

A CALL FOR HOPE AND INNER LEADERSHIP

Ami Lamb



30

TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOSYNTHESIS AND SPIRITUALITY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

*“In the midst of darkness, light persists”
(Mahatma Gandhi)*

In a world where darkness looms, where can we find hope for a new dawn?

It is not the first time humanity has faced dark times, but present developments threaten a new and darker reality. Most clients, as well as others I meet, seem to be experiencing some existential turbulence, as they listen to the news, think about climate change or dive into the newsreels on social platforms. There are no ready-made solutions. There are no standard practices we can turn

to. So, as always, I turned to Psychosynthesis and asked myself if we might find guidance in the teachings of Roberto Assagioli. How can we build hope in the middle of darkness and despair? This is what I found.

“THE ONLY WAY OUT IS THE WAY UP”⁰

On a personal level, we can employ the disidentification exercise, when overwhelmed by a multitude of thoughts powered by emotions, relating mostly to fear and anger, as we look towards the future. We feel anger at politicians and social frontal-figures, fearing climate-change and the destruction of life as we know it. These are indeed turbulent times but, strengthened by our insights gained from psychosynthesis, we have a solid basis from which to make sense of what is happening around us.

As we practice disidentification, we also identify with our self, the Observer. This helps us remain conscious in the present and to let go of the heroes and heroines of our inner struggles, trying to win imagined wars. Psychosynthesis as a way of life, something to be grateful for. Personally, I often look at the photograph of that smiling old man with the white beard and silently whisper: “thank you”.

Still, self-mastery also involves the energy of will, so I ask myself: where shall I direct my will, where will we all direct our will beyond the frustration that tends to constrain us?

Where can we turn when the world is on fire? Roberto Assagioli himself gave us a clear route to follow: “The only way out is the way up”.

On a collective level, we have the higher levels of Self and the Unconscious. Recently, I found myself looking at a title in my bookshelf, “Transpersonal Development – the dimensions beyond Psychosynthesis”, published in 1975⁰. It is a collection of Assagioli’s writings, first written in 1935, then revised in 1962, where he reflects on the first half of the twentieth century. There is one chapter, “Twentieth-century Spirituality”, that inspired me to write this short article. Assagioli saw:

“...the rapid development of technology, a growing appreciation of and even more determined quest for material well-being, worship of money and its growing prestige and power, and the view that success in life was an indication of one’s individual worth”. (p 193)

I could copy page after page from his work and you, dear reader, would think it had been written only yesterday. Instead, I will give you a brief resumé of his key concerns;

“...lack of understanding and mutual fear between nations... the spread of violence... unrestrained economic greed...the thirst for pleasure... people’s attention directed almost exclusively at the external world...the cult of the physical body and of its power and skills...earthly

values, such as attachment to land and race.

He admits that the first half of the twentieth century “has characteristics that are clearly materialist and often anti-spiritual.” He seemed to have no illusions and yet he proposed: “it is not enough to list such phenomena, and it helps even less to criticize and deplore them.” (p 194) His words inspire action:

Every student and observer of life has a duty to understand what he sees, and in order to understand phenomena he must not stop at the level of their outward manifestation or consider them in isolation – and more importantly he should not take up an ill-considered position either for or against them.

One needs to get rid of prejudices and to put aside one’s normal reactions and personal preferences. If we attempt this for the twentieth century it takes on a very different complexion: behind its pained, twisted features we glimpse a new soul, and we see a new light shining in its eyes. (p 194)

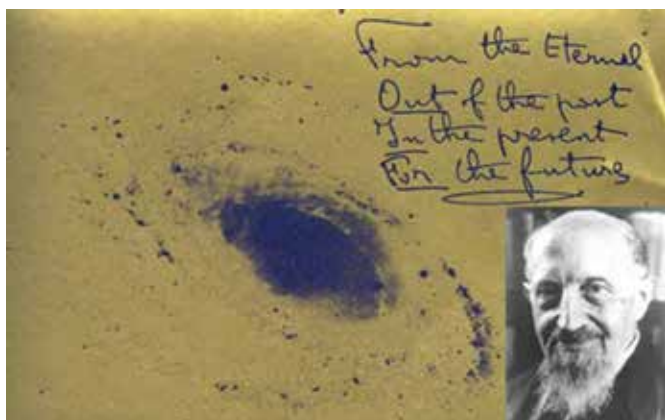
A new soul, a new light? Can Psychosynthesis be helpful in today’s political, social and cultural climate as a guiding hand, indeed a guiding light, on our path towards an uncertain future?

He ponders the question whether we can see:

“...any clear signs of spirituality alongside the phenomena we have already listed? Is it possible to spiritualize the earthly forces that have been unleashed? And how?” (p 195)

His writings were to some degree inspired by the writings of Alice Bailey.⁰ I know that I might be putting my head on the line by referring to the esoteric writings of Bailey, but she *was* an inspiration to Roberto Assagioli in his transpersonal work. And his work and the spirit and principles of Psychosynthesis have been with me as my main source of inspiration for this past almost twenty years, so I cannot pretend her influence does not exist.

“... out of the past... in the present... for the future...”⁽⁴⁾



Out of the past...

32

The first half of the twentieth century saw two world wars and a genocide of hitherto unparalleled proportions. The struggle for power and supremacy created two opposing blocs, the Western democracies and the Eastern bloc of the Soviet Union.

Looking back to the 1960s, when Assagioli's article was revised and republished, there were signs of protest against political and social injustice. The Civil rights movements in the US can be symbolized by the courage of one black woman, Rosa Parks,⁽⁵⁾ who kept her seat in the 'whites only' section of the bus home. In 1963, Martin Luther King gave us his speech *I have a Dream*.⁽⁶⁾ In Paris, the freedom-movements led to reforms that modernized French society and increased individual liberties. The freedom movements spread to more and more countries and continents. The revolts and the wish for change were supported by the world of culture. *The times they are a-changing*, Bob Dylan sang in the 1960's and Pete Seeger and the Byrds sang their versions of Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 in the song *To Everything there is a Season*. Soon after, the musical Hair sang of the coming of *The Age of Aquarius* and of letting the sunshine in with love, light and humanity.

The second half of the twentieth century saw the continuation of conflicts under the soothing light of technological and social development, giving the so-called developed countries an upper hand in the market

economy. Traditional values and ideals faded away as greater emphasis was placed on the individual, the external world and the technological and economic advancement of every-day life. Again, an imbalance arose between the West and East, in economic, social, religious and human terms.

But there was also the creation of the United Nations, the World Health Organization and other global help-organizations, global trade agreements and so on. The world started seeming safer, better - and war seemed a thing of the past. Hans Rosling, Gapminder, kept tabs on the statistics and presented positive trends for global goals.⁽⁷⁾

In the present...

But now, well into the twenty-first century, conflicts have risen on a scale and with hitherto unknown risks to the planet and humanity. The hunger for an ever-expanding market economy has enveloped all continents in a haze of pollution and ecological destruction of varying degrees locally, but on a progressively more dangerous degree collectively.

The paradox is that more and more of us have had it better and better while the prerequisites for our life-on-earth is getting worse and worse, and not enough is done to look at life on earth from a clearer and more holistic perspective. It is as if we go into a shop to buy binoculars to see the future and instead come out with blinkers to stop us from seeing beyond our own noses. We know that change is necessary, but the road to change seems to go via the old herd values of 'them and us.'

For the future...

And now, more than 60 years later, looking at *what is*, it is easy to despair and feel small and insignificant, but our task as practitioners of Psychosynthesis is to observe, disidentify and take new steps in the desired direction, all based on these same principles. Assagioli himself has given us a powerful directive for the twenty-first century with the words: "The only way out is the

way up”. He speaks of “building spiritual airways” between groups and nationalities to create a new world-order of synthesis.⁽⁸⁾ Assagioli writes that we cannot survive as isolated individuals, we need to unite in spiritual brotherhoods, not in external organizations.

We need to provide guidelines, encourage initiatives, educate, enlighten and lift people up to a higher level in all areas of life and human activity.⁽⁹⁾ (p 203)

He says (p 204) that some of the problems and tasks that need to be tackled are:

1. To understand what is going on. This is the essential starting point.
2. To endure and put up with various kinds of hardships, reactions, knocks, and inconveniences involved.
3. To actively collaborate in construction of the new civilization. In other words, to become builders.

I like the fact that Assagioli is not telling us to build external symbols or manifestations. He is stating clearly that it is about each and every one of us waking up to the new era and the new needs and tasks ahead of us.

To help us understand what is going on in a broader perspective, we can listen to the speech made by Mark Carney, the Prime Minister of Canada, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on January 20, 2026. His speech elicited a standing ovation from the high-powered audience. Only two people before him have earned this rare recognition; Nelson Mandela and Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Carney spoke eloquently of history, quoted writers, reminded us of the danger of “going along to get along”, of ducking and of signalling compliance to avoid trouble. He talked about the economic and political world-scene, but surely his message can also be looked at through the Lense of Psychosynthesis.

He talked of being principled and pragmatic. In other words, of being true to oneself.

He talked of value-based realism. In other words, of manifesting higher values in the immanent world.

He talked of relying on the value of our strengths. In other words, of authentic self-identification.

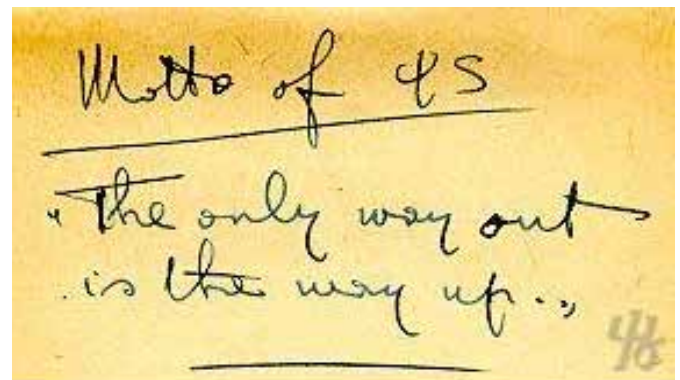
He talked of knowing and applying your strengths. In other words, about trust, self-consciousness and will.

Let us again consider Assagioli’s words: “The only way out is the way up”. I’d like to think that what he means is that we all, individually and as a collective humanity, will be saved by our higher aspirations and by the laws and principles that are named “spiritual”.

But the thing is, we cannot bypass the challenges we are presented with. We need to confront and resolve them, to come out the other side. And this is where Carney’s speech brought in the clear-sightedness needed in facing the challenges we encounter, be they personal or collective. Clear-sightedness disidentified from fear, disidentified from submission and from false compliance.

My dream is for a new world order of synthesis and right relationships. A world order where the spiritual laws and principles may guide us towards a lighter future.

As you may have guessed by now, I believe in “the only way out is the way up”. Whether that be through individual prayers, personal actions, global mass-protests for freedom and human rights, civil action for the climate, or through any action deigned for ‘the greater good’ and a sustainable future.



Archivio Assagioli, Firenze © Istituto di Psicossintesi

When we need to trust in our power to contribute to major change, let us remember the words of Margaret Mead, the great anthropologist: *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

We are all leaders of change in our own right. The Inner leadership manifested through the conscious self and will is personal. Be it in small steps or giant leaps, we can all direct and use the power of our own beliefs and values for 'the greater good'.

I do believe that Inner leadership or even Spiritual leadership is what we need today, to take us towards the future. It could be built on the values and energies of the six natural laws and principles of the soul as outlined in the writings of Alice Bailey. These are: the Law of Right Human Relations, the Law of Group Endeavour, the Law of Spiritual Approach and the Principle of Goodwill, the Principle of Unanimity and the Principle of Essential Divinity.

Is Spirit at work even in the darkest hours, and what *is* Spirit? Assagioli defines Spirit as follows:

The Spirit is that element of transcendence, superiority, permanence, power, liberty, inner reality, creativity, harmony and synthesis in every manifestation, both individual and social. In Man, therefore, the term 'spiritual' (to varying degrees) can be attributed to everything that compels him to transcend his selfish exclusivism, his fears, his inertia and his love of pleasure, everything that urges him to discipline, control and direct those untamed forces, instincts and emotions that seethe within him, everything that induces him to recognize a greater superior reality, social or ideal in nature, and to become one with it, extending the limits of his own personality. (p 196)

Assagioli ends his article by saying:

...it is our fervent wish and firm intent that all awakened souls, all enlightened minds and all generous hearts be worthy of the wonderful opportunity before us, so that

the glorious new Era of the Spirit can be ushered in. (p 205)

Reflecting Spiritual light, we all become bearers of Light with Hope as our beacon.

Note

1. Motto written on the whiteboard in Casa Assagioli
2. ISBN 1 85538 291 1
3. Alice Bailey in her series of books on the teachings of D.K.
4. Quote by Roberto Assagioli, by courtesy of Isabelle Küng.
5. Rosa Parks 1956.
6. Martin Luther King, 1963.
7. Hans Rosling, TED talk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVimVzgtD6w>
8. Text on card for World Psychosynthesis Day
9. Mark Carney, Davos 2026. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flsgJe8mN-A>