

NEWS FROM THE ASSAGIOLI ARCHIVE



Translated by Alberto Gabba/ Gordon Leonard Symons

The appointment with the Assagioli archive is now a recurring one. In the magazine we read some pages of Roberto Assagioli's spiritual diaries, notes, letters and documents that come from the past.

We would like to enrich the history of this archive with some more information.

As Laura Ferrea will tell us later, the precious material of the archive has been enhanced and made available for consultation thanks to the collaboration of volunteers from the world of psychosynthesis.

Over the years the archive has become an increasingly attractive magnet for many: for those doing research, for those doing training and in-depth studies in Psychosynthesis. The appointment for the international Psychosynthesis meetings, organized by the Group alle Fonti has also been consolidated. The Group welcomes friends who come from all over the world, to meet in the rooms of the Institute of Psychosynthesis to leaf through and discover treasures in the cardboard folders, still tied with cloth ribbons.⁽¹⁾

For many, the first impact with the rich collection of Assagioli's manuscripts is to still feel the profuse energy and this is confirmed by the testimonies of those who have experienced it.

This happens every time Casa Assagioli opens its doors to visitors, thus expanding the breath of the archive that still speaks to us.

The great work dedicated to the archive is rewarded by surprises and encounters, revelations and connections with other historical archives of illustrious figures with whom Assagioli came into contact during his long life.

And so it was recently. During the last congress held in Padua on 14-15 October 2023, Carolina Montessori, great-granddaughter and curator of Maria Montessori's archive, entertained us with an interesting and lively talk on the existing relationships between Maria Montessori and Roberto Assagioli through manuscripts and correspondence between them, a part of which is preserved in the Assagioli archive.⁽²⁾

Then, the Hungarian researcher Zsuzsanna Tóth-Izsó, who had crossed the threshold of via San Domenico to consult the archive for her own research on the relationship between Assagioli and Papini, promoted together with Lucia Bassignana - trainer and lecturer of the School of Group Leadership and Counselling of the Institute of Psychosynthesis - a conference at the Italian Cultural Institute in Budapest "Assagioli 2021. Psychosynthesis and literature". Following this meeting, an intense relationship developed with a Hungarian group for which the Institute organized training in Psychosynthesis abroad with lecturers from the Institute.

Here is therefore a taste of the direct and indirect implications that the Assagioli archive moves in terms of opportunities, which can then also be maintained and expanded by consulting the archive material, which is also online: www.archivioassagioli.org.

The work is made possible by the willingness of volunteers who fall in love with the special atmosphere of this *still-living* material and lend themselves to making it available and accessible to all those who might be attracted by it.

Like Roberto Assagioli, the archive speaks many languages: mainly Italian and English but much correspondence and documentation can be found in German and French. Even today, as in the past, there

are voluntary collaborators from other countries who participate in this adventure.

The archive has this strength within itself: it enriches and nourishes those who access it.

Laura Ferrea, current head of the Assagioli Archive, below gives us some background about the history of the archive from its origins up to the present day, the material found and protected, the people who contributed to the cataloguing and scanning of all this precious material left by Roberto Assagioli.

The Assagioli Archive contains a considerable amount of documents produced by Roberto Assagioli during his lifetime.

The handwritten notes, amounting to approximately 19,000, make up an important section, preserved in his study and therefore called the “Study Archive”. They are mostly very short texts, notes in which Assagioli recorded his reflections on the fly, notes for an article, a lecture or a conference, short excerpts from texts by other authors to quote in his own writings. He would write them on tiny sheets of paper of varying sizes, mostly printer’s cuttings, but also on the back of used and no longer valid papers, on old letterheads, and even on the back side of World War II ration cards. Piero Ferrucci, his close collaborator in the last years, remembers that after having quickly written them down, he would put them in a desk drawer to put them away and use them later; and that he actually did so is testified by the numerous folders that collected them, with the indication of the subject written in his own hand. The various collaborators who followed one another over time certainly contributed to arranging them, but a complete organization of the manuscripts into categories was only achieved after his death, in the 1980s, by Piero Ferrucci.

The complete texts of all of Roberto Assagioli’s writings, both those published in print and those in typescript, are collected in a metal filing cabinet with the suggestive name of “Synthesis Cabinet”, another significant section of the Archive which counts around 2,000 documents. They bear testimony to the great writing activity of

Assagioli, who published few books during his lifetime, but many articles in various journals, and whose many lectures dealing with the fundamental concepts of Psychosynthesis also remain.

The arrangement of these documents is mainly due to Ida Palombi, who worked alongside Assagioli for many years and then succeeded him as President of the Institute of Psychosynthesis until 1981; they are arranged alphabetically based on the title and to her we owe the recovery of many writings that had been lost and the constant care in maintaining the integrity of the filing cabinet.

The rest of the material preserved in the Archive is collected under the name of “Archivio alle fonti”. It was in a state of great disarray when in 2006, at the end of the renovation of the building where Assagioli once lived and which now houses the Institute of Psychosynthesis, a group of members of the Institute, the *Group alle Fonti*, began to take care of it. The reorganization of these documents is still continuing and is the occasion of interesting discoveries, such as the unpublished 1910 letter from Giovanni Papini to Assagioli on the occasion of his graduation, published in this same magazine⁽³⁾.

The creation of an online site dedicated to the Archive was also initiated to make it available to a wider public, so that it would be easily consulted even remotely for those who could not travel to Florence in person, although direct contact with the writings and with Casa Assagioli remains a very significant experience. The site has been online since 2015 and the work of scanning and cataloguing the documents is still ongoing. First, the inclusion of the manuscripts of the Studio Archive was completed, also using the numerous scans carried out in the 1990s by Sandro Maneschi, and in recent times the Synthesis Cabinet was also made fully available online.

It should be emphasized that this achievement is the result of the combined action of the many people who, over time and with various tasks, have taken turns in looking after the Archive, a chain of people united by their passion for the Roberto Assagioli’s work and its dissemination.

Using the Archive website is very easy. From the home page www.archivioassagioli.org, which is bilingual in



7

Italian and English, one can access information on the history of the Archive, a concise exposition of the life of Roberto Assagioli and a complete bibliography of his publications, as well as a collection of writings on his person. To consult the individual documents, a simple registration is required, free of charge, with the insertion of a few details and subsequent activation by clicking on a link sent by email.

Once in the reserved area it is possible to view the documents in two ways. In “Explore” the real experience of accessing the Archive is reproduced, with the opening of folders and files that correspond to the existing ones and the possibility of browsing through the documents one after the other, as one would do if one were actually there; the guide and the lists at the top of the page provide help in finding one’s way around in the consultation. In “Search”, on the other hand, it is possible to limit the display of documents according to one’s interests, either by entering only the words or phrases to be searched for in “Quick Search” or by supplementing them with other elements to better define the area of investigation

in “Advanced Search”. In both cases one will obtain a detailed list, which can be browsed document by document.

Laura Ferrea

Assagioli’s archive Responsible

Notes

1. see articles by Donatella Randazzo and Theo Dijkman in this magazine.
2. Maria Montessori and Roberto Assagioli: Parallels in their thinking.
3. Letter of papini to Assagioli.