

ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI

EMBODIMENT OF LOVE WISDOM

By: Anne Robertson

Roberto Assagioli was an Italian psychiatrist and visionary born in 1888 who was a contemporary of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Abraham Maslow. He conceived a transpersonal psychotherapy that he called Psychosynthesis which corresponds with the ageless wisdom, in particular the teachings of esoteric astrology and psychology as espoused by his friend and colleague, Alice Bailey.



ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI'S WORK WITH
ALICE BAILEY

The first clue that I had of the extent of Dr. Roberto Assagioli's connection with Alice Bailey's esoteric teachings occurred when my partner and I visited Blavatsky Lodge in 1990 to obtain information for a talk I was giving on influential women in the 20th century. I was given as a gift a copy of Alice Bailey's Unfinished Autobiography. I was intrigued to find Alice Bailey mention her work with Roberto Assagioli. She refers to him as her friend and colleague and her representative in Italy for several years. She continues to speak of him in glowing terms declaring that her "contact with him and the many years of work with him

constitute one of the outstanding happy factors in our lives". She described him as "a man of rare beauty of character.....He could not come into a room without his essential spiritual qualities making his presence known." She quotes Frank D. Vanderlip who refers to Assagioli as the modern St. Francis of Assisi. Alice also noted that when he lectured the spiritual power which poured through him was the means of stimulating many into renewed consecration in life. I did not have the good fortune to meet Assagioli who died in 1974 but I was always aware of his loving, benevolent presence that emanated from his photo hanging in the room where we did our Psychosynthesis training.

However, I did have the good fortune to become acquainted with the principles of Psychosynthesis when I undertook two years training at the Australasian Institute for Psychosynthesis Studies in the late eighties here in Sydney. The circumstances that led me to it were curious. In fact the journey of discovery of the real significance of Assagioli and Psychosynthesis didn't end for me after completing the two years training. It has been an ongoing journey like solving a mystery with clues along the way. During a reading in which a medium brought messages from my father in spirit it was recommended that I do a counselling course. The very next day I bought a copy of Southern Crossings and opened straight to a full page advertisement on Psychosynthesis training. At this stage I had never heard of Psychosynthesis but it just resonated with me that this was what I was meant to do. It has had a profound impact on my life giving me greater self awareness and consciousness of choice in my life.

ASSAGIOLI'S VISION - SYNTHESIS OF THE PSYCHE AND OF KNOWLEDGE

As the name Psychosynthesis implies it involves the integrating of the psyche. Assagioli envisaged the integration of the psyche as being twofold - first the

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integration of the personality around the conscious self (self actualisation) and then the integration of the personality with the Higher Self (Self realisation). Jean Hardy in her book, *A Psychology with a Soul*, describes Psychosynthesis as a transpersonal or spiritual psychotherapy. Assagioli had an all encompassing vision of what Psychosynthesis entailed. He envisaged it not only as a synthesis of the personality but also as a synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophy and wisdom. Like many of his contemporaries he realised that not only was the psyche fragmented but also knowledge had become fragmented. In his practice of Psychosynthesis he was endeavouring to synthesise these different branches of knowledge, of medicine, education and religion.

His goal was to achieve synthesis not only of the individual, but to extend it to couples, families, education, the wider community to reach a global level.

**ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI - A
DISCIPLE FOR THE NEW AGE?**

The next clue to the significance of Assagioli's teachings was given to me by Alan Oken in an FAA lecture in 1990 when he was in Sydney to launch his book, *Soul Centred Astrology*, when he made the claim that Assagioli was guided by the Tibetan Master, Djwhal Kuhl, and put the proposition that Assagioli was indeed a disciple for the New Age! In Alan Oken's book, *Soul Centred Astrology*, he acknowledges the influence of Roberto Assagioli's work in Psychosynthesis: "In both traditional and esoteric astrology, Jungian psychology and Psychosynthesis deal with the Law of Correspondences (also known as the Hermetic Law - As Above So Below). Astrology, as well as these two psychological approaches, attempts to relate the macrocosmic to the microcosmic in terms of the human experience".

A PSYCHOLOGY WITH A SOUL

When living in Melbourne in the early to mid nineties I gave series of lectures and a seminar on Psychosynthesis to various spiritual groups, including the

Melbourne Theosophical Society, The Melbourne CAE, The University of the Third Age and Melbourne Goodwill. While browsing through The Theosophical Bookshop I came upon a book called *A Psychology with a Soul - Psychosynthesis in Evolutionary Context* by Jean Hardy, an English academic who did research on Dr. Assagioli's work and background. I was amazed by the further insights she gave me into the range of other philosophies and esoteric traditions that had influenced Assagioli. Then the final intriguing synchronicity occurred on the very day I was to give a talk to Melbourne Goodwill when the latest Theosophical magazine, *Quest*, arrived in the mail with two articles on Assagioli! It is because of this series of synchronicities that I feel impelled to share with you the insights that I have learned from others which in turn inspired my own personal quest to examine the correlations between Psychosynthesis and the ancient wisdom in particular with regard to esoteric astrology.

**PSYCHOSYNTHESIS - EMBODIMENT OF
ANCIENT WISDOM**

One of the articles in the *Quest* magazine which was entitled *Psychosynthesis and the Spiritual Tradition* was written by Peter Roche de Coppens, Ph.D., professor of sociology and anthropology at East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania who had the good fortune to study under Assagioli in the last two years of Assagioli's life from 1972 until 1974. Peter also acknowledges the influence that Alice Bailey had on Assagioli's work: "Assagioli also developed a friendship with Alice Bailey, who connected him with spiritual teachings that she had articulated in numerous books" Assagioli also shared with Peter the mystical experience he had at a very early age: "for him there was no doubt that the core of his philosophy, the essence of psychosynthesis had come to him in a very particular experience in Venice at the age of eleven, as he watched the sun going down over the sea. Further in his article Peter says, "As a long time student of sacred traditions, I have come to the conclusion that Psychosynthesis is really the reappearance in the modern world of the wisdom of the ancients, what the Greeks consider the highest good."

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**ASSAGIOLI'S LINKS WITH THE
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

So what were the main influences on Assagioli's world view? He was born in 1888 at a very exciting time where there was a great cross fertilisation of ideas. He was born just two years after the Theosophical Society was founded in America in 1886. England followed suit in 1888 and Italy in 1902. Both Assagioli's mother and wife became members of the Theosophical Society. Jean Hardy, the author of *A Psychology with a Soul*, was privileged to have access to Assagioli's library in Florence. She noted that he received a good classical education studying both Latin and classical Greek and being a Jew was also well versed in Jewish mysticism.

**SOURCES OF INSPIRATION FOR
ASSAGIOLI - EASTERN AND
WESTERN PHILOSOPHY**

The broad spectrum of disciplines from both Western and Eastern teachings with which Assagioli came in contact became a source of inspiration for Psychosynthesis. From western philosophy he drew inspiration from such writers as Aristotle, Socrates and Plato. He was also influenced by the writings of the Russian esotericist, Ouspensky, the German philosopher, Hermann Keyserling, and R.M. Bucke, Buckminster Fuller, Evelyn Underhill who wrote *Mysticism plus* psychologists, Viktor Frankl, the founder of logotherapy, Robert Desoille, the creator of guided daydream, and C.G. Jung himself before and after his break with psychoanalysis. His contacts with the Theosophical Society and Alice Bailey acquainted him with the work of leading lights of Eastern philosophy and mysticism such as the Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore, Sufi mystic, Inhayat Khan, Patanjali to name but a few. In literature he drew inspiration from the Bhagavadgita, Homer, the grail legend, Tolstoy and his fellow countryman, Dante Alighieri. In fact Assagioli categorically states that the central theme of the Divine Comedy is a wonderful picture of a complete psychosynthesis. The journey of Dante

through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise is the journey of the spiritually aware person through life. Other writers who greatly inspired Assagioli include the American philosopher, William James, whose work on subpersonalities and the will are a pivotal part of Psychosynthesis. Another American writer whose work Assagioli acknowledges as being influential on his thinking was Abraham Maslow, one of the foremost psychologists of recent times who wrote *Toward a Psychology of Being*. The turn of the 20th century saw the ascendancy of Sigmund Freud who introduced psychoanalysis and Carl Jung whom Freud anointed as his successor. Carl Jung, however, like his younger contemporary, Roberto Assagioli, veered away from some of Freud's principal tenets and formulated their own unique models of the human psyche.

**THE GOLDEN MEAN OF
ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI**

Assagioli was instrumental in introducing Psychoanalysis to Italy but his doctoral dissertation in 1910 was also a critique of Freudian psychology. In an interview with Sam Keen entitled *The Golden Mean of Assagioli*, Assagioli graphically sums up the different worldview of Freud and himself in response to Keen's question about the differences between Psychosynthesis and psychoanalysis: "We pay far more attention to the higher unconscious and to the developments of the transpersonal self. In one of his letters Freud said, 'I am interested only in the basement of the human being.' Assagioli claims that Psychosynthesis is interested in the whole building. "We try to build an elevator which will allow a person access to every level of his personality. After all a building with only a basement is very limited. We want to open up the terrace where you can sunbathe or look at the stars. Our concern is the synthesis of all areas of the personality. That means Psychosynthesis is holistic, global and inclusive." The contributions to psychology of Freud, Jung and Assagioli are summed up very succinctly in the

World Goodwill newsletter July-September 1981. They acknowledge Jung as a transitional thinker between depth psychologists and psychoanalysts and the newly emerging height psychologists who are beginning to acknowledge the reality of

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the higher dimensions of human consciousness. Assagioli often described his work as 'Height Psychology'. Assagioli's successor, Piero Ferrucci, sums up Assagioli's role as participating in two distinct and fundamental revolutions in twentieth century psychology, the first being the birth of psychoanalysis and depth psychology at the beginning of the century and the second being the creation of humanistic and transpersonal psychology in the 1960s. If psychology was losing its soul to the scientists, here was a movement in the opposite direction to link psychology with spirituality.

It was only in the late sixties that with the suddenness born of a deep and pressing need, that his books and other writings were taken up by thousands and Psychosynthesis centres and institutes sprang up all around the world. Almost sixty years needed to elapse, so far was he ahead of his time.

**ASSAGIOLI'S NATAL CHART - INSIGHT
INTO THE MAN BY DANE RUDHYAR**

In his book, *Astrology and the Modern Psyche*, Dane Rudhyar, the renowned astrologer, gives a very interesting insight into Roberto Assagioli. Dane Rudhyar actually knew Assagioli and stayed with him in his house in Florence in 1936 and corresponded with him after that. According to Rudhyar after the beginning of World War 11, Assagioli's work in Rome became increasingly difficult because his humanitarian and international ideas and attitude aroused more and more suspicions and hostility by the fascist government - until in 1940, he was arrested and kept in solitary confinement for about one month. Assagioli told his friends that his prison episode was an interesting and valuable experience which gave him an opportunity for undertaking psycho-spiritual exercises.

Dane Rudhyar outlines some very striking features in Assagioli's chart that he says clearly symbolise his ideal of psychosynthesis. The basis of Assagioli's chart is the mystic rectangle which Rudhyar says is a configuration symbolising a process of integrative synthesis, to which is added an undertone of self-consecration to

a super-individual purpose. This configuration comprises two opposition aspects, two sextiles and two trines. The oppositions form two diagonals of the rectangle, and in Assagioli's case they are those between Venus and Saturn and Pluto and Jupiter. The shorter sides of the rectangle are represented by the sextiles of Saturn to Pluto and Jupiter to Venus; the longer sides, by the trines of Venus to Pluto and Saturn to Jupiter. In Assagioli's chart there is a far more complex pattern; there is also a Sun Moon opposition (a full moon symbol of extreme awareness and illumination) which forms a perfect cross with the Pluto-Jupiter diagonal through a sesquiquadrate and semisquare (aspects of stressful activity or response) while Mercury is also similarly related to the Venus-Saturn diagonal. As Neptune is only five degrees away from Pluto (and thus participates in Pluto's aspects), and as Mars also squares the Venus-Saturn diagonal, there exists an extremely complex pattern of oppositions, squares, semi squares and sesquiquadrates held together by sextiles and trines.

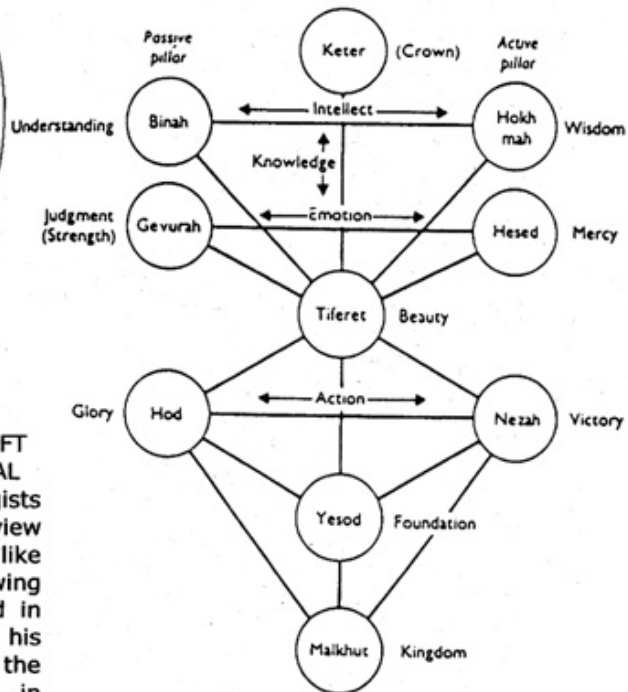
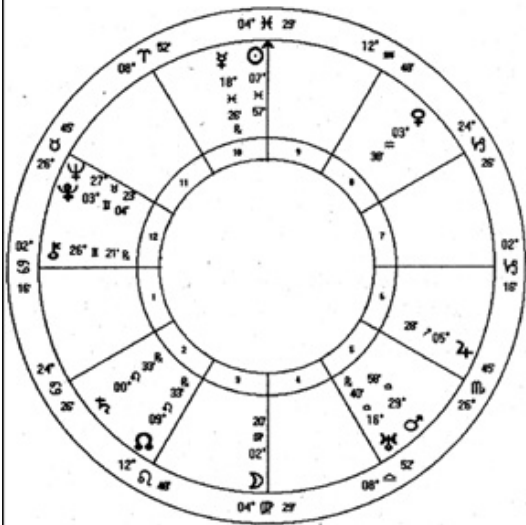
Rudhyar explains that what this means is that, in Assagioli's personality, a great variety of interests and foci of attention are represented, that his nature is widely open to the universe (Cancer rising, Sun and Mercury retrograde in Pisces) and contains many conflicting elements. These however, are so disposed to make a very rich and complex type of integration possible. The very pressure of this unusually varied and inclusive potential upon Assagioli's consciousness and the very challenge of a personality structure able to stand so many lines of stress and creative projection, is discernible in the ideal of psychosynthesis which he envisaged. In other words Assagioli's psychosynthesis is the answer to the chaos in his own chart. He had to confront this multiplicity of energies and stresses, and the complexity of a global openness in his own chart and the solution has come out of the confrontation. The pattern of solution - the image of salvation, the principle of reconciliation of opposites - is obvious in his chart, and psychosynthesis is the interpretation of it." In her book, *Chiron and the Healing Journey*, Melanie Reinhart adds to the

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picture when she says that "Assagioli has Chiron in Gemini in the 12th house conjunct the Cancer ascendant: it forms a grand trine with the MC in Pisces and Mars in Libra in the 5th house which is reminiscent of his work on the will ie the need to align the personal will of the personality with the transpersonal will of the higher self."

acquainted with Jewish mystical traditions such as the Kabbalah and that in fact his egg or oval diagram of the human psyche resembled the Sephirot or tree of life. Assagioli maintained there is only one self – the Higher Self is a deeper dimension of the personality self. Similarly in the Kabbalah the Yesod or the 'I' is a paler reflection of the Tiferet or the Higher Self or 'Watcher'. Another tradition which is reflected in Assagioli's egg diagram is the world egg of Theosophy. Another theme in common with both Plato and the Kabbalah is the importance of the will. Plato emphasised the importance of self discipline and in the Kabbalah the will has a prominent position as one of the four worlds – Will, Intellect, Emotion, Action.



THE INNATE GOODNESS OF MAN – SHIFT FROM VIEWING MAN AS PATHOLOGICAL

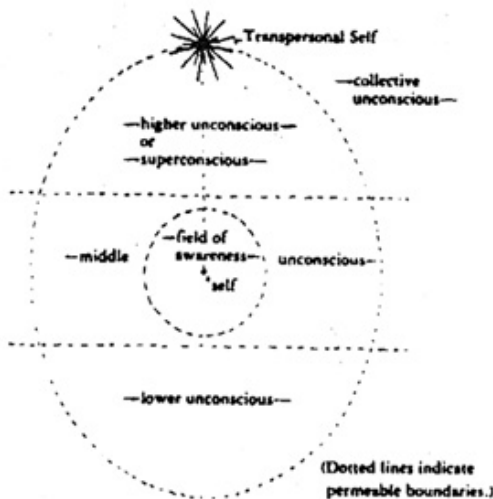
Whereas the earlier psychologists including Freud had a pessimistic view about the nature of man, Maslow like Assagioli and Jung shifted from viewing man as pathological. Assagioli believed in the innate goodness in man as did his predecessor, Plato. Assagioli's model of the human psyche had some aspects in common with Carl Jung's model in that he acknowledged the existence of the collective unconscious but he also included the higher unconscious or superconscious in keeping with his belief in man's ability to reach his highest potential, eg altruistic love, compassion, gratitude, intuition, creativity, service and the drive toward purpose and meaning in life. In her research into Assagioli's library Jean Hardy noted that Assagioli being a Jew, was also well

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**THE ROLE OF THE WILL IN
PSYCHOSYNTHESIS**

In Assagioli's star diagram the will is an integral part of the self. Alan Oken uses the analogy of the charioteer as the Higher Self and the three horses as the personality self ie. the mind, body and emotions: the will is the instrument used to whip the horses into action. In Psychosynthesis training we practised disidentification exercises in which we envisaged ourselves as the observer self or witness looking on dispassionately at our personality self while saying the mantra: I have a mind but I am not my mind. I have a body but I am not my body. I have emotions but I am not my emotions etc. After this disidentification of the self we then stated, "I recognise and affirm that I am a centre of pure self consciousness. I am a centre of will, capable of observing, directing and using all my psychological processes and the physical body"



SEED PERIODS

In his book, *Astrological Timing of the Transition To the New Age*, Dane Rudhyar talks about the seed periods that occur with each new age. In the Age of

Pisces the seed period occurred in the 6th century BC with the advent of the great teachers, Jesus, Buddha, Pythagoras, Lao Tse and Confucius. The turn of the 20th century heralded a new seed period for the incoming Age of Aquarius with such teachers as Helena Blavatsky and Alice A. Bailey who wrote under the guidance of the Masters of Wisdom, Annie Besant, co founder of the Theosophical Society, Rudolph Steiner, founder of the Anthroposophical Society, Krishnamurti, Carl Jung and Assagioli to name but a few. Their teachings represent the resurrection of the teachings of the great spiritual teachers of the Age of Pisces.

**AGE OF PISCES - AN AGE DUALISM AGE
OF AQUARIUS - AN AGE OF SYNTHESIS**

The Age of Pisces ruled by the outgoing sixth Ray is an age of dualism where both knowledge and the human psyche have been fragmented. When Psychoanalysis was discovered at the turn of the 20th century Pluto was transiting Gemini which represents analysis. The Age of Aquarius ruled by the incoming 7th Ray is an age of synthesis. Pluto is now transiting Sagittarius which symbolises synthesis.

What evidence is there, then, to support Alan Oken's claim that Roberto Assagioli was a disciple for the New Age and that as Peter Roche de Coppens maintains Psychosynthesis is an embodiment of the Ancient Wisdom? As Jean Hardy points out, although Assagioli had mystical leanings like his contemporaries, Carl Jung and William James, he wore two different hats i.e. they had mystical leanings but wanted at the same time to be scientifically respectable. As mentioned earlier Assagioli and Alice Bailey collaborated together but what are the correlations between esoteric or Soul centred astrology as espoused by Alice Bailey and Psychosynthesis?

**WE ARE A SOUL AND HAVE
A PERSONALITY**

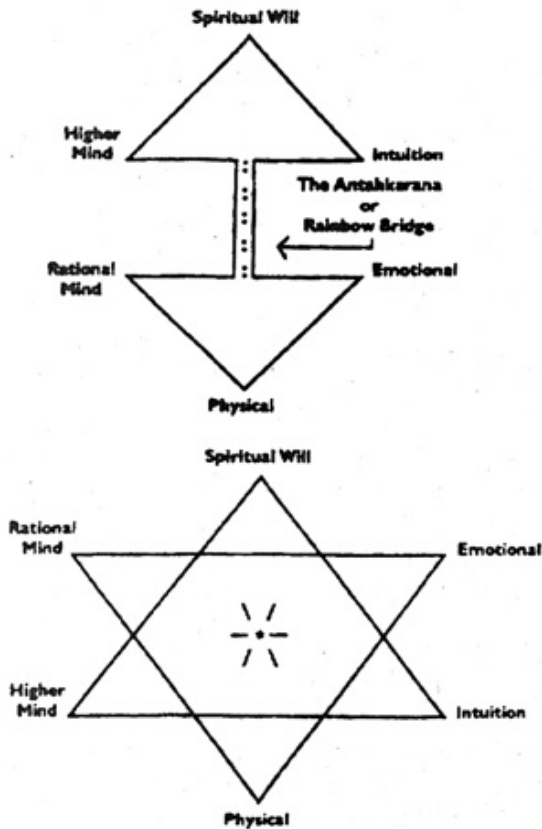
First and foremost Assagioli maintained that we are a Soul with a personality. This teaching corresponds with the ancient wisdom espoused by Alice Bailey and is elaborated at length in more accessible language by Alan Oken, the renowned American astrologer, in his book *Soul - Centred Astrology*. Just as Assagioli maintained that first we need to integrate

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our personality self before spiritual psychosynthesis can take place, Alan Oken describes the process of Soul infusion whereby the personality consisting of the rational mind, emotional and physical bodies once integrated, forms the rainbow bridge or Antahkarana and fuses with the Soul or Higher Self. The Soul comprises the Higher Mind, Intuition and Spiritual Will. These are envisaged as two triangles which fuse together creating the Soul infused personality symbolised by the six pointed star or Star of David. This process is called the Path of Synthesis or the Path of Discipleship.

The Soul, the Personality, and the Rainbow Bridge



THE SCIENCE OF TRIANGLES - A MEANS OF SYNTHESIS

Triangles are instrumental to the teachings of both Psychosynthesis and esoteric astrology. In Esoteric Astrology Alice Bailey refers to the science of

triangles. In same way Assagioli uses the analogy of triangles to demonstrate the process of psychosynthesis. His diagrams of triangles are used to show how two diametrically opposed emotional states can be harmonised by synthesising the two to reach a golden mean at the apex of the triangle. In the chapter of The Science of Triangles Alice Bailey talks about the triangles as being energies linked to the planets and the constellations through which the Rays manifest. She states that the energy of triangles found in man mirror those in the cosmos.

THE SEVEN RAYS - ASSAGIOLI'S SEVEN WAYS TO SPIRITUAL REALISATION

The Seven Rays in Esoteric Astrology are embodied in Roberto Assagioli's seven personality types. In his Psychosynthesis Typology The Seven Ways To Spiritual Realisation, Assagioli

elaborates on the seven personality types corresponding to the Seven Rays. In esoteric teachings the Plan for the evolution of humanity is synthesis. The Plan has three great goals: the revelation of love, the illumination of the mind and the evocation of the will. In volumes 1 and 11 of Esoteric Psychology The Tibetan Master stresses the need for the evocation of the will. Assagioli's work on the will as outlined in his book, The Act of Will, is a vital contribution to the ways of developing the will. In it he includes exercises for developing the right use of the will. Assagioli also outlines the different types of will i.e. the skilful will, good will, universal will, transpersonal will and talks of the urgency to synthesise love and will i.e. the 1st and 2nd rays. This is borne out by Alan Oken who in Chapter 4 of Soul Centred Astrology entitled Laws and Principles of the New Age claims that the Age of Aquarius is a synthetic period in which will and love are to be joined and harmonised. Assagioli's colleague, Alice Bailey, devoted herself to the Goodwill movement as a world server.

ASSAGIOLI'S CONCEPT OF LIFE PURPOSE - DK'S PREDICTION OF VOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

In Esoteric Psychology Volumes 1 & 11 the Tibetan Master DK makes a prediction for the psychology of the future. It will entail vocational psychology i.e. it will determine one's life path or dharma. This concept is an integral part of psychosynthesis training. Assagioli himself

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refers to the word dharma in his writings and in our psychosynthesis training we focussed on discovering life purpose, meaning and direction through exercising the will.

**ASSAGIOLI'S MEDITATION TECHNIQUES -
DK'S PREDICTION OF THE SCIENCE OF
MEDITATION FOR THE NEW AGE**

In Psychosynthesis we learned three different meditation techniques which Assagioli based on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali – reflective, receptive and creative. This practice links up with DK's prediction of the importance of the science of meditation for the New Age.

**PSYCHOSYNTHESIS – A PSYCHOLOGY
FOR OUR TIME**

As we prepare to leave behind the Age of Pisces, an age of dualism, separatism and analysis and enter the Age of Aquarius, an age of synthesis, unity and world service we are called upon to adopt an evolutionary psychology which will serve our needs in a time of accelerated change. We need a psychology with a soul which resurrects the values and teachings of the ageless wisdom as is embodied in Psychosynthesis. This is the next step in the evolution of human consciousness according to the Plan of the Masters of Wisdom. Roberto Assagioli truly deserves the title conferred on him by Alan Oken as Disciple for the New Age! Throughout his life and *work Assagioli demonstrated the qualities of love wisdom. In Assagioli's own words we need "to prepare for the coming of a New Age when Psychosynthesis will be implemented at a worldwide level Only through an awakening of our deepest soul, only when the sovereignty of the Spirit is recognized and made a reality, will man be able to achieve that true power, that secure peace and that divine freedom – the unconscious goal to which he is aspiring."

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