

SUBPERSONALITIES

By James Vargiu

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Who am I? I am George. I am Peter. I am Martha. I am Judy. Whatever my name, I know that I am some one person – I sense that “I am me,” though it is hard to express what this means. When you ask me to describe it, when you press me to answer the question, “Who am I?” I waiver. I will write, “I am George.” But that doesn’t say it. I will write, “I am a teacher” because that’s my profession, but that doesn’t say it either. I will write, “I am kind,” then, “I am mean (sometimes),” “I am bold,” “I am timid,” “I am a father,” “I am faithful.” The list can extend for pages: qualities, social roles, attitudes, peculiar habits, typical foibles. The list is endless. And yet as I give more and more answers, adding complexity upon bewildering complexity (so that it might seem that the very thread of “me” would break in shreds), my *sense of identity*, the awareness that “I Am Me,” also gets stronger. (G.C. Taylor: *The “Who Am I?” Techniques in Psychotherapy*, Psychosynthesis Institute, 3352 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA, 1968.) I see that I am one person – the *same* person – and that I am made up of many aspects, also and at the same time.

THE INNER ONE AND THE MANY ONES

Frequently, we do not pay attention to our sense of “I-ness.” We take it for granted. Just as we may not pay real attention to our inner complexities. Yet our sense of identity is no mere theoretical concept. It is an existential reality, which can be experienced directly. The *intensity* of this experience, its energy charge, varies between individuals and, within the same individual, from time to time. For example, our sense of “I-ness” seems to dissolve every night when we go to sleep, then, mysteriously, reappears when we awake in the morning. It decreases when we throw ourselves into an activity or is painfully amplified when we feel shame. When we are in the process of making a decision, our sense of “I-ness” maybe especially strong, as it is when we willingly assume a heavy responsibility. (G. Cirinei: *Psychosynthesis: A Way to Inner Freedom*, Psychosynthesis Institute, SF, CA, 1970.)

But despite these variations, we take for granted, in practice, that there really is an “I,” and that it is the same “I” (George or Judy) who gets up this morning as went to sleep last night. The fact that our sense of personal identity remains, intact in the long run, regardless of our actions or the actions of others, is what generates the sense of *continuity* in our existence. So our “I-ness,” is most precious to each of us, literally as precious as life itself. Even though we usually take it for granted, we resist people and forces that would diminish it or take it from us, and a serious threat to it will instantly mobilize our

survival instinct. Some have argued that even the fear of death itself is not basically fear of pain, of loneliness, or even of the unknown, but is at the core fear that this basic sense of personal identity will be wiped away.

Accordingly it is not surprising that some people have great resistance to seeing their personality as other than one monolithic, coherent unit. Something inside them resists the awareness that their personality is made up of many different parts – as if to admit such a breakdown would cause the breaking down into non-being of their identity itself.

More often, once we become aware of the diversity of elements in our personality, we accept them in principle, but continue to reject them operationally, in practice. As we live our lives, we continue thinking about ourselves and about others as if we were made “all in one piece,” as if we were *already* whole. We seldom think of ourselves – and of others – as made up of different parts. We sort of know it in theory, but in practice forget about it. So if we are talking to somebody who’s being obnoxious, we say, “He’s obnoxious,” and may get angry at him. And if an hour later he becomes happy and cheery, we say, “Well, he changed, he’s almost like a different person.”

But of course if we stop and think about it, we realize that it is not that simple. It is not really that *we* change. It is rather that we express different *aspects* of ourselves at different times. So the aspect we are expressing now is not the same one that was there an hour ago. Very simply, we play different roles in different circumstances, as we all know. But what we often don’t know – and don’t think to ask – is *who chooses the role we play?*

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Often it is not us who choose our roles, but one or another of the many distinct aspects, or psychological formations in our personality. So these formations can be considered to be true *subpersonalities*.

There are in each of us a diversity of these semi-autonomous subpersonalities, striving to express themselves. And when any of them succeeds in doing so, we then play the corresponding role. But during that time the other subpersonalities are cut off. Yet they are still very much present – even though we may be unaware of them – and they are likely to create a lot of inner conflict. They may also have some very beautiful, useful qualities that we may need, but not be in touch with. So one of the easiest and most basic ways to facilitate our growth is to get to know our subpersonalities. As we understand them better, we can regulate and direct their expression according to our own needs and goals, making them our helpers and our allies, and bringing them increasingly close to each other, toward greater harmony and integration.

And an increasing number of people have discovered that recognizing the diversity of subpersonalities in us, learning to direct them, and to deal with them

operationally, *in the moment*, enhances rather than diminishes the sense of “I” – of personal identity and unity.

Unity and Diversity, the One and the Many are a central paradox in all thought from all times. The intuition has been that an essential unity underlies the myriad diversities of manifested life. Philosophers, religious leaders, scientist of all ages have dealt with this paradox. We have come to accept it as one of the central mysteries of nature and the universe. But the *personal* aspect of this paradox is still largely neglected.

A rather extreme example of this paradox is the well-known case of some actors who become so identified with their part that they “forget about themselves,” and truly experience themselves as the one they are impersonating. (R. Assagioli: *Life as a Game and Stage Performance*, Psychosynthesis Institute, SF, CA, 1973.) If, at that time, such an actor were to ask himself, “Who am I?” he would answer, “I am Hamlet,” “I am Othello.” Yet after the play he would have not doubt about the “I” who said, “I am Hamlet” was the same who would say, before and after, “I am an actor.” But if, later on, he were to give up acting, and become involved perhaps in business, he would then likely answer, “I am a businessman.” Yet he would be sure of being the “same one” who had experienced himself as the actor.

In the same way, each of us is One and Many, we have Unity and Diversity in our inner life. And it is a psychological reality that exploring our inner diversity, and working systematically to harmonize the multiplicity of elements within our personality, leads to a stronger sense of identity and unity, and to greater effectiveness in the outer world.

EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPLEXITY

“There are times,” said Somerset Maugham, “when I look over the various parts of my character with perplexity. I recognize that I am made up of several persons and that the person that at the moment has the upper hand will inevitably give place to another.” (Quoted in T. A. Harris’ *I’m O.K., You’re O.K.*, Harper & Row, NY, 1969, p. 1.)

Many writers have pointed out that in our personality there exist a multiplicity of personages – of subpersonalities – each one attempting to fulfill its own aims, sometimes cooperating, but more often isolated or in a state of conflict. According to Henry A. Murray, “A personality is a full congress of orators and pressure groups, of children, demagogues, Macchiavellis...Caesars and Christs...” (H.A. Murray: “What Should Psychologists Do about Psychoanalysis?” *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology*, 35, 1940, pp. 160-161.) In the Orient as in the West, the inner complexity is vocal as the Buddhist scholar Alexandra David-Neil makes clear: “A person is an assembly...where discussion never ceases... Often several members of the assembly rise at the same time and propose different things... It may happen that these differences of opinion...will provoke a quarrel... Fellow members may even come to blows. (A. David-Neil: *Buddhism*, Lane Publishers, 1939.) The philosopher Keyserling goes even further: “Each fundamental personality tendency is actually an autonomous entity, and their

combination, conditions and transmutations produce...an inner fauna, an animal kingdom the richness of which is comparable to the external one. It can truly be said that in each of us can be found, developed and active in various proportions, all instincts, all passions, all vices and virtues, all tendencies and aspirations, all faculties and endowments of mankind.” (Quoted in translation from R. Assagioli: *per L’Armonia Della Vita, la Psicosintesi*, Istituto di Psicosintesi, Via San Domenico 16, Firenze, Italy, 1966, p. 5.)

During the last one hundred years, this inner complexity has been a major theme of psychology. From the time of William James, psychologists have recognized the importance of the divisions within our psyche, and the corresponding psychological formations that result from them. There has been an increasing attempt to examine scientifically, and to describe, the inner divisions of man. Recently many personality theories and therapies have been developed which recognize these divisions, and work to heal them. Among them are such approaches as Berne’s Transactional Analysis (E.Berne: *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy*, Grove Press, NY, 1961), Perls’ Gestalt Therapy (See for example, F. Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, Bantam, NY, 1972), and Shapiro’s Ego Therapy (S.B. Shapiro: “A Theory of Ego Pathology and Ego Therapy,” *The Journal of Psychology*, 53, 1062, pp. 81-90). Transactional Analysis emphasizes one common subdivision of the personality, and the corresponding constellation of subpersonalities – Parent, Adult, and Child. Gestalt therapy has brought to light another common constellation: “Top Dog” and “Under Dog,” usually found in conflict with each other.

(Note to professionals: Both approaches recognize a specific type of subdivision with its specific subpersonalities. And each has developed effective and powerful techniques for dealing with the typical conflicts between those subpersonalities. Therefore, each approach is of great usefulness.

And yet there is the case of an experienced Gestalt therapist who described a client as having “three Top Dogs and no Under Dog” – and who worked with the client accordingly. The point he was making, implicitly, is that when a therapist uses any system that puts emphasis on particular subpersonalities in preference to others, he must eventually come to terms with the *uniqueness* of each individual.

The uniqueness and the similarities of human beings are an aspect of the unity-and-diversity paradox. It is implicit in the previous quote by Keyserling. He said that *in each of us can be found all instincts, all vices and virtues, all tendencies of mankind*. This is the basis of the similarity between individuals, which underlies empathy – the direct understanding of another person through identifying with that part of ourselves which is the same as he is – and which generates the feeling of brotherhood for one’s fellow man.

But Keyserling also said that these common qualities are developed and active *in various proportions* within each person. This difference of proportions is fundamental to the *uniqueness* of each individual. Because although in each of us are found the same basic qualities – which will develop, interact, combine, and be harmonized following the same basic patterns – yet for each human being the development and combinations of these qualities, and the *order* in which these combinations occur happens according to a wonderfully unique process – a process that has unique requirements, unique timing, and unique outcome.

So in practice there are some basic subpersonality constellations that are common to most of us, so approaches to growth that focus on them are highly effective. But the more an approach is effective and powerful, the more it is important to consider its application in the light of the person's unique existential situation, as a whole. Because, as we have said, there are certain clusters of subpersonalities that are likely to be present, more or less developed, in every individual, so if we look hard enough for a specific one, we are very likely to find it. And having at our disposal a powerful psychological tool to deal with it, we may yield to the temptation to do so before considering what else there is in the unique constellation of elements of that individual. While such intervention is often useful, and at times of major importance, we may have missed other aspects that were more crucial at the moment, and more in line with the individual's next natural step of development. So it will be most effective to first consider a client's personality – or for that matter our own – without any *expectation* of finding the subpersonalities that will fit any particular system. Rather we can strive to recognize that personality's unique formations, subdivisions, and interactions. And *then* we can apply whatever model and techniques best fit that person's specific existential situation – modifying them, or adding to them as needed.

Needless to say, this caution applies even more to the concept of subpersonalities itself. On the one hand, the concept of subpersonalities is an overarching framework that can augment and integrate – without in any way replacing – the approaches that deal with specific types of subpersonalities. But on the other hand it is *only one* of a number of possible ways to look at the personality.)

In literature, we find the same point: Pirandello's Six Characters who search for an author, Hesse's Steppenwolf and his personal Magic Theatre, Stevenson's tortured Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. We see this multiplicity of subpersonalities in the lives of the greatest men: Tolstoy, Michelangelo, St. Paul, Goethe. And St. Augustine gave a profound description of the struggle – and its resolution – between his two main subpersonalities: the “animal man” and the “spiritual man.”

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

Once we turn our attention to them, we will find many subpersonalities in each of us. Some are typical, some are practically unique. Students and clients have identified hundreds: The Hag, The Mystic, The Materialist, The Idealist, The Claw, The Pillar Of Strength, The Sneak, The Religious Fanatic, The Sensitive Listener, The Crusader, The Doubter, The Grabbie, The Frightened Child, The Poisoner, The Struggler, The Tester, The Shining Light, The Bitch Goddess, The Great High Gluck, The Dummy, to name a few.

Subpersonalities exist at various levels of organization, complexity and refinement. Within any one person, they exhibit a tendency toward greater organization and integration: the cast wants to get together. No specific cluster or combination of subpersonalities can be considered to be central for everyone, though certain patterns are quite common. Rather, the focus in working with subpersonalities is on the particular

natural process through which each individual's subpersonalities evolve and become harmonized with the other subpersonalities, leading to an integrated, whole personality.

Here is an account of integration between two opposite subpersonalities.

A client in her early forties...had long been identified with being a "good daughter, wife and mother." She had centered her life on pleasing first her father, then her husband and finally her three children, doing all the "right things." Just after her fortieth birthday, however, she discovered women's lib, started a career, got a divorce, and become in her words, a "new person." But now she had difficulties in relating to her teenage children. She wasn't experiencing any feelings of love or caring for them, which distressed and confused her very much. In one period she had become depressed and for a few weeks had "fallen back into the old me," and she was able then to feel love and closeness to her children. Her question was: should she be the "old self" or the "new self"?

This woman had begun to integrate many parts of herself which she had previously disowned (need for independence, a good intellect, competitiveness, ambition, etc.) around a new identity of being a strong, independent intelligent person. Yet the "old self" contained many important and valuable qualities, such as emotional sensitivity and the ability to give and accept love. She was subsequently able to see that she did not need to choose between them, but to form a broader identity which could include some of both. The solution lay not in disowning, but in including. (B. CARTER: *The Integration of the Personality*, unpublished paper, 1973, p. 16.)

In essence the approach used here consisted of the *fusion* of two opposite subpersonalities, through which process a new, more highly evolved subpersonality was formed – one that includes the desirable aspects of both subpersonalities. This is often an important undertaking, which may need considerable time and effort. It may have to be preceded by further development of each subpersonality, and by temporary, intermediate solutions. We will discuss this further on, dealing with the stages of subpersonalities harmonization.

But subpersonalities do not only appear in pairs of opposites. Many are interrelated without being opposite to one another. The following account, written by a 23 year old woman experienced in subpersonalities work, deals with a sequence of four interrelated subpersonalities.

Putting aside my healthy subpersonalities for the time being, I'll focus on four of my real troublemakers: the Dictator, the Martyr, the Bitch, and the Clinger. They seem to be related to each other in a continuous breakdown of *trust*. The Dictator stems from a lack of basic trust in myself and in life. The Martyr fears the Dictator. The Bitch doesn't trust the Martyr. And the Clinger is the final low point.

The Dictator rules, and he expects perfection in everything: in my daily schedule, my work, my lovemaking, my relationships with people, my medication. His basic fear is that all will not be run harmoniously and smoothly, should *he* lose control.

The Martyr reacts to the force of the Dictator. She is the one who feels the brunt of the Dictator's whip of conscience. She feels guilty for not being good enough, but also sorry for herself for having to do so much, and being so little rewarded.

The Bitch is a reaction to the incapacitation of the Martyr. She lashes back. She's sharp and cruel, and always hits her mark. She teases nastily and puts down those around her, especially my husband. She's not aware of the cause of her pain, but only of the need for revenge.

The Clinger is a stage that only occasionally is reached, and it's sheer misery. The Clinger is in despair over the chaotic situation. There seems not way out of the mess and she tries to escape, especially into warm baths. It's an infantile, clinging self that's especially prone to being overcome by emotion and can't see the fog around it. All of life seems too difficult to manage.

I can see the chain extending from the Dictator to the others, and I see that the Dictator *misuses* his power. He's strong, with power of planning and execution, a strong will, which instead of strengthening myself as a totality, focuses rigidly on partial plans and schemes of action.

If the Dictator's energy can be reconverted to serve the whole from the center of myself, tempered by the love of that self, there would be no need for the Martyr, the Bitch, or the Clinger to arise. I see the Dictator as a potential source of energy that could be useful in my daily life as well as my more long-range development and growth.

HOW THEY GET TOGETHER

A subpersonality is a synthesis of habit patterns, traits, complexes and other psychological elements. But *in order to have a synthesis, there has to be a center around which the synthesis occurs*. In a subpersonality, this center is an inner drive, or urge, which strives to be expressed, to be realized. It is this center that attracted and synthesized various personality elements to create what can be considered as its own "body" – its own means of expression.

There are, in each of us, a large number of these subpersonalities. What do we do with them? As we gradually recognize and harmonize them, they in turn, become organized and synthesized around a *higher order center*. This higher center is what we have called the "I," the personal center of identity of "I-ness (Readers can also consult with *The Act Of Will*, by Roberto Assagioli, Viking Press, 1973, pp. 211-217.) It is to the many subpersonalities as the center of a single subpersonality is to the many elements that make it up.

This higher order synthesis becomes the integrated personality – the harmonious and effective means of expression of the self-actualized human being. As we move toward this goal, we become increasingly able to choose, at any moment, which subpersonality we want to express. Until then, we are controlled by whichever subpersonality we are identified with in the moment, and thus limited to its particular good and bad qualities. But as the integration of the subpersonalities proceeds, every quality in us, every aspect, becomes available to us. We have the greatest freedom of expression; whatever is in us can be brought out and actualized.

Before this integration, not only can we be limited by a particular subpersonality, but also by the conflicts that often arise between two or more of them. In such a conflict situation, each subpersonality wants to control us, and express itself. But often none will yield, and they become deadlocked. Then energy is wasted – and there is much conflict and pain. But as the integration proceeds, it leads to harmony. It is then possible to find

a means of expression where all subpersonalities involved get what they need. Then they will learn to cooperate with each other, *and with you*.

For example, let us say that a person has a subpersonality called “the mystic,” made up of a visionary quality and of kindness. Then let’s say he has an efficient “businessman,” made up of aspects such as one-pointedness, will power, etc. Initially, the mystic and the businessman, being so different from each other, are likely to be in conflict. They don’t understand and don’t like each other, and each wants to have its way completely. So they keep getting in each other’s way, and neither allows the other to ever express itself freely and fully.

But if, for example, they can be persuaded to a kind of “time-sharing,” where each allows the other freedom to express itself part of the time, the persona will have access to the qualities and strengths of both, by shifting his identification from one of the other. And the conflict will be largely eliminated.

This is often fairly easy to achieve, and although it is mostly in the nature of a compromise, it is a major step toward integration. True, for a time the person will only allow himself to be kind when he is identified with the mystic, and to be efficient when he is identified with the businessman. But in time, mystic and businessman will recognize and appreciate the good qualities of each other. They will be willing to cooperate, and will eventually fuse together into a more evolved subpersonality. So we may have a kind businessman or an efficient mystic – or even a completely new subpersonality with all the good qualities of both. (Recognizing subpersonalities is also very useful in our interactions with others. For example, if we try to give constructive criticism to somebody, we can get into all sorts of misunderstandings. As we all know, criticism is often hard to accept, because *we take it personally*. But once we think and speak in terms of subpersonalities, the process is much easier... “I think your martyr is trying to make me feel guilty. Do you agree?” When we put things this way, we remove any implications that “you are bad.” Rather, we are really talking straight, by saying, in effect, “have you seen that part of you?” I know it’s not *you*, but you may want to do something about it. Communicating in this way is not only easier, but more effective, because *it corresponds to what is really going on*. One never has to say “you are bad” or even “you are doing a bad thing.” It is just that one subpersonality may be out of control. And of course it becomes the person’s responsibility to do something about it. We are responsible for our subpersonalities, just as we’re responsible for our children, our pets, and our car. We certainly need to see that they don’t cause trouble to ourselves or to others. But *we are not* them.

People can use the concept of subpersonalities very effectively when they’re dealing with problems in interpersonal relationships – especially in couples. Doing so takes away a major stumbling block to real communication – *blame*. To the extent that people learn to work with the concept, it has the potential of detoxifying relationships and breaking the endless circle of blame and guilt, blame and guilt. Rather, it’s you and I – and our subpersonalities, which we have to harmonize. And we can help each other in this, because you and I are fine. It is these characters that are giving each other trouble, when many of them could nurture and help each other.)

The process of harmonization of our subpersonalities consists of five phases: *recognition, acceptance, coordination, integration, and synthesis*.

We have already considered the phase of integration, in which subpersonalities interacting with one another establish increasingly harmonious relationships, and often combine. Eventually, this process results in one whole, *integrated personality*.

But for integration between subpersonalities to occur, there must be also changes *within* the subpersonalities. This is the same as with people. Suppose a number of people get together and form a group. Before the group can become well integrated, and function as a unit, interpersonal problems are likely to emerge, which need to be solved. And to be solved, they require some inner changes by the people in the group. Similarly, for the integration of the personality to proceed, there must be the *inner* refinement and harmonization of the subpersonalities involved. This process is called *coordination*.

Recognition and acceptance are clearly necessary prerequisites to coordination and integration. The acceptance can be acceptance of a subpersonality by the individual, or acceptance of a subpersonality by another subpersonality.

Synthesis (I use the term here in a specific sense, to indicate the last phase of the harmonization process) concerns primarily the personality as a whole, and is essentially *interpersonal* and *transpersonal*. While it has an influence on subpersonalities, it has to do with the interaction of the individual with others and with the world, and is mediated by the Transpersonal Self.

In the following pages is the work of a client that will give you a practical sense for these five phases of subpersonality harmonization. Afterwards, I will consider each phase in some detail, and give some specific guidelines and techniques to facilitate progress through the phases.

HOW IT HAPPENS

The client's work is centered on a "guided daydream." The guided daydream "...is a means of establishing two-way communication with the unconscious. The client, relaxing and with his eyes closed, may be told for example, to imagine himself in some neutral place (e.g. a meadow) and proceeds in his imagination, experiencing whatever comes, and reporting his experience and his feelings to his guide. The guide, in turn, encourages him and helps him to move on and to face and resolve problem areas, usually at a symbolic level. Such images as a dragon, a wise old sage, a sword, a fountain, the sun, or others of high symbolic value often arise during this process and can be confronted or utilized as appropriate. The technique can be used to open up a channel to the superconscious, and to tap superconscious energies. It also brings up unconscious material in symbolic form, making it accessible, and can allow for cathartic experiential release and substantial relief in conflict areas." (S.VARGIU: *Psychosynthesis Case Studies*, Psychosynthesis Institute, 3352 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA, 1971, p. 4.)

The initial imagery of a guided daydream often reflects the *present* situation of the client. With the assistance of an experienced guide, it is often possible to trace the *causes* of that situation, which have their roots in the *past*. One can thus arrive at a better understanding of what is going on and why, and through the two-way communication with the unconscious provided by the imagery, suggest the changes which seem most suitable to improve the situation in the direction of the client's values, goals, and desired growth. This last can be considered as a journey into the *future*, and can become a road

map or “ideal model” (R.ASSAGIOLI: *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, Viking Press, NY, 1971, pp. 166-177. See also the *Ideal Model Exercise*, Psychosynthesis Institute, 3352 Sacramento St., SF, CA.) at the symbolic level, that the client can then realize in his normal life. (Many articles on the Guided Daydream and other Mental Imagery techniques have been written including: R.DESOILLE: *The Directed Daydream*, Psychosynthesis Institute (see above), H. LEUNER: “Guided Affective Imagery,” *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, Vol.XXIII, No. 1, 1969, pp.4-22., M. CRAMPTON: “The Use of Mental Imagery in Psychosynthesis,” *Journal Of Humanistic Psychology*, Fall 199, pp. 139-153.)

The client (this session was conducted by James Vargiu and his wife with a client who will be called Sharon for the purposes of this history) was a 23 year old woman who came to her first session saying that she desperately wanted to grow, to move on to a more creative and fulfilling expression of herself. But, she said, she felt badly blocked by something within her...something experienced as anxiety, mental confusion – even despair. Relating to other people, she said, had begun to feel unreal and unsatisfying. And more and more she found herself feeling depressed, not wanting to be with anyone, and incidentally, overeating to try to compensate for her depression. Her friends were concerned, her husband was worried; and, she said, she wanted very much to do something about it.

The problem which seemed to concern her most deeply was the pain of wanting to contribute something valuable to the world and feeling that she never would be able to make a real contribution. She was extremely critical of herself, unable to see value or usefulness in anything she had already done. Yet she was someone who would be called “successful” by most people ... honors in college, a good marriage, friends who loved and appreciated her, even a respectable portfolio of poems and stories she had written in the rare moments she allowed herself to try. She was a lovely looking person, with delicate fine features, a general aura of sensitivity and intelligence, and unmistakable good will. But her critical view of herself undermined her efforts and held her back from all that as within her reach.

When we explored her feelings during the session, we tried to see what lay behind the anxiety. She talked of subtle underlying feelings, hard for her to recognize in her daily life – of disgust, and a kind of nameless hostility. We decided to explore the disgust and hostility and use these feelings as the entry point of a guided daydream.

As a result of this daydream, three central subpersonalities emerged, which she called the “Hag,” the “Doubter,” and the “Idealist.” During the guided daydream, Sharon was able to work out a *symbolic resolution* of the subpersonality conflict that lay behind her severe self-criticalness. This symbolic resolution then served as a “map,” or set of guidelines, for her to work with the subpersonalities in her daily life – to begin in actuality the process of real-life resolution. You will notice how the guided daydream included, at a symbolic level, all of the five phases of subpersonality harmonization: recognition, acceptance, coordination, integration and synthesis – and helped to give her a clear sense of direction.

With the help of an experienced guide, the guided daydream is an unusually effective means for getting at the underlying psychological drama of our subpersonalities which expresses itself in our behavior. In general, it is a powerful instrument to bring to

light the deeper inner dynamics of our personality. But very effective and fruitful work can be done on one's own, without using the guided daydream technique. A daydream is presented here because it represents a complete panoramic view of the process of subpersonalities harmonization, from the initial recognition to the synthesis.

The comments following the daydream transcript consider the daydream in terms of the five stages. In the transcript, the numbers at the side of the text refer to these later comments, for your convenience. The transcript follows:

SHARON'S DAYDREAM

Guide: Close your eyes... relax...take some deep breaths ... (pause)... now let yourself experience again those feelings of anger and disgust. Tell me when you are in touch with them.

Sharon: I have them.

G: Good. Stay in touch with them...let an image appear for those feelings, and tell me what it is.

S: I'm having trouble... my mind is confused. [1]

G: That's all right. The image will come.

S: Yes, and it's one I've seen before. It's an old hag, very ugly and twisted inside.

G: Tell me more about it.

S: Well, she's made up of twisted pieces that babble a lot... and wear back and forth and eat away.

G: How do you feel toward her?

S: I hate her and I'm disgusted by her...and I disgust her. [2]

G: Let yourself feel that...(pause)...Now what is she doing?

S: She's looking at me with all her twisted parts writhing around, knowing that I'm looking at her and being very disgusted by her. But it doesn't bother her because she knows I can't get rid of her, that she's a part of me.

G: Ask her if there's anything she'd like to tell you.

S: She said to stop being phony, that my standing and looking at her and trying to put her away from me – making her not part of me – was very, very phony and pretentious.

G: How do you feel about that? [3]

S: Angry. Of course I put her away from me. She's ugly and twisted. Maybe I'm phony, but I don't know how else to make her go away if I don't ignore her. I despise her. I hate her. I want her to go away: Why won't she go away? ... (cries)...She's right. I do feel phony and pretentious, trying to pretend that she's not a part of me.

G: Okay. Tell her that.

S: I did, and she said, "Okay, you admit that I'm part of you, but there's still contempt between the two of us."

G: You mean from both side?

S: Yes.

G: Is there anything you would like from her?

S: Just to be straight with me so that we can deal with each other.

G: How isn't she straight?

S: Well, she's not straight because she hates and accuses me. But I'm not straight with her either, because I hate and accuse her, too. When we stop and admit the truth, like I just admitted to her that I knew it was phony to pretend she wasn't there – then that's being straight.

G: Tell her that.

S: Hag, I'd like you to be straight with me.

G: Ask her if there's anything she needs from you. [4]

S: Yes, she says there is...She needs understanding and help.

G: How do you feel about that?

S: I feel sorry for her. [5]

G: Let yourself feel that...Really get into that, it's very important.

S: (begins to cry) It's so good to let these feelings out (continues crying)

G: Yes... (pause)...Tell her that you feel sorry for her.

S: I told her. We both have to help each other.

G: How can she help you?

S: She can help by reminding me who I am, and what we are together, and that we can work together...She has to remind me that she's there. [6]

G: What I'd like you to do now is to see if you can become her and then tell me how it feels. [7]

S: I'm the ugly part now, and I'm talking to Sharon. I feel very cynical, very scornful of her.

G: Tell me more. What are you like?

S: I'm bitter...and cynical...and I hate her for trying to pretend that I'm not here.

G: What don't you have that you need?

S: Her help.

G: What kind of help?

S: Her help in understanding and recognizing me so that I can get out of this twistedness I'm in...because I really don't want to be this way. [8]

G: Say again: "I don't want to be this way."

S: I don't want to be this way.

G: Say it again. (B.FINNEY: *Say It Again: An Active Therapy Technique*, unpublished manuscript, 1969.)

S: I don't want to be this way!

G: And again...

S: I don't want to be twisted this way!

G: Keep saying it. Let the feelings come.

S: I don't want to be twisted this way! (shouts) I don't want to be this way! I DON'T WANT TO BE THIS WAY ! PAY ATTENTION TO ME!

G: Yes... (pause)... how are you feeling now?

S: Energized and relieved. Strong. Sharon finally heard me. And she's saying, "I'm sorry, I didn't realize. I'll help you." [9]

G: How do you feel about that?

S: I still feel a little hurt, but it's okay. [10]

G: Tell Sharon why you're hurt.

S: I'm hurt because it's been so long, and you've neglected me for so long.

G: Do you understand why she neglected you?

S: Because she wanted to be pure. [11]
G: How do you feel about that?
S: Like she was just a little pretentious child, going off and chasing all her ideals.
G: How do you feel about those ideals?
S: Well, they're good – in relation to the world – but she's not on the right track with them because she was trying to be something that she wasn't ready to be.
G: How wasn't she ready? [12]
S: She has to start at home, in everyday life. Those ideals became an escape for her...she was trying to force herself into this image of a high, pure being. She's never even accepted me.
G: Tell her all that.
S: I told her she has to come back and start right from where she is, one step at a time, looking at where she's going, and looking at herself.
G: How does she respond to that?
S: She says, "You're right, but it's hard."
G: How can you help each other so you can do it one step at a time?
S: She has to look at me and see all this twistedness in me, and she has to look inside and see that I'm in here. And I have to look at her and accept her ideals and her desires to be pure and help her realize them...and we have to come together. [13]
G: Okay, in the future then, how can you get Sharon's attention when you need help or feel you can help her?
S: I can ask her to send some of her energy, some of her ideals, some of her will...
G: Why don't you try that now...(long pause)... [14]
S: I asked her for some positive energy, for some will, and she said, "Yes. Okay." But then something started nagging at me...something new...and now I feel different.
G: What was it?
S: I don't know exactly, some kind of negative feeling, possibly doubt, or something. [15]
G: Let yourself feel it. Let it come.
S: It's a fear...of being alone, of being insecure and alone.
G: And you became afraid of being alone just as Sharon was starting to help you?
S: Yes. Because I don't know where I'm going.
G: I see. Does Sharon know?
S: She said, "yes," but I don't feel that she does.
G: Do you trust her?
S: I guess not, no.
G: Okay, tell Sharon that.
S: She said, "It's all right. I know where I'm going. Take my hand." And I said, "But where?" And she pointed ahead and said, "See that light down there, that point of light?" And it was straight ahead, in a channel. "That's where we're going."
G: You said you felt different. How?
S: I am the one who has real doubts – the Doubter. [16]
G: I see...and how do you feel when Sharon says "Come with me"?
S: I feel resistant. I hold back.

G: How come?

S: I don't know where that funnel of light is, or what it is.

G: I see.

S: And I'm afraid, and I feel that I don't know where I am. I don't know what's happening. I see myself standing with Sharon and she's pulling my hand. I'm looking around saying, "Wait a minute, wait a minute! Where am I?" I have to know where I am before I can go there, toward the light.

G: How do you feel toward the light?

S: It's small and very far away, but everything funnels towards it.

G: Yes...how do you feel toward it?

S: I don't know. I don't have any fears of it now, but I just don't know.

G: Tune in to the light...and see if feelings of any kind come.

S: I imagine myself there, what it would be like to be there, and the feeling is joy—my heart is beating fast – I'm going through a funnel and near the end it opens up...forever. And it's very bright.

G: Okay. Now things are going to change slightly. Step back and observe Sharon...(pause)...now be aware of the Doubter as well...and of the Hag... [17]

S: Yes, they are all there...and Sharon is just one of them...I can really see her clearly now. She's not Sharon, she's the Idealist! I'm not her! *I have been* her, but I'm not her, am I? She's the Idealist! Oh, wow! [18]

G: Good...This is an important insight...take some time to experience it.

S: (long pause)...yes...now there's someone else...there's someone else here too...kind of the greater me, the high me. [19]

G: And what is the "high you" like?

S: She's what I want to be. She's looking at the Hag, and the Doubter, and the Idealist. And what's so special is that she accepts them. All of them. And she feels compassion towards them. She knows the Hag is critical and twisted, and the Doubter afraid, and mistrusting, yet she accepts them. And she sees through the Idealist too, the unrealistic ideals and the refusing to accept her limitations, the pretension and the desperate spirituality. She accepts them all, and loves them in spite of their faults. And she's humming...she hums all the time...she's in touch with the light.

G: Can you talk to her?

S: No, she doesn't talk with words. She's silent.

G: Can you communicate with her in some other way?

S: Yes... (pause)... she showed me an image of a circle, a loop of light. I'm getting some meaning from that. It is a message, but I don't quite have it. The connection keeps getting broken. [20]

G: What breaks the connection?

S: The other parts keep coming in, and I keep listening to them.

G: Okay...now things are going to change again. Imagine that you are at the foot of a mountain with the Idealist, the Hag and the Doubter. The "Higher" Sharon is somewhere above, probably close to the top, and she'll guide you whenever you need her. What I'd like you to do is to take the others with you to the top. [21]

S: They're climbing with me, slipping and chattering away, making lots of noise like little kids...(pause)...we're still climbing...(long pause)...we're getting near the top now...We're at the top.

G: And is the "Higher" Sharon there too?

S: Yes, she's here.

G: Turn to her and ask her what to do.

S: She says that all need to turn to each other and look at each other and lean in together so that they flow into one.

G: Okay. Tell her you are going to do that now, and ask her to help you. Let the sun shine down very brightly. Now go ahead and tell me what happens. [22]

S: She's circling them with a ring of light that hums, and she's energizing them with this until they too start to hum and they're looking at each other and taking hands...and they're flowing together now and they're one. They're ringed by light.

G: How does that feel?

S: The feeling is of being in touch again...(long pause)... [23]

G: What's happening now?

S: They've merged, and a new one has formed in the ring of light. And she's different. She sort of has qualities from all the other three. And she has a bearing that's not puffed up, or on an ego trip, but sure of herself, knowing who she is. She's very, very solid. She doesn't get all carried away so she doesn't have to be so critical. She has high ideals, but they're somehow more connected to reality, more grounded. And she's not all sweetness and light, either...She's somehow more human, wonderfully human.

G: Are you watching her or are you being her?

S: I'm becoming her...now I am her...it's beautiful. [24]

G: Good...(long pause)...now turn toward the sun. There is a beam of sunlight that comes from the sun down to your feet. You can feel its warmth coming into you. Let yourself fill up with its energy...now turn to the "Higher" Sharon and tell her that you'd like to go toward the sun, and would she help you.

S: She said to establish a connection between the sun and the top of my head.

G: Okay. Go ahead and do that. She'll help you. And tell me what happens.

S: I'm going up toward the sun... it's very joyous.

G: Tune in to the joy. Open yourself to it...(long pause)...what's happening now?

S: My mind took over. [25]

G: And what did it do?

S: It started thinking of selfishness, that I was being selfish.

G: How were you being selfish?

S: Getting so much joy, so much attention from you.

G: Turn to the "Higher" Sharon and ask her if you are being selfish.

S: She says, "No, not now, not way up here."

G: Okay, do you want to try again and go toward the sun?

S: Yes.

G: Go ahead...

S: I tried, but I can't get over the feeling that I am taking a lot of time whereas I can work on this alone later.

G: Why not do it now, the easy way? It's not selfish to take things. It's selfish to hold onto them after you have them. [26]

S: That's right! What the high Sharon does, what I want to do, is to draw in the light and then share it, and give it out, and help. [27]

G: Yes...and how can you share it without first taking it in?

S: That's right.

G: So, go ahead.

S: The flow is re-established and I'm back in the sun. [28]

G: Now let yourself really feel the flow...(pause)...what is it like?

S: I am one... with everything.

G: Let the energy flow to you and out from you. Let it flow through you and practice radiating it in all directions...(pause)...now, look for the center of the sun. Try to go right for the center point in the sun and tell me what happens...(long pause)...

S: There's an explosion. No, not quite an explosion, but a constant force of light from all around, brilliant, and emanating and humming. [29]

G: Can you let yourself go right in the middle of it? And tell me what happens...

S: I just disappear.

G: Good...go with it...

S: Now I'm light...

G: Be aware of what is around you and tell me what's there.

S: First there's only light and then sun which surrounds me. And then there's a whole earth and a whole universe and the stars.

G: Can you still hear the hum?

S: Yes.

G: Tune in to it. That hum ties everything together. Really tune in to it. Listen to it all around you and let it emerge from within you also...Try to get the inner and the outer hum to be in tune...they are really the same one...

S: Everything's humming and the hum is going through me and all around me.

G: Good. Remain in touch with that hum and look at Earth...very gradually, follow that hum as it goes toward Earth, keeping a connection between the sun and the top of your head. Stay in touch with the hum, with the energy...Gradually go toward earth, toward the top of the mountain...and let yourself land on the mountain. Again practice letting the energy and the hum flow to you and out, this time in all directions. You'll see that one the mountain there are other beings, and animals, and other parts of you which you haven't seen yet. Now, send the energy and the hum to all of them to help them get close to each other. Send it down the slopes of the mountain all around...Then, whenever you feel like it, you can open your eyes...(long pause)...

S: (laughing and crying at the same time) I feel so good...so solid...

G: I'm very glad...it was a good piece of work...shall we talk together now about what happened?

.....

After the daydream, we spent a brief time talking. We wanted to help Sharon explore the meaning that the symbolic process had to her and what she had learned from

it. To avoid imposing our own interpretation on what happened, we asked her to write down her insights for our next session.

In her paper, Sharon said:

I see now for the first time what the Hag has always been trying to say to me...what she would have said to me if I had listened. She says: "I'm the one in whom you've buried all the feelings you don't like to admit you have...your angry feelings, your impatience, your envy. The Idealist wanted you to be so pure that you'd never have bad feelings, and you pretended you didn't have them. But that left me alone and twisted, without any way of changing.

I'm truly a part of you; you can't reject me. I need your understanding and help. And I know the world. I'm useful in the world. There are times when it's appropriate to be angry...times when impatience can be transformed into action. You need to help untwist what I have and then use my good, practical side.

I resent what the Idealist made you do to me. But I see and appreciate your ideals. I can help you realize them. But I want them to be useful, to be connected to the real world. You can't make any of your ideals come true, you're not ready to, unless you can deal with the here and now, as it is, and accept your own negative feelings. You must go one step at a time.

Sharon went on to write:

I see now that if I let the Idealist take over and reject the Hag, none of my ideals can be made real. They are useless unless I can first accept, and learn to deal with the negative side of myself and of other people.

I see the value of the Doubter. She just wants to understand where I'm going. She can help me from doing crazy, impractical things, too, with her questions and her thinking things through. I need that.

Sharon was beginning to have a good intellectual understanding of how her subpersonalities could begin to work together. As we went on, she realized more and more how badly she had been blocked by her unrealistic ideals, feeling overwhelmed by them and beaten before she had begun.

Later in a second daydream, besides delving further into the Doubter, she took another look at the Idealist. She discovered that the Idealist had a great deal of hidden ambition, and that it was this ambition that was exaggerating and inflating her ideals, making them seem impractical. And, as we had seen, the Idealist had convinced her that the only way she could ever achieve them was to repress and deny her limitations.

It became clear, as well, that the anger she had experienced in the early part of her daydream was a central element – an integral, though repressed, part of the Hag, and that it too would have to be dealt with.

The next phase of her work – and a most important one – was to begin to anchor her new understanding in her everyday life – to begin to change the way she had been living. It was crucial for her to begin to get in touch with her anger and ambition, in which her much needed energy had been bottled up. For several weeks, she did an Evening Review looking back over each day for feelings of anger and frustration and for ways in which her ambition had affected her choices and actions. Gradually, she learned

to be aware of these feelings in the moment, and was surprised to discover how much of her energy was locked into them. As she let herself tentatively experience this energy, she realized it could be used to help overcome her feelings of inadequacy and to achieve realistic goals. She began to consciously channel some of this increased energy towards overcoming obstacles that had seemed insurmountable before – for example, to work at writing a story for six consecutive days until she had finished it!

Through this phase of her work, she came to appreciate the ambition of the Idealist, and to see that provided it was under her control, ambition could help her to be creative and innovative, and was a powerful motivating force for dealing with working through, rather than avoiding, her personality limitations.

Sharon was now willing also to come to grips with her anger and frustration. First of all, it was important for her to learn ways of releasing these feelings harmlessly. This was done through various catharsis techniques. (S. VARGIU: op.cit., “Alex,” p. 8.) For example, we suggested that when she felt anger she pound her bed with a tennis racket until she felt better, or that she vigorously scrub the floor or chop firewood. This cathartic release was an important step, for it was during this period that her long lasting and deep depression gradually lessened and then disappeared.

Eventually, she understood that the anger and frustration that had been bottled up in the Hag also represented valuable energy that, like ambition, could be turned to useful purposes. So with Sharon’s help and understanding the Hag could turn this energy toward becoming “untwisted” and putting her practicality and honesty to work.

Over the course of this later work, the *Hag* became transformed into an earthy, practical, realistic voice which Sharon came to trust more and more. The “living in the real world” quality of the *Hag* and the discrimination and careful judgment of the *Doubter* eventually became two trusted voices which helped her “ground” the vision of the *Idealist*, making it realistic by helping her see the steps needed to make her goals attainable. She was then well on her way to integrating these three important subpersonalities into the new, more inclusive and joyful subpersonality – the one she had been, momentarily, when standing on the mountain top at the beginning of her work.

THE PHASES OF HARMONIZATION

Now let us look at Sharon’s daydream in terms of the five phases of subpersonality harmonization.

The subpersonality that was causing Sharon’s feelings of disgust and anger was recognized with only little difficulty, and turned out to be, “one I’ve seen before.” [1] This sense of familiarity is often the case, and confirms the notion that subpersonalities are not arbitrary constructs, but natural formations that have spontaneously developed in the psyche. It is not unusual for the recognition of a repressed subpersonality to be accompanied, at first, by reciprocal negative feelings (“I hate her, and I’m disgusted...and I disgust her” [2]. These will be often the same feelings that caused its original rejection and repression. Full recognition and acceptance of a subpersonality requires experiencing and owning those feelings, which can then be transformed into more positive ones (“I feel sorry for her” [5]).

This in turn opens the way for the coordination phase.

Coordination is a central aspect of the work with subpersonalities. It consists in reaching from the external aspects of a subpersonality to its core; from its actions to the meaning of those actions and the causes behind them; from what it says it *wants* to what it truly *needs*. In practically every situation, even if a subpersonality initially appears ugly, mean, in deep pain, hostile, and a complete hindrance, once we reach its core we find that its basic quality is good. We see that it is not only acceptable but useful, and at times badly needed; that it can be harmonized with the other qualities, and that distortions and conflicts were produced largely in the frustrated efforts to express and actualize that fundamentally good quality.

So the first step is to establish clear and open communication. One can then focus on what the two sides want from each other (always keeping in touch with the feelings involved), and from the expressed wants, trace the reasons, the “whys” for those wants, and then the needs behind those reasons. In Sharon’s case, the Hag initially wanted her to “stop being phony” because, it turned out, by being phony, Sharon was rejecting her. But what the Hag actually *needed* was first to be accepted, then helped, so as to move out of her twistedness and to grow [4, 8].

A fundamental point is that the twistedness of the subpersonality was caused by Sharon’s lack of acceptance of her, and not in any way by any quality intrinsic in the Hag. And the Hag was disgusted by her twistedness (“I don’t want to be this way”) just as much as Sharon was, and wanted to change, but was powerless to do so without Sharon’s help. So Sharon needed to accept responsibility for the distortions in the Hag, and offer her help (“I’m sorry, I didn’t realize, I’ll help you” [9]). After that, the Hag was willing in turn to take responsibility for her remaining feelings (“I still feel a little bit hurt...but it’s okay” [10]).

The technique that led to this acceptance is an important one, very helpful during the phases of acceptance and of coordination. It consists of identifying *temporarily* with the subpersonality one is in conflict with – in “becoming” it [7]. This technique is discussed in detail further on.

After the reconciliation between Sharon and the Hag, one might have been tempted to end the daydream. There had been a good catharsis of the central feelings. The vicious circle – of rejections leading to distortion leading to more rejection – was broken, and Sharon and the subpersonality were on good terms, eager to help each other. Yet, if we had stopped here, after some time Sharon most probably would have reverted to her previous attitude of rejection and condemnation. What was missing to produce a permanent change in attitude was the understanding of the initial causes that led Sharon to reject that subpersonality, *before* the rejection twisted her into the Hag. (Clearly, the underlying assumption here – as in all attempts at coordination – is that, as I have stressed earlier, the subpersonality is basically good, desires to grow and improve, and has a certain amount of good will which can be brought into play. This assumption has been found to be valid in a very large majority of practical cases by the therapists who tested it. It is important to remember, however, that *it must always be treated as a probable assumption*, a hypothesis to be verified again and again by reaching the core of each new situation, not a belief to be accepted blindly and superficially.) The cause emerged quite easily (“she wanted to be pure” [11], and “she was trying to be something she wasn’t ready to be” [12]). In this respect, the daydream is unusual. More often, a considerable amount of work is needed to reach this point. Finding the causes of

Sharon's rejection of the Hag led to the most concrete statement yet for mutual help and cooperation [13], and to the first suggestion of integration ("we have to come together").

Again one might have been tempted to stop here. But in mental imagery work it is worthwhile to *act out* the giving of help ("Why don't you try that now"[14]), or whatever else might be suggested as desirable. By doing so, if there are any remaining obstacles, they are likely to be brought to light. This was the case here, and the block that emerged [15] turned out, quite unpredictably, to be a major one, to the extent of involving a new subpersonality ("I am the one who has real doubts – the Doubter" [16]. At this point, it would have been possible to work on the acceptance and coordination of the Doubter just as he had done for the Hag. But, I felt that the material and insights related to the Hag was about all that Sharon could handle effectively for the time being, and, as it was more closely related to her immediate life needs, she would be more highly motivated to follow it through.

But I decided that it would be useful to her long-term growth for Sharon to have an experience of her transpersonal nature. This would add to her overall motivation, and help her gain a more realistic perception of the possibilities and the long-term goals toward which the work with the Hag made her free to reach. So in dealing with the Doubter, the emphasis, as may be apparent, was primarily on overcoming its immediate resistance, rather than on resolving its difficulties – on *going around* the obstacle, rather than removing it – and at times on gathering data for later use.

These data complemented the picture that had already emerged of a basic conflict. On one side we have the subpersonality with which Sharon was normally identified – the one she referred to initially as Sharon, and later on as the "Idealist" – who "knows where she is going" but wants to proceed prematurely, out of impatience and over-eagerness, avoiding to deal with her limitations. On the other side we have the Doubter and the Hag, which react with mistrust, doubt, and hostility. The result of this conflict is to block progress and cut off the energy they need to grow effectively and in reciprocal harmony.

After the substantial work of *coordination* of the Hag, it seemed feasible to attempt an *integration* of the subpersonalities present. The first step was to help Sharon take the position of the *objective observer* [17]. She was able to do this without difficulty, and it produced two important results. The first was the *disidentification* from, and the recognition of the subpersonality Sharon was normally identified with ("She's not Sharon, she's...the Idealist! I'm not her!" [18]. This was a major step forward, accompanied by strong emotion, which freed Sharon from the specific desires and limitations of the Idealist. Next came a spontaneous influx from the superconscious, in the form of a subpersonality-like formation of a transpersonal nature (the "High Sharon" [19]). This is somewhat typical, as for many people it is easiest to get in touch with the superconscious from the position of the "disidentified observer."

Such a superconscious element is of great assistance to the process of integration, and is essential for the synthesis phase. Often, its first effect is to throw light on whatever is in the way of the integration. This was the case here when Sharon said that the connection kept getting broken by the various subpersonalities [20]. Again, it seemed better not to explore the difficulty in order to avoid bringing up too much new material at once, but instead to go around the obstacle. So rather than having some interaction between the subpersonalities, I suggested the ascent of a mountain, as a symbol of integration [21]. At the top, the "High Sharon" was used as an inner source of guidance.

She spontaneously suggested that integration was appropriate [22], and helped to make it happen. This integration led Sharon to identify with the new subpersonality (“I *became* her”), and produced a positive experience (“It’s beautiful [24]) and a stronger connection with the superconscious (“The feeling is of being in touch again” [23]).

The successful integration does not mean, of course, that Sharon actually achieved then the full integration of her personality. Only three subpersonalities were involved. Furthermore, as was said previously, the greatest value of mental imagery work is often as a “roadmap,” an “Ideal Model,” a pattern of the work that needs to be done. It is not at the same level as everyday life, so it must be “grounded,” or made real in one’s normal life through practice, appropriate exercises, and the gradual changing of one’s habits and behavior.

As Sharon proceeded toward the sun (a symbol of the superconscious and the Transpersonal Self), laying the foundation for the synthesis phase, another block – the concern with being selfish – appeared [25]. Its nature, however, was completely different from the previous ones. It was not a conflict or incompatibility between subpersonalities, but an obstacle between the personality and the superconscious dimension *set up by the personality to stop its own progress*. This is a typical case of “repression of the sublime,” which frequently appears at some point as one proceeds into the superconscious realm.

It is interesting to note that this block *was approached and solved completely at the mental level*, through reasoning and insight. Although it had a definite emotional aspect – feelings of guilt, selfishness, etc. – its core was a *conceptual* distortion or limitation, in Sharon’s world view. The conceptual understanding (“It’s not selfish to take things. It’s selfish to hold on to them after you have them” [26]) was all that was needed for Sharon to go beyond her resistance. Going on led her to a firm superconscious connection [28] which experientially validated the conceptual insight, and allowed her from then on not to be held back by her feeling that taking was selfish.

An attempt to work on the issue of selfishness at the feeling level, on the other hand, would have brought the whole interaction down again to the level of subpersonalities (probably a “selfish one” and “one who does not want to be selfish”). Sharon might eventually have reached the same insight, but it would have been considerably harder and slower, entailing unnecessary pain and expenditure of effort.

We can see here a first intimation of the interpersonal and transpersonal nature of the synthesis stage: “I want to draw in the light and then share it and give it out and help” [27], which was then reinforced with the suggestion of acting it out [29, 30].

Let us now look at each stage of subpersonality harmonization in some detail.

RECOGNITION

The early development of a new subpersonality and its initial struggle to express itself often occur outside of one’s conscious awareness. One becomes aware of the situation after a certain amount of development has taken place, and, in many cases, only when the struggle has reached an acute stage. Such a belated recognition makes the process of harmonization more difficult than it needs to be. If we can recognize new emerging subpersonalities sooner, and understand their behavior and their needs, we can minimize conflict and foster their growth in harmony with the other subpersonalities, preparing the ground for their later integration within the personality. We can then avoid

much unnecessary pain and the loss of many opportunities, and help our lives proceed in an increasingly harmonious and fulfilling way.

It is usually quite easy to recognize many of our subpersonalities. For most of us, they correspond to our inner experience, and in such cases all that is needed to identify them is simply to look for them. A few basic exercises, such as those described in the “Practice” sections of this workbook, are also quite effective as means of recognition. The Door exercise and the Evening Review, in particular, are valuable not only to recognize subpersonalities, but also to understand their patterns of behavior and interaction, and to work toward their harmonization.

The subpersonalities that are more hidden often appear in the course of therapy, or can be recognized indirectly from the material that emerges in a therapy situation. Mental imagery techniques are especially effective, and many guided daydreams deal primarily with subpersonalities and their interactions.

So recognizing most subpersonalities is hardly ever a problem. In fact it often takes less work to find new ones than to deal effectively with the ones we already have recognized. When people are first acquainted with the idea of working with subpersonalities, they often tend to do just that, becoming so fascinated with uncovering a teeming cast of thousands that the more fruitful work of understanding and integrating the central ones is neglected. So the reader is cautioned against such an attitude, which is a waste of energy at best, and can actually be harmful. In fact, focusing *needless* attention on our subpersonalities, either by looking for too many at once, or by brooding without purpose on the ones we’ve chosen to work with, *feeds them energy* – as it would in the case of any other psychological formation. If this is done for an extended period of time, say several months, with the emphasis on the existing state of things rather than on the changes we want to see happen, the result is merely to *increase the size of the difficulty* without improving the situation. In extreme cases, this can lead to a crystallization of the status quo.

Even naming a subpersonality can eventually contribute to maintaining the status quo, although naming can be useful to distinguish the various subpersonalities and to make a more direct contact with their essential quality. Thus, “the seeker” will find it very hard to end its search, “the ape” will be encouraged by its name to remain an animal, and “the bitch” will feel most alive when it is most bitchy. So it is good to be ready to change the name of a subpersonality when that name is found to be an obstacle to its growth.

As I have said, it is not advisable to work with too many subpersonalities at one time. Experienced people who have much practice in dealing with their subpersonalities might “keep track” of perhaps half a dozen of them during any period of time, and some of them only in a peripheral way.

While it is impossible to set general rules, often the existential situation itself indicates which subpersonalities need attention at any one time. When this is not clear, I suggest that after having recognized a few subpersonalities one concentrate initially on one or two of them – perhaps those that seem to have the greatest energy, new emerging qualities that one wants to develop, or the most acute need: those that, in other words, seem more central or more important at the moment. Of course this choice should not be made in a rigid way, and it is wise always to be open to a new subpersonality that wants to be heard for a good reason. In general while one is building up experience, common

sense and a good sense of humor often supply the best guidelines. A light touch is of real value in subpersonality work.

ACCEPTANCE

The acceptance of a subpersonality and its coordination occur *gradually*, and proceed hand in hand. Through the process of coordination, positive aspects of a subpersonality increasingly replace the negative ones, thus making it more acceptable. But acceptance is involved in another way: one must first *accept* that the negative aspects are there in order to be able to change them. So acceptance and coordination often turn out in practice to be complementary processes which help each other proceed with increasing momentum, and lead to the integration of the subpersonality within the personality as a whole.

Often we reject a subpersonality – or any other part of ourself – that we dislike because we unconsciously believe that once we accept it, it will remain there, as it is, forever. In reality, exactly the opposite is true. As we have seen in Sharon’s guided daydream, if we reject a subpersonality we cut it off from the direct line to the energy it needs. This creates a block which stunts its growth, and causes it to seek energy indirectly, by manipulating and generating conflict. It then develops in a one-sided, distorted fashion, increasingly at odds with the rest of the personality. And we cannot avail ourselves of its useful qualities, its skills, its strengths. But once we accept it, we can discover its real needs and fulfill them in ways that are acceptable to us, and that will enhance its positive qualities while transmuting its negative qualities into others more suitable. The appropriate fulfilling of the subpersonality’s needs is a function of coordination, and makes it possible for the subpersonality to evolve and to interact harmoniously with the other subpersonalities.

When we first recognize new subpersonalities, our *attitude* toward each of them – as toward people – can vary. In each case, it is determined by many factors, two major ones being our *values* and our *self-image*. In general, we tend to accept a subpersonality that according to our value system, we consider good, useful, etc., and to reject one that we see as bad, harmful, or useless. But a person who has pronounced feelings of inferiority, or an inferiority complex, and who is identified with those feelings, may more easily accept a “bad” subpersonality, and have considerable difficulty accepting a “good” one. And many of us without strong inferiority feelings, often have a marked resistance to accepting subpersonalities having “higher” qualities, or a distinctly transpersonal orientation. In general, the subpersonalities that are consistent with our self-image are easily accepted. Those that do not fit it are usually rejected.

Often one can handle the resistance to accept a subpersonality on his own. Just becoming aware of it may be sufficient, in many cases. When that resistance turns out to be a major difficulty, it can be dealt with, just as in the case of any other psychological resistance, through any one of the many good approaches to psychotherapy or personal growth available today.

A powerful technique, particularly effective for this purpose and for coordination as well, is to attempt to become aware (or in a therapy situation, help the client become aware) of “which part of oneself” is resisting that subpersonality. Invariably, *the one who is resisting is another subpersonality*, often in opposition to the first. And since one is

identified with it, even if unconsciously, it is necessary to “step away” from the resisting subpersonality, or more precisely, to *disidentify* from it. One is then freed from its influence, and is able to take the attitude of an unbiased, *objective* observer. As the objective observer, one is easily able to accept both the first subpersonality and the one that was resisting it, and proceed to their coordination. This is done by understanding their needs and their mode of interaction, and finding acceptable ways in which those needs can be satisfied, and the interaction harmonized and made more constructive.

As I have already mentioned, there is an opposite – and complementary – technique: that of “becoming” the subpersonality one had rejected. This *temporary identification* brings an immediate experiential awareness of that subpersonality’s existence, which in turn can lead to a compassionate understanding of its needs and the reasons for its attitude, and then to its acceptance. I must emphasize again that this is not submitting to the status quo, but rather accepting the reality of the situation. And it is precisely because the situation has been accepted that it can then be modified and improved.

With this technique, one can deal with a conflict between two subpersonalities by alternately identifying the first with one, then with the other, creating a dialogue between the two, and expressing each one’s position and each one’s needs. This is often done in Gestalt Therapy, for example, when dealing with the typical Top Dog-Under Dog conflict. This alternating identification, by itself, often leads the conflicting parts to a cooperative understanding, and at times even to a fusion into a higher formation.

Combining this technique of alternating identification with the technique of the objective observer has been found to be most effective. The latter is essential in bringing about a resolution when the alternating identification is not sufficient to overcome the impasse, and quite helpful when the impasse is very painful or very prolonged.

With this combined approach, after a number of alternations have given an adequate understanding of what is going on on each side, one “steps back” from the two subpersonalities, and as the objective observer, looks at the situation, and at the possible strategies that could be used to bring about a solution of the conflict. Such a solution may be of a synthetic nature, where both sides will have more or less all they need, or it may be a *temporary* compromise, of a kind that will lead to a synthetic solution further on. Either way, the solutions given by the objective observer are, almost invariably, better, and more acceptable to both subpersonalities, than what either of them were able to suggest.

So while identification with the subpersonalities entails a strong emotional involvement and, at first, often a self-centered (although not necessarily selfish) attitude, later the objective observer acts as advisor, reconciliatory and mediator in the conflict, keeping emotionally detached from what is going on, and avoiding to take sides or to inject specific needs of his own.

Dealing with situations from the position of the objective observer is common practice in psychosynthesis and in a number of other approaches to growth. For example, Stewart Shapiro’s ego therapy uses the metaphor of the “board of stockholders” and the “chairman of the board” to indicate the many subpersonalities and the objective, unifying principle. In Transactional Analysis, the “Adult” can be used for a similar function. An increasing number of Gestalt therapists are also finding it very helpful to introduce the observer when working to resolve a conflict. The Top Dog, for example, may sit in one

chair, the Under Dog in another. After the dialogue has gone back and forth for a sufficient time, a third chair is introduced with the suggestion that “this is the observer’s chair – as the observer, see what you can discover about the other two – see if there is a way you can help.”

COORDINATION

Whenever we go deep enough toward the core of a subpersonality, we find that the core – which is some basic urge, or need – is good. For practical purposes, this can be considered an absolute. No matter how many layers of distortion may surround it, the basic need, the basic motivation, is a good one – and if it became twisted, it was because of not being able to express itself directly. The real core – not what the subpersonality wants, but what it needs – is good. A basic purpose of the coordination phase is to discover this central urge or need, to make it conscious, and to find acceptable ways in which it can be satisfied and fulfilled. And, provided we have sufficient understanding and skill, it can be satisfied – if not fully, at least enough to maintain the process of growth.

If you are faced with a demand by a subpersonality that you can’t satisfy directly, you can say, “Well, I can’t really give you this, but is there something else I can give you instead?” And often what the subpersonality will propose then will be appropriate and useful. Suppose you discover in you a four-year-old child that wants to be loved. “How do you want to be loved?” you ask. “I want to be held.” “How often do you want to be held?” “Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.” Well, you can’t do that for him, but is there anything else you can do? You can say, “I understand that you want to be held all the time. Nobody has held you in a very long time. You are important to me, but I also have other things I want to do. So I would like to hold you half an hour a day. Let’s try it for a week, and see how it works.” So you make an agreement with that subpersonality – a compromise – in which, metaphorically, you “hold” the subpersonality and give it comfort.

And a little bit of satisfaction goes a long way. When subpersonalities are repressed, they get nothing. When they get nothing, they want everything. But just a little is often all they *need*. And if they are childish, they soon develop beyond their childish needs. If there is a subpersonality in you that is four years old, it is because it has not really been “fed” since *you* were four years old. As you start feeding it, it will grow up. Soon, it will want to do more mature things, more in tune with the things *you* want to do. So gradually, you bring it in, and it becomes part of you. Before coordination, the subpersonalities work against you, and there is conflict. After coordination, they begin to work with you.

Suppose you are dealing with a “dictator” subpersonality. The dictator might want power. He may want to rule everyone in sight, to get them all under his thumb...beginning with you. And of course you don’t want to let him do that. But you do want to find out why he does what he does. At first he may say, “I want you to do what I ask all the time!” And you say, “Why do you want that?” By continuing to ask, “Why?” by trying to *understand the reason behind the request*, you go toward more and more basic needs, toward the core. There may be resistance, but eventually, in a case like this one, you may hear him say, “Because I’m always very hungry, I need you to feed me

all the time, I'm very weak, I can't take care of myself." This can lead to many solutions, of varying depth. You can agree to "feed" him, at reasonable times, if he agrees to stop trying to control you. Or you can help him realize that he can take care of himself more than he thinks – or can learn to do so – and offer your help in situations when he truly can't. Finally, you can explore the basic nature of his hunger, which may well lead you to discover the central urge that "animates" him.

Sometimes, like some people, a subpersonality of this kind wants power because at some time he was not able to have love. He needed love, but he did not know how to ask for it directly. But he knew how to get power, so he turned to power, and, with power, tries to force others to do all sorts of things for him that, he hopes, will act as surrogates of love. If you recognize that *under the need for power there is often a need for love*, you can often straighten things up easily. (S. VARGIU, op. cit., "Mark," p. 11.) You can say, essentially, "I can't let you run everybody, I can't let you manipulate. But I see that your core is good, and I care for it, and I'd be very glad to help that." So you give love to that. And as he receives love, he stops misusing power; that is the turning point. Again, you're saying, "I can't give you what you're asking, but I'll give you what you really need." And he may say, "I never really wanted power anyway, I just wanted love."

Of course, to be able to respond lovingly, we must *understand* the subpersonality in depth. It is very hard to love a controlling and unfeeling dictator. However, once you see that the dictator isn't really a dictator, but at the core is just someone starved for love, then loving him becomes possible. You can love someone who has been starved for love, no matter what he's been doing. You can understand the reason he has been acting that way is that he's desperate for love and doesn't know how else to go about getting it.

One sees this over and over. Whenever we are able to understand subpersonalities that seemed negative, we find that their core is positive. They will simply do what seems best to them at the moment, within the limitations of their awareness, their weaknesses, and their needs. It is the same as with people. It relates to the old Socratic truth that no one chooses to do something bad if he sees clearly that he has a choice between something bad and something good. But sometimes we are just very blind.

INTEGRATION

While coordination deals with the development and improvement within specific subpersonalities, integration is concerned with the relationship of each subpersonality with the other subpersonalities and with each one's place and activity within the personality as a whole. (The harmonization of the subpersonalities is only one of several vantage points from which the integration of the personality, as a whole, can be considered. We can deal with the integration of the personality from another very important vantage point: that of the coordination and integration of the physical, emotional and mental nature of the human being.) The process of integration leads from a general state of isolation, conflict, competition, and repression of the weaker elements by the stronger ones, to a state of harmonious cooperation in which the effectiveness of the personality is greatly enhanced, and its emerging aspects find the space and

nourishment they need to develop fully. (It will be apparent that the various phases of harmonization of subpersonalities are *distinct but not separate*, and that although in general they follow each other in the order given, there is often, in practice, a great deal of overlap and interconnection. While the sequence is of definite conceptual value to understand what is going on, one should avoid, in practical work, any attempt to proceed rigidly from one phase to the next. Rather, looking at the complete picture, we need to be aware of how each of the five phases is progressing, and be ready to focus on the one that needs attention at the moment. In Sharon's daydream, for example, there were many shifts back and forth between acceptance, coordination and integration.)

Subpersonalities are often found as pairs of opposites. As this is not only the most common but also the simplest pattern, we will deal with integration in terms of opposites. But the same approach can be easily adapted to other situations.

To best consider how opposite subpersonalities can be reconciled, it is useful first to understand how such opposites arise. At a certain point of development, an individual may be strongly identified with one major subpersonality, and for all practical purposes, believe himself to *be* that subpersonality. Most of his energy, therefore, is centered in – and flows through – that subpersonality. The other subpersonalities develop more slowly, without being recognized or accepted, and are largely relegated to his unconscious. He is therefore relatively free from conflict, has well-defined goals and is capable of realizing them, and is likely to be normally well adjusted and happy. But his aims are restricted to the particular aims of that subpersonality, and he is able to express only a small fraction of the qualities and gifts that are in him: those that the predominant subpersonality accepts as its own.

I said that most of the person's energy is focused, and flows, through that subpersonality. A subtle but important effect of this focalization of energy is that the *quality* of that energy will be limited to the qualities that that subpersonality accepts. In other words, the subpersonality acts as a *filter* for that energy. Energy having different qualities, *especially opposite qualities*, will not be able to go through – will not find an outlet through that subpersonality. It will seek, among the other subpersonalities, the one that is more akin to *its* quality – that presents to it the path of least resistance – one that is likely to be complementary, and often *opposite to the dominant subpersonality*.

This is how opposites are often formed. As time goes by, this second subpersonality, "fed" by the new stream of energy, develops, becomes stronger, and seeks expression. But it finds the way blocked by the first subpersonality, which does not want to give up its position of control. A situation of conflict now arises, most often beginning at the unconscious level. As long as the dominant subpersonality is much stronger than the emerging one, it will succeed in inhibiting the other and, at least for a certain period, prevent its direct expression. The emerging subpersonality will then try to express itself indirectly, perhaps through manipulation, or other devious maneuvering. As it becomes stronger, it will be able in unusual circumstances – such as moments of stress – to take the person by surprise, and bring about a temporary shift in his or her identification, from the dominant subpersonality to itself. Initially, a person will usually interpret this as his own behavior taking on increasingly undesirable aspects, which he is unable to stop. In the earlier example of the businessman-mystic, suppose the businessman subpersonality was dominant, and the mystic emerging. While identified with the businessman, the person first becoming aware of the mystic would probably

interpret its sensitivity and vision as weakness and delusion, to be ignored. But as these tendencies become stronger, manifesting perhaps through fantasies, or affecting his actual decision-making process, he eventually would become increasingly concerned. The inner conflict between the two opposites would have reached the conscious stage. He might, for a while, keep pushing away the new tendencies, postponing the issue but making it much harder to deal with. Or he might decide to understand what is really happening, either by himself, or perhaps with the help of a counselor or therapist. If he reaches an understanding of the mystic and its place, he would then make room for it to emerge in full consciousness, would see that it has many beautiful and valuable qualities, and eventually, become identified with it. The mystic can now express itself directly, and much of the energy that was pent up can be released. This sudden release, and its corresponding increase in *energy flow*, is likely to be experienced as a peak of joy, or some other positive quality, which lasts until the stored energy is released.

But now the mystic wants to stay in control, and the businessman is cut off – the energy that was flowing through it is now, in turn blocked, and pushes to be released. Soon, businessman and mystic begin to fight each other for freedom of expression. The conflict is now fully in the open, and raging. To the person, being identified with either subpersonality alone is now unrewarding, inhibiting, and a betrayal of a part of himself. He finds either identification increasingly difficult to maintain, and gradually becomes more *identified with the conflict* than with either subpersonality.

Superficially, this new situation may appear to him as a step back in his growth. He is now functioning less effectively, is less happy, and is under greater stress. But his existence, becoming increasingly uncomfortable, demands the resolution of the conflict, the reconciliation of the two opposite subpersonalities. So it is, in reality, a *transition* toward a higher level of integration, and represents a definite step forward in his development.

Depending on a number of factors, integration can be accomplished in a number of different ways. Some of the most common are:

Time-Sharing: In many conflict situations each subpersonality, as we have seen, strives to have control all of the time, inhibiting the expression of the others. When this is the case, one can never be fully present in what one is doing, nor enjoy it or be fully effective in it. For example, we might have a subpersonality who wants to work all the time – the “Compulsive Worker” – at war with one who wants to play all the time – let’s call him “Goof-off.” When we are trying to work, Goof-off will intrude, making us feel tired, getting in the way of concentration, and enticing us with fantasies of lying in the sun. But when we finally have time and freedom for leisure, the Compulsive Worker, unwilling to have us do anything but work, will fight back, nagging at us with thought or worries about work, and making it impossible to relax and enjoy our leisure.

In such situations, once the subpersonalities involved are recognized and accepted, it is usually possible to start a dialogue with them, from the position of the objective observer, and have them recognize that their fighting one another for control has led to a dead end, a stalemate, in which *both are losing out*. One can then suggest a compromise, where each subpersonality agrees to let the other be in control, undisturbed, for a reasonable part of the time, provided it will also have its turn. Sometimes it is quite obvious how the time should be shared: the Compulsive Worker’s space clearly is on the

job; Goof-off's is leisure time. But in some cases, a change in the daily routine may be called for. For example, definite periods of leisure may have to be scheduled if one's busy life does not provide room for it. And the increased quality and effectiveness of work is likely to more than make up for the decreased time.

Time-sharing is perhaps the simplest approach to integration, and may appear downright simplistic, but in practice it is surprisingly effective. As I said, rather than being a true synthesis, it is a *temporary* compromise that fosters further coordination of the subpersonalities involved, leading to a closer form of cooperation. The great value of this strategy is that it requires only a minimum of coordination. Therefore it fits a large number of situations, is easy to apply, and most subpersonalities accept it willingly – long before being ready to accept a more sophisticated solution.

Cooperation: Understanding the reasons for the conflict and the needs of the subpersonalities involved often shows that, through cooperation, both subpersonalities can achieve their goals, and each can do so more fully than if they were on their own. This was the case with the Idealist and the Doubter, in Sharon's example.

Often the desires and goals of one subpersonality appear quite different from those of the other. But on many occasions, when reaching the true causes of the conflict, one discovers that the *basic* needs and aims of both subpersonalities are the same or very similar, and that the conflict was about the *means* to fulfill those aims. A particularly close and fruitful cooperation is then possible, and in a relatively short time the *fusion* of the two subpersonalities can usually occur. In Sharon's daydream, we see that the Idealist is motivated by a strong urge to reach the transpersonal dimension, and because of this urge is impatient, unrealistic, and unwilling to accept Sharon's limitations. The Doubter is doubtful, mistrusting, overly cautious and unwilling to go along with the Idealist. During later work it becomes clear – as the daydream had hinted – that the Doubter actually gave as much value to the transpersonal as the Idealist, and had just as strong an urge to move in that direction, although it did not have so clear a vision of how to get there. And it was because it considered this aim to be so important, that it felt the need to proceed with equally great caution – not to get lost on the way. As the subpersonalities realized that they both had the same goal, they were able to *trust, respect, and value* each other, and pool their strengths while helping each other overcome their limitations. By pooling the enthusiasm and the clear vision of one, and the discernment and prudence of the other, Sharon was able to proceed effectively.

The other polarity Sharon found was that between these two subpersonalities on the one hand, and the Hag on the other. The Idealist and the Doubter wanted to reach for the transpersonal while the Hag's aim was down-to-earth personality development and effectiveness in everyday life. Here, the basis for cooperation – and then the fusion – came from Sharon's insight that without personality development the spiritual quest is dangerous, and eventually sterile, while everyday life ultimately finds its true meaning within the broader framework of transpersonal awareness and goals.

Absorption and Fusion: As two or more subpersonalities become closer together, through coordination and cooperation, they are drawn more and more toward each other. Eventually, a merging of the two occurs.

If the two are at about the same level of development, the merging is an actual *fusion*, which results in a completely new subpersonality. If one is considerably more developed than the other, it will take the smaller one “inside itself,” or *absorb* it – preserving much of its own original identity but greatly increasing its coordination, effectiveness and range of expression. For example, as I said earlier, the integration of the businessman and the mystic could result in a compassionate businessman, or a practical mystic. Or it could be a completely new subpersonality with not only the positive qualities of both subpersonalities, but also some entirely new ones, not available before, which resulted from the synergic effect of the fusion. In other words, the new whole becomes more than the sum of its parts. And many of the negative qualities of the original subpersonalities disappear or are greatly diminished because, being opposite to each other, they are *balanced out* in the new synthesis that the fusion represents. The same was true in Sharon’s case. Her unrealistic enthusiasm on the one hand, and her mistrust on the other, having opposite effects, tended to balance out each other’s excesses, leaving an open avenue for a utilization of the available energy which was healthy and appropriate to each situation.

SYNTHESIS

This last phase of harmonization can be considered to be the culmination of personal growth. It facilitates the integration of the personality through the refinement and harmonization of the personality itself. But while personality integration is *intrapersonal*, synthesis is essentially *interpersonal* and *transpersonal*, and is the outcome of a growing interplay of the personality with the superconscious and the Transpersonal Self.

As a result of this interplay, the life of the individual, and his interaction with other human beings, become increasingly characterized by a sense of responsibility, caring, harmonious cooperation, altruistic love and transpersonal objectives. It leads to the harmonious integration of the human being with others, with mankind, and with the world.

PRACTICE:

The following exercises provide the practical means for working with our subpersonalities. There are several ways you can do them. Some exercises, like the Pie or the Door, have a series of steps to complete. One way you can work with these is to read one step at a time, complete that step, and then proceed to the next until you have finished. Or you may read the exercise through and then do the whole thing from memory. Another way is to have some other person read it to you, step by step, slowly, as you do it. Or you might want to tape record yourself reading the exercise, and then play it back. In this case, be sure to leave long enough pauses for you to actually do what is called for.

The Evening Review has only a short series of steps, which you may want to read the first few times you do it, but which you will easily memorize after that.

If at all possible, it is preferable to complete each exercise in one time period rather than doing it piecemeal. Stopping in the middle of an exercise usually interferes with the momentum, interrupts awareness, and blocks whatever insights might emerge.

Visualizing. Visualization is involved in most of the following exercises. It is interesting, enjoyable, and easy to do. Yet some people believe that they cannot visualize, or find it difficult because of a mistaken idea of what visualization is. If this is the case for you, try this experiment.

After closing your eyes, recall your car to mind. What color is it? What side of it are you looking at? What is its shape like?

You were probably able to imagine your car. You do not have to “see” it as you see an image on a movie screen. You can “think about it,” remember it, imagine it.

Try to imagine your car again. In your imagination, walk around it, so you can see both sides and its front and back.

If you can do this, even just barely, it is all you need to start, although with practice visualization becomes richer and easier. And seeing is not the only sense available. Hearing, touching, smelling and tasting all have their imaginative counterparts.

Visualize your car once more. Now touch it. What does it feel like? It may be smooth, or you may be able to feel an occasional dent or scratch. Is it cool, or warm from standing in the sun? Now imagine that you open the door, sit in the driver’s seat and start the engine. Listen for the sound of the engine. Can you feel its vibration? Are you aware of any characteristic odors...like gasoline or the special scent of its upholstery?

Several of the exercises in this section will ask you to visualize, to “let an image emerge.” If several of your imaginative “senses” are active, try to draw on them when you do this. It will enrich the experience and deepen your involvement with the imagery.

Grounding. Lasting psychological change and growth are often slow. So it may seem easier to find out new things about ourselves than to apply what we already know. Increasing our self-awareness without applying it to our life can create a “psychological overload” which often leads to depression and pain. To prevent this from occurring, it is important to work patiently toward expressing and actualizing our insights before – or at least while – looking for new awareness.

Fundamentally, we need to “ground” any new awareness we have about ourselves. To ground an insight is to bring it down from the realm of ideas into the realm of daily life, to anchor it firmly in our everyday world, to create from it specific and practical changes in the way we live.

For example, the insight may come that there is an “Artist” subpersonality in us who is crying for expression. This insight can and should be grounded by actually supplying the necessary means: for example, buying paint and canvas, and taking the time to use them. Or we may realize that there is a “Dreamer” subpersonality in us who needs time to be quiet and alone. The insight by itself is fruitless; care and attention should be given to ground it, perhaps by setting aside some specific time each week to simply sit under a tree and dream.

Rather than merely searching for new awareness in an endless self-exploration, we can take the time and care to ground what we learn, *as we go*.

The Door

A Psychosynthesis Exercise

(Prepared by Betsie Carter-Haar. Betsie Carter-Haar is a former Senior Associate of the Psychosynthesis Institute and has been an Editor of *SYNTHESIS*.)

Your answers to the Who Am I exercise have probably given you a feeling for some of your subpersonalities. But now, what can you do to learn more about them? To discover new ones? How can you increase your awareness of your subpersonalities so that their unconscious processes can become more conscious?

Your future subpersonality work is based on your awareness and knowledge of their needs, their wants, their special qualities, their behavior patterns. Of course these are *your* wants, needs, qualities and behavior which are locked into the inner psychological configurations we call subpersonalities. The goal of the work with subpersonalities is to release the energy which is caught in them and to integrate it into the whole personality, so that the energy can flow more smoothly and harmoniously.

The following exercise will aid the recognition, acceptance, and coordination of your subpersonalities.

- 1.) Sit comfortably and relax. After closing your eyes, take a few deep breaths. Imagine a big wooden door in front of you. Make it as real as you can – note the texture and the color, and any details such as the hinges, handle or knob. On the door there is a sign that says SUBPERSONALITIES. Imagine that they all live behind the door.
- 2.) Now open the door and let some of your main subpersonalities come out. Just observe them. Don't get involved. Be aware of them.
- 3.) Gradually focus on some of the most important or interesting ones. And of these, choose one which seems most central, or which interests you most. If the one you have chosen is part of a pair, take them both and change the following directions accordingly.
- 4.) Approach the subpersonality and begin to relate to it. Talk to it and listen to what it says to you. See what you have to say to each other.
- 5.) Ask it what it wants. Then ask it *why*. Ask it what it *needs*, and why. These are different questions and they are very important. Make a mental note of the answers.
- 6.) Now let yourself *become* the subpersonality. Identify with it and experience what it's like to be it. As this subpersonality, how do you feel? What is the

world like to you? Ask yourself: “What do I want? What would I like to do? What do I need?”

- 7.) Now be yourself again. See the subpersonality in front of you. And ask yourself: “What would my life be like if that subpersonality fully had its own way, if I *were* the subpersonality all the time?”
- 8.) Now take another look at the subpersonality and examine carefully what you like and what you dislike about it.
- 9.) See yourself outside in the sunshine with the subpersonality. Imagine that it is a beautiful, sparkling day and that the sun is shining brightly. Now image that a special warm beam of sunlight slowly radiates from the sun towards you, and envelops you and the subpersonality in light and warmth. The energy of the sun will make something happen.
- 10.) Is the subpersonality different in any way now? If it is still there, turn toward it, and again begin to relate to it. See if you can improve things, if you can arrive at some better relationship with it. Take all the time you need to do this.
- 11.) Now write about what happened. What did you like and dislike about the subpersonality? What does it need? Were you able to reach an understanding with it? You may find it helpful to make a small drawing of the subpersonality.

This exercise can be repeated as needed, focusing on the same subpersonality or on different ones. Be sure to spend plenty of time in the write-up afterwards.

Variation

The first three steps of the Door exercise are designed to generate new awareness, to discover new material that must then be dealt with and integrated. This is the stage of recognition.

On the other hand, you may already be in touch with the subpersonalities that seem to be important at the moment and not feel a need for fresh input or new material. In this case, harmonizing them may be more appropriate than looking for new ones. The exercise can then be modified as follows:

When you do step 1, imagine that the sign on the door has the name of the subpersonality you want to work with. Then open the door and let that subpersonality come out. Then proceed to step 4.

Patterns to Watch For

A pattern to watch out for is self-criticism. As an example of this, let us look at the experience of a writer in his early forties with a tendency to extreme self-criticism. He demanded perfection of himself, which made it nearly impossible for him to work creatively. Nothing he wrote was ever good enough. When he first did the Door exercise, he dialogued with “Hemingway,” his creative writer subpersonality. He learned some important things about how to relate to “Hemingway,” but after a few weeks he began to feel depressed. Later, he wrote that, “I wasn’t remembering to relate to Hemingway one hundred percent of the time, as he needed. I saw nothing happening. I wasn’t doing it right. Where was the perfect harmony and creative productiveness that should have ensued? Not only couldn’t I write – now I had the added awareness that I couldn’t even grow! I couldn’t do anything good enough. Then I realized with a shock that the ‘not good enough’ feeling *was coming from another subpersonality*. I did the Door exercise again, and out came “The Perfectionist.” That was where I really need to work, of course.”

Many of us have inner critics and perfectionists, although they may not be as extreme as the writer’s “Perfectionist.” If you find yourself entering into such a vicious circle of criticism, try and step back and find your critic or perfectionist subpersonality.

THE PIE

A Psychosynthesis Exercise

(Prepared by Tom Yeomans. Tom Yeomans is a Director of the Psychosynthesis Institute, San Francisco, California.)

How do your subpersonalities get along with each other? By learning more about how subpersonalities relate, we further increase our understanding of why and how we feel and do what we do. Inner conflict, a sense of fragmentation, depression, boredom, anxiety, indecisiveness and the like often have their roots in the activity of our subpersonalities and interactions with one another. Sometimes these interactions are complex, and we must work over an extended period of time to resolve them. But the first important step is awareness. The following two exercises were designed to help you look more closely at some of your subpersonalities and examine how they relate to one another.

- 1.) Take crayons or colored markers and turn to the Pie drawing at the end of this exercise. Sit quietly with the Pie in front of you, and reflect for a moment on the various subpersonalities you are aware of. (This awareness may result from other exercises such as the Who Am I or the Door, from general reflection on your life, or any other sources that are available to you.)
- 2.) After closing your eyes, in your imagination *summon* each of these subpersonalities in turn. As the first one emerges, tune in to it and let a visual image appear that expresses the essence and quality of this subpersonality. Look at the image in your mind’s eye for a minute, then draw it into one of the

Pie segments. Do this for each subpersonality until all but one of the slices contains an image. One piece is left blank to symbolize the incompleteness and potential of our growth process at any one particular moment. Leave the small circle in the middle blank, too, for this symbolizes the center of your awareness.

- 3.) If you have difficulty letting an image emerge (and you do not have to “see” it; it can be perceived as a feeling or an idea) simply begin by choosing a color and let the image form as you draw.
- 4.) Now, spend some time “eavesdropping” on your drawing. Imagine that the images are speaking to each other and interacting with each other. Listen and observe. Which are in conflict? Do any form alliances against others? Which cooperate? Are any dominating or bossy? Trying to please? Withdrawing? How do they relate to each other?
- 5.) Write down the most important aspects, and the meaning of what you observed. Most importantly, do you recognize any patterns which occur in your daily life?
- 6.) Now, talk with the images and enter into their dialogue. Can you help them to meet their needs more satisfactorily, to better appreciate each other, to work out more harmonious relationships? Do they meet *your* needs? If not, can you work things out with them?
- 7.) Finally, note any other important aspects of the way your subpersonalities relate to each other and to you – and how you can help.

It will be useful to keep your drawing and study it over a period of time. You might even put it up on a wall in your home for a while, for the images will make more sense as time goes on, and will also serve as reminders of the subpersonalities’ existence. The dialogue between you and your subpersonalities can be carried on repeatedly, with a gradually integrative effect. After a period of time (a few weeks, a month), as the integration proceeds and the constellation of subpersonalities has developed, you may want to do the exercise again from the beginning, drawing a new Pie – and compare it with the previous one.

The Dance of the Many Selves

Another way to carry on the dialogue between you and your subpersonalities is presented in the following exercise, The Dance. This

exercise enhances awareness of the subpersonalities in the Pie, and brings in the body as a means of communication.

- 1.) Stand in a place where you have room to move around. Become aware of your breathing, without trying to change it. Let the rhythm of your breath gradually quiet and relax you. Now imagine that you are standing in the middle of the Pie, and your subpersonalities are standing around you. Explore each in turn in the following way:
- 2.) Move into a subpersonality's space and take on the body posture that expresses its particular state of being. For example, if it was a frightened child, you might crouch down, hands over face; if it was a haughty queen or king, you might stand imperiously and straight.
- 3.) Now exaggerate the posture and feel its quality and being in your body and feelings.
- 4.) Let a sound emerge that seems to go with this posture. The sound need not be a word, but it can be.
- 5.) Make the sound several times, loudly. Experience its resonance in your body and feelings.
- 6.) Now slowly leave the subpersonality and step back into the center. Become aware of your breathing again. Take on a posture of balance, calm, quiet. Then move into another subpersonality's space.
- 7.) Follow this procedure with each subpersonality. When you have returned to center for the last time, reflect quietly for a moment on each subpersonality. Now move, in your own time and rhythm, from the center into a subpersonality and back, creating a "dance" between the many selves and the center. Both movement and sounds will choreograph the dance of the subpersonalities, around and in relation to the center of awareness. This is a powerful and integrative experience. Now let the dance subside. Return to the center.
- 8.) Write about the experience. Was it easy or difficult to move in and out of the subpersonality spaces? What did you learn that was new? How do these same patterns occur in your daily life? Do any of them need to be changed? How?

Patterns to Watch For

The true observer within us, our "center," is not critical. It is objective and wise, and understands that the *needs* of our subpersonalities (although not necessarily their wants) are valid and legitimate. If you are finding that you are annoyed or judgmental

when you act as the observer in the Pie, or as the center in the Dance, step back and consider this critical part of yourself as another subpersonality. If you continue to have difficulty stepping back from being critical, discontinue the exercise for the time being and try again after you have done some work on the Critic in you. (See the Door and the Evening Review.)

Questions Frequently Asked

All my subpersonalities related nicely and politely from the beginning. What should I do?

Being nice and polite is not the same as being integrated and harmonious. Many of us have been taught that we should never show feelings of anger, hurt or frustration. While there is an appropriateness, and a social value in being polite, it is not a healthy way to deal with *ourselves* all the time. If we are consistently “nice and polite” inside ourselves, many of our feelings will be repressed, ignored, or at least discounted. Although you may choose to be polite socially if a part of you feels hurt or angry, it’s important that *you* recognize those inner feelings. So, as an experiment, assume that you have a *subpersonality* who feels that you should *always* be nice and polite. Work with this subpersonality using any or all of the exercises.

I can’t get a spontaneous image. Is there something wrong?

Although a spontaneous image has great value, a deliberate or thought-up image can have just as much value and meaning. Of the infinite number of images available to us, we choose only one. This choice in itself has meaning: Why did we choose this image rather than another? And much can be learned from in-depth work with even the most obvious of images. So, if you experience difficulty getting a spontaneous image, just pick a known or obvious one which comes to your mind and use it.

Isn’t this just a game? What good will it do in the world of real problems?

Symbols and images are a “language” of the unconscious. Using images, we can carry on a two-way communication with our unconscious, shedding much light on our real problems. Adults’ games and children’s play are recognized to be ways of dealing in a symbolic way with very real problems. We encourage you to use the scientific method of experimentation to find out for yourself how this can work for you.

THE EVENING REVIEW

A Psychosynthesis Exercise

(Prepared by Steven Kull. Steven Kull is a Senior Associate of the Psychosynthesis Institute, San Francisco, California.)

What is happening in your life? Do you allow yourself the time to really look? Many of us keep a close watch over how we spend our money, but have only a vague awareness of how we are using our time. Modern psychology has demonstrated that we

live our lives more *unconsciously* than we think. Yet consciousness can be increased. As we become more aware of how we are living our lives, we can also become more aware of other possibilities and options. Through increased awareness, we increase our ability to live our lives the way we choose, unhindered by our habits, by our fears, by our past.

The Evening Review is a technique for increasing this awareness. It is deceptively simple, and even obvious – yet it is very powerful. It cuts through all kinds of vague impressions about how your life is going so that you can encounter and understand more fully what is actually happening. The basic technique is as follows:

- 1.) At the end of the day, preferably just before going to sleep, find a quiet place free from outer distractions.
- 2.) Close your eyes, give attention to relaxing your body, quieting your feelings, and as much as possible stilling the activity of your thoughts. Your mind should be quiet and receptive, but *remain alert*.
- 3.) Now review your day in your mind, playing it back like a movie, but backwards, beginning with where you are right now, then the time of late evening, then early evening, then the dinner hour, and the late afternoon and so on until morning when you awakened.
- 4.) Throughout the experience it is important to maintain as much as possible the attitude of an objective, detached, non-critical observer, calmly and clearly registering the events of the day, neither becoming elated at a success, nor depressed and unhappy about a failure. The aim is *not* to relieve the experience, but to non-critically register in consciousness the *patterns* and *meaning* of the day.
- 5.) Finally, write down your general impressions of what happened and anything particular that you have learned.

Variations

There are many variations of the Evening Review. In the form just described, it is very effective for gaining a greater sense of the whole of our lives. It can also be modified to focus on a particular aspect that is currently in need of special attention. Some of these are:

Subpersonalities. An important application of the Evening Review is in the work with subpersonalities. During the review, you can focus on such questions as:

- Which subpersonalities were dominant during the day?
- What circumstances (inner or outer) made them emerge or withdraw?
- Did any of your subpersonalities come into conflict with each other?
- How much did the subpersonalities help or hinder what *you* wanted to do? Who was in the driver's seat?

The Evening Review can be used for getting in touch with a multitude of subpersonalities, or it can be used for focusing on one or two that are in need of special attention.

Often, as we begin to work with subpersonalities, we have an inaccurate impression of which ones are truly the most dominant. One client, a middle-aged businessman, discovered (in a guided daydream) a subpersonality which he called “The Spiritual Seeker.” The Seeker was very upset because, he claimed, another subpersonality, “The Materialist,” was dominant and in control, and was not allowing him any space. During the discussion afterwards, the client said he could not understand why the Seeker was so upset. Perhaps the Seeker was too critical or demanding. The client did not feel that the Materialist was excessively dominant at all, so the counselor suggested that he do an Evening Review, focusing on which subpersonalities were the most active during his day. Two weeks later he returned, overwhelmed with the discovery that the Materialist was indeed his most dominant subpersonality, taking tremendous amounts of his time and energy and generally interfering with any activity the Materialist did not approve of. Having recognized the amount of control which the Materialist exerted, the client was motivated to do what was needed to change the situation, and was then able to allow time and space in his life for the Spiritual Seeker. (Note to professionals: As can be seen by this client’s discovery, the Evening Review is of real usefulness to help a client recognize, on his own, some pattern in his behavior he may be ignoring or resisting. A client may show resistance to a therapist’s suggestion that a problem area may exist and is worth exploring. But frequently, by means of an Evening Review, the client will discover the problem by himself, and will thus become motivated to work on it.)

Managing Your Time. An area that frequently needs attention is that of time management. How many people feel their lives are not what they could be, simply because “there isn’t enough time.” Certainly much of our time is spent in activities that are important or necessary – that we can’t, or don’t want to eliminate – working, caring for home and family, sleeping and eating. But many minutes and even hours of our day are spent, without our quite being aware of it, in less important or outright trivial activities that we would not consciously *choose* to do, but that we allow to slip in almost automatically, due to external pressure or routine habits. It is useful to realize that beginning from this moment, we always have an unlimited amount of time before us. The question – and the source of the difficulty – is how we choose to use it. The Evening Review is an ideal technique for becoming more aware of how you are choosing to use your time.

A young woman who was in a great deal of conflict around the fact that she “did not have enough time,” felt that she had to exclude one of the two major activities in her life, and was in considerable conflict over which it should be. She tried the Evening Review, focusing on precisely how much time she devoted to each area of activity. It was not long before she discovered, to her genuine surprise, that activities which were of very little important to her were consuming vast amounts of her time. She found she did not have to exclude either one of her favorite activities. She simply had to become more aware of herself, so she would no longer be distracted by unimportant activities.

Other Applications

The Evening Review can be used to expand our awareness of nearly any issue that is at the forefront of our growth. Someone who tends to ignore or repress feelings can review the day looking for emotional experiences and thereby bring them into greater awareness. Someone who excessively withholds his energy can watch for times he was withholding, and what feelings caused him to do it – *when* does he withhold, *what* does he withhold? By increasing awareness he increases the number of his alternatives, his options to try out new behavior.

The Evening Review can also be helpful for developing desired qualities, such as serenity, openness, or courage. Reviewing the times during the day when we were able to express these qualities will help us understand and appreciate them more, and will help us also to discover which circumstances and situations make it difficult for us to express them.

Patterns to Watch For

The most common pattern to guard against in using the Evening Review is the tendency we all have to react emotionally to a review of our day. As was said, during this exercise we need to avoid becoming elated at a success, or depressed and unhappy at what we see as failure. Such an emotional involvement gets in the way of its purpose – the calm and objective registering in consciousness of the day’s pattern and meaning. When these feelings emerge, we can remind ourselves to once again shift our focus, gently, to the position of the objective observer.

If maintaining the position of the observer is very hard for you, it is best to postpone using this exercise and to practice instead taking the position of the observer at various times during the day. After you gain facility in doing so, you can try the exercise again.

Some people have such a strong inner critic that they find it impossible to review their day without constantly judging and evaluating their actions. In this case it may be best to suspend the Evening Review and work with their critical subpersonality. After a while, the Evening Review may be useful in this work. For example, when working with a critical subpersonality who only sees failure, one can do an Evening Review, in writing, to look for successes. In this way, the Evening Review can be used to break down the perceptual distortions created by subpersonalities.

People who are excessively introverted, who spend much of their time in their own inner world, would do well not to give further attention to subjective experiences. For this reason, the Evening Review in general may not be as desirable for them. At times, however, it may be helpful if a strong emphasis is placed on recording the external activities of the day. In this way, the person can increase his awareness of and interest in the “outer” world.

Questions Frequently Asked

How often should I do the Evening Review?

Once a day, in the evening, preferably for at least one week. When you do the Evening Review over a number of weeks you will create a continuity so that you can observe larger patterns and long-term trends not otherwise apparent.

How long does it normally take?

This depends on how deeply you want to explore. The basic review – quickly rerunning the day’s events to increase your general awareness – usually takes less than five minutes. You may also use it as a daily “workshop,” where you can do some in-depth exploration of a particular pattern of subpersonality, in which case it may take longer.

What shall I write down in my workbook afterwards?

Besides taking notes on the area you are currently exploring, you may want to write down general impressions and especially anything which came into your awareness that was new or surprising, that you hadn’t clearly seen during the day. The purpose of the exercise is to increase your awareness. And as you gain new awareness, it is helpful to strengthen and solidify it through writing.

Why is the day run backwards rather than forwards?

Experience has shown that reviewing the day from evening to morning, although not essential, is more effective. It also seems that this is how the mind more easily plays back stored experience and is therefore the most natural route for us to follow. People who come close to dying have reported that they saw their whole life “pass before their eyes,” moving backwards through the years. This movement backwards as a means of exploration is also a major element in psychotherapy. We begin with our present condition and, as we explore the underlying dynamics, move backwards to earlier time periods.