

that allows to live in perfect joy, imperturbable and yet throbbing with love and understanding.

One of the most shining examples of human wisdom is certainly Socrates, capable of accepting his own death with detachment and serenity. We remember Socrates as associated with the Love/Wisdom type also because his philosophical teaching starts from the very famous aphorism “*Know thyself*”, that, borrowed from a far older wisdom, used to warn and still warns men to seek in themselves the reasons of Being and Life, to understand how actions, emotions and thoughts operate (starting the search for knowledge) and especially to weave a network of straight relationships with their fellow human beings. Socrates urges men to be aware of their non-knowledge and urges them, through *ars maieutica*, to the quest for Truth, or Virtue, intended primarily as a cure for their soul. In this way it is possible to achieve wisdom, liberation from conditioning and from the fear of death, as the philosopher beautifully demonstrated at the time of his condemnation and death.

We cannot forget, as a shining example of the Love typology, one of the most beloved men of all time, Saint Francis of Assisi, capable of expressing the power of his Being as pure Love towards every living being, without distinction and without any preference.

Let us remember the essence of this precept of Love as expressed in the *Canticle of Creatures*, where Francis shows a simplicity in his approach to God, which, however, is not absence of depth, as Francis tends to the celebration of divine Glory through ecstasy, rather than through speculation and knowledge. Man, according to the saint, is called to a greater moral responsibility than “brothers” and “sisters” of the other kingdoms of nature, because man is endowed with free will and can consciously turn to the respect of the divine law and to the imitation of Christ. In Assagioli we find the Second Human Type described as follows:

“God, in his most universal, transcendent, absolute aspect is the Whole, and therefore we cannot attribute to Him any particular quality or note in preference to the others, as the manifested God of our Solar System is above all Love. The Law of Life is the Law of Love. But this Divine Love is to be understood in the highest, purest, most universal sense. Love was the profound reason that determined the manifestation, and it is Love that maintains its order and rhythm. Love guides all Beings along the Way of Return to the Father; Love works for the perfection of all that exists. Love creates the forms that temporarily harbour the Life hidden in them, and Love itself produces the disintegration of those forms, so that Life may progress further. Therefore, this Love is Supreme Wisdom. (...)”

Giuliana Pellizzoni

THE INNER THEATER FROM CONFLICT TOWARDS PEACE

Translation by Greta Bianchi

*“Perhaps all the dragons in our lives
are princesses who are only waiting
to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage.
Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest
essence,
something helpless that wants our love”*

Rainer Maria Rilke

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Working with “sub-personalities” (or “inner characters”) is essential in Psychosynthesis and there are many techniques and methods that can be adopted to do it effectively, both working in group or as individuals.

The modality that I suggest comes from an experience and a research that are ongoing for about twelve years and is based on the theatrical representation of sub-personalities. It is therefore an activity for a Psychosynthesis group. To be precise, it should be added that some techniques are derived from Gestalt therapy (Fritz Perls), Bioenergetics (Alexander Lowen), Psychodrama (Jacob Levi Moreno) and from the Systemic approach (Bert Hellinger).

I also want to emphasize how this contribution refers to a work “with” the sub-personalities. That is, it refers to the recognition, the re-appropriation and, finally, the reconciliation with one’s own elements and psychic forces existing both in consciousness and in the unconscious: joy, anger and pain; trust and shame; courage and fear; generosity, selfishness and egocentrism; shortcomings and the need to grow; phantasmatic desires but also aspirations, values, authentic tendencies of one’s own Self or Soul.

The path that goes from the recognition of these elements and psychic forces, and the eventual conflict between them, to their possible reconciliation, thus towards authentic peace, can only follow the “red path” of

the heart. Hence central is the “scene” of affections, of the heart.

Furthermore, I do not see how the process of integration and synthesis of the human personality around its authentic Center, at its living and pulsing heart, can take place on a conceptual, theoretical level, without paying a bitter price: the self-deception and a consequent, sad and inevitable estrangement from oneself. With the resulting persistence and often worsening of the discomfort for oneself and others.

The **goal** is therefore to learn to know, recognize and above all accept the so-called “inner characters” (or sub-personalities), trying to acquire a more agile mastery of them from the “SELF-director’s” side. The **goal** is the transformation of these sub-personalities into centers of psychic energy that can contribute to an authentic evolution of the whole personality, in a harmonious and self-actualizing way.

Finally, as a conclusion of this brief introduction, I am pleased to mention the contribution of Daniele De Paolis who, with his collection of notes *L’IO e le sue maschere* (from which I have freely drawn), makes an interesting comparison and integration of the thought of Assagioli with that of other authors.

PRESENTATION OF THE “INNER THEATER”

Eastern philosophers (Vedanta) like to say that the central core of the being is a mirror: it reflects everything that comes before it, it is a pure witness. Consequently, everything happens *before* the mirror, it does not happen *to* the mirror. Therefore, according to this approach, the goal of a man is to become a mirror, while what normally happens is that we are an “impressionable film” that retains, more or less clearly, thousands and thousands of images. And so, of ideas, emotions, behaviors.

This is the mechanism of identification by which the self identifies itself gradually with the various contents of consciousness. And the identification is the premise for the constitution of sub-personalities.

The process of *adaptation* to the outside world and *assimilation* of it within oneself lasts a lifetime. It’s a continuous succession of identifications.

We identify with our remote heritage (collective uncon-

scious), with hereditary/family-related elements (parents and ancestors), with external influences (pre-natal time, early childhood, adolescence, social environment, club, spirit of the age or generation, charm of close personalities, powerful models), with those roles that escape the conscious direction of the “Self-Director” and end up activating unconsciously, out of control, under the stimulus of needs and wounds. But also, out of desires and aspirations (roles of power, of care, of aggregation, of ascetic isolation, of sociality, of protagonism).

The **need**, meaning the experience of what we lack, is in fact always at the basis of the constitution of a sub-personality. Behind it there is almost always a **wound**, especially in the case of hindering sub-personalities.

Nevertheless every evolutionary advancement, every psycho-spiritual development can be considered as one series of “disidentifications” from obstructing elements and of “identifications” with more and more facilitating elements, up to the “auto-identification” or identification with the Self, that is with what we really are, the Soul.¹ The first step is therefore to recognize how and to which extent we have adapted, identified, beginning with the observation, in the present, of the “inner characters” that most often come automatically into play, following a repetitive, well-tested, unconscious “script”, which tends to obstruct or facilitate us. As always, it is good to start from the “known”, from the here and now of consciousness.

Phase 1 - The introduction of participants.

It begins with a “**Business Card**”, sharing directly in groups essential information that one wants to give to others about their “person”, in the present moment.

It could be completed on a sheet, in a few lines, and then read aloud.

Another round follows, this time about “**Meaningful Sharing**”: after one short reflective meditation, write down and then refer the motivations, the existential moment (on a physical-sensorial, emotional, affective level), the expectations, the present state of mind.

Then move on to a “**walking meditation**”, on **three levels**.

Each level must be distinguished from the one that follows: 1) feeling one's own grounding (support of the feet on the ground, balance, rhythm in the movement, breath, bodily sensations, images, emotions, any memories or associations); 2) perceiving the surrounding environment (shapes, colors, volumes - including the physical ones of the companions -, objects, smells, sounds, tactile perceptions if stopping to touch something or someone, lingering no longer than the equivalent time of three breaths); 3) meeting the gaze of the others (first moving, without pausing, then choosing someone and pausing, always for a time of at least three breaths).

It follows a moment of anchoring, through writing, of the self-observed salient elements in the various stages of the walking meditation experience.

Sharing in pairs.

Sharing in group.

Phase 2 – The “Messenger cushion”.

The host places a small round or square cushion in the center of the circle, on the ground. Preferably of light, relaxing colors.

The cushion represents the means, the vehicle through which it is possible to deliver a message to another companion. Which message?

Everybody starts listening to emotions, feelings, images, thoughts, that others evoke in themselves: a look, a tone of voice, a gesture, a shared experience or an apparent distance... Among all the members of the group is precisely that which hits us, that makes something ring inside us. It does not matter if “beautiful or ugly”, appreciable or unappreciable. We are a mirror before which all this happens. Therefore, we mirror, accurately, without interpreting, judging, defining. Simply, it is in us that that movement happens. The other is a simple stimulus, blameless and neutral in its very essence of mirror.

At this point, whoever wants to start can get up, collect the pillow from the ground in the center of the circle and bring it to the other, delivering it along with a word, an image, a feeling, an emotion that is stated aloud. It is not allowed to throw it, nor to send it via other participants.

Each one is responsible for his own actions, his own body and gestural expression. He can however record in himself the presence of possible impulses or emotions. The rule of SILENCE remains, except for the declaration of the “message”. At this stage no comments, questions, clarifications or others are allowed.

Being the receiver, accept the pillow and feel what is the effect of the “Message” (Do I recognize it, do I feel it mine or not ... and what emotions do I feel?). Then look for someone to bring the pillow to, someone who represents your stimulus. Bear in mind that the same person could send us different stimuli, in different moments of the dynamic: it is his “multiple soul” that acts unconsciously. It is our that responds. We can observe, listen to all this transmitting and receiving between our unconscious and that of the others.

If we do not detect any external stimulus, nor any reaction in us, we can put the pillow on the ground in the center of the circle. There it will remain, until someone wants to get up for taking it and delivering it again, together with his “message”.

After a certain time, which can vary depending on the composition and “personality” of the group, but still sufficient to create a more authentic atmosphere, open and free from judgment, the host announces the end of the dynamic.

This second phase ends with the writing down of the contents that have interchanged in one's own consciousness: impulses, emotions, images, associations, thoughts ... But without binding them specifically to the single person who stimulated them. This is very important, is tantamount to a “withdrawal of the projection on the other”, therefore to an assumption of personal responsibility. The other, in fact, was only an intermediary, someone who acted *before* our mirror.

This is why it is important to take note, to observe what stirred inside us and how. A first list of images, emotions, impulses, behaviors emerges, that are ours to work on. They can be put in relation, linked by type, intensity, topic that they have in common.

Sharing in group.

Phase 3 - The “audition” of inner characters.

On a sheet divided vertically into two columns, with a central “SELF” inscribed in a circle with a dot in the middle that represents it, describe the “hindering” characters (on the left) e the “facilitating” ones (on the right). Those that we recognize in us at the moment, in the different “existential areas” (family, work, friendship, couple, interests, passions). In order to do this, we can draw on the list previously obtained from the activity of the “messenger cushion”.

For each character, describe age, behavior, posture, the theme it represents, the need that it embodies, the strategies that it adopts to obtain satisfaction, the automatisms belonging to his “script”.

Sharing in pairs.

Now the “inner characters” are introduced to the group, giving each one a name or a nickname (it is important to establish a link of recognition, of familiarity), an age, the main characteristics, the need represented, the ways to satisfy it responding to a “repetitive script”.

This second elaboration is facilitated by the previous sharing in pairs.

At this point, the host could read aloud the following words of Assagioli:

“If we look at ourselves and others sincerely, without preconceptions and illusions, we must recognize, or rather note, that each of us represents or recites various parts in life.

This is inevitable and it constitutes the texture of our interpersonal and social relationships. But mostly we perform our roles unconsciously, without realizing it, and therefore we perform badly! ... The “playing a role” is a psychosynthetic technique of crucial importance. One could perhaps consider it as the central technique of the art of living, with which all the others are connected to and from which in a certain sense they depend “.²

Phase 4 - The choice of two “characters” to represent.

Proceed to the choice of only two characters to represent. This is because a polarity (often compensatory) emerges almost always, or even a real conflict between opposing elements. But also because more characters could lead to confusion or could cause excessive difficulty to the host. Each participant gives a very detailed description of them to the group.

The person who plays the role of “director” chooses the “actors”, two companions of the group that are suitable to interpret their “inner characters”, to whom he offers the roles and explain how to behave, what to say. Obviously, they can accept or refuse the assignment, possibly justifying the rejection.

The actors ask the director questions about their character, in order to better understand the profile, the characteristics.

Each character has his own mandate, his own **“initial script”** that is not written, it is not rigid, but it is useful to start the representation. Once started, every character can improvise.

Phase 5 - The creation of the “SET” and the staging.

The public, which also plays the role of “Witness” (supporting the director and the actors), forms a semi-circle with the chairs. At the center of the semi-circle, a little further, is placed the chair of the “SELF-director”. Behind it, is positioned the chair of the host who plays the role of the “Prompter-inspirer” (the Self). In front of it, at a distance, in the space of the “SET”, there are only two empty chairs available for the actors.

Everyone sits on their chairs at designated places. The assignment is that of SILENCE.

The director gets up, goes in front of the actors and, one at a time, invites them to get up and lead them gently, putting his hands on their shoulders, to a spot of the set that he chooses. He also decides in which position, in which posture each actor must stand. Afterwards, the director goes back to his seat. The representation begins.

The two actors stand still on the scene, in silence, and the director observes them.

Whenever he wants, the director can activate each actor

(even at different times) with a **first touch** on the shoulder and from that moment on the characters can act, they can move but they **cannot talk**. The director sits back down and observes.

When he wants, with a **second touch** on the shoulder, he can give the actors a **voice**. From that moment each character can move, talk, both on his own, following his “initial script” and also interacting with the other one. That is, they improvise.

There is no fixed plot to follow, nor a fixed goal to achieve, but only to act following what gradually happens on the emotional level.

Each actor’s only mandate is to adhere to his role, the “initial script” that the director has given him; until he “feels” his own emotional-affective level moving, changing, becoming something different. Throughout the whole staging, **the director** has the power to stop the action by saying: “STOP”. If he wants, he can also whisper in the ear of a character a suggestion (short, simple), making sure that one does not hear those of the other. When he wants to start again, he says: “ACTION”.

The director can also confer with the “Prompter-inspirer” always behind him (the Self is unconscious ...), without turning completely to look at his face. He can only listen to the words, the voice, the tone, the inflection.

The “**Prompter -inspirer**”, during the whole performance, can decide if he wants to stay in silence, to put a hand or both on the director’s back, to talk to him for encouragement; or to point out (as it often happens) that the sub-personality of the “judge” or “super-ego” is taking over the “director’s chair”.

In short, he can evaluate moment by moment how and if to step in on the basis of his own sensitivity and intuitive ability, thus disidentifying (to the extent possible) from his subpersonalities.

The **public** assists, observes, listens, experiences the emotions in silence. Everyone can write down if something significant is happening inside him.

The representation lasts about 20 minutes.

The host decides when it is over, even if there are open or incomplete *gestalt*.

If necessary, it will be his duty to rephrase and make sense also of the “Interruption”.

Phase 6 - Sharing after the representation.

Once the performance is over, the actors remain on the set, sitting on the two chairs. The director is sitting on his. First of all, the actors share, bringing what they have experienced in their role, at every level.

Then the director reports what his “characters” on stage communicated to him, what moved inside him. Finally, the public gives its feed-back (without judging, interpreting or “reviewing”) about what was experienced throughout the performance (resonance, affinity, sympathies/dislikes or other).

Lastly the “SELF-director” can talk to his “characters”, one at a time. He can share his emotional experience, his thoughts, his observations. He can interact, getting up and facing each of them, he can also ask to touch them.

The “characters” too can talk, communicate, answer, make requests or other.

Above all, the “SELF-director” can ask himself: “**What do I want to do with these characters of mine?**” And he can announce his answer with an intention, a resolution, a proposal. Or with a silent gesture.

The public - “witness” can close with an applause. Pause.

New representation (and then on, using all the time available).

Final group sharing.