

# An Introduction to Psychosynthesis: the Consciousness Egg

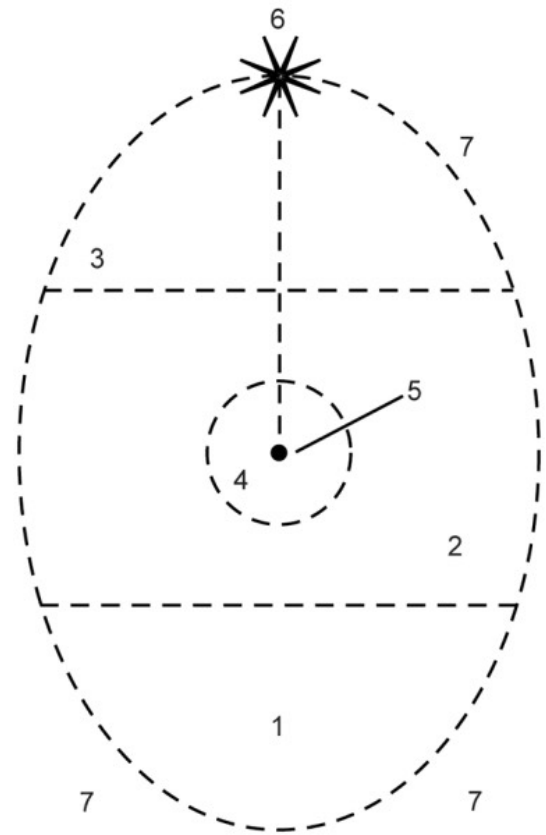
by Jessica Davidson

Many years ago I went through a kind of breakdown and renewal of my consciousness that triggered an awakening. At the time I believed I was going mad, but then I discovered psychosynthesis and it helped me to realise that I was actually waking up.

My **first glimpse** of the Higher Self pulled me back from the brink of suicide and saved my life. I didn't understand what had happened, but then I came across **this book** and it all became clear. It gave me a language I could use to understand what I was going through and how I could help myself to grow into a more whole person. The book was the beginning of my journey into learning more about how our consciousness works.

The famous Egg Diagram is used to illustrate the multidimensional nature of the human mind and how the various parts of your consciousness relate to each other. It has its limitations – mainly because it's a static representation of something that's a dynamic, ever-changing process – but it's still useful. You'll notice that all the lines are dotted – this is to show that there's a lot of overlap between the various levels, and a lot of movement and flux. Nothing is pinned down or static.

1. The Lower Unconscious
2. The Middle Unconscious
3. The Higher Unconscious or Superconscious
4. The Field of Consciousness
5. The Conscious self or "I"
6. The Higher Self
7. The Collective Unconscious



To explain the diagram, the following text is quoted from *Psychosynthesis* by Roberto Assagioli:

### 1. The Lower Unconscious

“This contains:

- The elementary psychological activities which direct the life of the body; the intelligent coordination of bodily functions.
- The fundamental drives and primitive urges.
- Many complexes, charged with intense emotion.
- Dreams and imaginations of an inferior kind.
- Lower, uncontrolled parapsychological processes.
- Various pathological manifestations, such as phobias, obsessions, compulsive urges and paranoid delusions.
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## **2. The Middle Unconscious**

“This is formed of psychological elements similar to those of our waking consciousness and easily accessible to it. In this inner region our various experiences are assimilated, our ordinary mental and imaginative activities are elaborated and developed in a sort of psychological gestation before their birth into the light of consciousness.

## **3. The Higher Unconscious or Superconscious**

“From this region we receive our higher intuitions and inspirations – artistic, philosophical or scientific, ethical “imperatives” and urges to humanitarian and heroic action. It is the source of the higher feelings, such as altruistic love; of genius and of the states of contemplation, illumination, and ecstasy. In this realm are latent the higher psychic functions and spiritual energies.

## **4. The Field of Consciousness**

“This term – which is not quite accurate but which is clear and convenient for practical purposes – is used to designate that part of our personality of which we are directly aware: the incessant flow of sensations, images, thoughts, feelings, desires, and impulses which we can observe, analyse, and judge.

## **5. The Conscious self or “I”**

“The “self”, that is to say, the point of pure self-awareness, is often confused with the conscious personality just described, but in reality it is quite different from it. This can be ascertained by the use of careful introspection. The changing *contents* of our consciousness (the sensations, thoughts, feelings, etc.) are one thing, while the “I”, the self, the *centre* of our consciousness is another. From a certain point of view this difference can be compared to that existing between the white lighted area on a screen and the various pictures which are projected upon it.

“But the “man in the street” and even many well-educated people do not take the trouble to observe themselves and to discriminate; they drift on the surface of the “mind-stream” and identify themselves with its successive waves, with the changing contents of their consciousness.

## 6. The Higher Self

“The conscious self is generally not only submerged in the ceaseless flow of psychological contents but seems to disappear altogether when we fall asleep, when we faint, when we are under the effect of an anaesthetic or narcotic, or in a state of hypnosis. And when we awake the self mysteriously reappears, we do not know how or whence – a fact which, if closely examined, is truly baffling and disturbing. This leads us to assume that the reappearance of the conscious self or ego is due to the existence of a permanent centre, of a true Self situated beyond or “above” it.

“(Note: **The higher Self should not be confused in any way with the super-ego of Freud**, which is not a real self but, according to Freud’s theory, a construction, an artificial product. **It is also different from any “phenomenological” conception of the self or ego.**)

“There are various ways by means of which the reality of the Self can be ascertained. There have been many individuals who have achieved, more or less temporarily, a conscious realisation of the Self that for them has the same degree of certainty as is experienced by an explorer who has entered a previously unknown region. Such statements can be found in Bucke’s *Cosmic Consciousness*, in Ouspensky’s *Tertium Organum*, in Underhill’s *Mysticism*, and in other books. The awareness of the Self can also be achieved through the use of certain psychological methods, among which are Jung’s “process of individuation”, Desoille’s “Rêve éveillé”, techniques of Raja Yoga, etc.

“Then we have the corroboration of such philosophers as Kant and Herbart, who make a clear distinction between the empirical ego and the noumenal or real Self. This Self is above, and unaffected by, the flow of the mind-stream or by bodily conditions; and the personal conscious self should be considered merely as its reflection, its “projection” in the field of the personality. ...

## 7. The Collective Unconscious

“Human beings are not isolated, they are not “monads without windows” as Leibnitz thought. They may at times feel subjectively isolated, but the extreme existentialistic conception is not true, either psychologically or spiritually.

“The outer line of the oval of the diagram should be regarded as “delimiting” but not as “dividing.” It should be regarded as analogous to the membrane delimiting a cell, which permits a constant and active interchange with the whole body to which the cell belongs. Processes of “psychological osmosis” are going on all the time, both with other human beings and with the general psychic environment. The latter corresponds to what Jung has called the “collective unconscious”; but he has not clearly defined the term, in which he includes elements of different, even opposite natures, namely primitive archaic structures and higher, forward-directed activities of a superconscious character. (See C.G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, London, 1928, pp.118-9).

“The preceding diagram helps us to reconcile the following facts, which at first appear to contradict and exclude each other:

- *The seeming duality*, the apparent existence of two selves in us. Indeed, it is as if there were two selves, because the personal self is generally unaware of the other, even to the point of denying its existence; whereas the other, the true Self, is latent and does not reveal itself directly to our consciousness.
- *The real unity and uniqueness of the Self*. There are not really two selves, two independent and separate entities. The Self is one; it manifests in different degrees of awareness and self-realisation. The reflection appears to be self-existent but has, in reality, no autonomous substantiality. It is, in other words, not a new and different light but a projection of its luminous source.

“This conception of the structure of our being includes, coordinates and arranges in an integral vision the data obtained through various observations and experiences. It offers us a wider and more comprehensive understanding of the human drama, of the conflicts and problems that confront each one of us,

and it also indicates the means of solving them and points the way to our liberation.

“In our ordinary life we are limited and bound in a thousand ways – the prey of illusions and phantasms, the slave of unrecognised complexes, tossed hither and thither by external influences, blinded and hypnotised by deceiving appearances. No wonder then that man, in such a state, is often discontented, insecure and changeable in his moods, thoughts and actions. Feeling intuitively that he is “one,” and yet finding that he is “divided unto himself,” he is bewildered and fails to understand either himself or others. No wonder that he, not knowing or understanding himself, has no self-control and is continually involved in his own mistakes and weaknesses; that so many lives are failures, or are at least limited and saddened by diseases of mind and body, or tormented by doubt, discouragement and despair. No wonder that man, in his blind passionate search for liberty and satisfaction, rebels violently at times, and at times tries to still his inner torment by throwing himself into a life of feverish activity, constant excitement, tempestuous emotion, and reckless adventure.”

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The main problem with this diagram is the way it represents the Higher Self – it makes it look like a kind of separate entity that sits on the edge of your consciousness and that the only way to access it, is to transcend everything and leave the personal self behind altogether. But this is misleading.

The Higher Self isn't a “thing” that exists separately from every other part of the psyche. In fact, **the whole psyche is embedded within the Self and arises from it**, including all the lower stuff. As [John Firman](#) says in his essay *A Suggested Change in the Egg Diagram*:

*“...it has been observed over the years that Self-realisation is not a matter of working through lower unconscious issues and then moving into the higher unconscious, as implied in the early diagram. To the contrary, many seasoned travellers on the path of Self-realisation find that the more they are in touch with the heights in themselves, the more they engage the depths.”*

But the Self isn't just the sum total of your entire experience of consciousness either – in the sense of achieving wholeness through individuation in Jungian terms. **The Higher Self isn't the same thing as the content of consciousness. It is transcendent and immanent.**

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