

## Book Review

---

***The Magic of Psychosynthesis – Initiation and Self-Development***, by Will Parfitt. PSA Books 2019, Glastonbury, England. Paperback; 289 pages. £15,00; Available from Amazon.uk and Amazon.us: \$15.00.

Roberto Assagioli, the founder of Psychosynthesis, maintained that: “Psychosynthesis is a method of psychological development and self-realization for those who refuse to remain the slaves of their own inner phantasms or of external influences, who refuse to submit passively to the play of psychological forces going on within them, and who are determined to become master of their own lives.” In this quotation one may wonder what tested exercises, techniques or practices are valid and available for individuals to use to become masters of their own lives. Many of them appear in Assagioli’s books of course, their sources lying at the heart of several spiritual and psychological traditions. Assagioli has an extraordinary ability: he could borrow inspiration from a variety of heterogeneous esoteric and psychological sources, reduce them to their basics and reformulate and integrate them within a coherent system for self-development. That is a thing of beauty as the aim was to offer this “magic” to a wider audience. Assagioli was gifted with the rare skill of translating esoteric knowledge into models and techniques that could help all of us in the modern world. I found Will Parfitt’s books very much in line with this *pathos* and celebrate the publishing of his most recent book *The Magic of Psychosynthesis – Initiation and Self-Development*.

On the section of the author’s website dedicated to this new release we read that: “the aim of this book is to initiate you, to empower you in your life journey and help you to explore your connection to Will, Imagination and Love, the essential components for your personal and spiritual self-development.” This remarkable work by one of the leading psychosynthesis therapist and writers in England does exactly that, and much more.

Parfitt’s book stretches our conception of Psychosynthesis. While Assagioli is widely known as a pioneer in the daunting task of founding, conceptualizing and applying transpersonal psychology during the 50’s and 60s, he was also a prolific esoteric writer and lecturer, affiliated with several occult organizations in the Alice Bailey/Djwhal Khul tradition, organizations with whom he collaborated for decades. Unquestionably, however, he was keen on many other schools of thought, including Agni Yoga, Theosophy, and of course Kabbalah. This book, which focuses primarily on the latter, is replete with numerous examples, exercises and ideas that open a wide and vibrant field of research for psychosynthesis practitioners.

In my experience, it is not uncommon to find that the concepts of the *will* or *intuition* take over other significant ideas developed by Assagioli. In this book there is a balanced presentation between the *will* and *imagination*. I found that the suggestion that imagination expands our horizon and therapeutic goals and methods to be the master key in this book. As Parfitt writes: “through imagination we are capable of being united to the gods, of transcending the mundane order, and of participating in eternal life.” On page 16, quoting Israel Regardie, we read that “Imagination is the image-making faculty, an image creating power which when developed may prove of the utmost importance as assisting the soul in its forward journey...the imagination is being directed by the will.”

In this book, Parfitt eloquently presents the main discoveries of psychosynthesis—he clearly articulates the main concepts of Assagioli’s model (e.g. the interplay between identification-disidentification, subpersonality, self and Self, etc.) but he has the great merit of embarking on a journey that takes him even further and deeper than the standard presentation of a system of thought. Indeed, throughout the book there are multiple cross-references to sources Assagioli studied in-depth, although to the best of my knowledge they hadn’t been so precisely

and practically articulated within one book as in this one. In particular, Parfitt focuses on the psycho-spiritual journey as described in Kabbalistic wisdom and magic, drawing comparisons with other Western Ageless Wisdom traditions as well as Psychosynthesis. The main point in making such a comparison seems to be to demonstrate that spiritual evolution is an initiatory, graded, structured path that has been charted since the beginning by sages all over the World. Psychosynthesis and Kabbalah offer a modern, practical approach to this Ageless Wisdom that can be experienced at different degrees of depth by working with an experienced professional, with a group or simply on one's own.

As Parfitt writes: "Being initiated is about uncovering what has been hidden in you and aligning yourself with the natural flow of life on earth. To be an Adept is not a goal, it is an acknowledgement that you are on the path and that you have attained a level of proficiency in walking the path. This is key, for to be an Adept is not a state but a process of continual growth through deeper and deeper self-inquiry." Rethinking esoteric concepts in light of modern psychosynthesis, (e.g. the spiritual path is a process of self-inquiry) is a valuable hint provided in the volume. Personally, I think that psychosynthesis can benefit from rewording certain

ideas that are less accessible to the general public who, in some cases, are defensive against the "psy" jargon. I also think that the exercises provided in the book are accessible to everybody and can be noted as one of the most important contributions in this book, in line with the spirit of Roberto Assagioli, who was himself quite pragmatic. In fact, as Parfitt ascertains: "Psychosynthesis is more than another kind of therapy, it is a complete education and a workable system of initiation and self-development. The primary aim of Psychosynthesis, as with all magical and esoteric endeavor, is to help us deepen our inquiry into human nature and then find ways to effectively use our discoveries in everyday life. *The Magic of Psychosynthesis* includes working to restore balance to the various parts of the personality in the present, and also to find ways to promote the fuller expression of the potential and unique creativity of each individual." In this regard, the two appendices at the end of the book can be used for personal development or as a tool to have at hand when planning your own workshops and seminars.

Contributed by Dr. Mike Malagrec, Psychosynthesis counselor, psychologist, lecturer and practitioner. Director of the *Turin Centre of Psychosynthesis*. He can be reached at: malagrec@gmail.com.