

## SOME APPLICATIONS OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD \*

*Martha Crampton*

**A Humanistic-Transpersonal Bridge.** Psychosynthesis combines humanistic and transpersonal views of man, and generally interprets humanistic personal growth as providing a base which leads to transpersonal growth. This article weaves together the personal elements of identity, self-knowledge, will, and social relationships with transpersonal elements such as "higher intuition," ultimate values, and the attempt to use and educate intuition. Some of the educational materials Crampton mentions have now been developed and are available from Canadian Institute of Psychosynthesis, Inc., 3496 Avenue Marlow, Montreal 260, Quebec. Information on psychosynthesis in the U.S. is available from two groups: Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, Room 1902, 40 East 49th St., New York, New York 10017, and from Psychosynthesis Institute, 150 Doherty Way, Redwood City, California 94062.

Tonight I'd like to talk to you a little bit about some of the projects I am involved in for the Quebec Ministry of Education working with some of the graduate students at Sir George Williams University in Montreal. The Quebec Government has decided in the last year to institute a new required course in the schools called "Formation de la personne" or "Personal and social education," to try to deal with the increasing problems of alienation among students and the obvious need to humanize the schools. The talk was announced as "Some Applications of Psychosynthesis in the Educational Field," but the topic is too vast to try to cover in a comprehensive manner, and we have only just begun to explore it ourselves. So I'd prefer to keep the formal talk fairly brief, sketching in some of the approaches we are using, and allowing ample time for discussion so that I can benefit from your own ideas on the subject. I will perhaps finish with an experiential exercise, if you are willing, which may help to bring the material more alive.

In attempting to develop a philosophy for psychosynthesis in education, the concept of integration has been central. We have been using the term "integrative education," which is also used by the Foundation for Integrative Education. The Foundation edits *Main Currents in Modern Thought*, though their emphasis is slightly different from and, I believe, complementary to our own. While their approach has been basically intellectual, seeking integration of the various disciplines through discovery of common underlying principles, our own work is more grounded in a

\*From Martha Crampton, "Some Applications of Psychosynthesis in the Educational Field" mimeographed (Speech before Psychosynthesis Seminars, 1971-1972 Series), pp. 1-8, by permission of the author. Martha Crampton is Director of the Canadian Institute of Psychosynthesis, Inc. She is developing psychosynthesis-based instruction for the Quebec Ministry of Education.

psychological approach, taking the microcosm of the human psyche as the point of departure for relating to the various disciplines of the macrocosm.

We have preferred the term "integrative education" to the various other terms which are used to describe work in this field, such as "humanistic," "affective," or "psychological" education, as it seems more comprehensive and less limiting. The distinction between the cognitive and affective domains has always seemed artificial to me; our own conception is closer to that of George Brown in what he calls "confluent education" (to suggest the confluence of the cognitive and affective realms), though the word "integrative" has a more psychosynthetic feel to it as it suggests the synthesizing or integrative function of the self. It also implies, in our conception, various types and levels of integration.

First of all, there is integration of the different aspects or "bodies" of man—physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Then there is the integration of the individual and his environments or ecologies—natural, social, and cosmic. And finally, we hope, through the exploration of fundamental psychological laws and principles, to provide a framework from which to reach out to the other disciplines, helping students to relate to them in a more personally meaningful way and to gain greater insight into their workings through the laws or correspondence or analogy.

Over the last few years, many of the concepts and methods developed in the human potential movement have been applied in the educational field. A new journal, *Humanizing Education*, put out by many of the leading figures in humanistic education, is just starting, and the AHP is now in process of organizing an educational network. A number of universities have or are developing programs in this field, the longest established being the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, where Gerald Weinstein and his co-workers have been developing and testing affective curricula at all grade levels under a grant from the Ford Foundation.

The Esalen Institute has also sponsored a number of programs concerned with bringing humanistic ideas and methods into the schools, and has been working on another Ford Foundation grant along with George Brown's group in "confluent education" from the University of Santa Barbara to train teachers in affective methods so that they can develop their own curricula which integrate humanistic principles.

The approach in confluent education is not to develop a separate curriculum for the emotions, but rather to make a place for the emotions within the traditional curricula, helping children to understand themselves better through affective interaction with the subject matter, and deepening and enriching their understanding of the subject matter through feeling as well as thinking about it. I understand that the Browns have recently been studying with our colleagues, the Vargius, and have been including psychosynthetic approaches in some of their recent seminars, and I look forward very much to seeing how they will weave psychosynthesis into their own work in the educational field.

We have tried in our own work not to duplicate the fine accomplishments of others in the field of humanistic education, and to concentrate our efforts on aspects which have received less attention by other workers. We are involved at the present time in two projects: a unit on concentration and meditation, and a unit on what we have called the "integrative qualities" (historically known as the "virtues"). We have started some preliminary field testing in a local high school, and will continue in a more systematic way next year in two junior colleges. My recent appointment as curriculum consultant to the Quebec Ministry of Education to develop a new program in "personal and social education" will give us an opportunity to bring our material directly into the school system—the course will be required in all schools in the near future—and it has stimulated me, through my responsibility for developing the "health" sector of this program, to develop some psychosynthetic approaches to education in this broader area.

Our choice of projects was motivated by a wish to complement existing approaches, and also by the need to develop curricula which could be readily accommodated within the existing educational structures. The integrative qualities material can fit very nicely into courses given under humanities departments, and the meditation course has appeal for many educators who see it as an alternative to drugs.

We have been concerned in our approach not primarily to educate the emotions as such, which is the focus of most humanistic curricula, but to help students to build bridges between the various aspects of their being: between their emotions and their intellect; between the higher abstract mind—the archetypal realm—and the realm of the concrete mind; between knowledge and action; between intuition and reason.

We are particularly interested from the research point of view in varying types of learning styles, in exploring approaches which can help those students who seem to need to approach cognitive learning through affective experience as well as those who function best by starting at the other end and who use new cognitive insights to evolve in the affective domain.

We do not yet know what approaches are most suited to different age and ability levels; though as a general principle it seems likely that learning takes place most readily with a strong affective component, particularly until the abstract mind begins to develop around the age of 14. It also seems likely that the brighter youngsters will be more able to "work down" from mental to emotional levels than the less gifted. The Vargius have mentioned that many of the gifted adolescents with whom they have been working show an unusual capacity to do just this, and that they can progress more rapidly than less gifted youngsters because they can work from the cognitive to the affective (from the higher vibratory level) instead of the other way around. It would seem the esoteric teaching that the mental "body" or aspect of man is at a higher vibratory level than the emotional body may have some relevance here.

In addition to working with the higher intuition, we will also be concerned with the cognitive domain, with the problems of identity and will, with linking knowledge and action. We will be using a graded series of exercises for disidentification and self-identification, starting with the 7th grade with simple exercises to help youngsters expand the boundaries of their identity to include other things and people, and working up to a more formal introduction to disidentification and self-identification in the 9th grade or about the age of 14 when questions of self identity are normally paramount. We have developed a series of cartoons to help get the idea across, showing a person's head up in the sky looking down at the various roles he plays on the stage of life, the various emotions he expresses, and many physical states he experiences, and the constantly changing flow of thoughts that go by.

It remains to be seen, however, to what extent and in what ways disidentification is really necessary in the generation of young people that has grown up on the psychedelic drugs. Many of them seem to have this awareness already, and are faced instead with the problem of re-entry, of how to relate what they have glimpsed in the transpersonal realm to their everyday lives.

Education of the will seems very necessary, though I suspect that we will have to find new ways of doing this to meet the challenge these young people present us. Certain facets of will development are covered by some of the humanistic education curriculum, especially such aspects as goal-setting and choosing between alternatives. These methods serve a function, probably particularly at the elementary and possibly junior high levels, though many students who have been through the drug scene seem to require another approach to the will which would involve a deeply experienced sense of meaning and purpose, and which would therefore draw on transpersonal levels.

Some of our more deliberate and rationalistic approaches which start at the personality level fail to inspire those who have experienced deeper levels of ecstasy and meaning. The units on meditation and the "integrative qualities" will attempt to meet this need to some extent by helping students to contact their own sources of inner guidance, and to relate this to their practical living in the world.

The "Integrative Qualities" curriculum started out with the germ of an idea provided by Dr. Assagioli in his technique of "Evocative Words." He here suggests that the psychological techniques of suggestion can be employed to evoke desirable qualities in people, just as they are misused in the hands of advertisers and the manipulators of public opinion. In addition to the use of evocative words for this purpose, he suggests the use of posters, suggestive phrases and slogans, pictures, musical themes and rhythmic movements to help inspire people to follow higher goals. The idea would be to build a corpus of material that would serve as an accumulator of energy related to the various qualities one might wish to develop.

Assagioli is not the only one to have advocated such an approach. John Wilson in his book, *Moral Education*, has suggested that a collection of quotations related to what used to be called the virtues and vices might be a good point of departure for teaching in this field. And there is a delightful section in the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* in which he describes a project he conceived for "arriving at moral perfection." He selected a list of some 13 integrative qualities or virtues, as he called them—which are probably not ones which would be selected for a contemporary curriculum, as the list was largely made up of virtues with a strong puritanical tinge such as Temperance, Order, Frugality, Industry, Cleanliness, and Chastity, though the principle used is the same—and for each virtue he wrote an "evocative phrase" which he called a precept. He then proceeded in a systematic manner to cultivate these qualities, one at a time, making a daily examination of conscience concerning the particular virtue he was working on at the time, and entering any black marks in a little book he kept for this purpose. He took great pleasure in seeing the number of black marks diminish, and likened the process to weeding a garden.

Although this method may seem a bit heavy to many people today, he nevertheless felt that it had served him well, attributing to it much of his success and happiness in life, and he even hoped, had there been time, to have completed a book for the benefit of others which would have explained the value of possessing the various virtues and the mischiefs attending their opposite vice. His testimony about the experiences he had in using the method makes a fascinating psychological study, and is very moving from the human point of view because of his exceptional capacity for honesty with himself. I am sure that psychosynthesis and the growth psychologies generally would have a great deal to learn from study of the lives of the great geniuses in history, many of whom must have likewise devised methods of their own to accelerate psychological development.

In our own project, we wished to avoid the puritanical tone of words such as "virtue" and "vice," and after much thought hit upon the term "integrative qualities," though we are open to other ideas if someone has a better suggestion. To start off we chose the qualities of Openness, Centeredness, and Inclusiveness, with a further unit to be developed around those qualities concerned with Interrelatedness and Right Relationship. These were chosen on an a priori basis as they seemed to be qualities that people in the New Age are interested in developing, though we will have to find out by experiment what qualities are of greatest importance to people in the different age groups.

The qualities can be considered alone, but it is more interesting to consider them in relation to each other as, for example, the right relation between Openness and Centeredness or Inclusiveness and Centeredness. If Openness is not balanced by Centeredness, the individual risks becoming submerged in a flood of experience he cannot handle, some of which may actually be harmful. One aspect of being centered may be the capacity to

distinguish those experiences which are beneficial and nourishing from those that retard growth, the capacity for insulation without isolation.

The analogy of the semi-permeable membrane of a cell might be appropriate here, as the cell takes in through osmosis those substances it requires for its own functions, rejecting, in general, those which are not useful. (We have tried in these curricula to draw on analogies from other disciplines, both for their value in elucidating psychological principles, and for the powerful stimulus they seem to provide to exploration in other fields.)

Each of the organizing concepts or qualities has a cluster of related qualities which it subsumes. Centeredness, for example, would be related to such qualities as Simplicity, Silence, Self-Acceptance, Positivity, Alignment with the Self, Sense of Rhythm, Serenity, and Objectivity. Inclusiveness would be related to such qualities as Empathy, Love, Service, and Oneness. And Openness would be related to such qualities as Sensitivity, Beauty, Wonder, Appreciation, Pattern Recognition, Acceptance, and so on.

We also plan to develop some materials related to corresponding non-integrative qualities or "vices," which will probably be called "Distortions" or "Glamours" or "Illusions." Again, any suggestions as to an appropriate term would be most welcome. The term "glamour," which has been used in this context in certain esoteric writings, has a certain appeal, as it expresses the fact that our emotional responses which are rooted in the illusory sense of ego are often very glamorous to us. In spite of the harm they bring us, we cling to such attitudes as self-pity, possessiveness, and pride, and are unwilling to let go of them. The word "glamour" is also very nice as it seems to derive from an old Anglo-Saxon word for "fog" or "miasma"—a symbol of what the Hindus call "Maya" or illusion—and, in fact, nonintegrative attitudes might be defined as those which are rooted in illusion of some kind.

We have not yet worked out the details on how to weave in the non-integrative qualities, and do not want to make them the major focus since the soundest approach, psychologically speaking, seems to be to place the emphasis on the positive or integrative qualities. We feel that it will be useful, however, to gather materials which will help people to realize the limiting and ultimately illusory nature of the non-integrative qualities, and which will make clear distinctions which need to be made. The quality of Centeredness, for example, can easily be distorted or misunderstood to become self-centeredness and it may be associated with the glamour of self-sufficiency. Or the quality of Inclusiveness may be distorted by possessiveness or confused with a regressive type of merging that results in loss of one's own center.

We are especially interested in finding materials which bring in an element of humor in dealing with the glamours. Young people are very responsive to comics and cartoons, and this approach helps to "make light of" and to gain a certain detachment from the quality in question. We

found a wonderful illustration of the vice of Envy in a medieval fresco by Giotto in which a person is depicted with a long tongue going out like a snake which doubles back on itself to bite the envious person, reflecting the boomerang "law of karma." And we have a before and after picture from a Charles Atlas advertisement of a body-building course which should help to make graphically vivid the advantages of regular discipline and the development of the will.

Our accent will be on the positive and on helping people find techniques of transforming the energy bound up in the nonintegrative qualities.

In the "Integrative Qualities" project, we are collecting and producing materials of all kinds pertaining to the qualities which have been selected. We are gathering quotations and seed thoughts (short aphorisms and evocative phrases) which can be used as topics for discussion or meditation. We do not wish to limit ourselves, however, to the principle of suggestion and to what, from a certain point of view, could be considered the dehumanizing techniques of the advertisers, even when these techniques are used in the service of a worthy cause.

We hope to encourage deeper reflection on the concepts and qualities involved, and for this purpose will include provocative statements and paradoxes so that personal search is required to reconcile apparently contradictory statements. (Thus Kahlil Gibran's statement "My enemy said to me, 'Love your enemy' and I obeyed him and loved myself," or Emerson's statement "There is no wall like an idea," or the notion in the Tao Te Ching that "By letting it go it all gets done.")

We are also collecting myths, legends, and fables illustrative of the qualities chosen. The mythological notion of the axis mundi discussed by Eliade, for example, is a good one to relate to the concept of centering, and La Fontaine's fable about the oak tree and the reed can illustrate the fact that centeredness is not rigid, but must flow with the Tao. Thus, the oak tree which was unable to bend in the storm was uprooted, while the supple reed survived. Cultural materials of this kind provide valuable inputs for curricula in the humanities, and can be further supplemented by works of literature and biography.

We are also developing a variety of audio and visual materials to go into the "packages." This includes slides, photographs, drawings, transparencies, cartoons and audiotapes, and may include some filmstrips and videotapes. I'm also thinking of suggesting some films to the National Film Board, as we do not presently have resources for this sort of production. (Any ideas you may have would be most welcome.) One of our co-workers is presently working on a slide-tape presentation on centeredness, using excerpts from interviews with people about their own experience with this quality and visuals of everything from mandalas to potters' wheels.

We are also working on a variety of awareness exercises related to the various qualities, and plan to include many alternatives and suggestions so that a group working with the materials will not feel constrained by a

rigid curriculum, but can choose those activities which seem best suited to its own needs and interests.

Always we are concerned with developing a creative attitude, with encouraging students to make up their own exercises, and to gather and create their own materials. We are trying to avoid the mistake of flooding people with too much external input, as we find that this can inhibit creativity, and we are still experimenting to find the right balance. Frank Haronian sent me a copy recently of an interesting article which appeared in the *N.Y. Times* by our colleague from Paris, Dr. Fretigny. He wrote of his theory that too much sensory bombardment through the visual media, providing people with predigested images, tends to cut them off from their own deeper sources of experience. This seems to be a precaution worth bearing in mind.

So we are trying to learn to use the media and curriculum with a light touch—to stimulate but not to stultify, to help bring forth what is within rather than to impose some external vision, however good it may seem. We are experimenting now with the use of various audio inputs to help enhance mental imagery and meditative experience, and are obtaining interesting results with such things as white noise and water sounds. We are also beginning to explore various background sounds in the alpha and theta frequency ranges to see what possibilities this may open up for enhancing intuitive awareness in a group setting.

The scope of the various projects in which we are involved is too broad to be able to give an overall picture in any depth; it might be best if I were to give a few concrete examples of one approach which we have found to be of particular value in linking the cognitive and affective domains, and which we have employed in several of the curriculum units; then we can do a practical exercise together.

This technique is the use of mental imagery to explore one's attitudes toward, and conceptions of, various things—both concrete and abstract. The method is basically that which is described in my paper on "Answers from the unconscious," a revised version of which will appear in the forthcoming book edited by Fadiman on *The Practice of Psychosynthesis*, the "questions" being more of a general conceptual nature rather than oriented toward strictly psychotherapeutic ends as when the method was originally developed.

This method is one of the approaches used in the Integrative Qualities unit as well as in the meditation course. After a preliminary stage of relaxation and alignment—basic training in imagery projection—subjects are asked to hold in their minds a concept such as "Joy," "Positivity," "Interrelatedness," "Synergy," or some philosophic theme, and to allow their insights concerning it to come through in the form of mental imagery—usually visual, but it may also be auditory or kinesthetic and occasionally even in the other sensory modalities. This imagery is written down, drawn, or expressed in movement, and the sharing is generally a very meaningful experience.



We also encourage articulation of the intuitions experienced in this manner in both poetic and abstract language, as this is a great aid to cognitive and creative development. The aphorisms, affirmations, questions, and paradoxes that emerge in this way help to anchor the knowledge gained, and help to prepare the next step in further refinement and clarification of one's ideas. The affirmations may also be used as seed thoughts for meditation and for positive suggestion in self-programming.

We have used other kinds of imagery techniques in the Health Education units I am preparing for the Quebec Ministry of Education's new course in Personal and Social Education. This material has not yet been field tested, but I am hoping it will help children to contact their own deeper values and to relate to conceptual material more meaningfully.

In a lesson on smoking, for example, the children will be asked to experience through imagery what it would be like if they were the lungs of a person who smokes. And the lesson in dental care will have them identify with a tooth which is being allowed to decay. This is really an exercise in expansion of consciousness in which self-identity is extended temporarily to become one with something outside its usual boundaries. It is intended to help children learn to empathize with their own bodies which they, along with many adults, often treat in a manner that they wouldn't treat a dog.

These techniques also show great promise not only for discussion and awareness sessions, but for fundamental scientific research. I have been working for a couple of years with creative people in a variety of fields using mental imagery techniques for problem-solving, and have been able to help people in fields as far removed from my own areas of competence as mathematics and engineering to get over hurdles in work on their theses.

The method lends itself equally well to work in fields such as the behavioral sciences, philosophy, and the creative arts. It is well known that many scientists have obtained their intuitional breakthroughs in the form of mental imagery (Einstein and Kekulé are perhaps the most famous examples), and there is tremendous potential in teaching people to voluntarily do what people such as these have happened upon spontaneously.

One of my most interesting experiences in working with the method was a meditation group held last summer with a group of friends for the purpose of exploring laws of psychological development. In focusing on fundamental issues in this field with the imagery techniques, we came across some fascinating patterns of psychic energy, which opened up many fruitful avenues of exploration. The drawings I have here will give you an example of the way in which it worked. These images were seen by different members of the group in reflecting on the theme of growth stages.

We had been talking about the fact that archetypal symbolism suggests that growth takes place not only as a continuous process but that it is also

marked by discrete stages, analogous perhaps to the dual nature of light which manifests both as a continuous wave and as discrete particles or photons. This is reflected in ladder or step symbolism, the metaphor often employed by mystics of rooms in a mansion to be entered in succession, the Sufi notion of "stations" of wisdom, the concept of "initiation" (the Jungian analyst, Jos. Henderson has written a book on the archetype of initiation); and in nature it is found in the growth rings of a tree or the growth nodes of a bamboo plant.

In concentrating on the significance of the growth node concept, the group members saw a pattern in which energy seemed to come up through the central core of a cylinder following a rotary pattern of movement, spilling out at the top of the segment as though it were a fountain overflowing, and coming up through the center again, bringing with it strands of energy moving up from the segment below it. One idea that came out of this was the need for service—that when we reach a certain stage in our own development, there seems to be a law which requires us to share with others what we have gained before we can move on ourselves.

The similarity to the lines of force around a bar magnet is very interesting. Some of the energy does move on up, but much of it bends back to reenter the south pole. We found ourselves becoming very fascinated by analogies or correspondences between psychological laws and the laws of nature, many of us scurrying back to introductory physics books, and felt that an approach of this kind had great potential for involving students in exploring the physical and biological sciences. It is interesting to conceive of the possibility of research teams, with specialists from a variety of disciplines, working together on problems of this kind. Perhaps this is one future direction for psychosynthesis in the educational field.