

Knowing how to be alone therefore represents a precious resource that allows us to get in touch with one's intimacy, to reorganize ideas, process pains, and even forced isolation and conditions at the limit of endurance can be a boost to growth, collaborating with the inevitable, as many have testified, including our Assagioli, author of "Freedom in Jail".

"The art and technique of silence" which invites us to counter the civilization of noise that leads us to no longer bear silence, not to talk nonsense without first thinking and reflecting and to consider the internal silence, of emotions, of desires, of thoughts, of imagination that aim to slow down the activity. Silence is, therefore, *positive spiritual energy* and it is therefore that we are advised to practice silence, as Aurobindo and Gandhi did, through the various stages of meditation, passing from recollection to elevation towards the Soul, obtaining regeneration of all personal aspects, and I conclude.

It is from our inner sanctuary that our prayers can flow, like this poem by Tagore with which I close my reflections.

*I do not want to pray to be protected from dangers,
but to challenge them fearlessly.*

*I don't want to beg for relief from pain,
but to have the heart to conquer it.*

*I do not want to seek allies in the battles of life,
but my invigoration.*

*Grant me, my God,
to acknowledge the help of your hand
even in defeat and suffering.*

LONELINESS AND HOPE

Translation by Damiano Pagani / Gordon Leonard Symons

Loneliness is really an ugly beast, in many ways. I would have liked to write only about this feeling, because we live it largely on a physical level (feeling far away, distant, separate), but there is also a mental loneliness ("no one shares my ideas", for example), an emotional loneliness (anguish, fear). There can also be a desire for solitude, as well as images, intuitions that can arise from introspection, the result of a moment of meditation and an act of will. These different forms of loneliness offer a call to psychic functions, and in addition to those mentioned, there is also a spiritual one.

Precisely referring to this inner loneliness, I wanted to add the term hope to the title, because it is very close to the word faith, trust, close to the noetic dimension of life, as Viktor Frankl⁽¹⁾ would say, true nourishment of the soul. But in reality, the one who caused me to reformulate the title was Roberto Assagioli himself, in particular what he wrote about the experience of loneliness. I remember that in Psychosynthesis we always talk about verifiable and observable experiences, this is the true scientific attitude.

His last writing, the first lesson of the 1974 Annual Course of Psychosynthesis, a few months before his death, is entitled 'Loneliness and its overcoming through communication and understanding'⁽²⁾; in it he describes it as 'an experience, neither definitive nor essential. It is a stage, a temporary subjective condition. It can alternate and eventually be replaced by a genuine lived experience of interpersonal and inter-individual and between groups communications (...).'

At the beginning of the lesson he reports a news story linked to the suicide of two teenagers. Their evil consisted of psychological loneliness, in the total lack of any communication and understanding, not only on the part of the parents, but also of the teachers and

schoolmates; when interviewed, some of them reported a bitter reality: *'No, sometimes not even friends can help you. Indeed, you expect too much especially from them and you are the more disappointed'*. And again, they added: *'At 15 it is easy to think of death as the solution to all problems.'*

After this dramatic beginning, the writing continues by reiterating the absolute need for knowledge of psychology within the educational landscape, but above all it sheds light on the main forms of loneliness that dwell in the human soul. First of all, that of the *introvert*, closed in on himself and unable to communicate with the outside world; then the loneliness of the *extrovert*, perhaps even more dramatic, as the person appears open and sociable, but only superficially, in reality without ever completely opening up and keeping everything within himself. Finally, he mentions the *existential* loneliness which consists of the lack of any vision or feeling of a spiritual nature.

Assagioli therefore invites us to the psychological study of personality, to study the various human types, differential psychology, to recognize the value of non-aggressive communication, in the form of dialogue, and to develop a higher understanding, based on empathy and mutual respect.

So far, the thoughts of Roberto Assagioli, many ideas, reflections, which deserve a careful reading of the 1974 lesson which was part of a series of conferences scheduled for the entire year of the Institute. The lectures were open to the public and held by various of his students and collaborators. Later they were transcribed from the recordings, mimeographed and made available to those who wanted to study the subject matter. Even today they can be requested from the Institute or the Centers to which one is affiliated.

But now I offer you part of my experience on these two themes, in all modesty with respect to the large study of Roberto Assagioli, in the hope of being a stimulus and reflection.

Given the period from which we come, I refer to the lockdown of last spring due to the pandemic, the experience of loneliness, of isolation (which, we will see, are two different experiences) have been, and are, a sensation that many people have experienced, forcibly, albeit with different implications.

Let's immediately clarify the distinction between the two terms, referring to the Devoto-Oli dictionary. By loneliness we mean an *'Exclusion from any relationship of presence or proximity of others, desired or sought after as a reason for peace or intimacy, or suffered as a result of a total lack of affection, support and comfort'*. Isolation, on the other hand, means: *'Exclusion from relationships or contacts with the surrounding environment, mostly motivated by reasons of safety or incompatibility.'*

To open and close the discussion on quarantine, of physical distancing from others, some have surprisingly

experienced the pleasant sensation of discovering and enjoying their own company, of appreciating the unexpected occasion of introspection due to staying at home alone, even if connected with others through web technology (in particular). Others, on the other hand, while living in a family unit, yearned for moments of solitude, perhaps closed in the bathroom, thus muffling the background of the television always on or the voices of family members.

This does not mean that for others the experience of isolation was not a source of discomfort; then the consideration returns that for some people loneliness can represent a moment of recollection, of self-observation, therefore a moment of self-knowledge and individual growth, for others only a source of discomfort, loss, up to real depressive experience.

Entering into the specific theme, loneliness and hope, I want to talk to you about the image on the poster that advertises a course that I will hold at the Center. There is a stem with two blue flowers in the middle of other white flowers, a ground, almost marshy, gray-green; in the distance you can see hills, always green in color, although slightly lighter, and a sky, not exactly uniform, but of pink shades. Well, that image is a photo of one of my paintings that I keep in my professional studio. As a girl I painted four oil paintings, three hanging on a wall in front of my chair and one behind my back. The three in front of my gaze represent moments of my adolescent and youthful journey, the other painting, behind me, represents what would become my future, to be exact a future that, to this day, is still ongoing. I remember the title of a book by Vittorio Gassman that struck me a lot at the time: *'Un grande future alle spalle'* (A great future behind us - ed).

I will not tell you the story of my first three paintings, but only of the one represented on the poster; it was only after many years that I understood that those four paintings were a synthesis of important moments in my life, past, present and future.

Returning to the painting in question, if you look closely, there is a slender, young stem, however well rooted in the ground, a soil, despite the marshy color, evidently nourishing it. The stem has grown in height, perhaps precisely to look for the rosy sky, source of hope, of

a serene, tender future vision. In fact, at the time, I had recently been engaged and, after many years of loneliness, of small affective relationships, knowing that a person wanted to spend the rest of his life with me, to build a family, was an infinite joy. The two flowers at the top meant that a couple had been born and other lives could sprout from this. This painting in my studio represents hope and symbolizes how from a past of loneliness, made up of light/dark moments, one can go up and look for the Light, or at least a flare. The stem is thin because the personality has grown with that weight of an existential malaise.

From an early age, I wondered about issues greater than myself. I looked at the sky, at the stars and I thought I came from some distant planet. I was talking to the moon and it seemed to me that neither my parents nor the few friends I had understood my state of mind, my sense of loneliness, but above all the feeling of being a fish out of water. I was certainly a shy, insecure child, and in poor health. In short, I didn't feel rooted in life at all. Among other things, after so many years I realized that I probably must have been dyslexic; having been born in December, I was increasingly behind in learning compared to my classmates, so my school results weren't that great.

I'm not rewriting a *'Cuore'* (Heart, an Italian book by Edmondo de Amicis – ed), but I assure you that childhood, for me, as for other children, was not a serene experience. The constant experience that, paradoxically, always kept me company, was loneliness. Especially the one that insinuates itself into the heart like a thin blade and almost takes your breath away, not so much when you are physically alone, in a home environment or outside, but when we are together with other people, perhaps even physically close to, but so far from us and with a language that, in the inner silence, appears only as a lip movement with sounds and nothing more. A sort of tragic theater where everyone plays a character, without knowing the origin of the text. Pessimistic view? Yes, I was attracted to Schopenhauer, but many teenagers and others were fascinated by him.

Therefore, you can imagine what the encounter with Psychosynthesis, which took place at a very young age, was for me. I skipped all the passages of my

psychosynthetic epic, important meetings, experiences, decisions, and went to the heart of the matter, to the proposal of the psychosynthetic vision that immediately won me over.

The evolutionary tension of the human being that starts from the search for harmony in the personality, towards a supreme synthesis, yearned even without ever reaching it, but which guides us, orients us in the panorama of living, leads me to a consideration that I want to share with you.

One is born from a mother's body and immediately experiences separation, the so-called birth trauma, which Freud recognizes as the first traumatic event for every individual. Then for the whole course of life we are alone within ourselves, with our thoughts, feelings, emotions, alone, but at the same time in the company of other individuals who should help us discover the world. At the beginning the human dyad, mother/child, and then the family and social environment. Let us dwell on the family environment: the parents' task should be to give security, welcome, love, trust to that human sprout, to that slender growing stem, facing the Light. Imagine what can happen to a child who grows up in fear, or in an environment devoid of emotional nourishment, where the educational task of evoking in him his abilities, his characteristics, his talents is missing. This darkness, made up of ignorance of the psycho-physical development of children, leads to real mutilations of the psychic functions; then it will become difficult for the child not only to relate to others, to the outside world, but above all to himself. Already the sense of self is in formation, but if comparisons, meaningful encounters are lacking, if a comforting and welcoming return of glances, a recognition of oneself of the relational world close to him, through the maternal, paternal gaze are absent, a great inner void, a black hole will be created, where loneliness will lodge, a profound separation from the external environment, but also from one's inner world, from himself and himself.

It will be probable that this disconnection from himself and himself, and from the external relational environment, will lead to filling it later, in other phases of life, with false images of himself, to adhere to

momentary external models that satisfy immediate needs and impulses, without mediation with self-awareness and deep introspection; everything will be based on immediacy, immediately and now, in a sort of greed for emotions and strong stupors.

The person becomes alien to himself, unable to establish authentic relationships not only with others but above all with himself.

The vision of Psychosynthesis proposes a dimension of overcoming loneliness towards an opening of hope, where selfishness and altruism meet in a synergistic synthesis. By working with commitment but also with passion, it is possible to undertake a path of self-knowledge and establish a first relationship with ourselves, also creating small but significant partial syntheses. Better understanding ourselves brings us closer to understanding others and establishing authentic and fruitful relationships.

After all, when we feel good in the company of ourselves, we also feel at ease with others, connected with nature, the whole world, the stars and the universe. That's why as a girl I looked at the stars; in that solitude, mixed with nostalgia, there was a search for a distant origin, a yearning for a return, but also the hope of enriching myself humanly, thanks to the relationships with other individuals that I would have known in the course of my life. The beauty of living is meeting, having experiences, being together, also thanks to the help of new technologies; it always depends on individual consciences to make them an instrument of growth and maturation. This is basically the synthesis between loneliness and hope.

Finally, I offer you a small selection of songs that kept me company in my youth; today they can be easily found on the internet and, even if lightly, they offer interesting ideas to reflect on. Have a good listening.

Soli si muore - Patrick Samson

Bella signora - Gianni Morandi

La solitudine - Laura Pausini

THE ANXIETY AT THE BORDER

Translation by Achille Cattaneo/Gordon Leonard Symons

The Assagioli Egg diagram has no precise boundaries. It is designed so that energies can flow freely from the bottom to the top and vice versa.

Knowing fully what is below will lead to its integration in order to access more easily what is above without opposition. In expanding the space of consciousness, we are already overcoming the limits of our fears.

It seems to me that perceiving *the anxiety of the border* has to do with this exploration, with this crossing. Staying in one's own known territory, even if it has become boring by now, is much more comfortable than crossing the border and venturing into the unknown, into the different.

Whenever we find ourselves crossing a border in our life we are inevitably faced with our oldest fears.

"It is on the borders that all the terrible unease that runs through the history of man is measured. The word frontier comes from the Latin frons, frontis "front". Frontiers are the places where countries and the people who inhabit them meet and stand opposite each other.

This "being in front of" can mean many things: first of all looking at the other, acquiring knowledge, confronting each other; understanding what can be expected of them. But the existence of the other can be a pitfall: as in Hegel's dialectic of "opposite self-awareness", recognition is at stake in this confrontation. The most troubled borders are those that are not recognized. "

Thus begins the chapter "Pensare la frontiera" of the beautiful book "Il Pensiero meridiano" by Franco Cassano.