

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS TOWARDS THE FUTURE

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Andrea Bocconi



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Transcript of Andrea Bocconi's Zoom talk at the event celebrating 100 years of Psychosynthesis on 21 March 2026 in the wedding hall of Varese Town Hall.

Margherita Fiore introduces Andrea Bocconi

“...I would like to thank Andrea Bocconi for this talk. We all know Andrea Bocconi: psychologist, psychotherapist, a student of Assagioli, and he brings us an invaluable account.

As you can see, Andrea, we're in the town hall's wedding hall; therefore, I have the Italian flag behind me. A very important place.

When I contacted you, I thought of placing you in the past, but you quite rightly told me, “No, in the future”. And it is the future you'll be talking to us about.”

Talk by Andrea Bocconi

I find it amusing that you're in the town hall's wedding hall. I said, “I don't want to talk about the past”, but certainly my marriage to psychosynthesis has lasted

55 years, so we're well past our golden wedding anniversary.

Interestingly, Assagioli didn't have an exclusive view of the 'marriage' with psychosynthesis: he encouraged his students to gain experience, to explore other approaches. He would sometimes quip: “...go on, you're vaccinated!”.

This openness had been lost to some extent during certain periods in the history of Italian psychosynthesis: a form of psychosynthesis which — I use the word with caution — “preached”, rather than helping to find a path to freedom, disidentification and self-identification, which risked becoming too identified with itself.

Yet Assagioli was very clear on this point. When considering psychosynthesis in relation to dynamic psychology and other psychological schools, he would say:

“...let us collaborate and seek points of contact rather than points of divergence”.

This is one of the principles that should also guide the future of the discipline.

The future of psychosynthesis

The first point that I see as essential for the future of psychosynthesis is an engagement with different schools of thought, and undoubtedly with other psychological schools.

At times, within the field of psychosynthesis, psychoanalysis was portrayed as having remained static since 1925, whilst subsequent developments reveal much more points in common than is generally realised. On the other hand, we must always acknowledge our debt to psychoanalysis: Assagioli was one of the first Italian psychoanalysts and a member of the Zurich Centre for Psychoanalysis.

But the dialogue is not limited to psychological schools. The most important dialogue, at present, is with the neurosciences. There are now several master's programmes — at least two in Italy, one at the University of Pisa and one at the University of Udine — dedicated to the relationship between neuroscience and meditation, and more generally, to contemplative techniques. What we're seeing, and what we find very encouraging, is that the neurosciences are confirming the general framework of the psychosynthetic vision.

This provides us with an *Evidence-Based Practice*: a communication tool. When I work with a group of doctors, the first thing I say is that meditation has always been practiced in psychosynthesis, and that meditation has been scientifically validated since the 1950s. Today, there are over 3,000 studies a year on the effects of meditation, even on brain morphology. We therefore need a dialogue with medical science and medical research.

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Psychosynthesis occupies — as scholar Ram Dass (editor's note: Richard Alpert's initiatory name) and also Ken Wilber, who regards it as a sort of "hymn" to contemporary psychology, have said — a space of

connection between psychology and spirituality. The egg, with its dashed line pointing upward towards the self, tells us that the self is simultaneously part of the individual and part of the collective.

In this respect, psychosynthesis requires further theoretical development. Personally, one small step I have taken has been to revise the star of functions, wherever I wasn't convinced: unifying emotions and feelings, impulses and desires. Furthermore, we know that will without consciousness is not true will, and that consciousness without will is a process of rationalization. The superimposition of the map of the egg onto the star of functions offers many insights and topics for reflection.



Giacomo Balla - *Equilibrio Spaziale* 1925-26

Years ago, within the world of American psychosynthesis, discussions began as to whether the self was "at the top, at the bottom, on the side, everywhere, or outside". These are thought-provoking discussions, and are perfectly valid. But they remind me a bit of the comparison between the quantum theory and the wave theory of light: each is valid in a certain context, and yet it would seem that "either one is true or the other is true". Are we still caught up in dualistic thinking? In this

case, no: we're caught up in identifications and splitting, exactly the opposite of what Assagioli proposed in his vision and in his daily practice.

In the four years I was able to follow him, I never once heard him speak negatively about another approach. Engaging with philosophy, with spirituality in its various forms, with science, and deeply expanding our reflection on what we often overlook when we teach and describe the egg— the number 7, the collective unconscious — is fundamental.

The collective unconscious is present in every psyche. We are the children not only of our parents and our family, but also of our city, our religion, our social class, and, by extension: we are Italians, we are Europeans. These identifications must all be expanded and integrated: they enrich our work on the individual psyche, whether in the fields of education, therapy, or self-development, which is, after all, the very core of psychosynthesis.

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When I think of the Institute at 16 Via San Domenico in Florence — that room with the fireplace where lectures were held, with perhaps eight people in the early 1970s — and compare it with today's international congresses, it is as if I am becoming aware of the enormous ramifications that have sprung from that small space.

A few days ago, I attended a meeting of the European Psychosynthesis Association, and we watched a video featuring speakers from Bulgaria, the English-speaking world, North America and South America — essentially, all five continents. This demonstrates the power of the model and its applications.

I also had the opportunity, quite recently, to train psychologists in Georgia. The first time I was invited, I looked it up in the atlas to see where it was, and the border with Russia is never very reassuring. And yet, in Georgia, it all started with Assagioli's book: a university professor read it and trained a student who later became the founder of the Georgian Institute of Psychosynthesis, which — in the

initial selection process — had to choose 20 psychologists from a pool of 40 to participate in the training.

We also know that in Ukraine, psychosynthesis is practiced amidst bombs and drones. I happened to work with prison officers in Bolivia, through the Verso Foundation, and to visit a centre for street children in Nicaragua, working with educators who, almost all of them, had been street children themselves.

We are marking the centenary of psychosynthesis. We are in Varese, but let us imagine broadening our horizons: we are part of a global movement that will bring about various theoretical developments and applications.

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One thing that is very important to me: at the beginning, when I said I practised psychosynthesis, nobody knew what I was talking about. I had to launch into a long explanation, something that didn't happen abroad. Our audience is, let's be honest, mostly white, of a certain age and from a certain social background. The Americans would say WASP; we might say "White Anglo-Italian Catholics" — whether one is Catholic or not — but clearly that's our culture.

We need to go where psychosynthesis generally doesn't reach: *getting our hands dirty* in prison, with educators, in challenging schools, and in the social sphere.

Think of those people who volunteer at night, bringing food to the homeless: they need training, because these are very challenging situations. Those with an open heart go forward with the best of spirits, only to encounter rejection, difficulty and violence. What can psychosynthesis do to train these people?

There's no need to say, "...I practise psychosynthesis, which is this thing by Dr. Assagioli". One could, for example, suggest writing exercises in which psychosynthesis forms the backbone. I'm working on a book about this: a text that conveys the structure of psychosynthesis through writing. Even if the readers

aren't interested in psychosynthesis as such, they still engage in inner practice through the writing exercises.

The collective unconscious, at this moment, is full of fear, anger, and dread at what is happening in the world, at all the wars, old and new. Allow me to say frankly that the idea that someone who carries out bombings would want the Nobel Peace Prize strikes me as an extraordinary paradox.

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We must work not only in the social sphere, but also in the *socio-political sphere* in the noble sense of the word — of the polis — bringing forth ideas that unite the lowly and the exalted, that on the vertical axis, make us part of a whole: like a quantum in relation to all other quanta. We must be conscious of our potential.

When an idea survives and thrives after the death of its founder, this is a fundamental sign of vitality. When I go to Georgia or Sweden, people are working on the present.

*They probably no longer
need biographical details
about Assagioli there: they
work with psychosynthesis
as a living tool.*

So, these are, in a way, my guidelines for the coming years. I shall see some of this through — hopefully for quite a long time — because the work of spreading psychosynthesis and practising it in different cultural contexts strikes me as extremely interesting.

However, I'm keen for this to happen within the Institute, in the centres, and also in institutions that aren't part of the Institute. Knowing that there are psychosynthesists in Bulgaria excites me: perhaps they were inspired by a book. This is not just a matter of hopes, but of practical endeavours.

For example, I believe that many people with a scientific background, who carry out evidence-based research, are drawn to psychosynthesis. A psychosynthesis psychotherapist, Andrea Bonacchi, has conducted very

rigorous research into aspects of will as predictors of success in a therapeutic process, using questionnaires, statistics and a representative sample. The findings showed that the strongest predictor is 'good will' — and we can say that transpersonal will necessarily also includes 'good will', and therefore wisdom and love, the two key elements.

I hope there are physicists and researchers in various scientific fields who engage with psychosynthesis. The Dalai Lama says: "If science proves something that contradicts Buddhism, we'll change Buddhism". Not exactly the same attitude we adopted towards Galileo and Giordano Bruno.

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Andrea answers a question posed by [Daniela Paolini](#), a therapist in the audience:

"... I have a question regarding the collective unconscious: I started a first-year self-training course in France this year, and I have some young people who are very troubled by what is happening in the world. What advice or suggestions could you give me to appease the tensions simmering in the collective unconscious, which obviously affect each and every one of us?"

[Andrea Bocconi](#): "...We need to treat our emotions as we would in any personal psychosynthesis work: first and foremost, by acknowledging them. There may be fear, anger, and — this is a very strong point — a profound sense of powerlessness. If this profound sense of powerlessness exists, we need to find a way to understand what stance we are taking towards what is happening, acknowledging on the one hand our minimal impact, but asking ourselves: "...what can I do?"

Maybe I can talk to my children or grandchildren about what's happening, avoiding sweeping everything under the rug. Discuss the legitimacy or illegitimacy of forms of warfare in general, raise awareness of our fears and emotional reactions, find some sense — even in saying "it makes no sense" — and above all find some sense in the question "...what can I do?"

I can speak out and not hide away. I can choose how much information I want to receive. I can try to maintain healthy emotional balance in the face of an unhealthy situation.

In the psychotherapist's consulting room, these things emerge through dreams, through the sense that nothing makes sense. It's therefore a process of giving and finding meaning.

A metaphor I keep using is this: you know that the Olympic torch is carried by torchbearers, and that each torchbearer covers a short stretch of the route. The torch is traveling from Paris to Los Angeles, where it will arrive in two years' time, with tens of thousands of torchbearers each covering perhaps five kilometres before passing it on to the next one. I like this metaphor because the span of our lives is actually very short, as those of us who are older know all too well.

If we're not aware that we're passing a torch, frustration is inevitable. If, on the other hand, we feel that each of us makes an impact — even on just five students — those five will have children, those children will have grandchildren, and something of all lives on.

I recently came across Valentino Giacomini's "Alice Project" (www.aliceproject.org). He returned to his little village in Veneto, and the grandchildren of his pupils came to visit. What an impact this brilliant primary school teacher has had! I was also invited to a school reunion dinner for people who graduated in '87, people I hadn't seen since: seeing them go from being nineteen to being fifty-seven years old and observing the paths their lives had taken. The very fact of being invited gave me a sense of purpose: since I used to introduce meditation in class and tried to bring psychosynthesis into the classroom experience, I thought: well, something has remained.

Margherita Fiore: "...Thank you, Andrea. Next up are the young people, so we'll say goodbye to you".

Andrea Bocconi: "...Fine, absolutely fine: that's the perfect ending for me. Keep up the good work and have fun!".



"Looking to the future" — image downloaded from Unsplash.