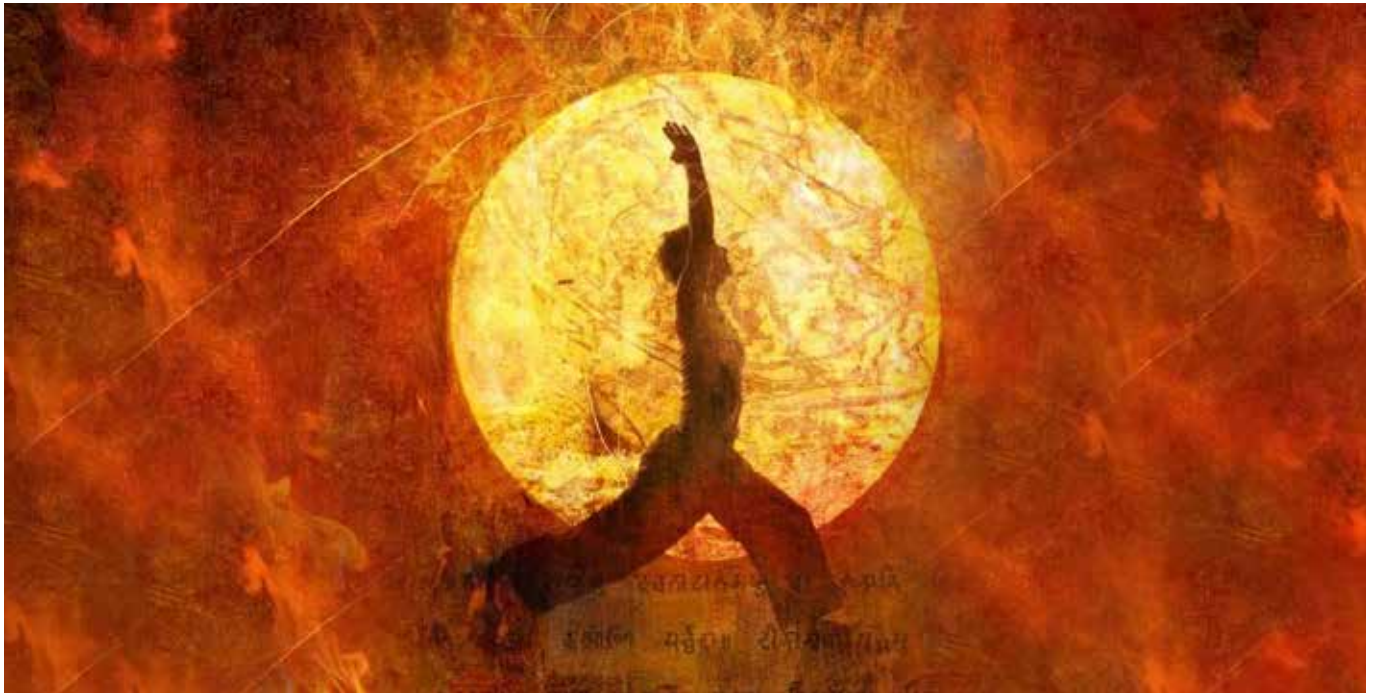


THE IMPECCABILITY OF THE WARRIOR

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THE ROLE OF THE CONDUCTOR BETWEEN ETHICS AND VOCATION

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Before addressing the theme of my presentation, I would like to make a brief introduction.

These reflections aim to make known the educational purposes of the School of Group Facilitation and Counseling of the Institute of Psychosynthesis. The School, founded in 1999 and active since 2000, prepares for future facilitation and counseling those who, after attending the Self-Training Course (CdA), wish to continue their education and personal growth.

It is a demanding path, but upon completion it provides theoretical, technical, and practical preparation that allows one to offer the psychosynthetic model in future courses, seminars, and training sessions, both within the activities proposed in the various Psychosynthesis Centers and beyond.

Roberto Assagioli, in May 1974, released a text that still represents his moral and scientific testament: the wellknown “*Notes dictated in English on Training in Psychosynthesis.*” This precious text is found in Appendix A of the Statute of the Institute of Psychosynthesis. It lists ten points outlining the path to becoming a psychosynthesisist.

One of them states that “*training in psychosynthesis can never be considered finished (...) it should never be considered complete because psychosynthesis is an open system: one can never speak of an end, but of successive temporary stages.*” It continues: “*Before being able to transmit psychosynthesis to others, we ourselves must have experienced it in depth: knowing it intellectually is not enough. Each technique must be practiced at length on ourselves, because only in this way will we acquire the authority to communicate it to others.*”⁽¹⁾

For this reason, those who turn to the School express the desire to continue, first of all, a path of selfknowledge, and also the desire to acquire the tools needed to transmit Roberto Assagioli’s message.

The feeling shared by most students is one of gratitude toward the SelfTraining Course (CdA), at the end of which many have deeply experienced important transformations and insights, with significant and incisive effects on their lives.

Based on their experience, they wish to continue deepening their personal development through the teachings of the School, and to be able to offer others, in future group facilitation, the same opportunity to improve themselves and evolve in consciousness and awareness.

We now come to the theme of my presentation: “*The Impeccability of the Warrior*,” and the reason why I chose the term *impeccability*.

Speaking of the figure of the Warrior in these sad and distressing times of war may seem inappropriate, but in this context we will consider it mainly in its symbolic and archetypal meaning. I chose this image, placing it alongside that of the facilitator, not to emphasize the warlike, cruel, and destructive aspect it may evoke, but rather to highlight humanity and the ability to choose noble motives and how to act upon them in order to achieve a goal.

The figure of the warrior has always been present in the traditions of major civilizations: the Greeks, the Spartans, the ancient Romans; in the East, the Samurai. Purified of its shadows, it can, at the archetypal level, be a source of inspiration. As confirmation, I will later quote a book—still unnamed—that states: “...being a warrior is a form of selfdiscipline that highlights individual realization (...) Becoming a man of knowledge is an unceasing process.”⁽²⁾

The prologue of UNESCO’s founding act (UN, 4 November 1946) remains tragically relevant: “*Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.*”

In “*Psicosintesi armonia della vita*” (*Psychosynthesis: Harmony of Life*),⁽³⁾ Roberto Assagioli dedicates two chapters to the transformation and sublimation of combative energies. In the first, he notes that “*the pugnacity inherent in human nature is nothing but the*

expression of a deep tendency of our being: the instinct of selfassertion, the tendency that Nietzsche called ‘will to power’.”⁽⁴⁾ He continues: “*The combative tendency, therefore, while expressing a deep and vital impulse of selfaffirmation, as well as, in many cases, the need for selfpreservation, contributes to fostering human evolution in its early stages (...) It can indeed accelerate the development of many qualities: endurance, attention, decisiveness, skill, courage, intelligence, and many other qualities that develop in that rough shrewdness.*”

Many of these qualities are also found among the qualities of the will: discipline, focus, readiness, patience, boldness, initiative. Their development intensifies every act of will, especially in combating the conflicting tendencies and cravings within the personality.

In the second chapter, which also deals with the Transformation and sublimation of combative energies, various methods for their transmutation are indicated. Assagioli offers a long analysis of the different levels of development among individuals and warns especially against pseudosublimations carried out by a “lower Ego,” driven by selfishness and separative tendencies. Symbolically, he introduces expressions indicating the harsh battles between the shadows of the personality and the lights of the soul: “*Seek the warrior and let him fight in you,*” and “*Seek him, otherwise in the fever and haste of battle you may pass him by and he will not recognize you. If your cry reaches his attentive ear, He will fight in you and fill the oppressive inner void.*”⁽⁵⁾

These are powerful and evocative phrases. Assagioli often refers to the inner battles between Spirit and personality; he takes as models highly symbolic figures such as the Knights of the Graal, urging those who approach spiritual research to become true Knights of the Spirit, “*soldiers of an ideal cause—the cause of helping humanity save itself from the dangers that threaten it.*”⁽⁶⁾

Another figure he often refers to is Prince Arjuna, the warrior *Ksatriya* whose deeds are narrated in the *Bhagavad Gita* (*Song of Blessed*), an important

philosophical and religious text within the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. At the moment of battle, Arjuna is seized by doubt and discouragement, and turns to Krishna, the incarnation of the supreme Spirit, who imparts him a series of teachings.

Prince warrior Arjuna represents a model to associate with the figure of the Facilitator/Leader—one who is able, first of all, to lead himself. Assagioli clarifies that Arjuna’s warlike deeds must be interpreted symbolically and spiritually: “*The battlefield is the human soul; the enemies are the various parts of the personality.*”⁽⁷⁾

Krishna’s teachings to Arjuna recall many psychosynthetic techniques: disidentification and selfidentification, acting with detachment, creating an external unifying center, the various stages of the act of will

Mastering oneself is truly an arduous undertaking, likely an unending goal—this is the purpose of continuous psychosynthetic training. Referring to external models is helpful for progressing toward increasingly broad partial syntheses, especially for those who wish to learn to lead a group.

Prince Arjuna evokes the archetype of the Warrior, which, like other archetypes, is part of our collective unconscious. In the psychosynthetic model, we find not only psychoanalytic elements but also those of Jungian analytical psychology.

Thus, in our psychic landscape, the Warrior archetype plays an important role in personal growth, embodying qualities of endurance, inner mastery, and the ability to pursue one’s goals. The archetype includes both male and female warriors, with different nuances but always oriented toward noble intentions and ideals—just like the figures of Heroes and Heroines that still populate collective imagination through films, novels, and video games (the latest not always educational or ethically oriented). For those interested, I refer to Carol S. Pearson’s “*The Hero Within Us,*”⁽⁸⁾ as well as works by James Hillman and Joseph Campbell, who have deepened the theme of archetypes.⁽⁹⁾

Pearson’s book offers a series of exercises, including meditations on the role of the Warrior, beginning with adopting a physical posture similar to that of the archetype—a sort of dynamic ideal model.

One is then invited to feel the qualities of courage, initiative, and especially the constant desire for selfimprovement flowing through oneself, developing attitudes and abilities linked to that role. This practice is very close to the Ideal Model technique used in psychosynthesis.

Dan Millman, author of “*The Way of the Peaceful Warrior,*”⁽¹⁰⁾ is a spiritual researcher who does not come from psychology but from athletics. He had experienced that, as in other sports disciplines, achieving good results required training applied with discipline and regularity. His phrase best expresses the essence of his research:

“You become a warrior when you take responsibility for your life.”

This, for me, is the meaning of being a Warrior—not a superman or superwoman, but a human being who takes responsibility for living, who faces life’s hardships with courage, seeing them as tests to develop the gifts and talents entrusted to them by their unique soul project. Everyday heroes—whom I wrote about years ago—are those who accept their humanity and the strength of their fragility.

At the end of the School’s training, many students who enrolled to continue their personal journey admit that at first they were not convinced they wanted to become facilitators or group counselors; they did not feel a true vocation. Yet, through simulations, internships, personal work, seminars, and supervision meetings, they discovered not only that they could lead a group, but also how the training revealed qualities and abilities they did not know they possessed.

Aspiring to become guides or models, even temporarily, requires intellectual honesty, the ability to engage

oneself, and the recognition of both strengths and limits. Facilitating a group is not easy; it is not improvisation. Last year, at the Padua Conference, I spoke of the *Art of Facilitation*, defining it as a form of psychic craftsmanship whose specificity lies in skillfully handling the plasticity of one's own psyche and that of others.

I assure you that in some groups we encounter combative participants, often unaware of being so; within group dynamics, projections, identifications, and attacks toward the facilitator may arise—verbosity, counterleadership, to name a few.

Facilitation can become a real battlefield. The facilitator's impeccability is not rigidity or following a fixed script; rather, it is the ability to adapt to the group's energy level, skillfully managing emerging dynamics, harmonizing the energies of participants, and elevating them with loving understanding but also with authority, toward the group's highest purpose: the realization of the Group Self, where the topic addressed is not the end but the means.

We now come to the term "*impeccability*." Etymologically, it derives from *impeccable*, from the Latin *impeccabilis*. In common usage it refers to composure, rigor, style; but in another sense it means "*not subject to sin*," referring to Christ as an example of immunity from sin. What does it mean to be immune from sin? What are the sins of a facilitator? It is not a moral admonition but a realistic warning—against feeling superior to group members simply because one masters a topic, or is intellectually prepared, or because of the presumption of knowledge, which instead indicates ignorance of wisdom.

Assagioli, again in the *Notes dictated in English*,⁽¹¹⁾ reminds us that "*believing one has understood everything indicates lack of understanding, which is the result of a gradual process*." He continues, stating that psychosynthetic training requires "*a fusion of humility, patience, and experimentation*." And finally: "*One may know all the techniques and yet not have penetrated the spirit of Psychosynthesis. Conversely, true training*

involves two factors: intuitive understanding of the spirit of psychosynthesis and solid technical knowledge."

Why, then, did I choose this somewhat old-fashioned, formal term *impeccability*—a term that does not inspire immediate sympathy and is not easily associated with "immunity from sin"? Because it fascinated me.

Thinking of the role of the facilitator/leader, I recalled an old book by Paulo Coelho, *Manual of the Warrior of Light*, which, following the success of *The Alchemist*, was widely read in the 1990s.⁽¹²⁾

But even earlier, in the 1970s, another book gained wide resonance among psychotherapists: "*The Teachings of Don Juan*" (13) by Carlos Castaneda, a young anthropologist from the University of California.

This is the text I mysteriously alluded to at the beginning, through the phrase describing the warrior as a *man of knowledge*.

At that time, in the 1970s, at the Palo Alto school in California, psychotherapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists experimented with alternative paths to inner knowledge, using psychotropic substances such as peyote, hallucinogenic mushrooms, and LSD.

Many years later, in 2000, at a transpersonal psychology Conference in Assisi, I listened with fascination to Claudio Naranjo and Paul Watzlawick recounting their youthful experiences, candidly confessing their mutual use of psychotropic substances to explore nonordinary states of consciousness—speaking half seriously, half jokingly, laughing together.

Intrigued, I decided to read "*The Teachings of Don Juan*," about which I had heard so much. (Assagioli, for his part, reminded us that a wellconducted meditation can achieve deep and intense results without losing selfawareness and without resorting to external substances.) I wanted to read the book because it contained spiritual teachings from a Yaqui Indian sorcerer, Don Juan, from the Mexican state of Sonora, to

the young Castaneda—teachings that, in some respects, resembled those given to Arjuna by Krishna.

Why not read it? Assagioli had included in his writings major spiritual texts from the East—Taoism, Buddhism, Yoga, Vedanta—and I was interested in learning about other cultural approaches from North America, including those of Native Americans, such as Black Elk of the Oglala Sioux.

Reading “*The Teachings of Don Juan*” all in one breath and then other books by Castaneda, I came across the word “*impeccability*.” I was struck by the clarity of the term and especially by its closeness to psychosynthetic practice.

“*By impeccability, I do not mean morality,*” said Don Juan to Castaneda. “*It only resembles it. Impeccability is simply the best use of our level of energy.*”

The teachings imparted by the Yaqui master to his apprentice span from June 1963 to September 1965, each encounter recorded in a travel diary. In these writings appears the famous phrase that became a sort of mantra for seekers of the time: “*Whenever you must choose a path, ask yourself: Does this path have a HEART?*”

If I were to rewrite these reflections, I would probably begin with this phrase and compare it with what Assagioli calls the *Intelligence of Love*. I might even retitile my presentation “*The Initiatory Path of Love*.”

There are pages in Castaneda’s book that, from different angles, retrace the path of Psychosynthesis. I invite you to read it to discover the many analogies and points in common, especially regarding experiences and levels of energy.

The phrase “*the best use of our level of energy*” fits perfectly with the task of the psychosynthetic facilitator or counselor: making good use of energy—first one’s own, then that of the group and its individual members. How? Beyond the various facilitation techniques, it is essential that the facilitator exercise *threefold attention*: observing oneself, one’s inner experience, observing

individual group members, nonverbal communication, posture, silences, gazes, and finally observing the group as a whole—three movements acting in unison.

This is why the wise use of the qualities of the will is fundamental: the personal Ego, the inner observer, fights battles with the shadows of the personality, but only if personal will bends to the Light of Transpersonal Will, without being overwhelmed by the separative cravings of the Ego.

Among the shadows of the Warrior are the struggle for personal power through manipulation, pride, asserting superiority, using strong will through domination, lack of compassion and understanding. Impeccability—then absence of flaws—means being an example of humanity, respect, equanimity, humility in offering oneself to others in a spirit of service. Above all, it means being in constant contact with one’s own Self. A facilitator who is not in contact with his Soul cannot evoke and illuminate the Souls of others.

Thus, in this sense, becoming Warriors of the Soul.



Notes

1. C. Castaneda, A scuola dallo stregone, ed. Astrolabio, 1970, pag. 163
2. Notes in English language by doct. Roberto Assagioli May 19,1974
3. R. Assagioli, Psicosintesi Armonia della Vita, ed, Mediterranee, Rome 1971
4. R. Assagioli, ibidem, pag. 144, cap.16
5. R. Assagioli, ibidem, pag. 155, cap. 17
6. R. Assagioli, ibidem, pag. 156, cap 17
7. R. Assagioli, op.cit. pag. 50, cap 5
8. C.S. Pearson, L'eroe dentro di noi, ed. Astrolabio, Rome 1990
9. J. Campbell, L'eroe dai mille volti, ed. Feltrinelli. Milano 1981 – J. Hillman, Revisione della Psicologia, ed Adelphi, Milano 1980
10. D. Millman, La via del guerriero di pace, ed. Il punto di incontro, Vicenza 2017
11. Notes in English language, op. cit.
12. P. Coelho, Manuale del Guerriero di Luce, ed. Saggi Bompiani, Milano 1997
13. C. Castaneda. Op. cit.
14. C. Castaneda, Il potere del silenzio, ed. Rizzoli, Milano 1999