

# **The Organismic Psychology of Andras Angyal in Relation to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Integral Nondualism**

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COMPARATIVE studies of Eastern and Western psychological and religious concepts often make references to the works of Dr C. G. Jung, the founder of analytical psychology. This is altogether proper. Dr Jung, as is well known, has undertaken various forms of psychological research with an inevitable appeal to students of Asian thought. He has, in addition, communicated the results of his research with a sensitivity and a resourcefulness which have added to their appeal.

Similarly, the achievement of Sri Aurobindo in creating the philosophy of integral nondualism, a remarkable blend of original thought with much that is first rate and enduring in both the Eastern and the Western traditions, has led to cross comparisons from the other side. In reading Aurobindo, one constantly experiences the shock of recognition. It is as though in Aurobindo one had rediscovered the West, or as if one had come across a new Dr Jung with a startling new vocabulary and a curiously vivid and massive style. So much of Jung is there, although cut to the pattern of a different idiom: the phenomenon of introversion, the concept of the collective unconscious, the relationship of ego to self, even in a sense the classification into psychological types-these and more are in Aurobindo, inviting comparison.

But scholars, in their attempts to spread enlightenment by tracing the parallels between these two giants, have tended to lose sight of the fact that the universality of Aurobindo's thought is such that echoes of it may be found in systems of Western psychology quite apart from Dr Jung's. If Aurobindo's insights into general human nature are valid and this writer believes that they are-then inevitably the insights not merely of one but of many Western psychologists are bound to approach them sooner or later.

Many insights approaching those of Aurobindo have already occurred, in fact, among that large body of European and American psychologists who constitute what is sometimes loosely referred to as 'the organismic school'. The integralism of Sri Aurobindo and the organismic, holistic thinking of this school are radically related. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the organismic viewpoint has emerged as a reaction against earlier dualistic and pluralistic attempts to fragmentize the unfragmentizable individual.

In their recently published survey of contemporary personality theories, Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey have described the emergence of organismic psychology in these words:

Ever since Descartes in the seventeenth century split the individual into two separate yet interacting entities, body and mind, and Wundt in the nineteenth century, subscribing to the tradition of British associationism, atomized the mind by reducing it to the elementary particles of sensations, feelings, and images, there have been recurrent attempts to put the mind and the body back together and to treat the organism as a unified, organized whole. One notable attempt, which has attracted a large following within recent years, is known as the organismic or holistic viewpoint.

That this attempt to restore wholeness where fragmentation has existed is perfectly in keeping with the thought of Sri Aurobindo is apparent to anyone who has read *The Life Divine* or any of Aurobindo's major works. It is also the thesis of this paper.

The similarity of organismic theory to integralism is evident from a survey of the chief tenets of the former. The essence of organismic theory is that the human organism is a unity, a psycho-physical system in which the part and the whole are inseparable so that what affects the one affects the other as well. It sees the organism as a body-mind unit which, although it may be studied from one point of view by the physiologist, and from other points of view by the psychologist, the sociologist, the anthropologist, and the like, may not be studied successfully from any of these points of view in isolation.

Because of this preference for studying the individual in his totality, organismic theory stresses the integration and coherence of the normal personality rather than the disorganization of pathological states so commonly emphasized by many other theories-the Freudian, for example-which have taken disease as their starting point.

Likewise, because it prefers to start with the whole and proceed to the part, organismic theory may be contrasted to the behaviouristic and the stimulus-response systems of psychology, which prefer to start with isolated data-and which consequently often remain at the level of the part and so fail to attain to the level of the whole.

As a result of this emphasis on the organism in the round, organismic theory draws extremely close to integral nondualism at a crucial point; it 'assumes that the individual is motivated by one sovereign drive rather than by a plurality of drives'. To this sovereign motive, Dr Kurt Goldstein, one of the leading proponents of organismic theory, has applied the terms *self-actualization* and *self-realization*. The concept of self-actualization presupposes that there is at work within the individual a prior drift, an innate tendency towards wholeness, which operates in such a way that the individual normally moves towards the realization of his inherent potentials.

The individual in his developed form is thus not the result of a mechanical interaction with his environment. In part, to be sure, his development is a function of his environment. But the drive towards self-actualization is logically prior to the impact of the environment; consequently, the individual responds to his environment selectively. Therefore, unless the environment is hopelessly inadequate, the individual will select those elements in it to react to which will move him relentlessly in the direction of the self that he potentially is.

It is possible to see in this a parallel to the doctrine of *lila* as developed by Sri Aurobindo the doctrine of divine play which gives rise to the struggles of the isolated individual in the relentless upward thrust by which he co-operates with the awakening divinity within and eventually transcends his isolation in the attainment of the supramental self. It may also be apparent by now that organismic psychology is very much in harmony with some of the basic tenets of C. G. Jung and that Jung might well be classified among the organismic theorists of personality.

In point of fact, he has often been so classified, together with a host of other contemporary personality theorists. The list of names is long: not only Jung and Goldstein, but Angyal, Maslow, Lecky, Allport, Murray, Murphy, Rogers, Freud, and many others, despite radical differences, have in one sense or other an organismic orientation. Indeed, as Hall and Lindzey ask, ' Who is there today who is not a proponent of the main tenets of organismic theory . . . ?' Some, however, have been identified so closely with organismic theory that they have received the label of organismic theorists *Per se*.

Among these, none has developed a model of the personality, which compares more startlingly with Sri Aurobindo's conception than has Dr Andras Angyal. Dr Angyal, formerly on the faculty at Yale University, is now in private practice as a psychiatrist in Boston. Perhaps he would be astonished to see his name linked with Aurobindo's, but consider for a moment his conceptualization of the personality. To convey his sense of the totality of the individual, Angyal has coined **the word biosphere** The word refers to both the individual and the **environment, ' not as interacting parts, not as constituents which have independent existence, but as aspects of a single reality which can be separated only by abstraction' .** It is apparent from this that Angyal's view of the personality is nondual with a vengeance, and to this extent at least it is similar to Aurobindo's. But consider further.

The biosphere is seen as a system of interlocking systems so arranged that any given sub-system of the biosphere is both the container of lesser systems and the contained of a greater system or systems. The interplay of the interlocking systems creates a tension which gives rise to the energy, which is available to the personality. Moreover, the biosphere as a whole is characterized by a fundamental polarity which gives rise to its most fundamental energy. This polarity arises from the fact that the environment pulls in one direction and the organism in the other.

To these fundamental yet opposed pulls of the biosphere, Angyal has given the names of *autonomy* and *homonomy*, respectively. Autonomy is the relatively egoistic pole of the biosphere: it represents the tendency to advance one's interests by mastering the environment, by asserting oneself, so to speak, as a separate being. Homonomy is the relatively ' selfless' pole of the biosphere: it is the tendency to fit oneself to the environment by willingly subordinating oneself to something that one perceives as larger than the individual self. In place of the words autonomy and homonomy, Angyal has also used the terms *self-determination* and *self-surrender* to describe these opposing yet co-operating directional trends of the biosphere, and he has felicitously summed up the individual's relationship to them with the remark that, ' the human being comports himself *as if he were a whole of an intermediate order*'.

It would be difficult to find a closer parallel to Aurobindo's way of thinking. For who can fail to bear in it a clear echo of Aurobindo's concept of the involution and the evolution-the involution by which the eternal Brahman buries itself in the dark centre of inconscient matter waking it to that separative consciousness that provokes the individual

ego to realize its difference from all other individual centres, the evolution by which the consciousness reascends until the isolated, autonomous ego is aroused to the unitary awareness of its radical identity with all other centres of consciousness? The individual does indeed ' comport himself as if he were a whole of an intermediate order' , because that is precisely what he is: related on the one side by *avidya* or ignorance, in a principle of separateness, to a world of diversity and conflicting entities; related on the other, through *vidya* or knowledge, in a principle of homonomy, to a world of unity and absolute, seamless integration.

Nor is it fanciful to push the comparison this far. While Angyal writes as an empirical scientist and therefore makes no conclusive statements about the reality of a divine principle, he specifically allows for, even emphasizes, the possibility. ' The superordinate whole' sought by the pull towards homonomy

may be represented for a person by a social unit-family, clan, nation-by a cause, by an ideology, or by a meaningfully ordered universe.... Its clearest manifestation, however, is in the religious attitude and religious experience.

Thus, for the individual at least, there is no limit to the trend towards homonomy except the limits of his own perception, awareness, and experience.

Moreover, it would appear to be only the limiting force of one's own perception, awareness, and experience that sets up the illusion of a difference, a tension, between the poles of self-determination and self-surrender. If the biosphere is dominated by the ' single sovereign drive' of self-actualization-and Angyal agrees with Goldstein that it is-how can there be any genuine split within it? It would be absurd to suppose that a self-actualizing individual could be the result of a compromise between, say, x percent of autonomy and y percent of homonomy. Actually, autonomy and homonomy, like heredity and environment, must be seen as presupposing each other and being therefore mutually essential. Then it would follow that the fully self-actualized person represents, not a mechanical compromise but an integral fusion of 100 percent autonomy and 100 percent homonomy, which is at the basis of his selfactualization. This is evident in Hall and Lindzey's discussion of *self-expansion*, the equivalent in Angyal's system to self actualization in Goldstein's:

Although autonomy or self-determination and homonomy or self-surrender may appear to be opposed to one another, they are really two phases of a more inclusive trend of the biosphere, that of *self-expansion* ... the chief system principle of the biosphere.

In other words, since the polar tendencies of the biosphere are merely ' phases of a more inclusive trend' they are not in reality opposed but rather they are aspects, conditions, of each other. Taken together, they constitute a single phenomenon: the movement towards self-expansion. Moreover, this tendency towards wholeness and the ascent towards supermind described by Aurobindo-what are these but the same nondual, bipolar process glimpsed from slightly different points of view? Angyal tells us that ' the human being comports himself as if he were a whole of an intermediate order' . This carries the clearest possible hint of Aurobindo's concept of the overmental consciousness: that global

awareness which is separative in its action and unitary in its knowledge, tending simultaneously downward into the realm of the autonomous ego and upwards into the realm of homonymy and the eternal self. The double and simultaneous pull in opposite directions constitutes for Angyal the process of self-expansion by which the biosphere constantly differentiates, enlarges, and unifies itself. For Aurobindo it is the process by which individualization, universalization, and transcendentalization occur simultaneously, not as negations, but as functions, fulfillments, of one another. In his words:

We have ... the transcendent and the cosmic, the universal and the individual ... each member of these pairs is contained in its apparent opposite. The universal particularizes itself in the individual; the individual contains in himself all the generalities of the universal.... So too, the cosmic contains in all itself and in each thing in it the complete immanence of the transcendent.... The transcendent contains, manifests, constitutes the cosmos and by manifesting it manifests or discovers, as we may say in the old poetic sense of that word, its own infinite harmonic varieties.

For both Angyal and Aurobindo, therefore, the self has triple reference points. Angyal sees it as an intermediate system containing lesser systems and contained by a greater. Aurobindo sees it as involving a 'triple transformation' of mind to overmind to supermind. This triplicity of the self, moreover, is reflected in still another parallel between the thought of these two men.

Angyal observes that the personality has three structural dimensions. The so-called *vertical* dimension, extending 'from overt behavior at the surface of the biosphere **down into the** central core of the biosphere', suggests the depth of personality characteristic of the fully transcendentalized individual in Aurobindo's system who has attained to a realization of the *Paramatman* or transcendental self. The *transverse* dimension, consisting of 'the coordination of discrete acts into a larger, better integrated and more effective behavior unit',<sup>3</sup> suggests the breadth of personality characteristic of the fully universalized person who has attained to the realization of the *jivatman* or the individual's pure spiritual self. And the *progressive* dimension, the directionality which results when 'a series of acts brings a person closer and closer to a final goal', suggests the personal uniqueness of an individual who has attained to an effective working relationship with his *antaratman*, the inner, private self that leads one to his specific destiny.

But more even than in their agreement about the triple nature of the bipolar personality, Angyal and Aurobindo meet in their agreement about the distinguishing characteristics of the self-realized man. They are for Angyal the presence of mastery, resulting from fulfillment of the autonomous impulse, combined with the capacity to love and be loved which results from the satisfactory expression of the pull towards homonymy. Absence of mastery, in Angyal's view, leads to that peculiar feeling of powerlessness so characteristic of modern regimented man. The inability to love and be loved is the source of neurotic anxiety, which in turn is not so much a 'mental phenomenon' as 'a state of limitation of life', which narrows our lives to impoverished simulacra of what they might have been.

Love itself Angyal analyses in a manner astonishingly reminiscent of the central tenets of integral nondualism. It is based on recognition of the value and otherness of the loved one combined with an experience of *sameness* with him. This is Angyal's recognition of the phenomenon of identity-indifference so emphasized by Aurobindo. The loved one must be 'other' in order to be loved rather than merely identified with, and yet also 'the same' as oneself in order not to be alien and therefore unlovable. This is similar to Aurobindo's conception of the relationship of the individual to the Eternal: between them there is both a gulf that separates and an identity that unites, the gulf and the identity related as adoration is related to rapture.

Aurobindo's vision of the fulfilled individual is similar to Angyal's, although it differs as a lightning flash **differs from** the spurt of a match. The light created by the one is supremely beyond that created by the other, yet the outlines of what they illuminate are similar. The 'gnostic being' which Aurobindo conceives as the goal of evolution emerges as a sort of colossal, transcendentalized counterpart of the self-actualized individual described by Angyal. When he appears, he will exercise a total mastery as an autonomous individual absolutely unfettered by a reluctant environment and his capacity to love and be loved through his homonomous identity with the universe will be guaranteed by his status as

an infinite and universal being revealing ... its eternal self through the significant form and expressive power of an individual and temporal self-manifestation.

There will be no question of the anxiety, which results from the separateness of the unloving and the unlovable. Inevitably, the gnostic being will

act in a universal awareness and a harmony of his individual self with the total self, of his individual will with the total will, of his individual action with the total action.

Thus, there will be simply no difference between his status as separate from others and his status as identical with them. The assertion of his autonomy will be identical with the assertion of his homonomy. His desires, individually, will correspond exactly to the universal intention, and he will love in the same rhythm as his breathing.

Love will be for him the contact, meeting, union of self with self, of spirit with spirit, a unification of being, a power and joy and intimacy and closeness of soul to soul, of the One to the One, a joy of identity and the consequences of a diverse identity.

It will be out of this very condition of what might be called his absolute homonomy-that is, his diverse and loving identity with the One-that the limitless mastery of his absolute autonomy will arise. He will neither submit with impotence to the conditions of matter and social existence, which frustrate the individual who has failed to achieve autonomy within the biosphere, nor will he impotently retreat from life and the world in the manner of the loveless and bewildered ascetic. Instead:

The gnostic being will take up the world of Life and Matter, but he will turn and adapt it to his own truth and purpose of existence; he will mould life itself into his own spiritual image, and this

he will be able to do because he has the secret of a spiritual creation and is in communion and oneness with the Creator within him.

Thus, the polarity of the biosphere which opposes autonomy to homonomy, dividing ego from self and necessity from freedom, will stand revealed, in its fullest sense, as a polarity which, in fact, combines rather than separates, or which separates in order only to combine. The integrally selfactualized being, therefore, instead of succumbing to the conditions of matter or retreating from those conditions altogether in a flight of transcendence, will freely manifest himself in endlessly varying forms, not so much self-actualized as self-actualizing, never ' completed' but creatively continuing, not ' having arrived' but always arriving

To the biosphere, as Aurobindo would have seen it, what limits are possible? What can lie beyond self-actualization but the self-actualization beyond?