

## The Essential Self

Have you ever found yourself walking in a meadow on a warm summer's day, approaching a house situated in a clearing in the woods, or entering the temple of silence at the top of a majestic mountain? If your answer is yes, you may recognise each of these as being part of an exploration of your inner world, perhaps in relation to working alongside a psychosynthesis practitioner, if you have ever had the opportunity to do so. If your answer is no and you would like to know more about this approach to inner transformation, here is a brief overview to help with this.

Psychosynthesis was founded by Roberto Assagioli, a contemporary of Freud and Jung who initially introduced psychoanalysis into Italy, and went on to become one of the early pioneers of transpersonal psychology. Due to what he saw as limitations with psychoanalysis, he developed psychosynthesis in order to integrate psychotherapeutic and spiritual elements to create a dynamic and practical system of working, which facilitated an exploration of both conscious and unconscious aspects of the human psyche.

Described as a psychology of the soul, the psychosynthesis model consists of seven main elements, i.e., lower, middle and higher unconscious, field of awareness, personal self or 'I', Higher Self, and the collective unconscious. According to this approach, working with and integrating the various levels provides a path towards healing and freedom. Although Assagioli believed that each aspect of the psyche was as important as the next, the concept of the Higher Self underpins the whole approach as it is the central core around which everything revolves, i.e., the Essential Self, our deeper centre of identity and meaning.

Psychosynthesis draws from a wide range of psychological and spiritual techniques, which share their roots with both Western and Eastern approaches to personal and spiritual development, e.g., the use of guided imagery, meditation, sub-personalities, dis-identification, dreams, creative arts, body awareness and movement, spiritual Will, archetypal and abstract images, etc. Assagioli believed that human beings have a natural tendency to move towards individuation and that this could be advanced by consciously accessing the deeper parts of ourselves, facilitated by the use of techniques such as those mentioned here. Therefore, psychosynthesis incorporates these techniques for the ultimate purpose of integration and healing at a spiritual level.

Psychosynthesis acknowledges the spiritual, as well as emotional, psychological and physical aspects of the human experience, and provides a framework which can be applied to facilitate transformation on many levels. In fact, it is not only an effective and creative form of individual and group psychotherapy, but can also be used within various other environments, e.g., coaching, education, families, businesses, communities, etc. Wherever it is applied, psychosynthesis provides an opportunity to gain an understanding of one's deeper nature in order to restore balance and harmony at a soul level... something that is dearly needed at this time in our evolutionary history.

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