

# THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICTS

(by Assagioli's Archives in Florence) 1928

“The Ideo-emotional complexes” take shape in our unconscious, when related with the experiences of our life. They are similar to the electric accumulators. Our ideas and images correspond with the accumulators, while our psychological energy, made of emotions, feelings, impulses, desires, which are the engines of ideas, accords with the electric energy..

Often the “charge” acquires a strong and dangerous power and, even if it could be precious if positively utilized, when it is not ,it can produce destroying discharges and fateful short circuits.

“Ideo-emotional complexes” often are partially or totally unconscious; we ignore their existence inside ourselves and therefore we blindly suffer their influence, we are not able to modify them or even avoid their damages. Should we perceive that the most of our pains, weaknesses, mistakes - I mean, the most of our and others happiness - arises out of them, it would be obvious for us to make an effort in order to sound our unconscious and so to be acquainted with the mentioned “complexes”.

The most important, dangerous, harmful complexes are created as the effect of serious fights, conflicts arising inside ourselves. We mostly ignore the meaning, depth and capacity of them. They are made by two basic sectors:

- Conflicts arising between the components of our Psyche and Reality, the exterior world, the other beings
- Endo-psychological conflicts, the conflicts inside our psyche, between its inner fighting components

I. - The first crash between the human being and the exterior reality shows itself at the birth.

Extremely painful appears the first psychological impact in the newborn baby: his feeling cold, his being touched can cause painful sensations on him getting out his reaction of wailing.

Later on other painful sensations may come out: to be hungry, to feel himself wet by wee or uncomfortable, his first fears, first desires of being picked in someone's arms and being handled.

So the newborn baby discovers his dependence from the external world, from other beings.

Then he also discovers something very useful for the growing up of his psychological life: he learns that when he cries, he can obtain to remove what disturbs him and to achieve what he wishes. By his crying and shouting he comes into power over the mysterious external world of adults. His weakness, his inner powerlessness, the compassion and mercy on him improve his power in order to settle his struggles with the external world.

As the child grows up, some active powers rise inside him: he can move by himself, he can speak, he begins to gain autonomy then also a first rudimentary self-consciousness, which produces an egocentered and narcissistic feature. His aim is the unfoldment of his needs, he wants to subdue the others and the external world. He lives on himself and for himself.

Soon he will realize that the external world not always is at his service, the others often disobey, he perceives that shouting and crying not always works. It is the first conscious conflict with the external world, it can last all life through.

Adults have to be acquainted of it. For instance: a little boy spoiled by a weak mother, who, for sentimentalism or for not being disturbed, always needs to please him. That nourishes on him egocentricity and a sense of power, so that he gets on his mind the firm belief that he has the right of being pleased and that by his crying and shouting he can obtain what he wants. This attitude can stay grounded and go on all life through. It refers to the aim of adapting the external reality to oneself, and not adapt oneself to the outside circumstances.

Here is the problem, the conflict for each of us. Our wellness or our unhappiness are connected with the solution of it. In order to work it out we need to clearly recognize the exterior reality with its needs, the reality of other people, their rights similar to ours. We have to give up our egocentricity, our powerful instincts and desires and many other agreements and self-restrictions.

This adjustment is supported by:

- Our being scared by reactions, punishments from people and life
- A wholesome extroversion, the interest towards the external world, the awakening of trends, the pleasure of playing, of getting over difficulties, of fighting.
- The revival of our emotional level, of gratitude and admiration feelings, being aware that emotion magnetizes emotion, that love and kindness are more powerful than crying and being naughty.

Unfortunately it is often impossible to find a right and harmonious relationship with people and reality.

The reasons are:

- A nervous and psychological hypersensibility, which increases the power of our feelings
- To be scared stiff, which leads to real phobias
- Lack of play, of active trends and interest towards the external world
- Strong painful feelings coming from serious diseases, ruthless or severe treatments.
- Lack of care, of love
- Extreme self-centered behaviour

Conflicts so go on, get stronger, become worse.

The main results are:

- To seek comfort in illness as a defence and a reward: it draws attention, love, compassion. An unhealthy pleasure on mercy. This is why many neuropsychological diseases grow up. It is an unconscious process, which often gets by against the desires of the waking conscience.
- To shelter on a fancy world: "the dreamers". "Fear of living", fear of suffering. Partial overcoming of these attitudes and regressions when the conflict with reality gets stronger

- Rebellions acts towards life and human beings. A deep grudge against life and God. Rejection of suffering. Criticism of Life. Pessimism.
- A conflict with Life on an ideal foundation. Not a selfish rebellion, but an ordinary life overcoming. Inner power of modifying. Use of Imagination. Inventors. Active idealists. Reformers. Artists. Apostles.

The conflict as a dynamic element, towards a higher, lighter life in order to spiritualize the world, the ordinary reality.

#### OTHER CONFLICTS TOWARDS THE EXTERNAL REALITY

Just to complete the investigation of the problem, it is important to speak about some particular conflicts dealing with the external reality; they often become interior conflicts.

They deserve a special interest, as they are many and painful, they set up the most critical experiences in our life.

The first one is connected with the loss of a deeply loved person. Here we realize how steady can they be the binds holding together two human beings, how much moving the emotional attachments, how intimate the psychological identifications, so that they can succeed in doing a real blending of souls.

He who lies deprived of his beloved person feels as if something essential had been torn away from himself, a deep side of himself, his reason of life. Firstly the crisis, the emotional storm reveals itself so strong that nor the person or the others can still it. It is the most severe and dangerous moment. Some people, unable to dam the stream, not being cherished, lacking in emotional attachments, can commit suicide or show signs of madness. These extreme events are fortunately uncommon. Anyway a severe depression, or some nervous and psychological diseases. Rough rebellions, morbidity, strong apathies often turn up.

Similar are the reactions to conflicts when the beloved person is not ripped by death, even she doesn't re-

turn the same passion she inspired or she gets detached, showing herself unworthy. These are the famous love disappointments, too often not held on the due account. It's easy to show a spirit of contradiction towards human creatures, they are frequently primitive, elementary beings, blinded by their passion. But those who are in the mood of joking on them, are they really superior, only because they have lack of feeling, they are hard-hearted, and so, being poor and selfish, they appear preserved from these tempests?

The importance, the weight of an event, the intensity of a suffering are subjective, connected with the inner development and the resources on anyone. As for a child, a pain, a conflict we look as a small and "childish" disease, may be a serious thing; it may upset him and make him sick; the same thing is about the "baby souls", so dominated by their passion, deprived of a wider vision, of a strong will. That's why for them love disappointments are bitter tragedies. A strong suffering is wholesome, even if blind and weak, so we always must have respect and lighted compassion to it. Passions are called "heartbroken diseases". We have to look after and take care of them as for a sick person.

It would be fine if any person who, on an unconscious and cynical attitude, is used to have a thoughtless behaviour, joking about these passion fires, could perceive how serious outcomes his attitude can lead out, how many moral downfalls, and if he would be able to remind that the mentioned fire could collapse even himself. In situations like that it often happens a transmutation of the emotional energy, similar to the change of polarity. Love becomes hate and can lead up to destroying actions not against himself, but against the person who gave rise to the passion.

Which is the right attitude, which therapy towards these painful conflicts? Connected to these events the best thing is Prevention. We should set up a new vision: to create an Education and Discipline of feeling and emotion. It would be hoped for investigating resolutely one's own heart, testing it in courage, free from an incorrect sentimentalism, in order to inquire into the real natu-

re and the unconscious roots of our emotions and attachments. We have to be aware of the fact that love on its different shapes (maternal, paternal, filial, conjugal) is certainly something beautiful, deserving respect and admiration, a source of high sacrifices. But it can also have lower aspects, extreme and damaging; it requires to be enlightened, dominated, turned and compensated for other sides not less essential in our life.

A too much passionate, trembling, exclusive love, a blind fondness, which absorbs the whole life, is not a good thing either to the one who feels like that or to the person who is the object, because he gets limited, spoiled and oppressed. A clear and objective analysis shows how selfish this love can be, how often we love ourselves in our beloved partner and how dangerous it can be to create a mutual selfishness. .. Therefore ideas, feelings, actions, even if right and good, when they aim to take over in an exclusive way a human being become damaging. Man is, on his essential being, and must practically become more extensive than any single ingredients of which he is made up. He is and he has to become the master and not the slave to his own inner motions.

This doesn't mean that we have to love less, but to love better, on a enlightened, wiser and noble-minded way. It is a duty towards the beloved one, a sign of a higher love to turn one's own feeling on a beneficial mood for both the partners, to produce something more extensive, fruitful and enlivening instead of being overwhelmed by a passive love, which risks to become a narrow, muddy and oppressive love. In order to carry out this discipline, this raising, elevation and purification in our emotional section, it can be a help to grow a harmonious development of our inner means and first of all a transpersonal concept of life.

We don't have to stay always deep inside our personality, nor on our inner best fondness. It would be better for us every now and then to elevate our mind to a wide and impersonal concept of the world; to become aware of the ample Life penetrating the Universe, feeling as if we were a particle of that life, setting out, as many other people, for a glorious destination.

Anyone can do it, as for one's own beliefs and choices. The main thing, in an educational and therapeutic point of view, is to do , any could be the way, to raise oneself to the superconscious sphere, to get an alive inner connection with the wider reality around us. It will be useful for us if this connection will arise a deep motion of admiration, adherence, love A wide and impersonal love, yet lively and fervent, it will light up all our individual loves, will frame them on a larger background. So then, if misfortune knocks at our door, if a cheerful person dies, if a nice emotional gesture had no appreciation or return, if a loved but unworthy person leaves us, we shall get ready, in strength and light, to face it all, without being swept away. And even if we shall deeply suffer, we will be stronger than our sorrow and able to catch an opportunity for a new inner elevation.

Even if you don't have this educational setting, the inner conflict caused by a tragic event may become an elevation investment. After the starting storming and turbulent period, when the violent rebellion and moments of prostration are over, our soul looks for a new reason of life, still it doesn't find it in the ordinary life, in the usual interests by this time cold and colourless, now perceived as barren and mean. So the soul is powerfully attracted by the mystery where the beloved person has been wrapped in, it listens sometimes to a call, a love connection pushing it towards the High. So, slowly or quickly, it blooms to a higher life and it receives supporting, encouraging ,transforming glimpses and lightings. These spiritual revivals, these flowerings over the ruins, caused by the storm, are frequently recurring, beautiful and cheering...

Even the conflict can be made less hard, the trouble less worrying, the solution less uncertain, more speedy and harmonic by an adequate inner forming training.

This acknowledgement should stimulate people to study, to oneself mastery, discipline, harmonization with the arising of our inner energies.

KNOWING ONESELF  
 MASTERING ONESELF  
 TRANSFORMING ONESELF

## II. THE INTRAPSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICTS (inner struggles)

We will talk about struggles inside ourselves, the intrapsychological or inner conflicts.

Inside ourselves we can perceive a continuous getting cross at many elements, the different tendencies inside ourselves, mixed and conflicting components, they all want to live and express themselves. That's why conflicts are many and different.

Here are the main kinds :

- Conflicts between inferior and superior elements, related with instincts and passion on one side and reason, sense of duty and moral consciousness on the other. It is the most popular and common conflict. It represents one central problem in every human being connected with health, wellbeing, destiny.
- Professional, traditional attitude: blame of the inferior elements. Any effort directed towards the attainment of repression, suppression, killing. The extreme expression of this attitude is to consider some of the sides in our nature as "bad", nasty, diabolic. It is connected with mistakes, pains and nervous illnesses.
- The violent effort oriented to suppress vital aspects in ourselves produces the following results.

When the shapes of inhibition dominate, instinctual and passionate

energies are repressed and thrown into the unconscious. They may be left chained, and the personality keeps poor and barren, getting cold, hard ,uncomprehensive, unable to vibrate and love. It is virtuous and pure, but its quality is negative, fruitless.

Often the alive repressed elements do not accept their enslavement, looking for different paths in order to assert themselves.

Often it happens they discharge the repressed energies on the body, producing different nervous and psychological diseases, falling into hysterics or moral depressions. Sometimes violent revolts take place: some people, they thought they had self-control, property, morals, ethics may fall a prey to overpowering passions.

Comparison: a river, kept too narrow, breaks and floods.

Another comparison: they deceive the individual conscience, so we have persons who live by half measures and goon pretending. They swindle themselves, they don't want to live reality. These negative effects show how this constraint is not right or good, it is not necessary, not taken into account even by those who have strong religious beliefs.

I'm happy to give the influential opinion of a religious man Father Maturin on his book "About Knowledge and Self inner Power" , really interesting to read.

“The solution of conflicts lies in using vital energies” We will look over later which are the methods. Sometimes the conflict takes a different shape: a pressing movement takes place to the detriment of the others, bloodsucking them like a vampire, it soaks up their energy

## CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT EGO

- What we are
  - What we think we are
  - What we would like to be
  - What others think we are
  - What others would like we were
  - What others evoke on ourselves
  - What we would like to represent
  - What we can become
- (by Pirandello “One, no one, 100 hundred thousand)

It is a complicated matter, but we must work out the problem. We have to be neutral to the judgment of the others

There are different situations and types.

- The simple elementary self fulfilment. Security. Good middle-class persons. Self-love. Inflation (Jung)
- Tendency to self overestimation, but on an inner uncertainty. Looking for an external confirmation. Wishing to be appreciated. Masks of personality (Jung) hiding poorness or vacuum.
- More active types whose sense of inferiority creates a compensatory or an ipercompensatory reaction  
An example: the shy and fearful guy who talks threateningly, the weak person who behaves as an overbearing one
- Inconstant types: fluctuations between self overvaluation and devaluation (cyclothymia). Mistakes on the quality: we often overrate the conscious components and undervalue the unconscious sides. Sometimes we depreciate what we possess and overvalue our lacking qualities

Conflicts with the images of others (masks), which change into suggestions, models, nightmares on ourselves. What others think we are. Significance of the opinions from those who we love, esteem, worship (parents). Dreadful effects by not being trusted. What others would like we were: images, ideals projected by parents, often accepted on childhood. Conflicts with our real nature Sometimes the mask goes over the real personality. Sometimes freedom conquered after painful struggles, compromises and not harmonic fusions. Conflicts between superconscious tendencies. Spiritual fulfilment drama. Struggle between the Self and the Personality. Efforts to get away...

Conflicts between what we are at the moment and what we would like to be

(the opposite of what before)

The ideal :source of development and of discouragement. We should be glad of being discontented

Yearning, fruitful labour. To hold oneself in hand. To collaborate with unconscious energies. To create a real, true adequate ideal, not an unfeasible or unsuitable ideal.

A task of self acknowledge and self fulfilment  
From Chaos to Cosmos

---

Roberto Assagioli

9

## PROBLEMS ARE NOT SOLVED THEY ARE FORGOTTEN

*DIANA:* Assagioli often made very simple - classic statements - about humanity, about life and about evolution, that carried a depth and a potency that we sometimes miss. If we look more closely at these Zen-like statements we find out how deeply meaningful they really are and how they can provide us with a continuity of revelation.

What a wise person says and repeats again and again is not by accident, yet they may sound like Reader’s Digest phrases. These classic Assagiolian phrases were a point of arrival for Assagioli. They were the culmination or if you want the sublimation of a lifetime of work. We will revisit some of them so can bring them alive again. This is not to glorify Assagioli. When I was studying with Assagioli, he said very clearly to me “In your enthusiasm, do not give me prominence. Do not promote me - please have restraint”. Then he went on to say that: “You know it all. What I have to tell people is not particularly wise. You know it all and the only thing I do is perhaps to add some maturity to it by hammering the