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# Integral Psychosynthesis

Integral Perspectives on Psychosynthesis



By **Kenneth Sørensen**, Vordingborggade 76, 1.tv., 2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark  
[www.psykosyntese.dk](http://www.psykosyntese.dk), email: [info@psykosyntese.dk](mailto:info@psykosyntese.dk) Tlf. +45 25130502

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## Abstract:

This MA-study shows that Roberto Assagioli's original conception of Psychosynthesis is fully aligned with Ken Wilber's Integral Psychology. A careful research into all Assagioli's English publications gives clear evidence of Levels, Lines of development, States, Types and to some degree the four Quadrants. It also demonstrates that John Firman/Ann Gila's adapted version of Psychosynthesis operates with a very different developmental model, when seen through an Integral lens. The study also explores the benefits of implementing the Integral Approach to Psychosynthesis psychotherapy.

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#### Background and acknowledgements

This article is an extended and adapted (two case studies is omitted) version of my MA Thesis from 2008 at the Psychosynthesis and Education Trust in London and the University of East London (formal award in June). It is offered to the public with the hope that it can foster a deeper understanding of the Integral features of Psychosynthesis and perhaps facilitate an open debate about the future development of Psychosynthesis and for that matter: Integral psychotherapy.

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I wish to thank John Firman and Ann Gila for permission to print his revised Egg Diagram, to Jean Hardy for her model and to Ken Wilber and Brad Reynolds for their contributions. I also wish to thank my tutor Martin Egan for many good advices and Annabritt Jakielski for proofreading it all.

## **Introduction**

This article will investigate the question: *Is Psychosynthesis an Integral Psychology?*

Ken Wilber is an influential writer in our time within the field of psychology and psychotherapy. His Integral Psychology provides a framework and an overall perspective on human development that is synthetic in its nature. Owing to its inclusive comprehensive developmental approach it may be argued that Integral Psychology resembles the approach of Psychosynthesis. His model provides a method to examine or validate the integral nature of any psychotherapeutic discipline and this will be the main focus for this article in relation to Psychosynthesis.

Wilber works with five basic elements that characterise what he calls an Integral Approach and the AQAL model: Quadrants, Levels, Lines, States and Types, and through that lens I shall investigate whether or not Psychosynthesis is Integral.

I will take the five basic concepts one by one, define them and research into how well Psychosynthesis theory embodies the Integral features and how it can improve Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy.

It is a great challenge to cover such a comprehensive theory as Wilber's on the basis of an article. Due to the broad focus that I have chosen, there are some limitations that I have to implement.

It will not be possible to have an in-depth discussion of all the details associated with the Integral status of Psychosynthesis; I will only give enough evidence to make an assumption based on a few relevant facts.

I will not investigate whether Wilber is correct in his assumptions about human development. I will take his findings for granted and focus on testing Psychosynthesis for its fulfilment of the Integral criteria as set out by Wilber.

This is not an article on Integral Psychology, so I will only define the broad perspectives in the Integral Approach in order to use it as a lens in my research.

In order to create a clear focus throughout this article, let me start with an outline of the essential conclusions from my research.

I will demonstrate that I have found several new aspects related to the nature of Psychosynthesis when I applied the Integral model. The most relevant new discoveries are found when we compare Assagioli's and Firman/Gila's writings. My conclusions so far are as follows:

1. There is not only one version of Psychosynthesis but at least two very different versions with respect to especially the *developmental theory*: Assagioli's original conception and the revised one by Firman/Gila.
2. Assagioli's version is a height psychological and hierarchical stage model where the self develops through higher and higher levels of consciousness. Firman/Gila's version is more a depth psychological and a 'healing the past and recovering the lost potential' approach.

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3. Assagioli's version of Psychosynthesis includes all the five Integral elements in more or less degree, modern Psychosynthesis is only partly Integral and in Firman/Gila's version almost none of the Integral concepts are found.
  4. Assagioli is well aware of what Wilber calls the Pre/Trans Fallacy, the confusion of higher and lower consciousness. Firman/Gila's version sometimes falls into this confusion when viewed through an Integral lens.
  5. Applying the Integral model to Psychosynthesis, psychotherapy can help us define the hierarchical stages of development, identify the pathology on each level, avoid the Pre/Trans Fallacy, so we offer the appropriate type of therapeutic intervention to a given problem. This is crucial when deciding the type of therapeutic intervention in a clinical session and in order to create a more synthetic approach to human development.

In the following I will show that the above assumptions can be validated through a careful analysis of the research literature and by applying them to psychosynthesis psychotherapy.

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# Chapter One

## Two Versions of Psychosynthesis

### Roberto Assagioli's Integral Thinking

Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974), the founder of Psychosynthesis, was a pioneer of his time. He was one of the first psychiatrists in Italy to endorse Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis and at the same time pointed out its limitations. Later, he became a co-founder of Humanistic and Transpersonal psychology, and many years before Abraham Maslow he presented his own transpersonal concept of man.

Psychosynthesis is a broad and synthetic philosophical and psychological theory. Jean Hardy (1996: 95) argues that Psychosynthesis draws on inspiration from the Eastern as well as the Western spiritual and scientific traditions and in this way it resembles Wilber's approach.

Assagioli (1975: 11) acknowledges the many sources that have inspired his own writings and outlines the many contributions from especially Western psychology in his first book *Psychosynthesis*. In *Psychosynthesis* he claims to offer a "more inclusive" and "plura-dimensional conception of the human personality" (Assagioli, 1975: 17) than many other approaches of his time. Assagioli (1975: 17) does so through his model of the psyche known as the Egg Diagram. Even though Assagioli prefers the metaphor of synthesis instead of "Integral", I will argue that he actually points to many of the same philosophical concepts as Wilber does, when he uses the word "Integral." Assagioli (1967a: 6) states:

"The position assumed by Psychosynthesis is a "synthetic" one. It thus appreciates and weighs the merits of all therapies, all methods and techniques of treatment, without preconceived preferences."

We also find that Assagioli (1975: 20, 30, 66, 196) frequently writes about an "Integral vision", "Integral education", and the "Integral conception of the treatment."

From this we can assume that at least Assagioli attempts to incorporate an Integral Approach in his writings, even though it does not measure up to the standards that Wilber defines. Let us now turn to Wilber's (2000a: 659) consideration of Assagioli's contribution to transpersonal psychology:

"Assagioli was an extraordinary pioneer in the transpersonal field, weaving together the best of many important psychological and spiritual traditions into a powerful approach to inner growth. Among many other contributions, he was one of the first to call for an integration of 'depth psychology' with what he called 'height psychology', and to combine 'psychoanalysis' with 'Psychosynthesis'.

This could be the first suggestion, that at least Assagioli may fulfil some of the criteria of the Integral Map. It is now time to present the five Integral concepts one by one and see whether Psychosynthesis makes use of them.

According to Wilber (2000c: 5), levels of consciousness, also called The Great Nest of Being, are the backbone of the perennial philosophy and is therefore a "crucial ingredient of any truly Integral Psychology." So let us see how Wilber defines this concept.

### Levels of Consciousness According to Wilber

Wilber's concept of levels is derived from what he calls the perennial philosophy or the common core of the world's great spiritual traditions. Wilber (2000c: 5) argue that according to these traditions: "Reality is composed of various *levels of existence*, of being and of knowing, ranging from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit. Each senior dimension

transcends but includes its juniors, so that this is a conception of wholes within wholes.” According to Huston Smith’s (1976: 4-5) research, the spiritual traditions agree in the existence of these levels, but disagree in how many levels there are, ranging from three to twelve. In Wilber’s writings he very often uses from three to sixteen levels according to the need of detail.

The diagram in Figure 1 attempts to portray how reality according to Wilber (2000c: 6) is composed of a hierarchy of levels, which he prefers to call holarchies, because the basic levels are holons (wholes within wholes) of consciousness. When the self moves through these basic levels of consciousness, as part of its evolutionary journey and development it experiences them as *direct experiential realities*, reaching from sensory experience to mental experience to spiritual experience. The development of the self is a vertical climb, using a height metaphor, through the different inner levels of reality and increasing complexity.

The levels are not rigid patterns of consciousness but according to Wilber are more like the colours of the rainbow that interpenetrate and grade into each other or like waves in the great river of life, through which its many streams run.

Wilber’s conception of the levels is also supported by several theories of developmental psychology, including: Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, Kohlberg’s stages of moral development, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development, and Jane Loevinger’s stages of ego development, to name but a few.

The premodern concept of levels and interior hierarchies are not easily accepted by modern and postmodern science even though they have been partly verified by the tradition and the above scientists. According to Smith (1976: 6) and Wilber (2000c: 61) the levels have been rejected because of a scientific materialism that only needs one ontological level: the physical!

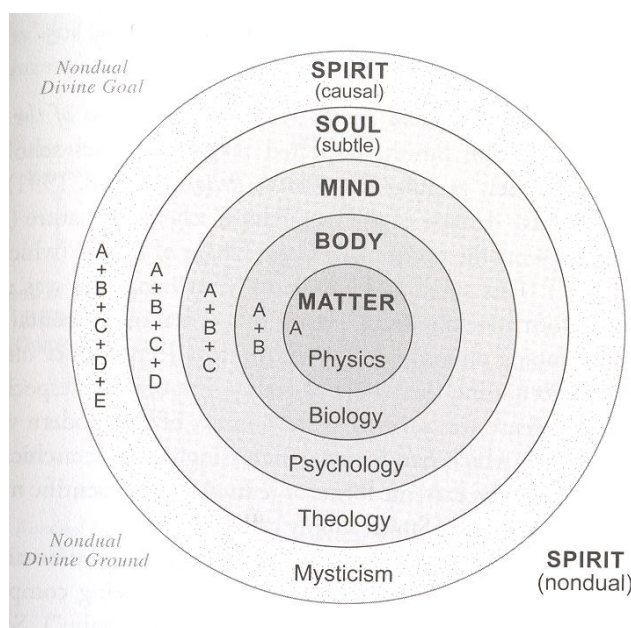


Figure 1. Levels of consciousness

Assagioli is also aware of the cultural hostility towards the term “higher.” He actively uses and appreciates Maslow’s *hierarchy of needs*<sup>1</sup> (Assagioli, 2002: 106-122) and explains that the hostility is caused by a false moral valuation. Higher and lower are according to Assagioli often associated with an erroneous moral devaluation of “low” as something inferior to be repressed, when it simply just denote an earlier or more basic stage of development. Assagioli concurrently claims that a false democratic ideal of equality makes the concept of higher development problematic: “It seems ... almost an insult to admit that there are people of a higher stature, psychologically and spiritually” (Assagioli, cited in Besmer: 1973-74: 219).

It seems that Assagioli and Wilber both defend the hierarchical construct of reality even though it is unpopular, but Assagioli does more than that: he very explicitly refers to levels of consciousness.

<sup>1</sup> This will be demonstrated in detail in Chapter II

## Levels of Consciousness in Assagioli's Writings

When reading through all of Assagioli's published writings in English (books, articles and interviews) there can be no doubt that "levels of consciousness" is an important concept in his thinking even though he very seldom specifies the inner worlds.

Assagioli's (1975: 17) definition of the levels is almost always kept on a general level and specified broadly through his Egg Diagram. He presents this diagram in his first book: *Psychosynthesis*, and in it he discriminates between three vertical levels: the lower, middle and higher unconscious. I present it in detail below, when I compare Firman/Gila's change in the Egg with Assagioli's original conception. But for now, let me demonstrate in the following how he presumably hints at the levels and directly defines them.

It seems that Assagioli (1975: 18, 28, 37, 38, 44, 45, 113, 198. 1993: 28- 29, 32-53), throughout his writings repeatedly refers in general to the Great Chain of Being when he talks about the different psychological "levels", "realms" and "regions of consciousness." In *Psychosynthesis* he uses poetic language and metaphors to make his point:

"Between the starting points in the lowlands of our ordinary consciousness and the shining peak of Self-realisation there are intermediate phases, plateaus at various altitudes on which a man may rest or even make his abode" (Assagioli, 1975: 24).

It is in his book *Transpersonal Development*, published after his death, that we find some of his most spiritual articles and a full explanation of his concept of the inner worlds or levels of consciousness:

"The third group of symbols, a frequently occurring one, is that of elevation, ascent or conquest of the 'inner space' in an ascending sense. There are a series of inner worlds, each with its own special characteristics, and within each of them there are higher levels and lower levels. Thus in the first of these, the world of passions and feelings, there is a great distance, a

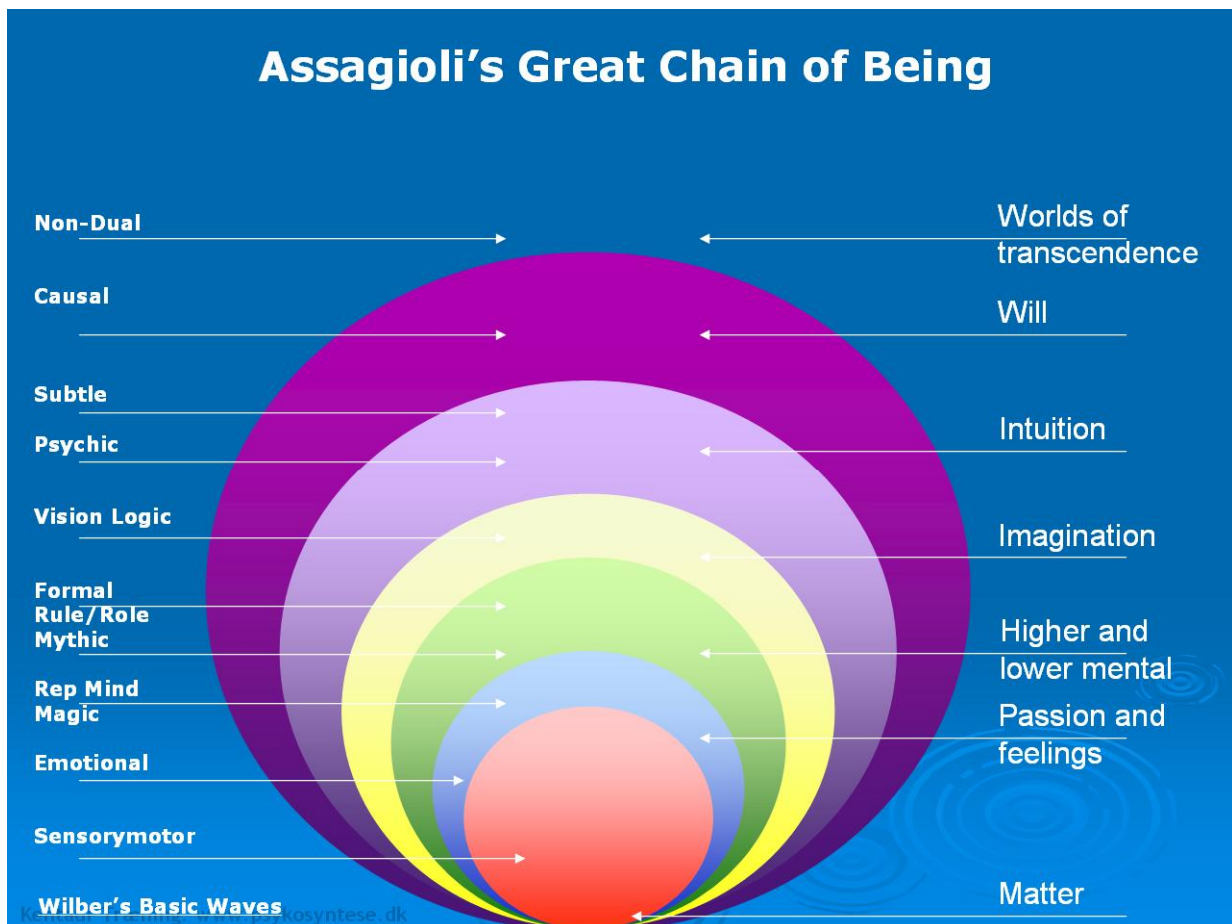


Figure 2: Assagioli's Great Chain of Being

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marked disparity of level, between blind passion and the highest feelings. Then there is the world of intelligence, or the mind. Here too are different levels: the level of the concrete analytical mind, and the level of higher, philosophical reason (*nous*). There is also the world of the imagination, a lower variety and a higher variety, the world of intuition, the world of the will, and higher still, those indescribable worlds which can only be referred to by the term 'worlds of transcendence' (Assagioli, 1993: 92).

Here Assagioli is aligned with Wilber and the perennial philosophy in his cosmological conception of the inner levels of consciousness and The Great Chain of Being.

Jean Hardy (1996: 195) also comes to the conclusion that: "One source of knowledge for Assagioli is certainly what Huxley calls "the perennial philosophy"". In her book *A Psychology With A Soul*, which has become a Psychosynthesis classic, she acknowledges the influence on Assagioli from e.g. Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism and Theosophy (Hardy, 1993: 115) and states that they all adhere to levels of consciousness.

Imagination, the picture making faculty in man, is according to Assagioli a synthetic psychological function that can 'operate at several levels concurrently; those of sensation, feeling, thinking and intuition' (1975: 143). In the above quote Assagioli emphasises the higher aspect of imagination and that is presumably why he places it after the mental level. Wilber suggests the same span for imagination (1999a: 130). In Wilber's (2000c: 62) AQAL diagram (see figure 12) the lower and higher aspects of imagination is associated with the stages he calls symbol and vision-logic. There seems to be a close parallel between the two thinkers in this regard.

In order to visualise Assagioli's Great Chain of Being, I have created the summary diagram (Figure 2), which stresses six important points that Assagioli upholds:

- a. Higher levels are higher frequencies of energies that interpenetrate the lower levels (Assagioli, 1975: 199-200)
- b. Higher levels transcend but include the lower (Assagioli, 1993: 197)
- c. There exists a natural exchange of energies between all levels (Assagioli, 1993: 265, 2002: 62)
- d. All levels are reflected on the physical level (e.g. through the brainwaves and behaviour), because matter is the lowest level of the hierarchy.<sup>2</sup>
- e. Within each level there exist higher and lower frequencies of energies (Assagioli, 1993: 92, 2002: 98-99)
- d. He also suggests that the various levels of reality or energy fields each have their own qualities, powers and laws that need to be mastered by the ascending soul (Assagioli, 1993: 161-62, Undated 2: 9).

Wilber's first book was called *The Spectrum of Consciousness*; a term Assagioli (1993: 93) also used to describe the inner levels, when quoting the Psychiatrist Urban.

In Figure 2 I have also suggested a preliminary comparison between Wilber's 10 basic levels and those of Assagioli.<sup>3</sup>

### **Transcend and Include, Myth of The Given**

In the introduction we touched on Wilber's concept of the higher levels always including the lower. Assagioli (1993: 197) comes to exactly the same conclusion that "these ever wider spheres of spiritual life do not cancel or exclude the preceding ones, indeed they assume them."

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<sup>2</sup> See the section on involution on page 12

<sup>3</sup> In Chapter two, where I compare Psychosynthesis with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, I qualify the comparison through one of Wilber's own diagrams

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When defining the actual structure of the levels, Wilber (2002: 163) stresses the need to be aware of the myth of the given and to integrate the post-modernistic concept of constructivism. Reality is not a pre-given factor but in many ways a cultural interpretation and this also applies to the levels. Many of the pre-modern descriptions of the levels (inhabited by deities and angels) are coloured by the historical and often mythic epoch in which the sage actually experienced them. This in no way cancels the reality of the levels, but we need to be careful with the interpretation of them. Assagioli (1993: 21-22, 65-66, 141-142) agrees wholeheartedly with this.

According to Wilber (2002: 12) the higher levels are rather potentials than a pre-given mold, a developmental space, "still plastic, still open to being formed as more and more people coevolve into them."

This is also a concept Assagioli (2002: 49-50) upholds. He discriminates between the plastic and conditioned part of the unconscious. There is a large part of the unconscious that has not yet been exposed to stimuli, and he considers it to be like an inexhaustible store of unexposed photographic film.

I believe that I have demonstrated that Assagioli in his original conception of Psychosynthesis works with levels, but for some reason he chooses to be very vague about the cosmological features of it expressed through the Great Chain of Being; perhaps because of the "hostility" toward hierarchies in the academic environment that made him cautious. This I have not clarified. Let us now see how modern Psychosynthesis deals with this issue.

### **No Great Chain of Being In Modern Psychosynthesis**

When reading through some of the most influential Psychosynthesists the picture gets quite clear. *According to my research nobody within the Psychosynthesis community has ever implemented the Great Chain of Being in their theoretical conception of Psychosynthesis.* This is quite astonishing, because several writers are well aware of this concept, but never use it.

Let me start by qualifying that statement. All of the psychosynthesists that I have researched into, apply the three general levels outlined in the Egg Diagram (see discussion below). In this way they have a clear discrimination between three vertical levels in the personality. All of them, except Firman/Gila (2002: 195, n.5) believe in a *natural unfolding development* from the lower unconscious to the middle unconscious to the higher and transpersonal unconscious (Whitmore 2004: 6, Parfitt 2006: 24, Hardy: 30, Ferrucci: 43, Brown: 26). In this way they adhere to a stage progression through higher and higher levels of consciousness and align themselves with the Integral Approach.

What they do not do, according to my research, is to postulate a *cosmological and collective* worldview with a Great Chain of Being. The modern psychosynthesists seem to operate within an *individual* framework and they only define three general levels, which give a very gross stage conception and *an unclear perception of how the levels of consciousness are actually created and what types of energies can be found there*, when seen through the Integral lens.

The traditions and Wilber/Assagioli argue that the levels of consciousness are collective and ontological developmental patterns of growth created by Spirit when it descended into matter and created the universe. This is called involution and will be explained below. This is the territory all individual souls will develop through from subconscious to self-conscious and superconscious.

Hardy, as mentioned, fully acknowledges the hierarchical approach in Psychosynthesis and several times points to the Great Chain of Being, but she does not make this explicit when presenting Psychosynthesis theory.

Similarly, Parfitt (2006: 134) is also well aware that Assagioli is influenced by Theosophy and the seven dimensions or levels of existence. Parfitt also uses the Kabbalah to explain Psychosynthesis. Kabbalah is the mystical aspect of Judaism and in this system there is also an

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inherent notion of the Great Chain of Being. Parfitt never implements this in his presentation of Psychosynthesis, although he operates with the three general levels. He actually *contradicts* it, when he introduces the idea that the Self (Universal Consciousness) can be found at all levels of existence. (Parfitt, 2006: 229) This is not compatible with the theory of *emanation or involution*, a core concept in Kabbalah and the perennial philosophy, which explains how the Great Chain of Being has been created and what types of energies that according to that theory can be found in the lower levels.

Neither Piero Ferrucci, Diana Whitmore, Molly Young Brown nor Bonney Gulino Schaub and Richard Schaub use the *Great Chain of Being* in their presentations. But they all use the three general levels.

John Firman and Ann Gila are two of the most influential writers on Psychosynthesis theory today and have contributed many new additions to Assagioli's theory. Many of the concepts they introduce *are not in line with Assagioli's original thoughts on e.g. how the Self develops* and the nature of the levels of consciousness which I will demonstrate during this article.

I will give their version of Psychosynthesis a prominent role when researching into the Integral nature of Psychosynthesis in modern time. Firman/Gila (2000c: 5) are the only writers who *directly* reject the vertical development through the levels of consciousness:

"We do not strive for particular experiences of unity, do not aspire to climb some ladder of enlightenment" (2007: 24), and in another important quote by Firman/Gila (2004: 8): "The stage model of Psychosynthesis is not a ladder we climb rung by rung, nor one we climb once and for all time."

Throughout their work Firman/Gila (2004: 8) are not in favour of a transcendent worldview with heavenly realms, they seem neither to believe in Assagioli's (1975: 211) "shining regions above" nor in his fascination with Dante's Divine Comedy, ending in Unity and Paradise.

From the above it seems that we can assume that Assagioli himself acknowledges the Great Chain of Being, and this will be emphasised in another quote below, while modern Psychosynthesis only has a limited use of it and Firman/Gila reject it.

Let us now turn our attention to involution; another of the inherent metaphysical assumptions in Wilber's Integral Psychology. It is a crucial concept to grasp in order to understand e.g. the inconsistency between Firman/Gila's version of Psychosynthesis and Assagioli's. They claim that the higher Self (universal consciousness) also can be found in the lower unconscious, this is not compatible with involution as will be demonstrated now.

## **Involution – The Great Descent Of Spirit Into Matter**

In Wilber's (1999a: 626) book *Up from Eden* he outlines the concept of involution in Figure 3. When Spirit creates and incarnates in the universe or envelops into matter, he calls this process *involution or emanation*. Involution is in this respect the whole downward movement, whereby Spirit loses and forgets itself in successively lower levels *and in this way becomes immanent in creation*. But the immanence of Spirit is only a pale reflection of the original spiritual source and when it steps down into matter, which is the densest, lowest, least conscious form of Spirit, it is almost not recognisable (Wilber, 2003: 5-6).

The well-known statement that all is One or what Wilber calls One Taste is only true on the highest Non-Dual level, up till then our union with Spirit is more or less *unconscious* according to the level of consciousness we are identified with. The higher we climb the closer we get to Non-Dual consciousness and Unity. *That's why Firman/Gila's claim that the Self can be found in the lower unconscious are not compatible with this philosophy.*

From an individual point of view, we as spirits do exactly the same prior to physical birth. According to Wilber (1999a: 250-253), drawing on the Tibetan book of the Dead, we descend from the spiritual regions until we reach the plane of physical birth. After physical birth we, as unconscious spirit, reverse the direction and the inner spiritual nature in the child (inherent in

matter) will now, through the stages subconscious, self-conscious, and superconscious, attempt to return to the source, to Spirit. This process is called *evolution*.

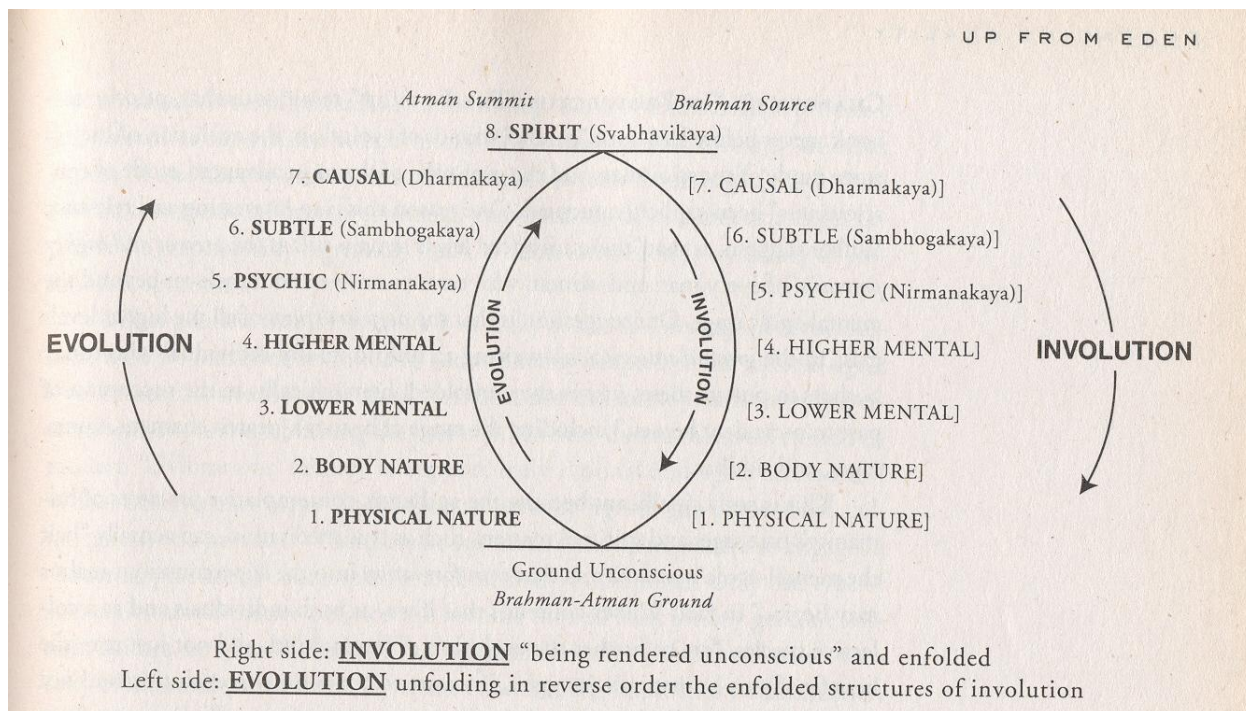


Figure 3: Involution

According to my research, Assagioli's cosmological concept of creation, involution and evolution is fully aligned with Wilber's version. Assagioli actually writes a lot on these abstruse matters, but I will not go into a deep consideration of all his metaphysical thoughts. I have included some of the most important in an extract in Appendix 1.

For now I will briefly demonstrate that he actually works with involution also called emanation. Assagioli believes that the transcendent Spirit is one and that it can only be defined by what it is not, but as soon as Spirit creates the universe, duality arises between Spirit and matter. In a paragraph where Assagioli (1993: 251) speaks of the "great principle of involution or emanation" he defines it:

"From a basic, original absolute reality, a series of levels of life, intellect, feeling and material life has developed, through gradual differentiation, to the point of inorganic matter. Thus every quality or attribute of the eternal world, of matter itself, and of the countless different creatures is but a pale, obscure reflection of a quality or attribute of the spiritual Reality, the Divine Being."

This quote demonstrates how Assagioli considers the creation of the levels of consciousness to have happened through involution. Assagioli (1993: 85-86, 102) also considers this process to be true in relation to the individual soul and uses the Biblical parable of the prodigal son to explain the individual cycle of involution and evolution. The soul descends from the star (in his Egg Diagram) in the form of a reflection (the personal "I") and forgets its origin, but after the long process of going astray in all kinds of "wrong" directions it remembers its father's house, it searches for it and finds it.

But how does modern Psychosynthesis relate to this concept? I have found no evidence whatsoever, that any of the modern writers have included the concept of involution. Firman/Gila (2004:3) are the only writers who consciously address the question and they reject it: "Human beings are intrinsically at home in the cosmos. We are not visitors from another dimension, alienated and seeking our way home."

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But according to Assagioli (1993: 102) the opposite is the case. He believes with his own words in an: "emanatistic theory of the soul, descending, becoming one with matter, and then returning to its "home", the heavenly homeland."

How does this discrepancy in relation to levels of consciousness and involution affect the developmental theory of Assagioli and Firman/Gila? This will be the next research area.

### Assagioli's Egg Diagram

In order to demonstrate how Assagioli's developmental theory of man differs in *essence* from Firman/Gila's version of Psychosynthesis; let us take a look at his Egg Diagram.

Assagioli's (1975: 17) Egg Diagram (see Figure 4, in my drawing) is a presentation of the different unconscious and conscious levels of man.

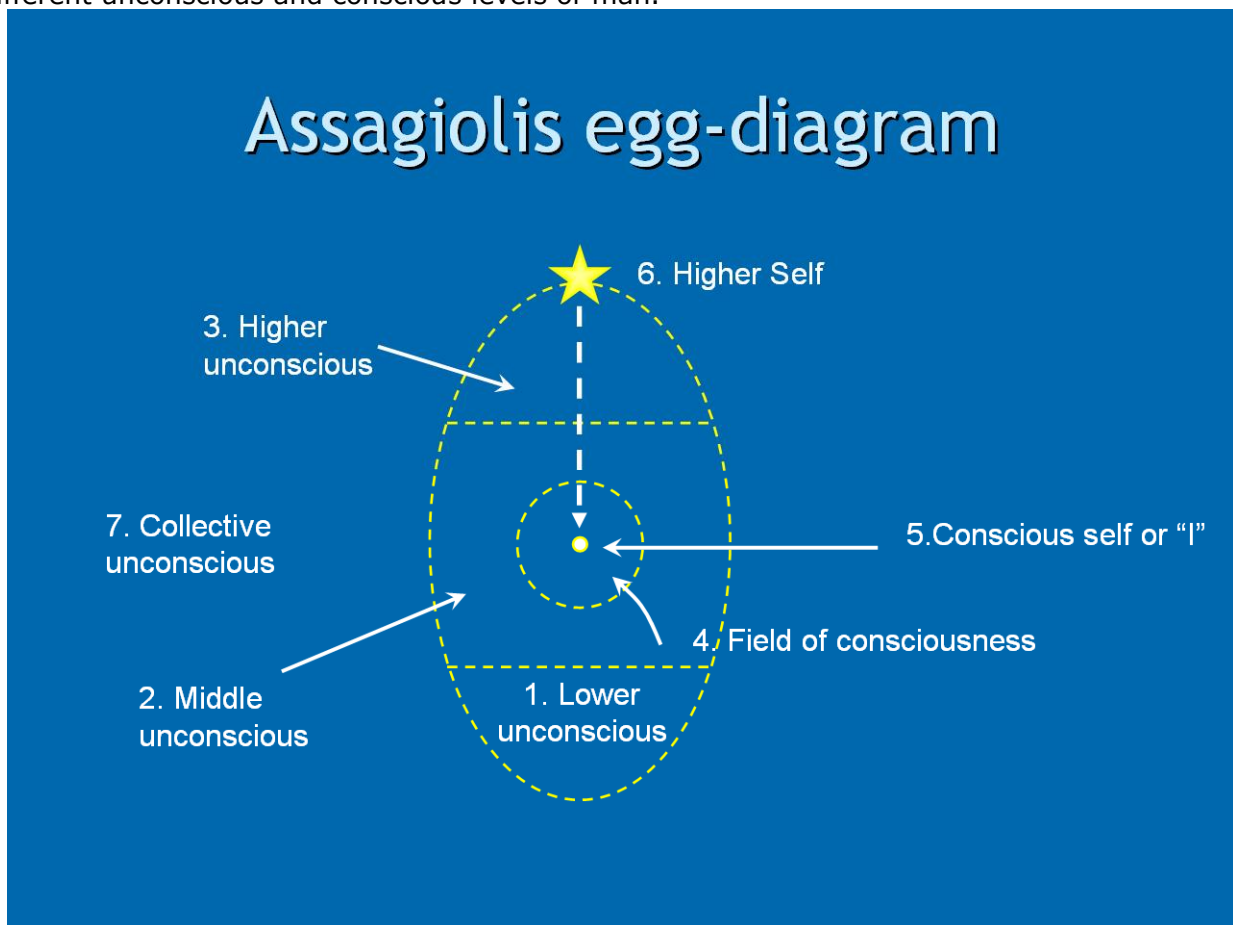


Figure 4: Assagioli's Egg Diagram

The lower unconscious (1) encompasses first of all the elementary psychic activities that govern the organic life. It is also the seat of the fundamental drives, such as sexuality, self-preservation and aggressiveness, dreams and imaginations of an inferior kind, and many complexes, charged with intense emotion. If we compare Assagioli's (1975: 17, 1967a: 2-3) definition with his levels of consciousness (see Figure 2), we find that this area corresponds to the physical and lower emotions/imaginations.

The middle unconscious (2) is the pre-conscious, and the psychic elements are similar to those of the waking consciousness, so the exact nature of this content depends on the *stage of development* of the particular individual. It is, however, composed of the ordinary psychological functions of mind, emotions and imagination and to the corresponding *levels of consciousness*.

The higher unconscious (3) is associated with the levels of higher abstract mind, higher imagination, intuition and transpersonal will. That is why contact with these levels is experienced as "higher intuitions and inspirations – artistic, philosophical or scientific, ethical 'imperatives' and urges to humanitarian and heroic action" (Assagioli, 1975: 17).

Assagioli also discriminates between different levels of self, according to the philosophy of emanation. The Universal Self (not represented in the above diagram; see my summary diagram in Figure 5) is the One Self (Brahman, God etc.) from which all other Selves arise and according to Assagioli (2002: 261): "All Transpersonal Selves can be considered as 'points' within the Universal Self."

The living conscious human entity in man is at the centre of the Egg Diagram (5) and called the conscious self, or "I." This self is a point of *pure consciousness and will*, and experienced as the inner observer and actor when disidentified from the content of consciousness (thoughts, emotions and sensations etc.). Very often we are so identified with the content of consciousness that we never experience this centre, but according to Assagioli (1975: 111) this is one of the major objectives in Psychosynthesis therapy to teach the client to step back (disidentify) and observe the contents in order to transform it.

The 'I' is a projection or emanation of its higher source, the Higher Self, in exactly the same way as the Higher Self is a projection of the Universal Self.

The higher Self (6) is a blend of individual and universal consciousness, it "experiences universality but without "losing" itself within the vast Universal Self. It remains at the center, Immovable." (Assagioli, Undated 3: 5) The Higher Self is the cause and source for all the superconscious processes, but is itself not a process, but a point of pure universal being. (Assagioli, Undated 3: 1-3)

There is only One Self on the highest existential and transcendent level of being, but in

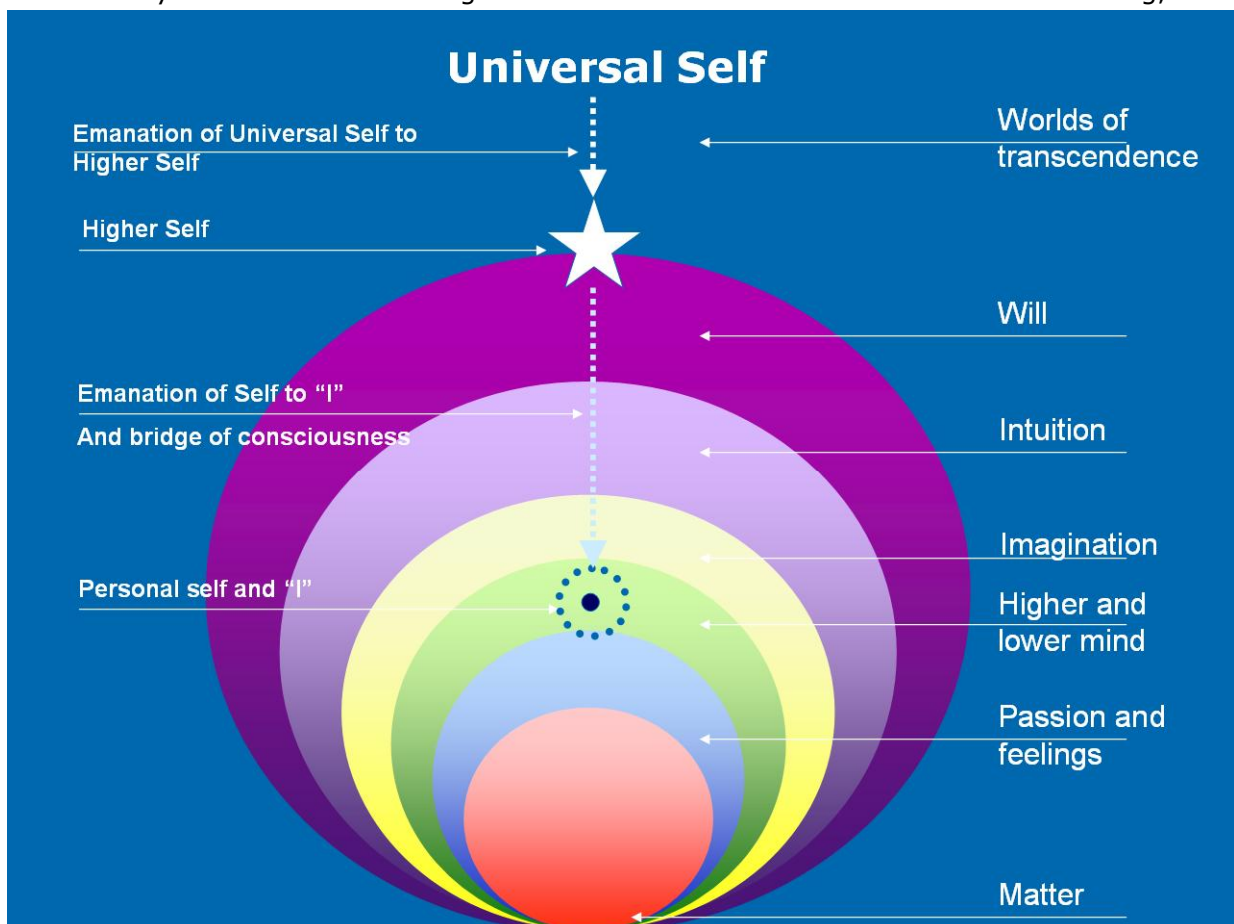


Figure 5: Universal, Higher and personal self

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manifestation the One becomes the many due to the duality between Spirit and matter as been discussed earlier. It is very important to discriminate between the different levels of Self in order to avoid confusion of levels. Assagioli (cited in Besmer, 1973: 7) states: "Such phrases as, 'I am Brahman, I am The One', need to be clearly qualified. They may express a metaphysical ontological truth, but the personal self certainly has not reached that level of expansion of consciousness. It is a difference of *development*." The relation between the three selves and the levels is demonstrated in figure 5.

The field of consciousness (4) is where we can observe, evaluate and act on the incessant flow of the mind-stream coming from all parts of the unconscious areas. The individual is in an ongoing interchange with the collective unconscious (7). Psychic energies from all parts (higher and lower) of this vast general psychic environment are influencing the individual and are blended with the individual energies, which the individual at some time has identified with.

It becomes clear from this very brief outline of the Egg Diagram that it serves as a powerful tool to discriminate between what Wilber (1999b: 332) calls prepersonal (lower unconscious), personal (middle unconscious) and transpersonal (higher unconscious). This becomes evident in the next section when we will investigate how Psychosynthesis deals with the Pre/Trans Fallacy problem.

Before I enter into the comparison between Assagioli and Firman/Gila, let me demonstrate how Assagioli's and Wilber's definition of the Self is very similar. According to Wilber (2002: 33), the self is the one that is navigating through the levels and lines of development (see below). Wilber (2002: 33) defines the self as the inner "observer (an inner subject or watcher)" which he calls the proximate self or the 'I' and defines all the belongings of the self that can be observed through the self's awareness: body, subpersonalities, different roles in life etc. as the distal self or the "Me."

Some of the self's primary psychological functions is: identification, will, navigation, defences and integration. The self undergoes its own development through the basic waves and develops different types of identifications or self-sense on each level. According to Wilber (and Assagioli) every human being possesses three major or basic selves. We have a gross self, or ego, a subtle self or soul and a causal formless self or atman Self. The atman Self is the ultimate Self and the transcendental witness and resembles Assagioli's Universal Self. We are of course not necessary awakened to them but during peak experiences the two higher selves can temporarily enter the prevailing stage of consciousness.

According to Assagioli and Wilber, Self-realisation is a process whereby the personal 'I' is making an ascent to its higher source *through the superconscious area* and the higher levels of consciousness. This is a crucial element in any Integral Approach and Assagioli is aligned with that. In Chapter Two I will demonstrate this in detail.

### **Firman/Gila's Change in the Egg**

One of Firman/Gila's central arguments for removing the higher Self from the top of the Egg Diagram (see Figure 6, Firman/Gila, 2002: 20) is derived from clients' experiences with the higher Self while in despair (lower unconscious) or in the mundane details of life. Firman/Gila (2004:1-2) argue that according to these experiences the Self must be present in all levels.

They believe in the omnipresence of the Self throughout all levels:

“Transcendence here denotes that Self cannot be equated with any specific content or process of the higher, middle, or lower unconscious, while immanence denotes that Self is still completely present and active within the content and process of all these levels—both insights at the core of Assagioli’s understanding of Self” (Firman/Gila, 2004: 2).

According to Firman/Gila the Self is “completely present” within the lower unconscious, but this is in opposition to the concept of involution, and also the “core of Assagioli’s understanding of Self.” We do not find universal consciousness in the lower unconscious in a model that builds on involution, because according to Assagioli (1975: 19): “This Self is above, and unaffected by, the flow of the mind-stream or bodily conditions”, and “The transpersonal Self is “outside” time and above it. It exists and lives in the dimension of the Eternal” (Assagioli, 1973: 6).

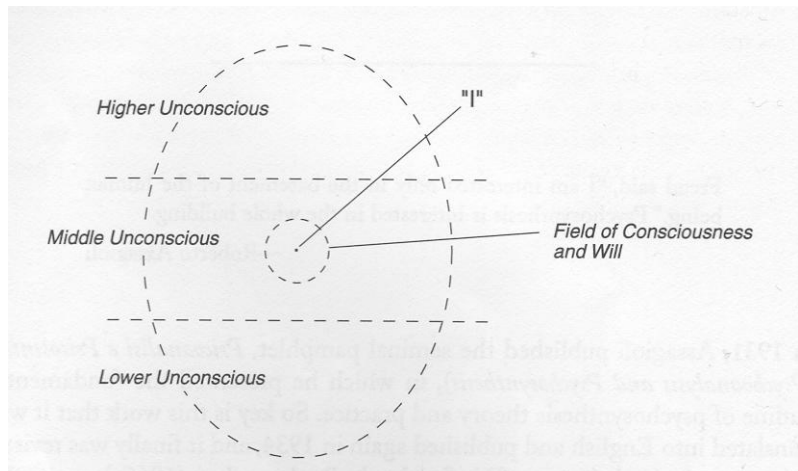


Figure 6: Firman/Gila’s Egg Diagram

Wilber (2000a: 468) agrees in the above: “We seek for Spirit in the world of time; but Spirit is timeless and cannot there be found. We seek for Spirit in the world of space; but Spirit is spaceless and cannot there be found.”

Assagioli does not say that the Self is cut off from the process of becoming in the manifested world including the lower unconscious. It is in direct connection with it but through the “I”, its pale reflection in the manifested world.

By following Assagioli’s theory it is not necessary to change the Egg in order to explain why people experience higher states while working with the past of the lower unconscious or experience spontaneous enlightenment while engaged in ordinary life situations.

According to Assagioli (1963: 4), the Higher Self is able to act through the superconscious “under the powerful stimulation of some unusual stress or emergency, or in response to some strong appeal.”

In an interview (Freund 1983: 85) Assagioli calls this principle for “*man’s extremity, God’s opportunity.*” The pain and agony of the personal self and its appeal for help act as an invocation to the Higher Self, which responds by sending its light and love through the superconscious.

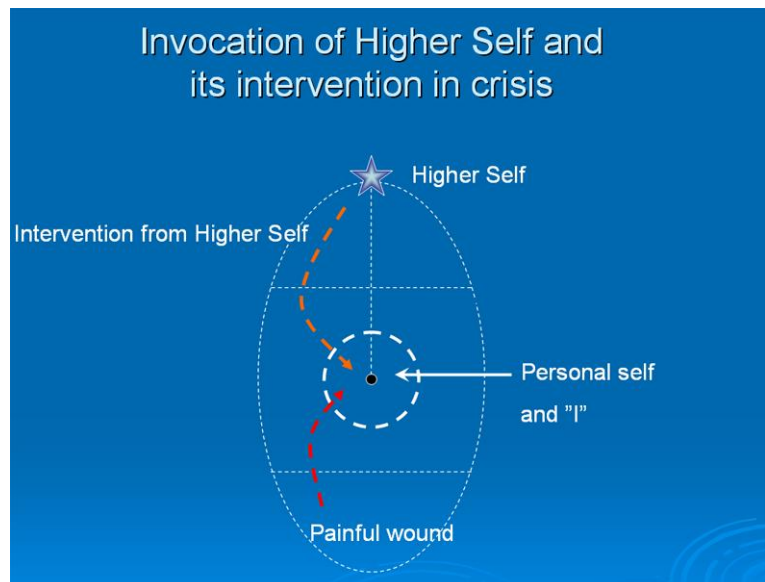


Figure 7: The higher Self’s intervention

The situation is visualised in my diagram (Figure 7). One famous instance of this process is Eckhart Tolle’s spontaneous enlightenment reported in his book *The Power of Now* (2004: 3). Assagioli explains the spontaneous enlightenment as a “pull” or “call” from above by the Higher Self (2002: 113).

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In Assagioli's version of the Egg Diagram: "The Self is to the superconscious what the "I", or personal self, is to the elements and functions of the personality." (Cited in Hardy 1996: 31).

They operate at two very different ontological levels. Firman/Gila see the Self as completely present and immanent in all lower and higher states; universal consciousness (the higher Self) can be found in the biological processes as well as in the higher more unitive states. Assagioli operates with the Great Chain of Being and the resulting duality between the different levels of consciousness. Firman/Gila do not because in Parfitt's (2006: 229) words: "The Self can be put at both top and bottom of the Egg, and for that matter anywhere else on the edge of the egg."

This is in not an option when working within the Integral Approach or with Assagioli's version of Psychosynthesis.

Even though Ferrucci (1982: 45) does not directly operate with the Great Chain of Being, he is in much closer rapport with Assagioli on this issue: "The transpersonal Self, while retaining a sense of individuality, lives at the level of universality, in a realm where personal plans and concerns are overshadowed by the wider vision of the whole."

The difference between the two concepts can perhaps seem to be unimportant for the psychotherapist, but they have very deep implications for how a Psychosynthesis psychotherapist guides his client in the process of Self-realisation. In what direction are we looking for the higher Self: above and beyond normal consciousness (Wilber/Assagioli) or in it (Firman/Gila)?

This question brings us to the much debated concept of the Pre/Trans Fallacy of Wilber. With the help of this theory I will demonstrate that Assagioli and Firman/Gila are following two very different developmental models.

### **The Pre/Trans Fallacy Debate**

One of the most crucial points to verify in order to clarify whether Psychosynthesis is an Integral psychotherapy is how it relates to one of the major debates within the field of transpersonal psychology – what Wilber calls the Pre/Trans Fallacy.

This issue was one of the most important philosophical discussions within the field in the late 80's and 90's. It is often called the Wilber/Washburn-controversy because of the two authors' diverging concepts regarding human development. Very briefly, as an introduction, it can be said that Wilber came to the conclusion after writing his first two books that his developmental theory (today called Wilber 1) was based on an incorrect assumption about a lost childhood spirituality. According to this notion every individual experiences a lost Eden or divine ground when developing an ego, because it represses the original connection to spirit. This childhood spirituality needs to be recaptured through a depth psychological approach so the self in this way returns to the lost spiritual source in the past.

Wilber (1999b: 1) speaks of his first model as a romantic "recaptured-goodness" model, which: "posited a spectrum of consciousness ranging from sub-conscious to self-conscious to superconscious (or id to ego to God), with the higher stages viewed as a return to, and recapture of, original but lost potentials."

This was also the position Washburn took and defended in his reply to Wilber's new perspectives in his two books *The Atman Project* and *Up From Eden*.

In the two books Wilber offers a different perspective on human development where ego-development is not a step away from Spirit but a step forward. Instead of the depth psychological perspective, he shifts to a height psychological approach and introduces a stage model where the self is developing through a series of psychological stages or levels ranging from body, mind, soul to Spirit. His phase-2 theory was an evolutionary "growth-to-goodness" model, with the spectrum of consciousness unfolding in developmental stages or levels.

According to Wilber, one of the major problems that occur, when we do not use hierarchical levels (holarchies) is that we tend to confuse the levels.

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In his book *Eye to Eye* he defines the Pre/Trans Fallacy. He assumes that human beings have access to the sensory/emotional (prerational), the mental and the spiritual (transrational): "The point is simply that since e.g. *prerational* and *transrational* are both, in their own ways, non-rational, then they appear quite similar or even identical to the untutored eye. Once this confusion occurs – the confusion of "pre" and "trans" – one of two things inevitably happens. The transrational realms are *reduced* to prepersonal status, or the *prerational* realms are elevated to transrational glory." (Wilber, 1999b: 333).

Wilber identifies Freud as a *reductionist*, because he tends to interpret all mystical experiences as an infantile longing for symbiotic and "oceanic" feelings, which he relates to the peaceful infantile state at the breast, to which every human being longs to return. According to Wilber (1999b: 1-3), Jung is occasionally an *elevationist* because he does not discriminate between higher and lower experiences within the collective unconscious. In this way primitive and archaic impulses will be interpreted as spiritual.

Out of the confusion of levels arise a lot of clinical issues related to what are personal energies and what is spiritual and how we guide the client to a real encounter with the Higher Self. I will research these questions below, but initially let us see what kind of developmental model Assagioli's version of Psychosynthesis is adhering to.

### **Psychosynthesis in Relation to Pre/Trans Fallacy**

Was Assagioli himself aware of the Pre/Trans Fallacy? According to Wilber he seems to have been. In regard to the Pre/Trans Fallacy, Wilber (1999b: 340) says about Assagioli: "I would like to include Maslow and Assagioli among the many transpersonalists who, in my opinion, do not commit significant Pre/Trans Fallacy." Wilber (1999b: 341) even notices that Assagioli is aware of Jung's tendency to mix the lower and higher unconscious.

In the interview *Height Psychology* (Besmer 1973: 4) Assagioli presents his view on discriminating between higher and lower levels, and he exemplifies the confusion via Jung's tendency to mix the "archaic primitive concepts and higher ideal models."

Assagioli (1975: 212) also uses Desoille's research to demonstrate the importance between lower and higher unconscious when working with these areas during guided visualisations. Desoille's research shows that a guided descent to the depths of the sea evokes "the threatening power of the unconscious ... In contrasts, in the ascent of the mountain there is the evocation of positive and constructive feelings."

Assagioli (1975: 19, 1993: 65, 120, 1967b: 19) points out the "confusion of levels" several times, so he is well aware of it.

I have not found any evidence that Assagioli believes in the "recaptured goodness" model, but overwhelming evidence for the "growth-to-goodness" model, which I will further demonstrate when dealing with his stage model in Chapter Two.

When it comes to how Psychosynthesis is practiced today in relation to the two different developmental models Wilber uses, the picture gets a lot more blurred. Because no one explicitly uses the Great Chain of Being it is not possible to identify a pure "growth-to-goodness" model. But as has been mentioned before, many of the psychosynthesists use three vertical levels and an ascending progression through them. This includes the discrimination between the two overall stages Assagioli suggests: personal and spiritual psychosynthesis.

Ferrucci comes close because he implies an ascending stage model (see Chapter Two) and Hardy, as has been demonstrated earlier, recognizes that Assagioli uses a hierarchical model, but does not implement the Great Chain of Being herself *directly* when outlining Psychosynthesis in her book. Indirectly, however, she presents the most precise diagram which gives a very close description of Assagioli's hierarchical conception of development.

When presenting Figure 7, Hardy (1996: 30-31) says nothing about the Great Chain of Being, but explains that "the relationship of the Self to the 'I' seems best presented by the diagram ... The 'I' is seen as the centre of body, mind and feelings, which can be assumed to make up the field of consciousness. The 'I' can be at different points in its relation to the Self."

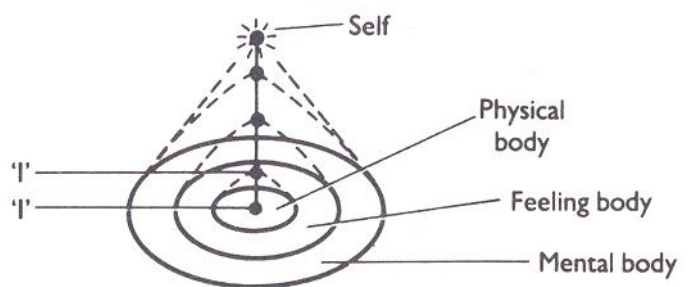


Figure 7. Vertical development

The diagram, I think, gives a very clear presentation of the vertical development of the 'I' and also of the three bodies, a concept I will return to in the section on AQAL.

Firman/Gila, on the other hand, present a very clear "Recaptured goodness" model and have as far as I can see, and perhaps unknowingly, turned Psychosynthesis in the opposite direction of Assagioli's original intention.

Firman/Gila consider the child to have an intact I-Self connection and also a full access to higher and lower unconscious from the birth. But that connection and experiential range is distorted or broken due to a non-empathetic environment that causes the primal wound and the split in consciousness between higher and lower. Firman/Gila (2002: 196, n.9) argue that *this split actually creates the higher and lower unconscious in the individual!* In their own words:

"In our view, the higher unconscious and the lower unconscious are not developmental levels but dissociated sectors of the psyche that need to be integrated."

This is another strong statement against the ontological levels of consciousness in nature. They argue that in order to heal the brokenness and reconnect to the Self and get the full access to higher and lower unconscious we must go back and heal the wound.

In a personal e-mail correspondence with me (see Appendix 2), Firman clarified his position: "Our hypothesis (is) that the person's experiential range—from agony to ecstasy—would be intact if he or she were perfectly seen in empathetic love. This ideal would mean there would be no higher and lower unconscious—just a full experiential range that would allow us to experience the heights and depths of life in stage appropriate ways. ..."

This is clearly an example of what Wilber calls a "recaptured-goodness" model. It seems that Firman/Gila (2002: 194, n. 5) have been unaware of Assagioli's close connection to the neo-platonic ideas, because according to them: "Assagioli never directly addressed the formation of the higher and lower unconscious", but it seems that he did.

When covering involution in the last chapter, I quoted him saying: "From a basic, original absolute reality, a series of levels of life, intellect, feeling and material life have developed, through gradual differentiation, to the point of inorganic matter." This is how the higher and lower levels of the unconscious are created, viewed through Assagioli's lens, and according to that theory the child is not in full contact with the higher unconscious or has an intact unbroken I-Self connection (full connection to God, Brahman etc.) as Firman/Gila claim. This potential unfolds during the development from body, mind, soul to Spirit.

Another important difference between Firman/Gila and Assagioli is that they consider the experience of new energies from the higher unconscious to be an experience of a *formerly repressed area* according to the primal wound. But Assagioli does not consider this always to be the case even though he agrees that repression of the superconscious does happen. But according to him the eruption of material from the superconscious levels arrive: "almost ready made, and has very little connection with previous experiences." (Assagioli, 1975: 198)

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Firman/Gila (2002: 195, n8, 196, n.9) clearly do not consider a hierarchical progression through stages. They reject the developmental progression from the lower unconscious to the higher unconscious. This brings them in opposition to Assagioli and the above-mentioned writers.

We find many traces of Firman/Gila's point of view (the "recaptured-goodness" model) in the writings of other Psychosynthesists even though no one fully takes their view.

Parfitt (2006: 93) clearly aligns himself with Firman/Gila in this quote on the lost childhood spirituality: "It has been said that a newborn baby is whole, complete in itself, and free from all restriction and fear. We can re-live and truly feel in our bodies all that we knew and felt as babies. This can include the free flow of energy, a sense of connection to the Self and to the oneness of all life. Our bodies may be armoured, but when we start to release this armour, we find our bodies also carry all the knowledge and understanding we have of the transpersonal or spiritual realms."

It also seems that Whitmore, even though she upholds the traditional ascending development through stages, has taken their view on childhood spirituality. She clearly talks about returning to a past union with the Self which is now lost e.g. "all counselling ultimately is to achieve the recovery of the Self, our Self" (Whitmore, 2004: x-xi, 126).

Hardy (1996: 25) is also suggesting the unity of lower and higher unconscious in childhood.

Assagioli (1993: 102) and Wilber (2000a: 467) also talk about a lost "Eden" or union with the divine source, but this "loss" happens before birth as part of the soul's involution into matter. Before we go into a discussion on how the "recaptured-goodness" model according to the Integral Approach can create trouble in the clinical work, we need a last discriminative factor. In order to distinguish between higher and lower energies we need a set of principles that define what spiritual development means.

### **Definition of Spiritual Development According to Assagioli**

Assagioli defines spiritual development in the following terms:

- A. Spirituality implies *vertical and horizontal development*. A transcendence of the little self in a vertical direction through communion with God. This means transcendence and transformation of all selfishness, fear, inertia, love of pleasure and all untamed forces. Horizontal development through communion with all fellow-creatures from the family to humanity as a whole (Assagioli, Undated 1: 4, 1993: 196).
- B. *Higher values*. Spiritual is connected with: "All states of awareness, all the functions and activities which have as common denominator the possessing of *values* higher than the average, values such as the ethical, the aesthetic, the heroic, the humanitarian, and the altruistic" (Assagioli, 1975: 38).
- C. *High ethics*. All claims of spirituality have to be expressed through a more pure strict and conscious morality than average man. "You shall know the tree by its fruits"; and that is why "moral purification is the key to understanding the true reason for the long pilgrimage through the inner worlds which is the fabric of Dante's famous epic" (Assagioli, 1993: 162).

This is some of Assagioli's principles, others could be applied, but we need spiritual principles in order to distinguish states that appear similar but are actually very different. A good example is the experience of *ecstasy*; it is very often associated with the experience of higher unconscious states flavoured by a blissful state, but it can easily be confused with more personal states of joy and happiness. The difference is that the personal states of joy, often associated with sexual intercourse, competitive accomplishment etc. very often (but not always) are *self-centred* and do not transcend the individual toward the universal. As has been discussed before, Spirit according to the Integral Approach is to be found on the highest levels of consciousness. The personal states can actually create stronger attachment to the body and ego and often exclude higher values. We will explore this issue now when we deal with

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elevation of prepersonal states to transpersonal and how the Pre/Trans Fallacy affects the clinical work.

It is important to notice that the confusion of levels can and does exist independently of what type of developmental model we use. But the Integral point is that when both higher and lower energies are associated with the same unconscious source (the "recaptured-goodness" model) and sought for via a regressive move to the past, then it is difficult to discriminate between them.

### **Problems and Dangers in Therapy Arising Out of The Confusion of Levels**

I will now investigate what consequences the Pre/Trans Fallacy has for especially psychotherapy, and what kind of confusion we can identify within Psychosynthesis theory and practice when using the Integral map as a critical lens. Assagioli mentions several kinds of problems associated with the confusion of levels, I will also suggest some myself and will interpret them all as dangers in therapy.

The prerational energies are the body sensations, feelings and images in the lower unconscious all associated with the separated individual and his basic needs. The experience of these energies can be quite joyful and beneficial, but they are not spiritual in the sense Assagioli and Wilber define spirituality. So what kind of trouble can come out of it, if we as psychotherapists believe them to be spiritual?

#### *The danger in the fascination of the primitive and disruptive states*

Assagioli (1967b: 5) address this issue and in order to clarify the confusion of levels, he introduces the concept of levels: "from the biological to the spiritual" in the collective unconscious. From Jung's mixture of higher and lower archetypes "arise various debatable consequences; debatable at the theoretical level and liable to be harmful in therapy" (Assagioli, 1967b: 5).

So according to Assagioli there are not only theoretical problems with the Pre/Trans Fallacy, but also "harmful" consequences. The dangers that Assagioli (1967b: 10, 1975: 98, 228. 1993: 91) discusses in his work are related to the danger when the forces of the lower unconscious are uncovered and sometimes overwhelm the client.

Assagioli seems to suggest that if we, like Jung, have a "potent fascination of the collective unconscious" (Assagioli, 1967b: 5) and consider it all to be spiritual or higher archetypes even though it is quite primitive and sometimes dangerous, then we can weaken our client's defence mechanism in an unwise way. He actually states that the premature unleashing of the unconscious energies can produce psychotic cases and in some cases lead to suicide (Assagioli, 1975: 98).

#### *The danger in pointing the wrong way to the "heights"*

Firman/Gila's version of Psychosynthesis claims that Self-realisation is something that happens when we heal the "primal wound" in the past, but from an Integral point of view, this position gives a very partial perspective on what spiritual development is. There are several problems with this conception.

The past is accentuated in an unwise way because spiritual development becomes a matter of regression to earlier states of consciousness in order to reconnect with the "wounded child." To believe that we have to regress to the "primal wound" in order to experience universal consciousness can in my opinion lead to a gross reductionism of what the spiritual path implies, when we remember Assagioli's definition of spiritual. This becomes in my opinion evident when reading Firman/Gila. According to the perennial philosophy, Assagioli and the Integral Approach we do not find universal consciousness in the lower unconscious, and if this is true, we lead our clients in the wrong direction. Assagioli points to Desoille's research in the above quote in order to show exactly what kinds of experience often are related to the descent: "the threatening power of the unconscious." Purifying the lower and middle

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unconscious is on the other hand absolutely necessary in order to facilitate the descent of spiritual energies (Assagioli, 1975: 49-53).

Firman/Gila write almost nothing about transmutation of selfish desires, purification, meditation and expansion of consciousness in vertical and horizontal direction, subjects that are central for Assagioli in connection with Self-realisation. The Integral Approach claims that in order to reach the transrational or spiritual states of consciousness we have to let go of (at least temporarily) our mind, emotions and body states. This is not done by a regression to past emotional states, but by identifying with something higher *beyond* mind. Parfitt's claim, that through the body we can get "a sense of connection to the Self and to the oneness of all life" is hard to believe in an integral context because, as Wilber (2000b: 456) states it: "The body, you see, is basically narcissistic and egocentric. Bodily feelings are just about *your* body, period. ... The body's sensory awareness cannot enter into care and compassion and ethical discourse and I-thou spirituality." Wilber (2006: 203) fully acknowledges the importance of bodywork and implements it in what he calls his Integral Life Practice, but we don't look for Spirit there.

It is the tendency to elevate prepersonal and personal states to spiritual that we find in Firman/Gila's writings and from an Integral point it has the unfortunate effect that it trivialises the sacred and actually makes room for a desacralisation of reality – in other words to reductionism. Let me offer a few examples:

The emergence of what Assagioli calls the "I", the separated and pale reflection of the Self, in Firman/Gila's (2002: 56) version of Psychosynthesis becomes the: "emergence of the human spirit, our true essence."

A motorcyclist's personal experience of joy, freedom and connection with the warrior archetype when riding his bike is elevated to a transpersonal state (Firman/Gila, 2002: 70). Why is it not merely a healthy ego gratification? Firman/Gila claim that Self-realisation is about following your deepest values, but they do not define them, so anyone can claim to be Self-realised because they follow their deepest wish to buy a motorcycle!

A client's development of healthy self-care (Firman/Gila, 2002: 88) becomes a matter of connecting with the higher unconscious, but healthy ego-development is not in Assagioli's version about higher values, because it is *motivated* by our own well-being. Transpersonal states make it possible to *transcend and expand* our self-centredness, so self care is only the foundational work that must precede Self-realisation.

Assagioli (2002: 98-99) clearly discriminates between higher and lower love, personal and transpersonal will, so these qualities, as well as freedom and joy, can be expressed at a personal and at a transpersonal level. Firman/Gila seems not to consider the *motivation* behind the qualities and the levels of expression. This creates in my opinion a lot of confusion. There are many examples of elevation in Firman/Gila's work and they all in my opinion tend to trivialise the great mystery and in a way: creates reduction of the spiritual mystery.

The cause of many of the problems could relate to the fact that Firman/Gila (2002: 171,183) argues that Self-realisation is part of personal as well as transpersonal psychosynthesis, while Assagioli (2002: 121) clearly defines Self-realisation as part of the transpersonal stages which will be explored in the next chapter. If healthy ego-development is part of the *realisation of the Self – Atman*, then it becomes very difficult to define spirituality.

In order to be authentic human beings when working with our clients it is crucial to mirror a realistic picture of what it takes to enter the path of Self-realisation. When we call self-care spiritual attainment, in my opinion we tend to lead our clients astray.

There is also a grave risk that the "recaptured-goodness" model strengthens an attachment to victimisation. When our childhood is connected with the loss of not only our personal happiness but also the entire spiritual ground, there is a lot more "to blame" evil society and our family for. The "growth-to-goodness" model does not postulate a blissful Eden in childhood, but

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instead points to the meaningful development of ego, as a step closer to the transpersonal "heaven." When the true connection to the Self is associated with childhood it can also create an unhealthy and regressive longing to the spiritual womb of the mother, a state Assagioli (2002: 113) calls "to lose oneself in the collective."

*The danger in confusing intuition with emotion and the resulting lack of true guidance*

Another example Assagioli (1993: 69) presents is in relation to Jung's definition of intuition: "Jung calls (intuition) "irrational" but this term is open to misunderstanding because it can be understood as contrary to reason, whereas in fact it is merely different, not contradictory. We might perhaps call it "para-rational" or "transrational."

Assagioli (1975: 27, 2002: 156) argues that intuition can be confused with unconscious wishes and desires, and if we believe that our client's irrational *spontaneous* emotions (following the gut feelings) are highly spiritual and intuitive, this can get them into serious trouble. For the untrained eye they are easy to confuse because they share some of the same features: they are non-rational, spontaneous and often accompanied by joy and certainty. It is especially important when confronted with crucial decisions that we can discriminate between what type of energies we are following, this is important for Assagioli (2002: 156). One way to discriminate between intuition and emotion is that emotion is always partial, only acting on behalf of one part of the personality while intuition is a holistic faculty that serves the whole.

One of the most fatal errors in psychotherapy is when we elevate our client's pathological (psychotic) fantasies to spiritual intuitions that need to be explored. Instead of strengthening the ego, we can in that situation apply spiritual techniques that will disrupt the fragile ego.

*The danger in confusing the Superego as part of the higher unconscious*

In my Psychosynthesis training I was presented with a comparison between Assagioli's Egg Diagram and Freud's Egg with the Id, Ego and Superego. The Superego was in this particular comparison related to the higher unconscious. This is a mistake that is very easy to commit when not using levels of consciousness. When we apply the levels, we know that the superconscious is associated with the levels of higher mind, intuition and will and the Superego has nothing to do with that. According to Assagioli the superego 'is to a great extent introjected from parental prohibitions and parental commands. This type of conscience is on the level of the personality.' (1975: 232)

The Superego is very often driven by fear, 'but the experience of the superconscious reality cancels out fear ... In the serene atmosphere of the superconscious, however, those feelings (fear, aggression, hate) cannot exist.' (1993: 29) (My brackets)

The danger in this specific confusion is that we connect the higher dimensions with fear and this can result in a 'repression of the sublime'. When the higher energies impact an unprepared personality they may cause serious troubles but they are not in themselves harmful, because the energies in the higher levels always include the lower even though a partial and (erroneous) identification with them by the ego can exclude the lower energies.

*The danger of ego-inflation*

Assagioli also takes notice of the danger of ego-inflation when not discriminating between higher and lower levels. He talks about "a confusion of levels" in connection with the inflow of superconscious energies, when the ego cannot discriminate between itself as a relative being and the more absolute being of the higher Self united with the Universal Self (Assagioli, 1975: 45, 1993: 50, 74, 121).

This confusion arises when we fail to discriminate between a transcendent reality and the immanent reality, when we do not see the difference between what is a potential and what is realised reality. Assagioli (1993: 50) uses the example of an acorn that has the potential to become an oak, but first has to go through the long process of growth.

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Firman/Gila are in my opinion very close to committing that error. They do not see the relevance in discriminating between the three selves as Assagioli and Wilber do. This is obvious since they do not use levels, so they easily, from an Integral point of view, confuse the different "reflections" of the Self. A clear example of this is found in this quote by Firman/Gila (2007: 39):

"Assagioli's 'three selves model' leaves a subtle but fundamental question unanswered: Who moves from the experience of 'separate individuality' to the experience of 'individuality and universality'? Is there yet another self, one which can move from the experience of 'personal self' to the experience of 'Transpersonal Self?' We do not think so."

They conclude that there is only one 'I' – the one who experiences, having different experiences of agony or unity with the divine, so no need for a higher Self, because you are always the same 'I' experiencing it all. Following this argument we might conclude that there is only One Who Experiences, (Universal Spirit), and this seems to be the well-known concept of "All is One."

Assagioli (Undated 2: 10) addresses this confusion of levels many times: 'All is One' is a deep metaphysical truth at that level, but unfortunately many people bring down that wonderful reality to human levels, or other levels in manifestation where it simply does not operate. All is One in essence, in Being; but in becoming, in manifestation, in that process of life, there are countless many."

When there is no duality between high and low, it is easy to blur the distinction between the personal self or 'I' and the Higher Self. Personal experiences very often get elevated in such a philosophical atmosphere, and this seems also to be the case, as I have demonstrated, in Firman/Gila's writings.

#### *The danger of moral nihilism*

Another danger we encounter, according to Assagioli, when we fail to discriminate between the transcendent reality of pure spirit and the more relative level we as human beings inhabit, is moral nihilism. Assagioli points out (1993: 160) that some immoralists claim that good and evil are relative for the realised human being, because in the eye of the Spirit all action is indifferent. Spirit justifies everything. So if we or our clients believe we are gods, which we are in potential but not in reality, then we can argue that no moral principles apply to me. Wilber has written extensively on the tendency in our culture towards a dangerous narcissism, which he calls Boomeritis because of the post-modernistic notion of moral relativism and its egalitarian worldview that claims that "nobody's truth is better than mine." Both writers seem to be in agreement here.

#### *The Danger of Reducing All Higher Energies to Sublimated Lower Energies*

Let us now turn our attention to the second version of the Pre/Trans Fallacy. Psychosynthesis in all its versions truly acknowledges the importance of integrating the higher dimensions when working with clients. That is why reductionism is not, as far as I can judge, so widespread within the Psychosynthesis community, so I will not go into detail with this issue.

But as we have already seen it can become a gross *reduction* of the spiritual mystery when we elevate normality to spiritual heights and this is a side effect of elevation.

On several occasions Assagioli addresses the *direct* reduction of higher states e.g. in *Transpersonal Development* he flatly rejects the positivist reduction of mystical phenomena, when they treat them as morbid manifestations. (1993: 134)

Assagioli is also very aware of the Freudian reductionist attitude and reject the idea that mysticism is merely a product or by-product of sex. (1975: 272) The psychoanalytical attitude tends to create a very negative image of man and his motivation, and this was also one of Assagioli's concerns (2002: 144, Keen 1974: 8) as well as the problem with the

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psychoanalytical dream interpretation that “tends to “reduce” everything to infantile impressions and traumas, and to instinctive urges.” (1967a: 9)

### **Summary of Chapter One**

In the above chapter I have mainly researched into Psychosynthesis for the use of levels of consciousness and the associate concepts of involution and the Pre/Trans Fallacy. It seems that the inclusion of the Great Chain of Being in Psychosynthesis can help clarify the difference between prerational and transrational states of being and help avoid the Pre/Trans Fallacy. Especially if we define the features of spiritual energies as Assagioli did and also include involution as a guiding theory.

I will now see how Psychosynthesis apply Lines, States, Types and Quadrants and start out with a brief introduction to Wilber’s definition of the Self in order to clarify who is experiencing the integral dimensions.

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## Chapter Two

### The Developmental Theory of Psychosynthesis

It is now time to research into the details of what type of developmental theory Psychosynthesis upholds from Assagioli's original version to modern Psychosynthesis. As we have seen, Wilber's Integral Model is a *hierarchical stage model*, a "growth-to-goodness" concept of human development.

But what is it that evolves? For Wilber, and for Assagioli, it is the Self – the seat of identity and awareness. What Assagioli calls the personal self, the center of pure consciousness and will (1975: 119), becomes in Wilber's terminology to the "Proximate Self" or the observing self (2000c: 33). They share the same basic understanding of what evolves in man, this I will demonstrate in the following and let me start off by offering some of Wilber's points.

The self, the sense of "I", undergoes according to Wilber its own development through the basic levels (called the Self-line) and develops different types of identifications or self-sense on each level. This can be defined as the evolution of consciousness through the stages: Material self to bodily self to mental self to soul self to selfless Self.

When the self conquers a new level Wilber claims that it also enters a new world, and a new outlook on reality. It then faces 'new fears, has different goals, suffers new problems. It has a new set of needs, a new class of morals, and a new sense of self.' (2002: 38)

The central source of identity expands and deepens as the self develops through the basic levels and develops different and more expanded identifications with what the 'I' thinks and feels it self to be. According to Brad Reynolds this leads: "to a 'decreasing egocentricity' basically because the self moves from a more narrow or contracted sense of identity to the wider, more embracing stages of conscious awareness" (2006: 195-196).

Wilber exemplifies this development through one of the self related lines i.e. the line of moral development based on research from Lawrence Kohlberg, Jane Loevinger, Carol Gilligan, and Robert Kegan. Wilber calls this development for the spiral of compassion because it expands the self-identity from egocentric (Me), to ethnocentric (US), worldcentric (All Of Us) to Cosmocentric (All). But how did Assagioli consider human development from an Integral perspective?

#### **Assagioli's Theory of Development Is Based On Hierarchical Thinking**

Generally it can be said that Assagioli never presented a detailed developmental theory, but from ideas scattered around in his books and papers a very clear picture can be assembled.

From what we have already covered we can assume that he shares Wilber's hierarchical 'growth-to-goodness' model. Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been an influential inspiration for Wilber, and Assagioli also uses it to clarify his own position on human development.

He warmly encourages his students to study Maslow's books (Assagioli, Undated 2: 4) and in his book *The Act of Will* he draws a close comparison between his own Egg Diagram and Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' (Assagioli, 2002: 106-122). Assagioli here gives a very precise picture of his developmental theory by aligning it with Maslow's well-known stage model.

Like Maslow, he considers human development an evolutionary progression *through natural unfolding stages* that can be stimulated through the various techniques used in Psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 2002: 99). Assagioli (2002: 99) states that: "As the basic human needs are being taken care of, the pull of what Maslow has termed the higher needs gradually emerges and asserts itself, and draws us toward ever greater expansion of consciousness and realization."

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After having briefly outlined the 'hierarchy of needs' (Assagioli, 2002: 106), Assagioli (2002: 110) starts to compare it to his own Egg Diagram and explains that: "The basic and normal personal needs concern the levels of the lower and middle psychological life."

The basic elementary needs are what Maslow calls physiological and safety needs, and they correspond to the lower unconscious. The normal personal needs are according to Assagioli love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. The higher unconscious is associated with Maslow's Being-values or metaneeds and a real transcendence of normal consciousness.

Assagioli and Maslow claim that satisfaction of the first two groups of needs often activate an existential crisis and the need for meaning – this is a higher pull from above through a transpersonal need or soul need.

Assagioli (2002: 113) claims that we search for the higher needs through an act of transcendence, which is a rising above ordinary consciousness and a transcendence of the limitations of personal consciousness. This happens through the aspiration and will of the personal self and through the pull from the Higher Self to transcend the limitations. There are different types of transcendence related to the different ways of self-realisation; it is not only happening through a search for enlightenment.

The ways are connected with Assagioli's typology and I will present them later on.

But all the ways apply the "fundamental will to transcend personality limitations through union with someone or something greater and higher" (Assagioli, 2002: 116).

As Maslow, Assagioli (1975: 30) discriminates between self-actualisation and self-realisation. Self-actualisation or what Assagioli calls personal Psychosynthesis is the development of a well-rounded personality and integration of all the normal psychological functions in the lower and middle unconscious around the personal self. This stage can still be quite selfish or self-centred and does not necessarily imply any higher motivation.

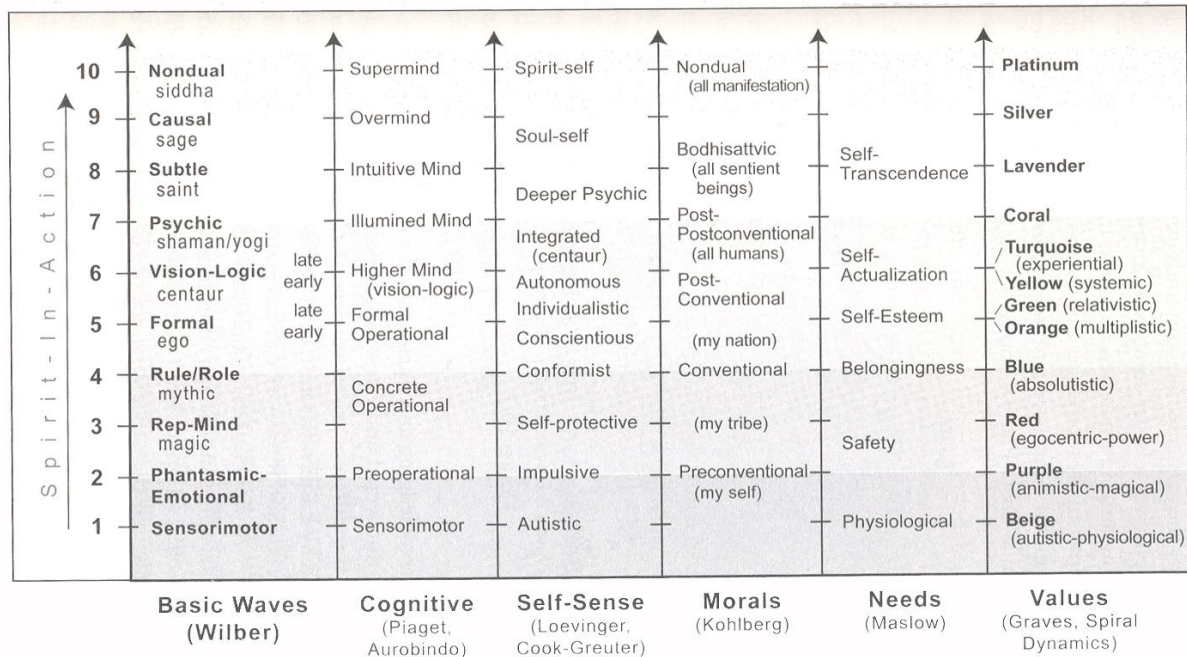
Self-realisation means realizing all potentials in especially the higher unconscious culminating in the direct unification between the "I", the observer and the Higher Self, and ultimately with the Universal Self.

Assagioli (2002: 120) summarises his developmental theory through Maslow's 'five stages of evolutionary development.' The types belonging to the first two stages are motivated by deficiency needs, from physiological to esteem needs. The third and fourth stage is associated with motivation for self-actualisation and the fifth stage is motivated by transpersonal self-realization.

Assagioli (2002: 121-122) further divides the fifth stage of self-realization or spiritual Psychosynthesis into three well-defined stages making the total of eight stages to full self-realisation. The three transpersonal stages are:

1. *The activation and expression of the potentialities in the higher unconscious* and he exemplifies this stage through some of the extraordinary geniuses in the history of humanity. Leonardo da Vinci and Goethe pertain to this stage.
2. *The direct awareness of the Self*, which culminates in the unification of the consciousness of the personal self with the Higher Self. Gandhi, Florence Nightingale, Martin Luther King and Schweitzer belong according to Assagioli here.
3. *The communion of the Higher Self with the Universal Self*. The highest mystics of all times belong here.

Assagioli divided the above seven stages into two overall stages which he called personal Psychosynthesis – stage one to four – and Transpersonal Psychosynthesis stage five to seven. This is equivalent to Wilber’s ‘outward and inward arc.’ The ‘outward’ development is a process whereby the individual develops a healthy ego resulting in the stage of the integrated body-mind, the ‘Centaur’ with the faculty of Vision-logic. After a stable egoic development there is a turn inward to the higher transpersonal stages. In Figure 8 (Reynolds 2006: 209) we see a comparison between Wilber’s basic levels with well-known Western and Eastern developmentalists, and if we follow Maslow’s stages we see how Assagioli fits into this diagram.



**Self-Related Streams & Basic Waves (Left-Hand Interiors)**

Figure 8. Self-related Streams and Basic Waves

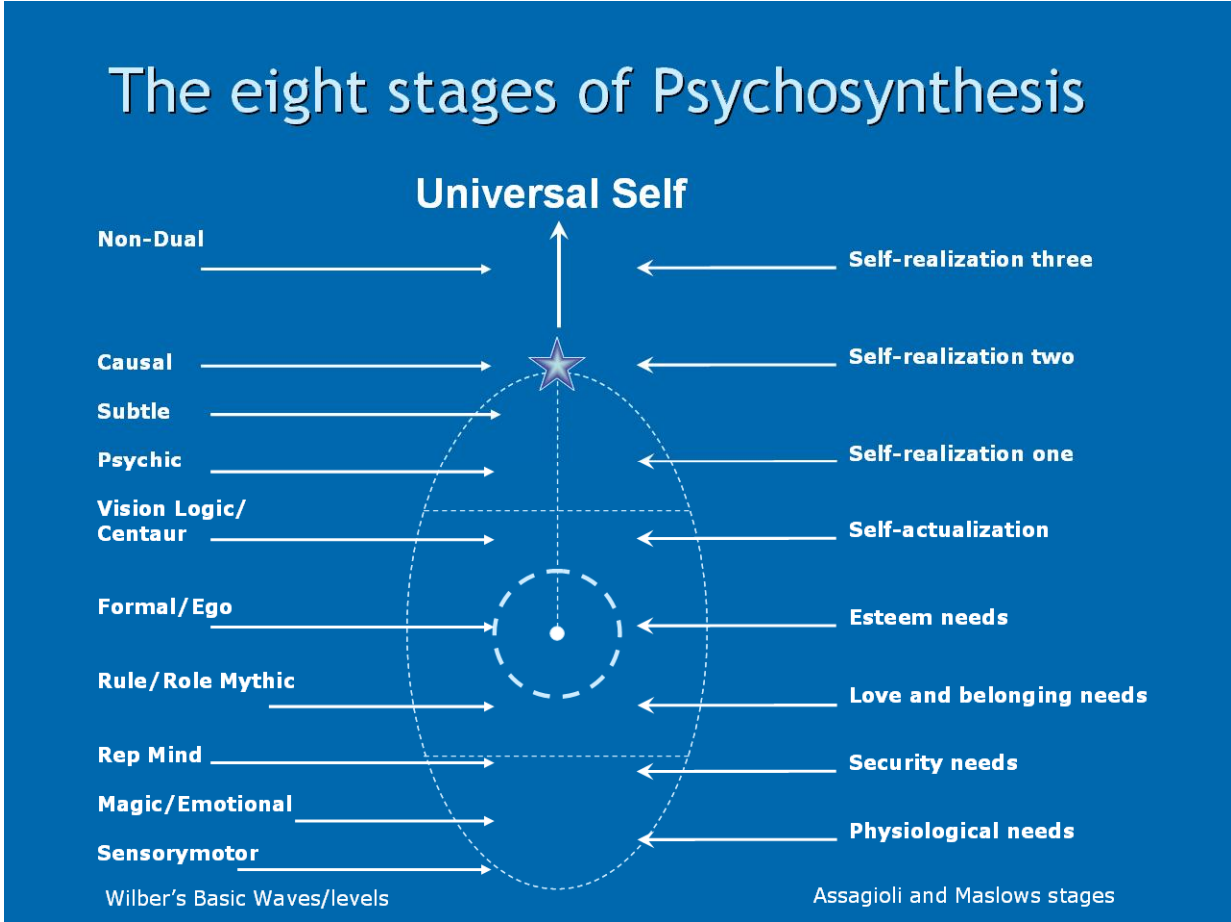


Figure 9. The eight stages of Psychosynthesis

If we apply the above theory on stage development to Assagioli's Egg Diagram, we could illustrate it like Figure 9. The comparison between Wilber's and Assagioli's stages needs a lot of elaboration, so this is only a first suggestion. Assagioli also divides the three transpersonal stages into five stages when the specific crisis related to the expansion of consciousness is included. In his article *Spiritual Joy* and in *Transpersonal Development* (Assagioli, 1993: 108-33, 1942: 1) he gives a lot of information, which I cannot cover within the limitations of this article.

In his book: *Psychosynthesis* he (Assagioli, 1975: 30) describes the more *practical* approach of how we actually help ourselves and our clients to develop through the stages, and he clearly discriminates between personal and transpersonal psychosynthesis.

"Psychosynthesis utilises many techniques of psychological action, aiming first at the development and perfection of the personality, and then at its harmonious co-ordination and increasing unification with the Self. These phases may be called respectively 'personal' and 'spiritual' Psychosynthesis." (1975: 30)

Within these two overall phases he outlines four stages:

1. Thorough knowledge of one's personality
2. Control of its various elements
3. Realisation of one's true Self – the discovery or creation of a unifying centre
4. Psychosynthesis: the formation or reconstruction of the personality around the new centre

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According to Assagioli (1975: 29) the above stages are not meant to be followed in any strict succession, because he clearly understands the uneven development of man. Assagioli claims that some people have developed a genuine realization of transpersonal Self-realization, but lack adequate development of the personality functions in order to express themselves properly in the world (personal Psychosynthesis) and vice versa (Assagioli, 2002: 121).

But from this we cannot conclude, as Firman/Gila do (see below), that Psychosynthesis does not operate with a hierarchical stage conception that unfolds in natural stages; I think I have demonstrated this in the above.

### **Vague Stage Conception In Modern Psychosynthesis**

When we come to modern Psychosynthesis and its developmental theories, we don't find many detailed hierarchical stage perspectives except the basic understanding already discussed.

Ferrucci (1982: 139) is the only psychosynthesist who outlines what he calls 'the evolution from personality to Self', and he clearly follows Assagioli's thoughts and defines six stages if we include the stage before awakening. He talks about 'the ladder of evolution' (Ferrucci, 1982: 72).

Hardy also acknowledges Assagioli's hierarchical approach and emphasises the influence from Dante: "The final point that I would like to make about the relevance of Dantes framework to Assagioli is the very hierarchical nature of the pictures of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. This is in accordance with the picture of the Great Chain of Being ..." (1996: 148)

Returning to Firman/Gila it is clear that they have chosen another developmental model than Assagioli's, but they seem not to be fully aware of it, so let me offer a few points.

They claim that their developmental model arises directly from Assagioli's original thinking and: "to our knowledge, Assagioli never elaborated a detailed developmental theory" (Firman/Gila, 2002: 112).

In order to state the above, they seem to be quite unaware of Assagioli's hierarchical 'growth-to-goodness' model, and that the model they suggest is in direct opposition to *fundamental features* in Assagioli's theory as been discussed above.

They claim that Assagioli's four practical stages:

"Are not hierarchical levels in which earlier stages are subsumed by the later" (Firman/Gila 2002: 46). They seem to forget that Assagioli considers these stages to be part of two overall stages – the personal and spiritual Psychosynthesis, and his alignment with Maslow's theory.

And they further state:

"Assagioli does not present them as natural stages in human development. For example they do not represent a development sequence unfolding from birth to old age" (Firman/Gila, 2002: 46). But Assagioli does believe in natural unfolding stages as been demonstrated above (Assagioli, 2002: 99). Firman/Gila continue:

"The stages cannot be used as some sort of yardstick to measure our progress in psycho-spiritual development. They are not a ladder up which we climb ..." (Firman/Gila, 2002: 46).

But within the text where he defines the practical steps, Assagioli (1975: 24) actually does talk about an ascent through stages:

"Between the starting point in the lowlands of our ordinary consciousness and the shining peak of Self-realization there are intermediate phases, plateaus at various altitudes on which a man may rest or even make his abode." And another place he states: "Identification with higher and higher aspects of the superconscious is useful, as it can constitute a ladder toward the Self" (Assagioli, undated 3: 4).

The above quotation from Firman/Gila is clearly in direct contradiction to the Integral Approach, Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs', and Assagioli's theory in all their points.

It seems that Assagioli always considers Self-realisation to be a process that *goes through the superconscious* and not the lower unconscious and his point is: "The contents of the superconscious, particularly at its higher levels, are very close to the Self and therefore share, to some extent, its characteristics" (Assagioli, 1993: 29).

And in another quote by Assagioli (Miller, Stuart: 1973): "...others feel "calls" - to use the old language. They are attracted by the possibility of expanding consciousness into the farther reaches of the Superconscious, up to the experience of the Self. This is true Self realization, what I call Transpersonal or Spiritual psychosynthesis."

Firman/Gila are obviously in direct opposition with that idea.

In the above we have considered especially the Self's overall development through the stages. I will now turn to the important Integral concept of *lines of development* in order to see how Psychosynthesis applies to this.

### The Self's Development Through Lines

When the individual develops through the levels of consciousness from subconscious to self-conscious and superconscious there are, according to Wilber (2000c: 28), about: "Two dozens relatively independent developmental *lines* or streams" that pass through these levels of consciousness. Some of the prominent lines that every individual unfolds through his/her evolutionary development are the affective, cognitive, moral, interpersonal and spiritual lines. According to the research on which Wilber bases his theory (Maslow, Kohlberg, Erikson, Piaget, Aurobindo etc.), each of the individual lines tends to unfold in a rather sequential, stage-like, holarchical fashion through the basic levels. "But the 'overall development' - the sum total of all these different lines - shows no linear or sequential development whatsoever" (Wilber, 2002: 28). The consequences of this are that an individual can be a mixture of highly, medium and low developed lines. The diagram in Figure 10 (Wilber, 2000c: 31) shows varying levels of development in separate lines.

The developmental studies that Wilber uses as background for his theory claim that individuals tend to be focused at an overall and particular stage of development, which is often called the Self's centre of gravity. The overall stage is especially related to the self-line and what an individual is *identifying with*, at a particular stage of development. But the overall human being with all its psychological functions is not at any particular stage of development, because all the aspects of the personality have their own individual development.

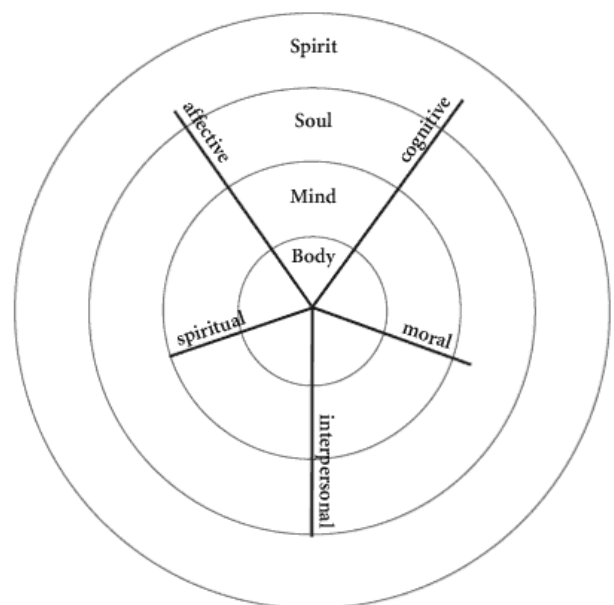


Figure 10. Levels of development in separate lines

Some of the lines of development are closely related to the self's own development and Wilber calls them the self-related streams (see figure 8). The self has a capacity for identifying with each level (becoming one with it) and through this identification masters the level of consciousness until it disidentifies with it again in order to step to the next higher level. Whenever the self is transcending one level it integrates the former in a developmental movement Wilber calls transcend and include.

When the self conquers a new level it also enters a new world and a new outlook on reality. It faces then "new fears, has different goals, suffers new problems. It has a new set of needs, a new class of morals, a new sense of self" (Wilber, 2002: 38).

### Lines of Development In Psychosynthesis

One of the principal parts of Psychosynthesis training is the "development of the aspects of the personality which are either deficient or inadequate" (Assagioli, 1975: 29). Assagioli (1975: 57) is well aware of the 'irregular development' of many people and has implemented many active techniques to develop the weak psychological functions.

In his Star Diagram (see Figure 11, Assagioli 2002: 49) he very clearly defines what he considers to be the fundamental lines of development, namely the seven psychological functions organised around the Self.

The Self is the white area of awareness at the centre of the Diagram (7) and in close relation to this centre Assagioli puts the will, so in a way they are the two sides of the same coin. The difference is that he considers the will to be the primary *dynamic* psychological function of a living conscious entity – the Self.

In *The Act of Will* (Assagioli, 2002: 98-99) he also argues for the hierarchical nature of all the psychological functions and in this way they become lines of development. There can be higher and lower aspects of e.g. love and will and all the other psychological functions.

The higher the level the more inclusive it becomes in its expression. Assagioli suggests many techniques to this specific development and especially the work with ideal models – a visualised image of perfection. According to Assagioli, every line or psychological function can have its own ideal model, which we work to realize: It "represents the next and most urgent step or stage – that of developing an undeveloped psychological function, focusing on a single specified quality or small group of qualities, or abilities which the patient most needs in order to achieve, and even to proceed with, his Psychosynthesis" (Assagioli, 1975: 170).

From the above we can assume that Assagioli has a conception of lines of development. In this respect Assagioli's version of Psychosynthesis becomes Integral.

It is a well-known feature of modern Psychosynthesis to train the weak psychological functions even though the only Psychosynthesist who, according to my research, really gives it a *hierarchical stage flavour* is Piero Ferrucci. In his book, *What We May Be*, he offers a lot of techniques to the development of the various psychological functions (see e.g. Ferrucci, 1982: 107-111). But Ferrucci is not very explicit about the hierarchical progression of the lines, so it is not possible to conclude that his approach is Integral in relation to lines of development).

### States of Consciousness

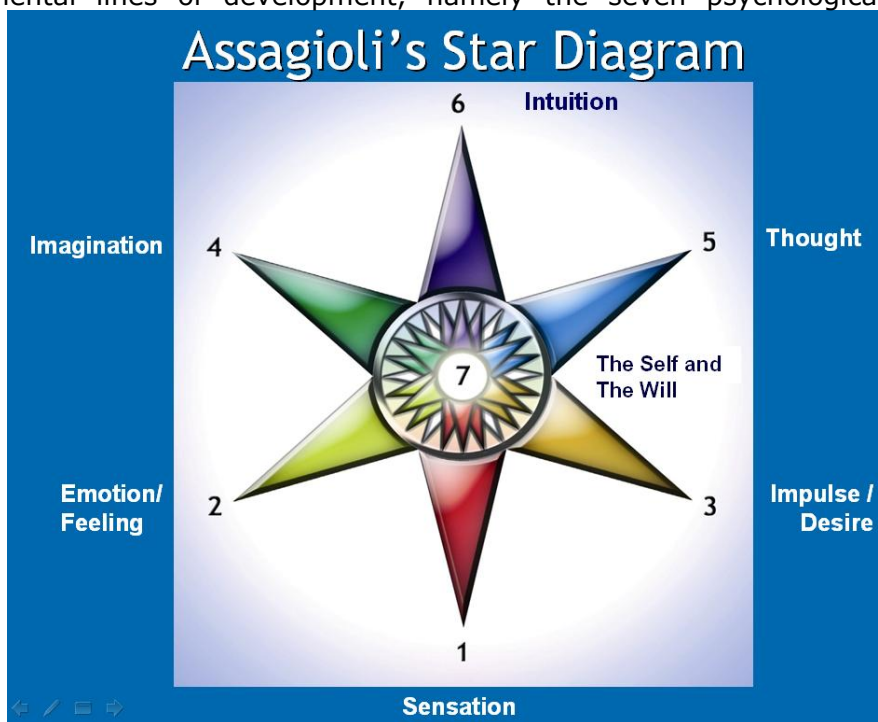


Figure 11: Assagioli's Star Diagram

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Another important concept in Wilber's Integral Approach is states of consciousness. In *Integral Psychology* (Wilber, 2002, p.13-14) he defines four states of consciousness that are available to all human beings as *temporary* state experiences. The waking state is related to the ordinary consciousness of the ego. The next two states can be entered with full consciousness even though they are defined as dream and deep sleep. The dream state is related to states of the soul and is associated with the experience of different visions of divine beings and diverse unitive states with form. The deep sleep state covers all the formless experience with spirit and is associated with emptiness. The final state is the non-dual state that integrates them all in unity – emptiness is form and form is emptiness.

If we look at Figure 9 and recall the presentation of the Egg Diagram on page 14 we can see that Assagioli's Egg Diagram gives a general presentation of the four above states. The lower and middle levels are related to the waking ego state. The higher unconscious to the dream or soul state. The Higher Self and above to the causal or deep dream state, and the totality of the Egg Diagram including the Universal Self is associated with the non-dual state. The above comparison is close on a general level, but the details have to be worked out. Assagioli offers many definitions of the higher states throughout his authorship, but does not discriminate as thoroughly as Wilber does between the states at each level.

One of Wilber's (2000c: 15-16) important points is that these passing 'height experiences' or perspectives can be turned into stable stages when the 'I' during meditation connects with these states during extended periods of time. Meditation is an important technique for Wilber as well as for Assagioli in order to raise the stage of development for an individual. Meditation on the ideal model is one of the techniques Assagioli suggests.

Assagioli arrives at the same conclusion in regard to turning states into permanent traits. He argues that the experience of the higher states: "encourages a gradual stabilisation of the centre of personal consciousness and of the area of ordinary consciousness at gradually higher levels" (Assagioli, 1993: 40, see also: 1993: 51).

From the above it seems reasonable to assume that Assagioli's version of Psychosynthesis is Integral when it comes to the concept of states. All the modern Psychosynthesists that I have researched into include the various states connected to the three levels of the Egg Diagram, but they lack the process that turns states into stages.

We will now very briefly turn the attention to a topic that Wilber does not say much about: Types. But that does not mean that they are unimportant.

## Types

When considering types, Wilber almost entirely draws on existing models from Jung and the Enneagram. The types are *horizontal orientations* available on each level i.e. the feminine and masculine expression. Wilber (2002: 54) exemplifies the important use of types by combining the nine types of the Enneagram with the eight vertical levels used in *Spiral Dynamics* and from this combination we get seventy two different psychological orientations.

Assagioli is well aware of the importance of typology or differential psychology. He has a chapter on typology in his book *The Act of Will* and a short presentation of his own septenary classification published under the title: *Psychosynthesis Typology* (Assagioli, 1983a).

He classifies them as: the Will/Power type, the Love/Illuminative type, the Active/Practical type, the Aesthetic/Creative type, the Scientific/Rational type, the Devotional/Idealistic type and the Organizer/Ritualistic type (Assagioli, 2002: 250-251). There is no space to elaborate on details of the types, so let us look at the modern Psychosynthesis writers.

Ferrucci is again the Psychosynthesist who comes closest to Assagioli's original ideas. In his book *Inevitable Grace* he goes deep into the seven ways (types) of Self-realization and exemplifies them through the lives of famous geniuses and creatives. Hardy and Parfitt also offer a short introduction to the ways.

None of the above writers, nor anyone else that I have researched into, has presented a complete theory on the basis of Assagioli's suggestions, so the modern version of Psychosynthesis Typology seems to be rather partial.

It seems to me that typology is a well known approach within the Psychosynthesis community, so it seems that they are all in some respect Integral. This brings us to the last Integral topic of how it all fits together.

## AQAL – How Levels, Lines, States and Types All Fit Together

Wilber's AQAL model is one of his later findings and offers a synthetic conception of all his central concepts in one picture. Wilber claims that anything in the manifested Kosmos – the world of becoming – can at least be observed from the four different perspectives we find in the AQAL diagram (see Figure 12).

The left part of the diagram represents the individual/collective interior, and the right part is the exterior. The upper part is all related to individual development and the lower part is collective development. All the quadrants are also embedded in the whole spectrum of levels already introduced. In this way AQAL becomes All Quadrants All Levels.

In the Upper Left we find all the different levels of consciousness that any individual may pass through in the full possibility of development to its fullest potential. In the Upper Right we find all the individual and physical aspects (e.g. brainwaves and behaviour) associated with the Upper Left. In the Lower Left we find all the cultural and *shared* states of consciousness that any individual will be part of, and the stages of development that any group may pass through. In the Lower Right we see how the cultural values are reflected in different kinds of political and social systems.

Wilber often summarises his model in the sentence: *cultivation of body, mind and spirit in self, culture and nature.*

I will now research into whether Psychosynthesis is aware of the four quadrants: The individual interior and exterior and the collective interior and exterior.

### The Individual Interior – Upper Left

This field has already been covered up till now; this is where the individual development occurs through the basic levels and lines.

### The Individual Exterior – Upper Right

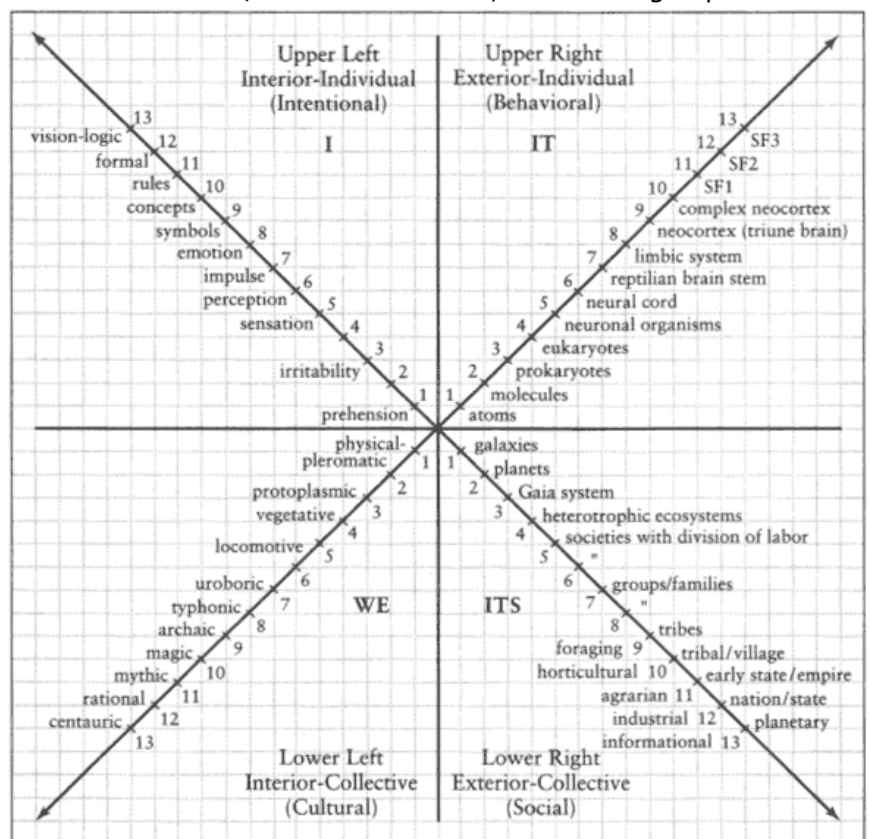


Figure 12: Four Quadrants

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In this quadrant we see all the states of consciousness reflected in outer behaviour and brainwaves. Wilber also has a conception of subtle bodies due to the stages in this quadrant.

He defines a subtle body as an 'energetic support of the various states and levels of mind' we find in the upper left. (2000c: 12) The gross physical body supports the material mind (brainwaves and behaviour), the subtle body the emotional, mental and higher mental mind and the causal body support the spiritual mind. The energetic bodies are also better known as the aura.

Wilber claims that we have to integrate the three bodies in e.g. psychotherapy in order to get the full picture of a given situation.

The question is here, does Psychosynthesis include the three bodies: gross, subtle and causal when working with psychotherapy?

Assagioli, being a medical doctor, acknowledged that the study of neuro-physiology and the electrical impulses (1975: 194) was very important, and he also encouraged the use of the appropriate physical cures i.e. different drugs etc. (1993: 126, 132)

In his article *Psychosomatic Medicine and Bio-Psychoanalysis*, he confirms that the body must be included in Psychosynthesis psychotherapy and states that the proper name for Psychosynthesis is Bio-Psychoanalysis. In various contexts he suggests a variation of physical exercises as part of the psychotherapeutic training.

It seems to me that Assagioli is also well aware of subtle bodies even though he does not write much about it. In a short sentence he explains what I assume to be the three bodies of the personality – the gross and subtle body of Wilber:

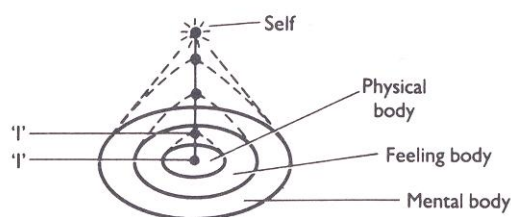
"Our spiritual being, the Self, which is the essential and most real part of us, is concealed, confined and 'enveloped' first by the physical body with its sense impressions, then by the multiplicity of the emotions and the different drives (fears, desires, attractions and repulsions), and finally by the restless activity of the mind" (1975: 214).

He also mentions what I believe is the Eastern concept of 'karana sharira', the causal body, when he speaks of the soul as the lotus flower hiding the divine essence – the 'Jewel of the Lotus.' (1993: 97)

Assagioli's emphasis on the will also places a strong focus on this area of the quadrant, because Psychosynthesis encourages the client to take direct action in order to facilitate the transformational change. The implementation of every new therapeutic goal follows a carefully planned process – called the six stages of the Will.

Many of the modern Psychosynthesists, especially Parfitt (2006: 202), also put emphasis on integrating body work as part of the therapeutic process and they also work with the act of will.

Many of the modern psychosynthesists lay emphasis on integrating body work as part of the therapeutic process and they also work with the act of will. In regard to Wilber's three bodies, Hardy is the only writer who according to my research is showing a direct knowledge of two of the bodies through this earlier presented diagram. Every body and the state of consciousness it carries is a step closer to the Self. This drawing shows the holonic and vertical dimension of Psychosynthesis. Hardy doesn't mention the inclusion of body work in



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her presentation.

The therapeutic work with the subtle body in psychotherapy is related to the use of i.e. Tai Chi and other types of subtle body practices. According to the Eastern traditions, the causal body is also the body that develops through the many incarnations and carries all the evolutionary growth from one incarnation to the next. So any spiritual practice will automatically and directly develop the spiritual quality of the causal body.

Let us now go to the collective sphere and see how Psychosynthesis performs in this area.

### **The Collective Interior – Cultural Development**

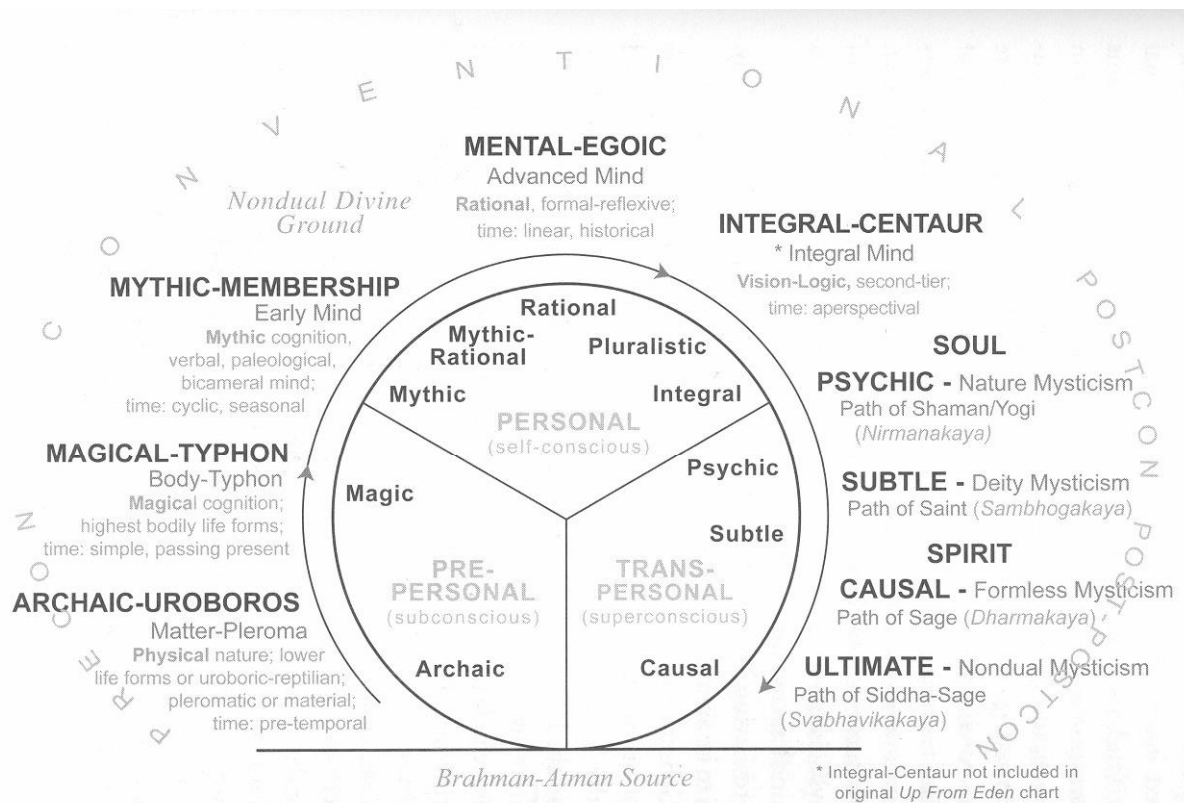
In his book *Up from Eden*, Wilber outlines how the spiritual evolution (called spirit-in-action) has unfolded up through the history of humanity through different stages of consciousness. This evolutionary development in history has been recognised by several theorists, including Jean Gebser (1905-1973) who influenced Wilber in his theories about cultural development. He was one of the first to research and detect the various psycho-historical structures of consciousness that have emerged in the course of history. He called these stages of cultural development for the *archaic*, *the magic*, *the mythic*, *the mental*, and the *integral* and it is visualised by Brad Reynolds (2006: 263) in Figure 13.

These traits are still active in the human constitution today because development always, in Wilber's definition, transcends and includes the former stages. Wilber also includes the transpersonal levels in his approach to collective development called *psychic*, *subtle* and *causal* but they seem more to be future possibilities. These stages of development are the shared worldviews that all the different cultures have been embedded in at a given time and they are at the same time reflected in the individual psychological make-up.

The stages has also been defined as prepersonal, personal and transpersonal development, and an important point Wilber makes is the difference between the popular masses of a culture and the avant-garde of a given culture. The latter are very often developing through the

Every human being develops through many of these stages in a natural process from birth to adult. In this way the culture as well as the individual climbs the Great Chain of Being.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to go further into the definition of Wilber's cultural evolution. Instead I would like to investigate whether we can find traits of collective and cultural evolution in Assagioli's thinking.



## AQAL MATRIX: Collective Human Evolution (Phylogeny)

Figure 13. Collective evolution

Roberto Assagioli is well aware of the evolution of cultural consciousness and addresses this issue several times in *Transpersonal Development* and in several articles (Assagioli, undated 1, 4, 1965, 1973). Chapter Nine in *Transpersonal Development* is called "*The Stages and Crisis of Spiritual Development*" and is introduced in the following manner:

"Even if we take no more than a causal look at the people around us, we see at once that they are not equally developed from the psychological and spiritual point of view. Some of them are still in a primitive, even wild, state, others are a little more developed, yet others are more advanced, and finally there are those few who have transcended normal humanity and now stand at the threshold of the superhuman, spiritual stage' (Assagioli, 1993: 107).

In this chapter Assagioli brings out his developmental theory by comparing the individual growth from child to adult (upper left) with the different cultural stages of development found in humanity during certain historical periods (lower left), and it resembles in many respect Wilber's psycho-historical stages of consciousness. Assagioli (Undated 4: 6) claims that according to the 'law of recapitulation' "the individual, in his development, actually goes through a rapid re-run of all the stages through which humanity has passed."

Assagioli works with the same three overall stages: prerational, rational and transrational. He discriminates also between a higher and lower expression of the same stage or psychological age. Let me very briefly cover them from the above chapter:

### Stage 1. The primitive stage

This is the stage of the primitive people and ordinary small children. They are "characterised by being simple, impulsive, easily distracted. They live only in the present, they are sensitive and emotional, but their feelings, though they may be intense at the time, are lacking in depth and are short-lived" (Assagioli, 1993: 108). The moral stage on this level he claims to be rather egocentric or pre-conventional. This stage very much resembles Ken Wilber's magical-typhoon – see Figure 13.

## *Stage 2. The mythic stage*

Assagioli exemplify this psychological age and stage through the early Vedic age in India or those of the Homeric period in Greece. According to Assagioli, human beings at this stage are rather naïve and childish in their belief systems. The higher qualities of this age are: "purity, spontaneity, devotion and a childlike faith in God" (Assagioli, 1993: 108). He describes their moral development as very conventional with a lot of devotion to their superiors, to moral and religious precepts and to the law. This stage seems to correspond with Ken Wilber's Mythic-Membership.

But Assagioli carries us further into the mental stages of development with the following words: "Men cannot and should not stay at this childish level. Their development is marked, as during adolescence, by a series of contrasts and conflicts, and this opens up to the next stage." (1993: 109).

### *The rational stage or the "Titanic or Promethean" stage*

At this stage we develop critical reflection and this gives rise to many problems and doubts. The cultural values and theories are no longer taken for granted or accepted without discussion. The mind wants to know the facts about a given moral value or thing. The individual becomes very proud and independent and turns away from gods or any authority. According to Assagioli we also find "an accentuation of self-awareness and self-affirmation which often leads to subjective introspection and is the chief characteristic of the Romantic viewpoint" (1993:109). He also considers this stage to be very chaotic and disharmonic presumably because of the many battles between the individual and the collective values.

The lower aspects of this psychological age are among more an excessive self-affirmation, destructive impulses, anarchy, fanaticism, pride, and lack of respect of and understanding of others. The higher qualities are idealism, generosity, courage and boldness, a sense of honour. The overall purpose of this age is "development of the mind and of the independent moral faculties, affirmation of self-awareness and of spiritual independence, the study of life and the gaining of a broader experience" (1993:110). This age corresponds to the psychological age of the adolescent and many people are according to Assagioli at this level today – and it resembles in some respect Wilber's Mental-Egoic level.

### *The stage of the consolidated personality or the adult soul*

This is the stage of the integrated personality which Assagioli compares to the adult man or woman and we also find a higher and lower expression of this stage. The emotions have been stabilised and the mental and rational faculties have been developed. The former states of chaos and rapid changes have settled due to a consolidation of the personality.

The lower expression of this stage shows itself through reactions to the harsh realities of life, the many failures and disappointments give rise to an unduly scepticism and intellectual crystallisation. This hardening of the personality can make it very extrovert in its pursuit of personal duties and ambitions and create an isolation and emphasis on selfishness.

The higher aspects of this age and stage can according to Assagioli be summarised in three words: harmony, balance and effectiveness. The personality is now so integrated or 'perfected' that it is a good vehicle for spirit, and man is able to demonstrate a good balance between spirit and form. This seems to represent the stage of personal Psychosynthesis or self-actualisation. This stage is a major turning point for the soul where it must choose between the lower or higher way. The lower way will intensify the suffering and crystallisation into matter until a major crisis will interact and change the course. This crisis is a battle between the personality and the Self which will one way or another rejuvenate the entire personality with new spiritual energies, when the surrender is done. The positive outcome of this crisis, Assagioli calls: *The awakening of the soul*. The higher way will lead to a gradually closer rapport with the spiritual Self and the evolving self will enter the path of purification and the different crisis here.

The above psychological age resembles in many instances the stage Ken Wilber calls the integrated body-mind or the Integral Centaur.

The following stages in Assagioli's stage theory are purely transpersonal stages and follow a pattern of crisis, purification and expansion of consciousness from stage to stage.

To Assagioli, individual Psychosynthesis (Upper Left) is only one aspect of the synthesis he argues for: "Individual Psychosynthesis is not, and cannot be, an end in itself, since each one of us is closely linked in life with other persons and groups" (Assagioli, 2002: 185). The horizontal part of Psychosynthesis was meant to be a wider and more full integration of the individual in the collective without losing individuality. He argues that many of the same techniques that are used for personal Psychosynthesis also could be implemented in the interpersonal work. His idealistic vision was that Psychosynthesis could play a role in establishing right human relations among the couples, between groups, nations and ultimately lead to the Psychosynthesis of humanity (Assagioli, 1965: 7). He even went further and saw human evolution as part of a greater evolution that united all beings into the supreme or cosmic synthesis (Assagioli, 1975: 31).

Assagioli does not write much on the above issue, but he seems to have been fully aware of the area and actually has a brief cultural stage model to offer as an example, so in this respect he seems to be Integral.

There is not much to say about modern Psychosynthesis. Most of the literature that I have researched into acknowledges the importance of interpersonal development, but lacks entirely a stage model and is not Integral in this respect.

Firman/Gila's contribution within this area is significant even though it is not Integral, because they have offered a lot of new insights to the significance of authentic mirroring and an empathetic environment this should be honoured. Let's now turn to our last subject – the Lower Right quadrant of social development.

## **The Collective Exterior – Social Development**

Wilber's Lower Right quadrant deals with the social and political reflections in society of the cultural values in lower left. The social and political systems are where the values get integrated in institutions; this is where we act to establish the structures of society within its manifold areas.

Assagioli does not write much about this area. There are a few articles about education (Assagioli, 1960, 1963, 1968, Undated 1) and how to integrate Psychosynthesis within the schools and universities. There are also some thoughts on the gender issue (Assagioli, Undated 4, 1965, 1973) and the development of nations as souls and personalities (Assagioli, Undated 4: 3). But he upholds the attitude that the core human problems have to be solved in the heart of every individual, because society is a reflection of human consciousness. He argues that e.g. the aggressive drives must be transmuted through an individual effort in order to secure real peace in the world. That's why his main focus is in the Upper Left quadrant.

There can be no doubt that Assagioli was a firm idealistic believer in the Psychosynthesis of humanity – unity in diversity was the glorious future goal he argued for.

In his article *From the Couple to the Community* he writes about the Psychosynthesis of nations, which he considers to be psychological entities with a soul. A nation is composed of *the public at large* that participate in the desire life of the lower unconscious, *the thinkers* that constitute the mental part of the nations conscious life, and the few geniuses and creatives that act as vessels for the nation's superconscious and soul.

The obstacle to this synthesis between nations he argues is psychological not political, which is why we need individual as well as social psychology. Here we might find a clue to why he does

not write more on the political and social issues, because as he says Psychosynthesis "is in fact neutral in the fields of philosophy and religion, as well as social and political neutral" (Undated 4: 3).

In the lower left we also find subtle and causal levels even though it is very difficult to find out how Wilber considers these structures in reality. Perhaps Assagioli gave a hint to how he saw this development in the quote below:

"Let us try in our imagination to form a vivid picture of the glory and bliss of the victorious, liberated soul as it consciously participates in the wisdom, power and love of the Divine Life. Now let us imagine an even greater vision of the Kingdom of God, when it has become a reality on earth, the vision of a redeemed humanity, with the whole of creation regenerated and displaying with joy the perfection of God" (1993: 128).

I find this area the weakest represented in both Assagioli's writings and modern Psychosynthesis, and the Integral perspective becomes very vague.

I will now bring in the clinical issues related to the second chapter. What can we learn, as Psychosynthesis psychotherapists, by applying the Integral Approach to our work?

## **Lines, States, Types and Quadrants In The Clinical Work**

What are the implications if we align Psychosynthesis therapy with Wilber's lines, states and types?

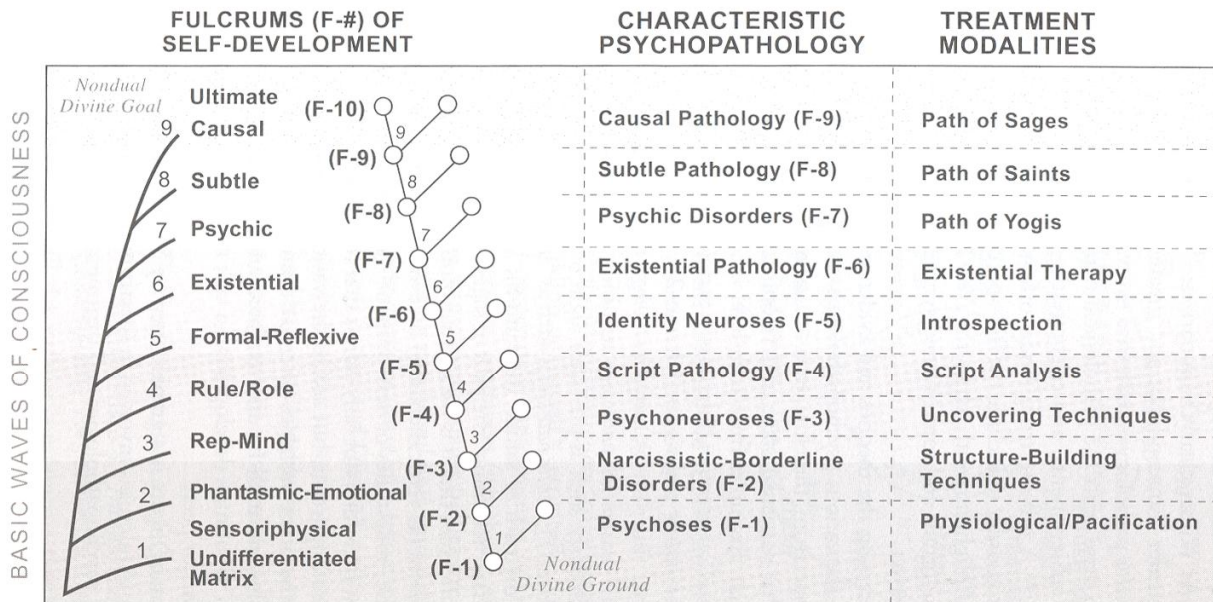
According to my research there seems not to have been any attempts to implement the modern developmental research, which Wilber is using, within Psychosynthesis theory. Assagioli seems to be the only writer who has used Maslow's findings to create a model of human development, which is a lot more dynamic, than his very static Egg Diagram offers. By combining the different lines of development with the Egg Diagram in the same way as Assagioli does with the need line in Figure 9, we get a much more detailed understanding of our clients' varied stages of development. This is crucial when we seek to develop the weak psychological functions in order to create a well-integrated personality.

The stage of development for any psychological structure or subpersonality could be assessed through an inquiry into the motivational level and value system of the subpersonality. If we are able to conclude what it *needs*, we will know what type of 'food' is needed and are able to help develop a healthy version at that level.

The vertical progression of the 'I' and the field of consciousness from the bottom of the Egg through the different vertical stages of development to the Higher Self, offer us a clear and detailed discrimination between prepersonal, personal and transpersonal states. In this way it becomes easier to discriminate between personal and spiritual development and to avoid the Pre/Trans Fallacy. Assagioli addresses the need for such discrimination in order to ensure the right treatment, because the same symptoms, e.g. depression, can be a sign of a spiritual crisis and a more normal state of consciousness (Assagioli, 1975: 53-58). In other words, we need to identify our client's stage of development in order to offer the right therapeutic treatment. Meditation exercises that train the client's ability to transcend and disidentify from normal consciousness could be fatal, if the real need is to build a more solid ego-foundation (personal Psychosynthesis). Techniques to strengthening the ego through ego gratification would be harmful for a client who is stuck in an existential crisis and needs help to let go of attachments to the 'values of normality' in the five first stages in Figure 9.

It is important to emphasize that many clients, who stress the need for spiritual psycho-synthesis, also need to address repressed personal issues, because of the uneven development of many people. But by using a detailed map of stages we always know as psychotherapists at what level we work.

One of Wilber's important contributions to psychotherapy is his Fulcrums of Self-development.



**INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY: A Spectrum of Basic Structures/Waves, Fulcrums, Psychopathologies, and Treatment Modalities**

(based on *Transformations of Consciousness*, 1986)

Figure 14: Fulcrums of Self-development (Reynolds 2006: 198)

(See Figure 14.) I cannot go into a full discussion of this model, but only indicate its relevance for Psychosynthesis therapy. Wilber argues that "whenever the self moves through a basic level of the Great Nest, it goes through a fulcrum (or a milestone) of its development" (Wilber, 2000c: 92). In this evolutionary development there can be a healthy or a pathological fashion of what has to be learned and integrated. Wilber (2000c: 98-99) claims that every level has a characteristic psychopathology that must be addressed by the appropriate psychotherapeutic intervention or treatment modality. His model includes personal as well as transpersonal pathologies so no stage of development is beyond a need for treatment, if the healthy transition through that stage failed. In Wilber's (2000c: 97) model all psychotherapies are relevant, at their appropriate level, because they each have specialised with specific types of pathology. Wilber (2000c: 109) introduces the term 'a full-spectrum therapist' and states that he/she: "works with the body, the shadow, the persona, the ego, the existential self, the soul and Spirit." Psychosynthesis, which claims to be a synthetic treatment, might be inspired by that vision.

Wilber's theory on states claims that the experience of higher states can further the client's evolutionary growth, because states can be turned into stages. The prolonged experience of higher states in meditation, he argues, has been proved to be one of the primary techniques for such accelerated growth (Wilber, 2000b: 541). It seems that in order for Psychosynthesis therapy to be a 'full spectrum' therapy, we *must* implement meditation as a standard procedure. This is also in alignment with Assagioli's suggestions, because in his own words: "It is the central technique which helps apply effectively all the other techniques" (Assagioli cited in Freund 1983: 74). He actually states that the exercise on self-identification meditation should be used as early as possible in the treatment for personal psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1975: 119). The Integral Approach could perhaps serve as a further incitement to implement meditation in Psychosynthesis therapy.

The use of types would assist the therapist in discriminating between the various types of clients and help facilitate growth in correspondence with the particular type. It could be an important tool to see and honour the uniqueness of all clients, especially when they are very different from the therapist's type. The last Integral area that I would like to comment on is the Four Quadrants.

A truly Integral psychotherapy would always include all four perspectives when dealing with pathologies of any kind. This would involve a therapeutic approach that explored the individual states and stages e.g. connected with the clinical issue, the individual background and the personal history experienced from the perspective of the 'I'.

It would also look into the behavioural patterns of the client and how the physical body carries the symptoms and apply relevant techniques to facilitate the healing within that area. All internal transformation must be brought into action in order to be grounded in real life experiences. It is a question of developing an autonomous behaviour based on recognised authentic values.

Applying the cultural perspectives in clinical work would highlight the importance of addressing the client's family background and the shared cultural worldviews that he/she is part of. It could also foster the use of group therapy and group meditation as a means for solving any dysfunctions in the intersubjective area.

The relevance of researching into the social structures of the individual is also very crucial. Were there any racial, sexual or gender related oppression in the society of the client? It is also important as an aspect of the client's psychological health to assist the individual in finding a meaningful life purpose and a role in the collective sphere. The transformations that take place in the inner collective sphere must be acted out within the family and social structure of which the individual is part. The psychotherapeutic objective in the two collective areas is to establish right human relations to ever wider spheres of humanity.

This concludes the last integral concept,

## Conclusion

### *Is Psychosynthesis an Integral Psychology?*

The answer to this question depends on what version of Psychosynthesis we use. It seems to me that there is sufficient evidence to assume that Assagioli's version to a greater or lesser degree implements all the five Integral concepts.

He is the only psychosynthesist who implements the Great Chain of Being and involution. He is very cautious on this matter, but when comparing the quotes with his philosophical background in Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism and Theosophy, I think there is sufficient reason to believe that he shares this conception with Wilber and the perennial philosophy.

Assagioli several times addresses the confusion of levels, so we also have reason to assume that he pays attention to the Pre/Trans Fallacy and that his developmental theory is a hierarchical 'growth-to-goodness' model, because of his close association with Maslow's model. The development of the weak psychological functions and the hierarchical nature of them suggest that he also works with lines of development.

I also think that the structure of his Egg Diagram confirms that he works with the same four states as Wilber does, and the quotes offered suggest that he was aware of the important transformation of states to stages. Assagioli's use of differential psychology and psychological types has also been confirmed.

The concept of the four quadrants is the weakest Integral feature in Assagioli's writings. Upper Left is covered reasonably well, but upper right is very weak when considering the importance of the body. His emphasis on the will, on the other hand, gives some weight in that area, because it is about implementing change in the individual's behaviour.

The cultural collective quadrant is only very briefly described but it has a clear evolutionary stage progression, and Assagioli is the only psychosynthesist who emphasizes this. The social collective quadrant is also very briefly described and is hardly recognisable.

My overall assessment is that Assagioli's version of Psychosynthesis shows enough clear and identifiable traits to be considered an Integral Approach.

When it comes to modern Psychosynthesis, I choose to discriminate between the major body of psychosynthesists and Firman/Gila.

The first group has a clear conception of *individual levels* and discriminates between the three vertical dimensions in the Egg Diagram, but it is a very vague conception. I do not find many new contributions to clarify the exact nature of the levels, they all seem to repeat the same information that Assagioli offers.

They do seem to have some sort of stage progression through the three levels – from the past, to now, to future possibilities. But compared to Assagioli's details it seems strange that there has not been any stronger progress in the hierarchical development theory of Psychosynthesis.

The Integral potential in relation to levels does exist, but it is weak. Some of them seem to argue for a lost childhood spirituality but do not embrace Firman/Gila's model of development. The development of the weak functions is also mentioned, but almost none of them describe any hierarchical stage development for the lines. I find the Integral potential existing but very weak.

The large group seems to work with the different vertical states, but they show no deeper understanding of how to turn states into stages. In relation to the four quadrants I do not find many developments that extend Assagioli's understanding, except some emphasis on body work. A major point of critique could be the fact that nobody seems to have taken the cultural stage progression into consideration.

My overall assessment of modern Psychosynthesis is that it is only partly Integral, but it has potential to be turned into a full modern Integral Approach.

Firman/Gila seem to be the most innovative among the modern Psychosynthesis writers. They have suggested many new theories to the field, but they also in some respect seem to be in direct opposition to Assagioli's original version. I find that there is good reason to assume that they have created a new developmental theory for Psychosynthesis as has been argued for. There is no natural stage progression through hierarchical levels; a fact that causes many incompatibilities with Assagioli's version, especially in relation to the nature of the Self's development. It also cancels out Wilber's concept of lines.

They place a strong emphasis on healing the wounded child as a way to personal and spiritual Psychosynthesis, and I find that part too over-accentuated even though it is highly relevant in personal Psychosynthesis. From an Integral point of view their model becomes very problematic in relation to the Pre/Trans Fallacy. The strong emphasis on the wounded child tends to blur the distinction between personal and spiritual energies, and creates confusion of levels.

They do use levels but it seems not in any ontological understanding of the word. There is no natural unfolding of stages through a hierarchy and this also cancels out Wilber's concept of lines. In their version, the higher and lower states are caused by repression of the initial unity, so they neither have any Integral conception of states and I have not found any mention of types in their writings.

In regard to the four quadrants they have contributed with a lot of new theory on especially empathetic and non-empathetic relationships. Unfortunately the limitations for this article have not been able to offer their theories within this field sufficient credit because real innovations have taken place here. My overall conclusion on Firman/Gila is that Psychosynthesis in their version is not Integral.

Applying the Integral Approach to Psychosynthesis, psychotherapy can help us broaden our perspectives on human development and see new potentials in our clients.

Implementing the Integral concept of *levels of consciousness* can refine our understanding of the higher and lower states and stages of consciousness in our clients' themes and help us identify the possible pathology on each of the various levels. The concept also contributes with an important discriminative tool to avoid the Pre/Trans Fallacy, so we offer the appropriate type of therapeutic intervention to a given problem. This is crucial when deciding the type of therapeutic intervention in a clinical session.

The concept of *lines of development* offers a dynamic and multifaceted conception of human development that could help the therapist identify high developed and immature psychological functions and traits. It brings in a detailed spiritual vision for all the different parts of the human being and a detailed understanding of the possible pathology in each line. Assagioli's ideal model technique is very relevant here as a tool to development.

The way *states* (peak experiences) can be turned into *permanent traits or stages* is also a very important concept, because it underlines the necessity for using meditation if we really wish to help our clients with spiritual psychosynthesis. It could be argued that any psychosynthesis psychotherapist should be trained in meditation and apply it daily if they aspire to be a full spectrum psychotherapist.

Typology or differential psychology is also very relevant in order to identify the deeper motivational forces behind the client's behaviour and help develop them in a mature form.

Applying the four quadrants really forces the therapist to think out of the box and work with multiple perspectives in relation to human development. Personal and spiritual psychosynthesis, Bio-Psychosynthesis (Bodywork), Social Psychosynthesis and creative participation in society should be at the forefront when ever we contemplate therapeutic interventions or introduce the client to the philosophical conception we work with.

The Integral Approach has much to offer Psychosynthesis and in many ways it seems to be a new and promising update of Assagioli's original vision.

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## Appendix One

"Space is an entity"

*Roberto Assagioli, Talks on Self*

### The Cosmic Mother

"Motherhood, considered in its broadest and deepest sense, was a cosmic principle before it was a human function. Matter, the substance which received the creative impulse of Spirit and then elaborates it and expresses it in myriads of beings, is the Universal Mother. It – or she – makes the existence of the manifested universe possible. In our planet, this Universal Motherhood is called Nature, the terrestrial mother, which moulds and nourishes all creatures. This has been understood and deeply felt by all people from the earliest times. In ancient Egypt, the worship of Isis, and in Greece, that of Demeter and Cybele were expressions of this belief. Then, in Christianity, we have the worship of Mary, the Virgin Mother of the Saviour, who joins the son in His redemptive mission."

Roberto Assagioli, *The psychology of Woman and her psychosynthesis*

### The Unmanifest Realm

"All that has been said (about love) concerns only *Reality in manifestation*, or in the process of manifesting, where there are *degrees* of transcendence. Of the *unmanifest* or transcendent Reality in an *absolute* sense nothing can be said. It can be indicated or hinted at only through negations: not-this, not-that, no-thing, the 'Void.' This aspect of Reality has been emphasized by some schools of Northern Buddhism and in the West by Meister Eckhart".

Roberto Assagioli, *The Act of Will*, p.129

"The pure Spirit, or to be more exact the Absolute Being who cannot be perceived by the senses, is essentially without attribute, which means that amongst other things he is above good and evil. But since the first moment of cosmic manifestation the Eternal One has been two – that is to say there appeared a polarity an infinite series of opposites, one of which is good and evil."

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 160

### From Unity To Diversity

"First of all we have the original unity, free from any form of differentiation, i.e. the Absolute, Transcendent, Unmanifested. It is from this that we have obtained the manifestation or differentiation we might regard as the projection, emanation or self-expression of the Supreme. This great cosmic process has various stages. The first is that of duality: the One becomes two. The first fundamental difference has been introduced: spirit and matter, the subjective aspect and the objective aspect, energy and resistance, activity and passivity, a positive pole and a negative pole, a male aspect and a female aspect. So far we have only spoken about the objective aspect of matter, something undifferentiated, we have not spoken about matter already differentiated as we know it. This is the primordial stage which we can call the relationship between the two.

These two great aspects of being do not remain separate, as though they were indifferent to one another, but exchanges take place – there is action and reaction – and the effect of this vital attraction is the creation or the manifestation of the universe as we know it, this fully developed, concrete universe. It did not reach its present form in a moment: there were successive stages of differentiation at the heart of creation. There was the expression of ever more concrete and material planes or levels of life, and ever more limited states of consciousness. And at each level countless new, successive differentiations until we reach the present highly divided state of separateness and difference between creatures in the widest sense of the word.

This then is the framework, or the stage on which we must come to terms with an understanding of love. Beneath the present state of division, difference and separation, in their various ways, and to different extents, these creatures have a distant, dim recollection of their original unity, a vague sense of common origin and an unconscious, though powerful longing to return to that origin. Every creature every separate being, feels incomplete, inadequate, unsatisfied; it lacks peace and searches for something, though it does not know what that something is. As it searches it makes mistakes and suffers one disappointment after another, but it cannot help continuing to search. It is spurred on relentlessly, and its thirst is never quenched. Indeed there is no alternative because this urge, this yearning, is an expression of the great law of evolution."

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development* p. 259-260  
(Much more about love in the following pages)

### **Being And Becoming And The Nature of Involution And Evolution**

"Q. Are the terms individual self and group self just terms, since all is one? Do we have to experience individual then group on the way to be One?

Assagioli: Now that gives me an opportunity to take up another essential point of psychosynthesis, that of the various levels of reality. There are various levels of reality, or if you like a modern term – energy fields. Each has its own qualities and laws. For instance, certain chemical laws at the atomic level are no more valid at the subatomic level but they are not abolished, not superseded; only at the other level other laws work. Here comes a jump, leaving aside intermediate steps which you can find out – 'All is One' is a deep metaphysical truth at that level, but unfortunately many bring down that wonderful reality at human levels, or other levels in manifestation where it simply does not operate, and many of the so-called metaphysical movements, and also some Oriental approaches don't take into consideration the basic difference. All is One in essence, in Being; but in becoming, in manifestation, in that process of life, there are countless many. I don't enter into that problem. 'All life is One' has chosen to reflect itself in countless ways. If He did it we may surmise He had very good reasons, but it is His business not ours. What we can say is that the great process of involution culminated in the mineral, as far as we know, and then started the contrary movement or process of evolution. We perhaps optimistically can say that we are at the middle point. We have passed through the mineral, vegetable, animal and partially human. So we have to proceed in this evolutionary work towards the 'One', but it is still far off. And here comes the confusion between the two selves which create so much mischief. When we say 'I am that Self' – quite true, I am the One, but we are not that in daily life at all; that would be paranoia.

As I have written, some paranoiacs just take that literally, and when they have a glimpse they think they are God. So you see all this fits with the levels of reality."

Roberto Assagioli, *Talks on Self*

### **Involution, Emanation, Immanence**

"In order to fully understand the nature and power of beauty we need to remember the spiritual concept which states that everything that exists externally, in concrete form and individually is the manifestation, effect and reflection of a higher, transcendent, spiritual Reality. It is the great principle of involution or emanation. From a basic, original absolute reality, a series of levels of life, intellect, feeling and material life has developed, through gradual differentiation, to the point of inorganic matter. Thus every quality or attribute of the eternal world, of matter itself, and of the countless different creatures is but a pale, obscure reflection of a quality or attribute of the spiritual Reality, the Divine Being. This is particularly true when it comes to Beauty."

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 251

## **Involution And Different Polarities**

"Polarity is a universal fact; it is inherent in cosmic manifestation. It is true that the Ultimate and Supreme Reality is the One, the Absolute, the Transcendent; but it can only be defined by what it is not.

From the very moment that cosmic manifestation begins to unfold, duality is born. The first fundamental duality is precisely that between manifestation and the Unmanifest. In the Bhagavad Gita this is expressed in the words: "Having pervaded the whole Universe with a fragment of myself, I remain." In the process of manifestation the fundamental polarity is that of Spirit and Matter.

It is necessary to state at once that all polarity is a relationship between two elements, and that, as such, it is never absolute, but relative even to a particular pair of opposites: the same element can be positive in its relation to a certain 'pole' and negative in its relation to another. An instance of the relativity of the 'polar relationships' exists in the fundamental polarity between Spirit and Matter. According to some (Keyserling) ..., Spirit is the free and transcendent Reality which stands above the various pairs of opposites existing in manifested life. According to others, Spirit corresponds to the positive pole, to the dynamic and creative element in all duality. Such is Jung's idea. In other words, Keyserling regards the 'tension' between Spirit and the various manifestations of life as existing in a 'vertical' direction, which he refers to as the 'dimension of intensity,' while Jung conceives polarity more as a horizontal relationship."

Roberto Assagioli, *The Balancing and synthesis of the Opposites*

"One of the most important and general polarities in the three kingdoms of organic life (vegetable, animal and human) is the sexual. The positive pole is represented by the masculine element, the negative by the feminine element. This does not mean that the former is active and the latter passive. Both are active, but in a different way, the masculine element being the dynamic, initiating pole, while the feminine element is the receptive, 'gestative,' elaborative pole. This type of polarity extends far beyond the man-woman relationship to innumerable manifestations in life. It has been particularly and deeply emphasized by the Chinese who regard these two principles as the foundation both of cosmic evolution and of every aspect of human life. The creative aspect, symbolized by the father and Heaven, they call Yang, while Yin is the receptive and elaborative aspect, symbolized by the mother and the Earth. The well-being of Man depends, in the view of Chinese philosophy, on the harmonious accord between Man and the cyclic evolution of the Universe, woven from the innumerable relationships and interactions of Yang and Yin."

Roberto Assagioli, *The Balancing and synthesis of the Opposites*

The spirit matter polarity – is reflected in the sexual relation.

Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis* p. 272

## **Immanence Versus Transcendence**

"We have already referred to the two main aspects of divinity: immanence and transcendence. They are both real and necessary, but taken individually they are one-sided: they need to be integrated or merged. When the aspect of immanence is given the upper hand there is the danger of diminishing or debasing the idea of the Divine and all its manifestations. Thus in the aesthetic field, when this aspect of expression and form prevails we have the graceful, the pleasant, the elegant and the cold perfection of the Parnassians and the Neo-classicists. In the religious field we have the sentimental mysticism and the personal love of God become man: too much man. In the area of thought we have the deification of man as man, as it is expressed in certain idealistic trends. When there is an exclusive emphasis on the transcendent aspect on the other hand, there is too great a dualism: nature and God are placed in opposite corners and an artificial opposition is created between them – between creation and Creator. There is then too wide a gap between man and God.

What is needed, as I said earlier, is integration – a synthesis between the two, and in order to achieve this in practical terms we must accentuate the aspect which is most needed in ourselves or in the age in which we live. The prevailing tendency today is clearly on the side of immanence. It is the age of science, an age which to all outward appearances gives us an expandable sense of the sublime.

As the prevailing trends are extroversion and the search for truth and beauty, as well as for power, both in the external world and in nature, the need today therefore is to accentuate the other aspect: both we personally and mankind in general need to be called back to a sense of the transcendent, to feel again the shiver caused by mystery and by a sense of the infinite.”

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal development*, p. 258

“A relationship (between man and God) is always present, recognised or unrecognised, conscious or unconscious. The individual is never absolutely alone and God (or the spiritual reality) is never pure transcendent, but always in living relationship with the manifestation.”

Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis* p. 205-06

### **Individual Being And Becoming, Eternal Now, Immanence**

“The Self has a sense of what is eternal- or, to be more accurate, it lives in eternity. But it is the eternal ‘now’ that it inhabits, not merely a transcendent eternity, cut off from the evolutionary process of development.

‘Eternal now’ is a paradoxical expression which must be appreciated intuitively; but it provides us with a key to a fundamental truth, and that has to do with the relation between the transcendent and the immanent, between being and becoming. Both of these should be present, conscious and at work in us.

We need to live our lives with a keen awareness of each moment, but against the backdrop of eternity. Now the synthesis of the moment and of eternity is the cycle. Life proceeds in cycles and these cycles are moments linked organically by something, which transcends them: eternity. A synthetic expression of this is the phrase ‘the glorious, eternal now’.”

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 84

### **Individual Emanation**

“Time and time again one is brought up against the paradoxical duality and unity of the Deity. The personal ‘I’ comes down from the star, or from the spiritual ‘I’, in the form of a reflection. This fits one of the interpretations of the parable of the prodigal son. The personal ‘I’ is the prodigal son who has descended to the level of the material world and forgotten his origin, to the point where of his own free will he resorts to all the foolishness he is capable of, all the errors (‘errors’ both in the sense of making mistakes and of going astray), and only then feels a longing for his Father’s house, sets out in search of it and eventually finds it.”

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 85-86

“We have now reached the fifteenth group of symbols, that of resurrection and return, what in the gospels is referred to as the return of the prodigal son to his Father’s house. This is a return to a previous state and points to a return to the original, primordial Being. It presupposes an emanatistic theory of the soul, descending, becoming one with matter, and then returning to its ‘home’, the heavenly homeland – not as it was before, but enriched by the experience of self-awareness which has come to maturity in toil and conflict.”

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 102

## **Individual Evolution**

"Everyone is a little world, a microcosm in which all the kingdoms of nature are represented: the mineral, in bones, etc.; the vegetative life; the animal instinct; then the 'human conditions', from primitive man to the highest human possibilities. At the present time we represent the sum of all the evolution of the past from the mineral kingdom on; but evolution does not stop with so-called homo sapiens: evolution is continuous, and our task is to carry forward and foster this great evolutionary impulse, without, however, repudiating the preceding stages!"

Roberto Assagioli, *The Act of Will*, p. 145-46

## **Reincarnation of Souls And Cosmic Manifestations**

"What Nietzsche had felt intuitively was the cyclical nature of the cosmic manifestation or of its process of evolution. This is the oriental concept of the great cycles of appearance, disappearance of worlds, of the periodic emanation of matter and its evolution in countless forms, followed by its subsequent reabsorption into the formless spirit. Recent discoveries in astronomy concerning the formation and disintegration of the stars and galaxies fully support this idea. According to Eastern philosophy this also applies at a human level in terms of a cyclical manifestation of souls in a series of bodies (reincarnation). But this does not mean an identical return, rather a reappearance in ever higher forms, evolution in the form of an ascending spiral. Nietzsche's ideas are a clear example of the wrong interpretation of a valid intuition."

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 76

## **The Inner Worlds. Levels of Consciousness**

"We must recognise that there are, in addition to the external world, a number of inner worlds, and that it is possible, indeed incumbent on us, to get to know them, explore them and conquer them. This is a prerequisite for balance and wholeness."

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 90

"If we turn our ability to observe inwards we realize that there is actually an inner world of phenomena, at least as manifold and varied as the outer world, and that through the development of observation it becomes more and more definite to the observer.

The first field of observation is that of the *sensations*, ...

The second field of inner observation or introspection is the kaleidoscopic realm of *emotions* and *feelings* ...

The third field of observation is that of *mental activity*, of the mental contents. ..."

Assagioli calls them "the various groups or layers of contents"

Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis* p. 115-116

"The third group of symbols, a frequently occurring one, is that of elevation, ascent or conquest of the 'inner space' in an ascending sense. There is a series of inner worlds, each with its own special characteristics, and within each of them there are higher levels and lower levels. Thus in the first of these, the world of passions and feelings, there is a great distance, a marked disparity of level, between blind passion and the highest feelings. Then there is the world of intelligence, or the mind. Here too there are different levels: the level of the concrete, analytical mind, and the level of higher, philosophical reason (*nous*). There is also the world of the imagination, a lower variety and a higher variety, the world of intuition, the world of the will, and then higher still, those indescribable worlds which can only be referred to by the term 'worlds of transcendence'."

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 92

"The psychiatrist Urban talks about the 'spectrum of consciousness' and says that we are only aware of a limited range, similar to that of the spectrum of light from red to violet; but, he goes on, there are also psycho-spiritual regions corresponding to infra-red and ultraviolet. It is

possible for our area of consciousness to expand or broaden so as to include ever larger regions of psycho-spiritual impressions and ideas. This expansion may be understood in 'spherical' terms, implying expansion in all directions, both vertically and horizontally from the individual to the group, to society and to the whole of humanity."

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 93

"Viewed in terms of energy, we may consider the contents of the superconscious as energies having higher frequency than some of the contents of the lower unconscious. We could say, more definitely, that psychodynamics and its laws – and in part the methods derived from them – are the same for the three levels of the unconscious.

Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, p. 199

"It is quite possible, although at this time we do not have scientific proof that the different unconscious levels are in reality different fields of energy which interpenetrate, but which would be almost impossible to present in a two-dimensional diagram."

Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, p. 200

"It is very difficult to distinguish what comes from the individual superconscious and what comes from even higher spheres or from the levels of the superconscious outside the individual. The higher one ascends the more the limits of individuality tend to disappear; the higher one ascends, the more the individual becomes united with the whole."

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 82

"The collective unconscious is a vast world stretching from the biological to the spiritual level, in which therefore distinctions of origin, nature, quality and value must be made."

Roberto Assagioli, *Jung and psychosynthesis*

"To avoid misunderstanding, however, it should be pointed out here that these ever wider spheres of spiritual life do not cancel or exclude the preceding ones, indeed they assume them. It is only by progressive stages that man is able to recognise and realise the various forms of spirituality."

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 197

"The transformation of energies is a natural process going on at all times, both "horizontally," *within* each level – physical, biological, and psychological – and "vertically" *between* all levels, where it can be seen as *sublimation* or *degradation*, according to whether energy is carried to a higher or lower level. ..."

Roberto Assagioli, *The Act of Will*, p. 62

"It is also important to note that these various levels do not remain in isolation, but there are continuous chains of action and reaction between them. This means that the activities at one level affect and act on the activities at another, and so on. One can easily see how such interaction will be a source of confusion, misunderstanding and error. But at the same time it is a source of great scope for transformation, regeneration and sublimation, having practical implications for our spiritual advancement and development."

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 265

"The discrepancies in experience are perfectly natural because: "No sphere of reality is a homogeneous, straightforward thing; rather it is a real, multi-faceted, varied 'world' abounding in fullness and life. It should not surprise us, therefore, when the many aspects of that Reality have produced such different perceptions of what has been seen"

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development*, p. 22

## Appendix Two

In a message dated 2/20/08 1:39:44 AM, info@psykosyntese.dk writes

Dear John Firman and Ann Gila,

In connection with my MA thesis at The Trust in London I am researching into different developmental conceptions in Psychosynthesis. In this respect I would really appreciate if you could explain me the difference between Washburns Dynamic Ground and your conception of "how it all starts."

As far as I understand your theory from your books and articles, you consider the child to have some kind of an intact I-Self connection and also a full access to higher and lower unconscious from the birth. But that connection and experiential range is distorted or broken due to the primal wound.

In order to heal the brokenness and reconnect to Self and get the full access to higher and lower unconscious we must go back and heal the wound.

Is that a correct assumption of your idea?

And how is it different from Washburns conception?

Kind regards

Kenneth

**Fra:** GilaFirman@aol.com [mailto:GilaFirman@aol.com]

**Sendt:** 29. februar 2008 19:33

**Til:** Kentaur Træning

**Emne:** Re: Question in connection with MA

Hi Kenneth,

Great questions! You have it right, well done. We believe there is always an intact I-Self connection since 'I' is a direct reflection or projection of Self. This can be lost to consciousness of course via primal wounding. And since that wound is a break in the empathic love from Self, the only thing that can heal it is re-establishing empathic love.

So the core principle in psychosynthesis therapy for us is empathic love, what we call spiritual empathy (empathy focused on 'I' rather than on content of experience, which for the therapist means letting go of all controlling agendas in order to be with clients, hear what they want, and to follow their direction)(so not digging up wounds, but walking with clients wherever called).

Our reading of Washburn is that he sees a negative side to the Dynamic Ground, that it can in some way be absorbing or overwhelming. This is a very Jungian view, that Self has this good-evil nature and thus (in Jung) is not to be fully trusted, though relating to it is essential. "Just don't get too close or your individuality will be threatened." There is the idea that one has to wrest one's individuality from the primordial Self in order to grow.

Assagioli's notion of direct reflection implies something quite different. Self is here completely trustworthy, with consciousness and will, with empathic love, and transcendent-immanent (all aspects that can be recognized in the human experience of disidentification, and extrapolated to Self as the Source).

If Self is the direct and immediate source of 'I' then it follows that closeness to Self means MORE 'you', rather than less. The image burns brighter closer to its source. So there is no inherent conflict between 'I' and Self, no need to wrest one's sense of identity from some undifferentiated-unity Self.

Assagioli's notion holds then that 'spiritual experience' is being held in being, enabled to experience the heights and depths of existence, rather than any notion of bliss, ecstasy, or stimulation that must be managed.

Hope this helps! Let us know if you need more.  
John (and Ann)

In a message dated 3/3/08 1:38:01 AM, info@psykosyntese.dk writes:

Hi John (and Ann)

Yes, thank you very much. This is helpful.

There is an additional question also related to Washburn. On page 173 you are writing: "much current infant research has strongly called into question the existence of a primary unity from which the infant must differentiate."

As far as I understand your point, then the infant has some kind of individuality from the start – the I-Self connection – and from that individual awareness it has a real connection to all of the lower and higher unconscious states.

But due to the primal wound, the perception of higher and lower unconscious is repressed as well as the pure unity with Self – the unbroken connection from 'I' to Self is now damaged in some degree.

Is that a correct assumption of your ideas?

Kind regards  
Kenneth

**Fra:** GilaFirman@aol.com [mailto:GilaFirman@aol.com]

**Sendt:** 8. marts 2008 18:08

**Til:** Kentaur Træning

**Emne:** Re: SV: Question in connection with MA

Hi Kenneth, again, you are on the mark. Yes, we believe that with a close look at the experience of disidentification 'I' is revealed as transcendent-immanent, ergo Self and the I-Self connection are transcendent-immanent—beyond all mass, energy, space, time (content, process, etc.).

So there is good reason to assume that 'I', Self, and their relationship are ever-present. There is always someone 'home' no matter the state or stage of the human being.

Our hypothesis that the person's experiential range—from agony to ecstasy—would be intact if he or she were perfectly seen in empathic love. This ideal would mean there would be no higher and lower unconscious—just a full experiential range that would allow us to experience the heights and depths of life in stage appropriate ways. No need to repress because no height or depth would threaten annihilation.

With wounding, areas of the experiential range become threatening and so are repressed in order to survive (we are not seen if we approach those certain areas, so will not exist there, or so it seems). So 'repression' is simply a function of one's bond with the survival unifying center (internal and external), leaving one in the survival trance.

Of course, since the I-Self is transcendent-immanent, it is never actually broken. Primal wounding is at bottom an illusion; there is no annihilation. But it is a tremendously powerful illusion deeply embedded in our soma and psyche, and will not respond to anything short of empathic love (in therapy, 'spiritual empathy').

As one connects to authentic unifying centers, this process can be seen reversing: the trance begins to lift, the middle unconscious—the experiential range—begins to expand, the higher and lower unconscious are 'integrated'.

(There is a lot in *The Primal Wound* about the false assumption of early fusion. See Daniel Stern.)

Good luck,  
John