

CHANGE: ILLUSION OR OPPORTUNITY?

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“Love and Will for a Responsible Change”

The title chosen for this conference, in itself, contains, in my view, a kind of manifesto of Psychosynthesis: if it has happened to you as well to have to answer the question, what is Psychosynthesis?, you may have grown tired of repeating: Psychosynthesis is a humanistic psychology, founded by Roberto Assagioli, which aims at development and personal growth, and so on and so forth.

From now on I will answer: Psychosynthesis teaches us to act, it guides us, it orients us toward responsible change by consciously using Love and Will. Moreover, I felt the invitation to participate in this meeting as particularly fitting at the life stage I am

going through: advancing years, a double move, some important life choices, have underscored how every kind of change presents itself in our lives in a constant way.

And then I asked myself: in all these years in which I have dedicated myself to the psychosynthetic path, have I changed following an objective, or have I simply let myself go with the flow of things—have I merely deluded myself into thinking I have changed?

In the article on the psychosynthetic summer, Roberto Assagioli writes that, in carrying out a life program for the summer, we can apply one of the fundamental rules of the art of living, that of seizing opportunities: “... every day, one could say every hour, life offers us opportunities, places us before choices; it is up to us to recognize and use them.”

But let us return to today's topic: Love and Will: Psychosynthesis for a responsible change.

My classical studies have accustomed me, when approaching a topic, to examine first of all the meaning of each word: all the words chosen lead to contents of great appeal; they bring out reflections, connections... beginning with the simple preposition "for." The Treccani dictionary indicates: used to indicate the place or the destination toward which a movement is directed; or to indicate continuity or duration, with a usage analogous to that indicating extension in space.

Therefore, an invitation to movement both in a spatial and temporal sense, to dynamism, to energy, in some way to presence.

A reference to that definition of Psychosynthesis as a praxis of life, understood as a daily experience that unfolds in the time and space in which we spend our existence.

Then I went back to the book "Comprendere la Psicossintesi" to retrieve the definitions that Assagioli gave of Love and Will.

Love: a yearning for completion, to unite, to merge with something, with someone different from oneself. It has cosmic origin, nature, and functions. Its manifestations are expressions of the law of attraction, of the tendency toward approach, contact, unification, and fusion.

In the article "Amare per vivere," Vittorio Viglienghi adds: "... Love is everything that moves or tends to move. The opposite of love, therefore, will not be hatred, but stasis, inertia; to love means to get involved, to step onto the field, to participate. Love burns, consumes, transforms."

The true enemy of love is, in Vittorio Viglienghi's reading—which I fully share—attachment, as a symptom of that generic attitude of preservation, a symptom of degeneration and regression.

The path of life, like that of consciousness, is not to be imagined horizontally, but rather on an inclined plane: either one moves forward, or one slips backward.

Love as liberation, not as renunciation; liberation

from the old—habits, conditioning, relationships—to make our inner flame vibrate and expand: here is a fine responsibility.

Love tends, and is inclined, to unite, to welcome, to develop in oneself, and in others with whom we are in relationship, a will and a capacity to collaborate, to bring out lines of coherence between values and conduct, to make oneself—and make others—"better."

And now let us recall the definition of Will.

Will: a psychological function, the closest to the I, its direct expression. Source of all choices, decisions, commitments. Through its discovery within us we perceive ourselves as a living subject endowed with the power to bring about changes in our personality, in others, in circumstances. It has a directive and regulatory function similar to that of the helmsman of a ship. Psychosynthesis makes use of techniques to arouse it, develop it, strengthen it, and direct it in the right way.

Here we find an intricate question: what is the right way? Which way, for us who have undertaken this path, is to be understood as right? Especially today, a time of shocking, unacceptable, incomprehensible events, we have all found ourselves asking toward what change to direct our existence, perhaps using Love and Will.

In reflecting on these words, I imagined them as united by a bond invisible to the eyes but very powerful for the heart. A bond made of shared experiences, transmitted through often unexpected means and instruments.

Assagioli says that in order to experience the Will one must have a positive meaning of life. The exact words are: "... the presupposition of volitional action is that life has a positive meaning, and not only individual life, but all life. In fact, man is not isolated, but interwoven not only in interindividual and social life, but in the entire flow and becoming of universal life." (Stages of the Will, III lesson, 1968)

And we come to the definition of Change which, I confess, is the word that stirred the most questions

within me: from the Treccani dictionary: change from to change, the act of changing oneself: change of house, of season, of temperature; to make a change, a great change, especially in habits, in character.

Can we therefore ensure that our life purpose is a responsible Change? Do we believe, do we feel in the depth of our being that Life HAS a positive meaning? We can then set out toward a change that knows no stops, only slowdowns or perhaps pauses, while the process as a whole is continuous.

We know, because we have studied it—but better, I would say, experienced it—that the will of the I carries our existential project.

Assagioli also indicates the qualities from which to draw: boldness, courage, spirit of sacrifice, willingness to renounce; and also: self-analysis, vigilance, attention, spirit of observation, foresight.

“If you want to build a ship, do not gather men to collect wood and assign tasks, but awaken in them the longing for the vast and infinite sea.”

(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*)

In our inner space does the vision of this vast and infinite sea for which we feel longing exist? Is there a part of us with the will to guide us toward responsible change?

It would seem difficult to feel the usefulness, the benefit of this change if we were unable to feel it connected to Love.

To embody the divine plan.

And so let us ask ourselves: do we truly wish to change? Is it with this question that we begin every morning to plan, to imagine our days? Is this the question that sets in motion our daily acts of will, even the small, apparently insignificant ones?

If we start from a firm YES, then let us try to set out on this path.

And memory takes me back to why I began attending Psychosynthesis at a moment in my life when there was

seemingly nothing to change... yet I felt that a change had become indispensable.

I was reading Tiziano Terzani and came across this illuminating phrase: “The cure of all cures is to change one’s point of view, to change oneself, and with this inner revolution to contribute to the hope of a better world!”

I think many of us have felt this impulse, which I like to call evolutionary. But then, what change are we seeking, and which—then as now—we can consider responsible? Because changing certainly does not mean denying ourselves or our previous life choices, whether small or large, but being able to disidentify from them, to activate that Observer I that allows us to gain a clearer, more objective and updated vision of the life stage we are going through.

Every life that comes into the world is a unicum, an epiphany of the I that reveals itself in its original subjectivity, combining its unique potentialities with the various opportunities offered by the time and place in which it happens to live. Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* wrote: Life is a gift that must transform itself into a project.

Therefore, what is the project toward which we feel called to orient and direct our lives?

We know and practice Psychosynthesis as the bearer of an overarching project, aimed at “improving” our life experience, freeing us, in a certain sense, from the conditioning of present reality, and guiding us on a path toward an independent position that, by linking will and Self, allows us to become masters of ourselves while remaining conscious, in a constant search for the “harmony of life.”

We must, however, remain aware that this project is not static, but itself in continuous evolution. It is shaped by the moment we are living, by external circumstances, by our energies, all closely connected to our peculiarity and uniqueness.

We therefore cannot—because it would be unjust first and foremost toward ourselves - allow ourselves to be conditioned by a hypothetical judgment about our goal or life project. Otherwise, we risk falling into two possible extremes: either a superego-driven attitude we believe our path is the only right one, the best, and must be respected and honored by all.

Or, on the contrary, letting ourselves fall into a sort of passivity born from a sense of inadequacy that leads us, unfortunately often, to tell ourselves that we can do nothing anyway, that we will never succeed, that we are too insignificant...

And so we can remember that the renewal or change of our goals or lifestyles becomes impossible if not corroborated by a change in our motives.

A radical and inner change, which may very well coincide with a corresponding non-change in external life.

If what truly matters is intention, then it is the change of intention, of motives, that counts. One might then ask: “And how does one change one’s motives?”

To recognize the positive values that exist in life, first of all a great openness is needed; a humility that is not diminishing but dignified before the mystery; a loving acceptance; a willingness not to demand and require from life and from others, but to give and to give oneself; recognition of one’s essential spiritual freedom and acceptance of the consequent responsibility.

In this way, we can see that everything derives from our attitude and that this not only allows us to perceive meanings and values, but can actually create them and confer them. This is within our power; it depends on our free choice, on a decision we make, and therefore on an act of will.

What future do we want for the generations to come? Perhaps, despite our commitment, we will not succeed in seeing a real change in the years immediately ahead of us, but we know that this is a difficult and dangerous time for all humanity, and therefore the effort must

be total: and as in every act of will one must follow a method and strengthen the links of the chain, so for us it will be a decisive factor to set ourselves a clear objective of change.

I repeated to myself: you will never change things by fighting the existing reality; build a new model that makes the existing reality obsolete.

I tried to imagine an inner path that would facilitate me in building this new model that reflects and interprets my aspiration to change: I began from an overpowering desire, an absolute need, a burning aspiration—as our Assagioli would have said—I allowed for a proper time of gestation, a time needed for the purification of motives, so that they might free themselves from the dross of personality that still kept them opaque, unreachable.

Then I nourished it with the powerful fire and the dynamic force of ideas, according to the laws of psychodynamics.

Finally, I immersed myself in my star of functions and played with imagination, inventing a different and better world. I used thought to design the practical ways to realize the dream; I used intuition, because the path to follow is not always clear and intuition can help us greatly; I summoned impulses, for the first push will come from them when we realize that we cannot remain inert before so many desolate spectacles; I awakened the senses, to verify every detail; I immersed myself in



Metamorphosis II - M.C. Escher, 1939

emotions, because our involvement must be total; but above all I brought into play my friend Will, not only to coordinate the functions mentioned, but also to know how to resist the enormous difficulties that present themselves to us.

Finally, I invoked and drew with full hands from Love, a source of dynamic, propulsive, and infinite energy.

But I had begun with a question: is change an opportunity or an illusion?

I tried to outline a path, from motivation through its various stages, to the attainment of the goal.

But once the goal has been reached, what helps us understand that we have truly changed? What can help us feel whether all those steps, that commitment, that time, have led us to a real result?

And what if instead the Personality, or a subpersonality, had clouded me, obscured me, had distanced my true I from its Self and from its light?

Roberto Assagioli suggests using Joy as a thermometer: joy is a feeling that arises from the depths, from a contact between the Personality and the Self, when we feel that our Soul is illuminated.

What do you think? Have you also experienced this joy? Can you recall its flavour, its simplicity, the sense of belonging to a whole that contains and guides us? I am certain you have... otherwise, perhaps you should do a little Psychosynthesis...

I would like to conclude with another phrase by Assagioli:

“In conclusion, there is a great work of renewal to be carried out in all fields of human life. It is a work of eliminating and transforming old mental and institutional forms, of old methods, in order to create a new civilization and a new culture corresponding to the profoundly changed psychological and external conditions of the present. Immense therefore is the field; innumerable are the opportunities for employing in a useful way individual and collective combative energies. Everyone, in some measure, can participate in this great mobilization of the dynamic energies of humanity for constructive and creative purposes. Thus and only thus will it be possible to prevent those powerful forces from exploding into wars or destructive social struggles. That mobilization instead can render more secure and rapid the success of the attempt now being made by men of enlightened mind, generous heart, and good will, to unite all in a harmonious planetary organism, to create a world synthesis, and to bring about a new and higher civilization, truly human.”

