masterpiece, in changing a baby's nappy as in encouraging it to walk and talk.

An important, underlying principle of synthesis is that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. If we look at a painting and analyze it into its component parts we may find the different colours, brush strokes, shading and light, figures and background, we may even find beautiful scenes depicted within it, trees, people, places ... but we have to see it as a whole, in its entirety before we can realise the value of it as a great work of art. What comes out of that synthesized whole is something beyond any or all of the individual components, perhaps something that even transcends the artists original conception.

Whilst looking towards wholeness, psychosynthesis respects the individuality of each part. No bit of us is 'better' or 'worse' than another bit. On the contrary, psychosynthesis says that each part of us has its purpose and has the potential to be truly synthesized and integrated. Conflicts can then be experienced in this light - as the source of the energy which allows us to know more about ourselves. When we work on our inner conflicts, we can utilize the energy this releases to bring ourselves into a more effective state. In other words, apparent obstacles are gifts with as much value as the more obvious gifts received when things are going well. This is true for groups, of course, as much as for the individual.

Some of the more spiritual connections made in psychosynthesis foster the realisation that all life forms, not just human beings, are part of a totally interconnected and inseparable energy field. Whilst most of us may spend a large part of our lives experiencing separation and disconnection, once we start to explore the deeper aspects of our being we discover the underlying truth of our connection. We may not be able to 'be there' all the time, indeed it may not be right for us to stay in such a state, but once we have the intimation of its existence, once we actually experience it in ourselves, there is no looking back. We have 'set our sights' on the clarity and connection that comes from such realizations and try to make each move we take a step in that direction.

The realisation that we are connected to everyone and everything else brings a different perspective on time and space wherein we can cultivate within ourselves a sense of 'global consciousness'. Many of the exercises and techniques of psychosynthesis help us have an inkling of this awareness and, perhaps more importantly, ground this awareness in our everyday lives. When we ground this awareness it helps us take actions that move the total collective consciousness forward along its positive evolutionary path. It is not an exaggeration to say that one small act made by one individual at one moment in time can make a profound difference. To care for others, both those immediately within our field of awareness and activity, and also all living and non-living things generally, is the way to ground this consciousness

When we care for our environment, both locally and generally, we are also grounding our deepest, psychospiritual consciousness. We shape our relationships with care and consideration. Every conscious act that includes such qualities furthers the cause of global awareness. Psychosynthesis can aid us in finding many different ways to contribute to this cause, and recognize that each way adds to the richness of our experience. Perhaps such awareness will bring about some cures for the ills which currently threaten not only our individual existence but the existence of life as we know it on this beautiful planet.

First published in the Avalon Journal, 1995.