

Psychotherapy Guidebook

# PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

H. C. Tien

# **Psychosynthesis**

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# Psychosynthesis

*H. C. Tien*

## DEFINITION

Psychosynthesis is a therapeutic process of combining individual elements of the mind to form a whole personality. Classical Psychosynthesis, as defined by Assagioli, is the system of psychotherapy that recognizes the central core of the self, or the persisting “I-consciousness,” as distinct from the changing biological, emotional, and mental states. Classical Psychosynthesis has three connotations: 1) It is a principle underlying the reality of life; 2) it is a method including different techniques from psychoanalytical procedures, suggestion, will training, music therapy, symbolic learning, sublimation, and meditation; and 3) it is a goal-oriented therapy to achieve a person’s highest humanistic aspirations.

Cybernetic Psychosynthesis, as defined by myself (Tien), combines the ideals of Classical Psychosynthesis with modern medical technology and information theory for personality development. The holistic definition of Cybernetic Psychosynthesis is a unified system of the eclectic elements of classical psychoanalysis and Psychosynthesis, based on traditional family medicine, psychotherapy, electrotherapy, behavior therapy, and group

dynamics, with television technology (videology) as the natural instrumentation to realize the humanistic aspirations for world community mental health.

## HISTORY

The term “psychosynthesis” has been used by Maeder in 1927, by Bierre in 1925, and by Janet in 1889. This brief historical citation should include the ancient psychosynthesist Wu Chengen, a fifteenth-century Chinese writer (Journey to the West).

Psychiatically, Freud stated in 1924, “I cannot imagine ... that any new task for us is to be found in this Psychosynthesis. If I ever could permit myself to be honest and uncivil, I should say it was nothing but a meaningless phrase.” In 1927, Assagioli developed Psychosynthesis as a critique of the limitations of psychoanalysis in his doctoral thesis. Classical Psychosynthesis is another splinter from Freudian Psychoanalysis, and remained obscure until 1965, when Assagioli published *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques*.

In 1969, I published my first paper on modern Cybernetic Psychosynthesis in *The American Journal of Psychotherapy*, entitled “Pattern Recognition and Psychosynthesis.” (Tien, 1969) I traced the modern development of Psychosynthesis as a natural evolution from Classical

Psychoanalysis and Classical Psychosynthesis, both occidental and oriental, and also from the cybernetics of Norbert Wiener, the information theories of Shannon and Weaver, together with modern neurophysiology of Pavlov and Sherrington.

The historical development of Psychosynthesis has been well recorded in the World Journal of Psychosynthesis since 1969.

## TECHNIQUE

In Classical Psychosynthesis, Assagioli advised, “the best training for practicing Psychosynthesis (as in the case of psychoanalysis) is a ‘didactic Psychosynthesis.’ When this is not possible, it is most advisable that the therapist undertake an auto-psychosynthesis (self-synthesis) by applying the techniques to himself before, or at least while, applying them to others.”

In Cybernetic Psychosynthesis, I recommend video techniques and video therapy for both auto-analysis and auto-synthesis, made technically possible through electronic technology. Instead of interpreting dreams and free associations, the modern psychosynthesisist can analyze himself and others by video and effect synthesis of self and others by “telefusion” techniques.

In Classical Psychosynthesis, the techniques include catharsis, critical

analysis, self-identification, dis-identification, will training, imagery training, auditory evocation, creative imagination, ideal models, symbol utilization, intuition, music therapy, and the transmutation and sublimation of sexual energies, together with spiritual psychosynthesis, including the exploration of the superconscious.

In Cybernetic Psychosynthesis, I use all the classical techniques, but also attempt to integrate psychotherapy with behavior therapy, electrotherapy, chemotherapy, marital therapy, and family therapy.

In short, all techniques, both medical and psychological, are utilized to transform an inferior personality to a higher personality, based on the two-personality theory, which states that every personality has at least two personalities. The theory is based on the following conceptual postulates:

1. The ego-consciousness is a single scintillating form of self-creating time series in the cortex of the brain (i.e., imageries of self)
2. A personality is a time series of scintillating frames of the conscious neuron patterns (i.e., ego-consciousness)
3. Every time series may be divided into two time series, the first ego-consciousness is observing the second one (e.g., when one personality is watching oneself via videosynthesis).

In the practice of videosynthesis, the person is usually analyzed into two



personalities. All the therapeutic techniques — analysis, interpretation, behavior therapy, medication, electrotherapy, biofeedback, etc. — are videotaped and fed back to the individual to control his current, less adaptable personality (i.e., inferior ego state) to develop his future, more adaptable personality (i.e., a higher ego state) as the therapeutic goal.

## APPLICATIONS

In the classical application of Psychosynthesis, the techniques are used widely to treat or to prevent neuroses and personality disorders. It may be fruitfully used in education to develop superconscious functions, especially in interpersonal and group dynamics. Classical Psychosynthesis may be applied as in psychoanalysis to accelerate the integration of the personality and also for its self-actualization. Assagioli hoped “to see develop over a period of years — I certainly do not claim it has been achieved — ... a science of the self, or its energies, its manifestations and how these energies can be released, how they can be contacted, how they can be utilized for constructive and therapeutic work.” That was an authoritative statement by Assagioli in 1965, but by 1969, I introduced the hoped-for video techniques with the needed scientific instruments, which have enabled us to transfer these energies of information directly from the synthesist to the patients. In the application, the family physician may become a family psychiatrist who works with other therapists, psychologists, social workers, technicians, and all community

mental health professionals to advance the idea of Psychosynthesis of a healthy mind, in a healthy body, in a healthy community.

Psychosynthesis is applied to the practice of family medicine and psychiatry, with special emphasis on the total health needs of the individual and his family, by making therapy available not only at the curative level — to treat the neurotic, psychosomatic, psychotic, or psychopathic disorders — but also to prevent the development of neurosis, psychosis, and personality disorders, which may feed into the destructive conflicts of the individual, his family, his community, his nation, or our world. Also, Psychosynthesis provides the budding concepts of creative service for the individual, his family, and our mental health community, so that we can direct, integrate, and develop our own highest personalities for the creative, harmonious, historical development of mankind.