

MORE OF 'SELF' BY DAVID ENGLAND

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PURPOSE, AIMS, AND SCOPE

Purpose

Guggisberg Nocelli describes (2017, p141) how “Assagioli strongly supported the theoretical and pragmatic value of synthesis,” in particular, “synthesis in therapeutic approaches.” It has been my professional purpose in recent years to synthesise Shamanic Psychology and psychotherapy, both in my writing and in the development of my psychotherapy practice. The reason for this endeavour is what I see as an affinity between these two therapeutic approaches: ancient Shamanic Psychology and contemporary Psychosynthesis Psychology. Both are psychospiritual, not least because both acknowledge an immanent personal self in relation to a transcendent Higher Self.

I have sought to fulfil my purpose of marrying Shamanic and Psychosynthesis Psychology by writing my book, *Soulfulness* (England, 2017), in which I show how Shamanic and Contemporary Psychology can be integrated, in particular by: the inclusion of some powerful psychological models based on the shamanic Medicine Wheel; employing a present-day application of the technique of the shamanic journey as a way of communicating in consciousness with the unconscious mind.

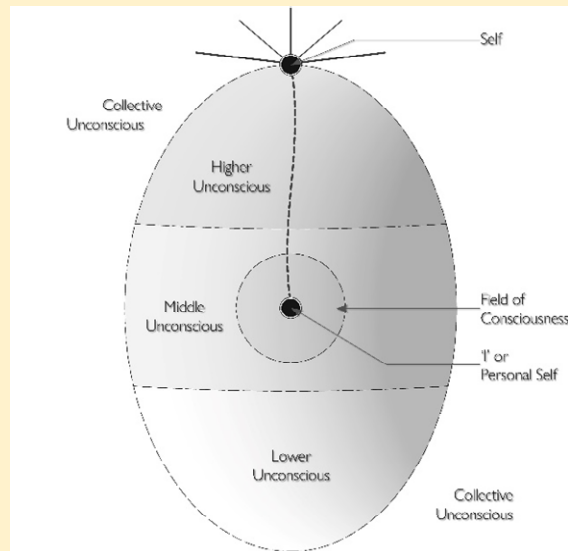
Aims and Scope

The aim of this paper is to set out my current thinking about the synthesis of Shamanic Psychology and psychotherapy in one aspect, the conception of 'Self'. I set out to place, alongside the Egg Diagram, one of the key models in Shamanic Psychology, the Shamanic Personal Energy Map. The synthesis of the Egg Diagram and the Energy Map realises a dynamic model of the whole human personality and offers a reframing of the Psychosynthesis understanding of 'Self'.

THE EGG DIAGRAM MODEL OF THE PSYCHE

In Assagioli's model of the psyche, The Egg Diagram: our infant woundings are repressed into the Lower Unconscious; our talents and creativity, when dishonoured, are repressed into the Higher Unconscious; and we are left to scabble around in what is left in the Middle. In time, as consciousness grows, we transcend the survival treadmill of ego; we gain a sense of our personal self, our 'I', and with it an increasing capacity for self-reflection, our freedom to make choices, and our power of self-determination.

Firman and Gila (1997) describe Self as "a deeper source of being beyond the conscious personality". The personal self is a projection of this deeper source of being onto the screen of our conscious personality. Self, the unseen projector, is the enduring source of all we are, our experience of being alive, our sense of being ourselves.



The Egg Diagram

THE I-SELF DIALOGUE

In his poem "We are transmitters", D. H. Lawrence (1950) wrote, "As we live, we are transmitters of life/And when we fail to transmit life, life fails to flow through us." To transmit life, to "ripple with life through the days", we need to receive life, and *the source of life energy is Self*, an abiding presence in our life conveying invitations for us to follow a particular life-path or to realise an aspect of our self-expression and creativity hidden away in our Higher Unconscious.

We may receive such promptings of Self as a call or a sense of vocation or a sudden insight. With our personal will, we are free to respond and to receive the willing energy to fulfil the calling. Equally, we can use our free will to reflect upon the call and to engage in a dialogue between Self and personal self. Hence, Firman and Gila (1997) assert that Self is not an "It" but a "Thou". This is a profound statement warranting sustained reflection. Self is a Thou, not a theoretical concept; it has real existence, real being, a real presence in our lives, and through sustained I-Self dialogue we can realise a life-path and creative expression *congruent with our personality*. We have a personal relationship with our self, a committed love relationship that deepens as our spiritual journey unfolds. Our personal self grows as we synthesise more and more. Our experience of being alive expands as the Lower and Higher Unconscious boundaries are drawn back. Our personal self is free to flower.

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY AND THE I-SELF RELATIONSHIP

Assagioli has a metaphor for the spiritual journey (1965, p. 200), in which the "conscious personal centre" shifts closer to Self, penetrating into the Higher Unconscious, the realm of "higher intuitions and inspirations" and "latent .. spiritual energies (pp. 17-18)". Thus, each of us has latent qualities, unacknowledged creative potential, talents, values, intuitions, insights, "ethical imperatives and urges to humanitarian and heroic action". Each of us is on a path running between narcissism and

Self-realisation. We can choose to move along the path because we are guided and shown the direction by Self and because energy for life and will to travel are supplied to us through the I–Self relationship. Along the way, we can synthesise more and more of our latent energies.

Petra Guggisberg Nocelli—in her excellent, comprehensive book about psychosynthesis, *The Way of Psychosynthesis* (2017)—presents the personal self and the Higher Self (p. 245) as immanent and transcendent aspects respectively of the one Self, with a profoundly insightful quotation from Assagioli: "Speaking of a personal self and of a higher 'I' (the Self) must not induce us to believe that there are two separate and independent selves. .. The 'I' in reality and in essence is ONE. What we call "ordinary" self is that part of the "higher Self" that the wakeful consciousness can accept, assimilate and implement at any given moment. It is therefore something contingent and changeable, a variable quantity. It is a reflection that can become ever more clear and vivid and that one day might come to unify with its Source."

The Vicissitudes of the Spiritual Journey

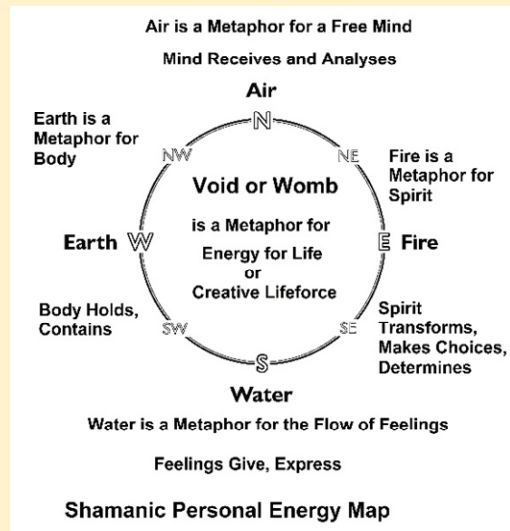
Writing about the vicissitudes of the spiritual journey, Assagioli (1965, p. 39) says, "Spiritual development is a long and arduous journey, an adventure through strange lands full of surprises, joy and beauty, difficulties and even dangers." The I-Self I-Thou relationship is a love relationship, and like in any love relationship, differences and tensions arise. Self doesn't seem always to respect personality; it can lead our personal self in surprising, seemingly undesirable, difficult, even dangerous, ways that our "wakeful consciousness" struggles to "accept, assimilate and implement". Many of you reading this paper will bear witness to the reality of the I-Self relationship in your existential experience of living; the struggles, the pains of spiritual awakening, but also the adventure of a life ever more fruitful, more abundant, more fulfilled, and with more meaning and more zest for life. For you, as for me, the journey of life towards an albeit unreachable Self-realisation is an existential reality.

THE SHAMANIC PERSONAL ENERGY MAP

Bio-Psychoanalysis

Petra Guggisberg Nocelli (2017, p149) explains the abbreviation of "bio-psychoanalysis" to "psychoanalysis", quoting Assagioli from a 1967 report to an international conference: "Practically speaking, it's often easier to use the word psychoanalysis, but remember that it must include the body, the "bio", and so it will always be bio-psychoanalysis."

I am heartened to learn that the real name for psychosynthesis is bio-psychosynthesis, because the Energy Map is pure bio-psychosynthesis. The Energy Map is an application of the Shamanic Medicine Wheel, where “*Medicine*” means *wholeness and energy for life*. The Energy Map is a way of mapping how we use our available life energy. When the energy used by our Feelings, Body, Mind, and Spirit is balanced, forming a harmonious whole, this represents a synthesis of our whole being.



Feelings, Body, Mind, and Spirit in Metaphor

The elements of personality—Feelings, Body, Mind, and Spirit—are represented metaphorically by the elements of water, earth, air, and fire, respectively. When the energy of the whole person is in balance, the Wheel goes around: our Feelings flow like water; our Body contains us and is the medium of expression for our feelings; our Mind is free as air to gather information from our feelings, body, intuition, and environment, to analyse this information, to reflect upon it, and to formulate options; our Spirit is a transforming fire, using the knowledge our mind has formulated to make life choices, great and small, that determine our way in the world and our relationship with the world.

Spirit on the Energy Map is comparable with ‘I’ in the Egg Diagram, with its growing capacity to be self-reflective, make choices, exercise will, create change, be self-determined.

A Dynamic Model

The determining and the transforming wrought by our human spirit affect how we experience being alive and how we feel about our self, and so the Wheel goes around and around as we grow, becoming more self-reflective, more self-determined. The Energy Map is a dynamic model.

The Energy Map is not a theoretical construct; it can reveal what is happening when a person’s energy is out of balance, when there is disharmony and fragmentation rather than synthesis. Here are two examples: (i) When a person is grieving, their feelings can be all over the place—sadness, numbness, anger, fear, etc—their diet may be affected, their mind preoccupied and confused, and they are likely to be dispirited and not in a fit state to make decisions. (ii) When a person is overwhelmed by feelings that the body cannot contain, this is manifested in the body as a panic attack, the person loses their capacity to think clearly, they become dispirited and incapable of making informed choices. The Energy Map is thus a powerful model for use in psychotherapy.

Creative Lifeforce/Energy for Life : Relationship, Creativity, and Sexuality

At the centre of the Medicine Wheel is Creative Lifeforce, Energy for Life, that vitality differentiating a living soul from a lifeless corpse. We experience Energy for Life simply by knowing we are alive. The metaphor for Lifeforce is a creative void or womb; Lifeforce is the vital energy that seemingly can form something wonderful out of nothing: a fertilised egg, a pollinated seed, an inspired thought. Lifeforce is, “The force that through the green fuse drives the flower” (Dylan Thomas, 1937). By photosynthesis, the flower converts electro-magnetic light energy into chemical energy which, when

combined with carbon dioxide and water, creates the carbohydrate molecules used to form the vegetative parts of the flower, petals and sepals, enclosing the sexual organs, carpels and stamens, that effect reproduction. Liferforce is the directionality driving the flower's reproduction.



To energise our body's cells we eat plants and inhale oxygen, the products and by-product of photosynthesis. Thus, the sun is our ultimate source of energy, energy that moves into a myriad configurations to synthesise and sustain our living being. Thus, *Liferforce, Energy for Life, is real energy, infusing our whole being*: the complex functioning of our body; the physiological processes that give us the experiences of feeling; the brain functions that give us the experience of thinking.

Liferforce is the directionality driving a human's reproduction, but unlike the rest of nature this is not its sole purpose. To begin with, a neonate's relationship with its mother is essential to its survival; a human infant is a relational being from the moment they experience their mother's gentle touch and loving gaze, and in the process creating a template for subsequent relationships throughout life. Creativity soon follows, at first the impulse to scribble on walls; human creativity seems boundless in its numerous spheres of endeavour. With growing maturity, the impulse arises towards sexual expression. Besides sexuality, in us Liferforce is directed towards relationship and creativity. The sexual impulse can be so fervent that it can pervade the feelings (South on the Energy Map) with such a craving for bodily release (West) that it overpowers rational thought (North). Yet, in the midst of chaos, we need to attain some balance, because important choices (East) need to be made, not out of craving, but from love, commitment, and will.

Alongside sexual union, Creative Liferforce sustains interpersonal synthesis, supplying the energy of mutual love that is the glue of any sustained love relationship. In a committed sexual union, the sexual impulse evolves into feelings of desire to have children and into sustained energy to nourish the children throughout their childhood. Such sustained energy entails a determination to remain committed to the family unit. Determination, the choice to sustain commitment, whatever the odds, is a function of spirit (East). Love is an act of will. This principle applies not only to a sexual partnership, but also to the sustaining of any creative relationship or any creative endeavour: love is not simply a feeling, love is an act of commitment and will.

Thus, far beyond the awareness of being alive, we experience Liferforce in our relationship with others, our creative impulse, and our sexual desire: in our whole experience of having Energy for Life in our relationship with our self and with the wider world.

SYNTHESIS : THE EGG DIAGRAM AND THE ENERGY MAP

These are two profound insights from Assagioli about the dynamic relationship of Self and 'I':

Self and personal self are "ONE", personal self being what the "wakeful consciousness can accept, assimilate and implement at any given moment, .. a reflection that can become ever more clear and vivid and that one day might come to unify with its Source (Nocelli, 2017, p. 245)". "Self as understood by Assagioli .. provides not only the source of personal being but a directionality for individual unfoldment and meaningful engagement with the world (Firman and Gila, 1997, p. 43)".

Just as Spirit on the Energy Map is comparable with 'I' in the Egg Diagram, so Lifeforce on the Energy Map is comparable with Self in the Egg Diagram, being the source of life energy—real energy, infusing our whole being—and providing a directionality for individual unfoldment and meaningful engagement with the world. The Energy Map elucidates this unfolding. Whilst Feelings, Body, and Mind are elements of our personality, Spirit is the totality of who we are at *any given moment*, everything we express in our emotions, our physical presence, our thoughts and ideas, our choices, our values, even our vicissitudes, how we experience our self in all of these aspects, and express in our engagement with the world. Everything, that is, that our wakeful consciousness can accept and assimilate of our Lifeforce, and can implement in our life, for in that moment we may be poor in spirit or rich in spirit, on our own unfolding path of life.

The Energy Map is a way of mapping how we use or misuse our sun-sourced life energy. Misuse is a consequence of the way we adapt to being misused, principally to the “primal wound” (Firman & Gila, 1997). We may repress or become fixated on feelings. We may abuse or fail to care for our body. We may have a rigidity of thought. All of this distorts how we see our self and express our self in the world. At the moment of conception Energy for Life forms us as a unique being, which becomes evident at our birth, at least prior to our primal wounding. This is our true nature, and directionality for individual unfoldment means remembering and realigning with our true nature and thereby growing in Spirit. We grow in Spirit when we choose to respond to our impulses to uncover our latent qualities, unacknowledged creative potential, talents, values, intuitions, insights, “ethical imperatives and urges to humanitarian and heroic action”. The Wheel goes around as we grow in Spirit, synthesising more and more of our latent energies. We attend more to our flow of feelings and how we feel about our self. We have more care for the health and fitness of our body. Our mind is more free to think our own thoughts and formulate our own ideas. Our Spirit expresses who we are with an increasing radiance. In our engagement with the world, we transmit our life energy.

Life is an interplay between Spirit, intent on the gathering of our true nature, and Energy for Life, a parable of the I-Self relationship. The synthesis of the Egg Diagram and the Energy Map yields a model of the human personality that is dynamic and vital, down to earth and embodied, comprehensive and practical, as well as being an effective psychotherapeutic medium.

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