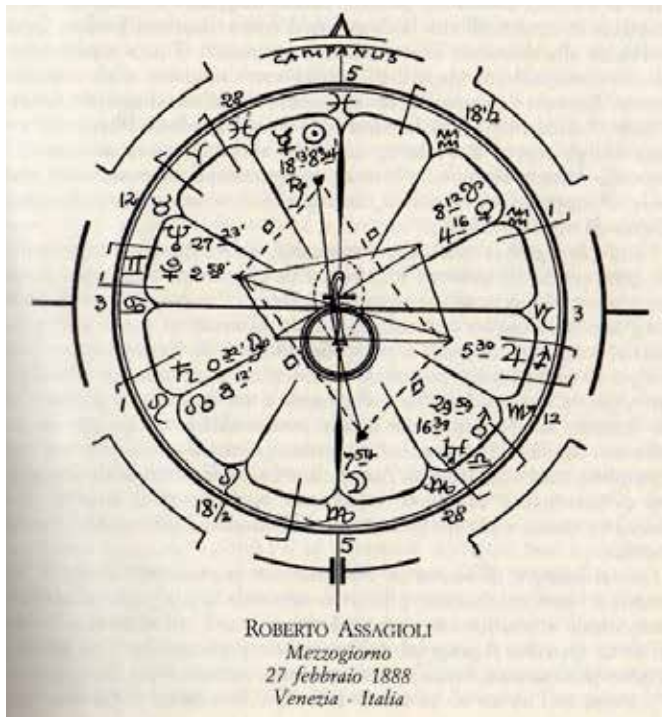


# THE LIFE OF ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI AND THE BIRTH OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Translated by Alberto Gabba

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Birth Chart prepared by D. Rudhya

I would like to begin this brief account of Roberto Assagioli and the birth of Psychosynthesis by sharing two of his youthful reflections, which, in my opinion, both represent significant moments in his life.

The first: “I was in a boat, far from shore, in a large expanse of water. I let go of the oars and simply looked at the peaceful scenery around me. As if from heaven, the phrase came to me: “I want to always be present to myself”. Of course, at the time I didn’t understand the full meaning of this experience, but I realized it was giving me a sense of joy. It was only a momentary episode, and then I came back down to earth”<sup>(1)</sup>.

This conviction of wanting to “always be present to myself” would prove prophetic throughout his life, supporting him in facing painful trials, such as the death of his only son, Nazi-Fascist persecution, arrest, and imprisonment. This would allow him to navigate these difficult experiences while maintaining his sensitivity and, above all, his unceasing desire to always seek the intimate and hidden meaning of life itself.

The other, almost a premonition, contemplating the sun in a Venetian sunset: “That day I received the skeleton of psychosynthesis, then for my whole life I put flesh around that skeleton”<sup>(2)</sup>.

This statement, undoubtedly the fruit of a sudden and particular state of consciousness, anticipates how already in these very early years the structure that a few decades later he would definitively give the name of Psychosynthesis had been revealed in him.

Born in Venice in 1888 to a Jewish family, his real name was Roberto Grego. At the age of two, he lost his father, a civil engineer from Verona. From an early age, young Roberto displayed a frail, weak physique and a valgus foot, which required the patient and assiduous care of the family doctor Alessandro Assagioli to straighten. The doctor’s affection and concern were so great that he even struck up a romance with his mother, and after some time, the two married. Roberto was thus adopted, taking on the surname Assagioli of his new father. This worked tirelessly to improve Roberto’s physical condition, encouraging him to swim, row, and go on mountain hikes, where “I discovered the highest meaning of mountaineering symbolism: it is connected to Maslow’s idea of the experiences of peaks and plateaus”, as he would later say in his memoirs.

His mother, a classically educated high school student in Alexandria, Egypt, where she was born, a keen scholar of theosophical content and passionately committed to Mazzinian ideas, passed these interests on to her son: “She was highly educated and a voracious reader, a propensity I inherited”, Roberto would recall. At home, “we spoke Italian one day, French the next day, and English the day after that. We started when I was three, so I learned all three languages as my mother tongues. Then, when I was eight, they found a teacher who taught me German<sup>(3)</sup>”. This knowledge of languages would prove invaluable, as the German language would later allow him to explore psychoanalysis firsthand and to engage in subsequent correspondence with Freud. Roberto will remember these years with his family in a positive way, not only for the stimulation, but also for being left free to make his own choices. Not everything

went smoothly; Roberto's bright memories of this period are clouded by a shadow: "There was a serious downside: my loneliness. I was an only child, and in the early years, my parents didn't understand my need for companions my own age. So I was a very lonely boy".

After brilliantly completing his classical studies at the Foscarini High School in Venice, he faced the challenge of choosing a university location and faculty, as Venice did not have an athenaeum at the time. His father favoured engineering, but Roberto, confident in his lack of talent for drawing and mathematics, managed to impose himself for medicine in Florence. The family moved there in 1904, finding the city a highly stimulating environment. Here, Roberto came into contact with the cultural ferment of the multifaceted Florentine world, with the restless group of young intellectuals, which included prominent figures such as Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini, founders of the two Florentine avant-garde magazines, *Leonardo* and *La Voce*. These were symbols of the idealistic rebirth, sensitive to the appeal of overseas pragmatism, in an open and irreverent polemic against the positivist culture of the nineteenth century.

A scholar open to the most innovative voices in Europe, Assagioli made frequent cultural and study trips abroad during his university years, where he came into contact with psychoanalytic ideas. He was then the first Italian to join the Zurich section of the Psychoanalytic Society, presided over by Jung. It was in Zurich that he prepared his doctoral thesis on psychoanalysis, which he defended in Florence in 1910. His connection with psychoanalysis, however, was short-lived due to the excessive importance that, according to Assagioli, Freud placed on sexuality, to which were attributed many psychic phenomena that had nothing to do with it. In particular, Assagioli noted the complete lack of higher manifestations of love and, above all, the scant importance given to the concept of *sublimation*, which, in his view, represented the fundamental psychic faculty for transforming lower instinctual energies into higher forces. In contrast to psychoanalysis, he emphasized other fundamental concepts, such as will and the

higher unconscious, arguing that in addition to a "depth psychology", a "psychology of heights" was essential. This insistence on the vertical dimension led him to often say that "there are no solutions below, there are no problems above".

In the pages of *Leonardo*, Assagioli's articles would appear, with a new and original approach, advocating a spiritualism influenced by Eastern philosophy, theosophical insights, and clearly connected to psychological research. A few years later, in *La Voce*, Assagioli would further clarify the relationship between his psychological conception and Freudian theory, highlighting his distancing from some of Freud's concepts. In 1909, he published an important article for the Bologna-based *Rivista di psicologia applicata* (Journal of Applied Psychology), entitled *Psicologia delle idee-forze e la psicagogia* (The Psychology of Idea-Forces and Psychagogy)", which "contained in embryo most of the concepts and methods of psychosynthesis", as Assagioli wrote in a Florentine lecture in the 1870s<sup>(4)</sup>. This psychagogy, a precursor of the future psychosynthesis, was defined by Assagioli as "a work of education of the will and shaping of character".

Not aimed at a sick psyche, but rather one that helps the healthy individual grow and evolve from birth to death, activating the internal engine of will, that force with which "man can transform himself and must learn to do so". He defines praxis as the implementation of a set of practical methods aimed at influencing behaviour and transforming personality, based on a series of psychic facts commonly called ideas, or rather "idea-forces" that contain within themselves "an energy that always tends to express itself externally in actions". A constant learning process that lasts a lifetime and which we could define as an attitude, a "philosophy of life", a self-directed practice for activating and developing the manifest or latent potential of human beings, who are not something defined.

After addressing Freud's ideas on sexuality and expounding the concept of sublimation, at the Bologna

Philosophy Congress he now addresses the origin of all complex subconscious psychic activity. On this occasion, Assagioli presents cases of “co-conscious” multiple personalities and, years later, acknowledges that “this talk was historic for me, because it contains the roots, and even more, of my current conception of subpersonalities, which is one of the main themes of psychosynthesis”<sup>(5)</sup>.

After graduation, he embarked on his first stint as a therapist, where, as he says, “I practiced psychoanalysis, but soon discovered its limitations”. He approached it with the enthusiasm and the initial passion for providing help. This experience would be marked by an unfortunate incident in his marriage to a patient, a medium who fell into a state of spontaneous hypnosis with split personality, which would lead to a complex personal relationship that was later resolved, not without difficulty. This did not deter him from his goals, and during this period, Assagioli felt the time was right to launch a bold and original publication, the journal *Psiche*, intended for a wider audience with the stated aim of popularizing psychology in Italy for the first time.

Then the winds of war arose, *Psiche* closed, and the Florentine conflict between interventionists and neutralists marked a profound turning point, not only politically, but also culturally and socially, ultimately involving him, albeit marginally. Assagioli was not an interventionist, even though he sympathized with France and Great Britain, but neither was he a pacifist, because as an expert on the human soul, he was not “under the illusion that peace could be founded on external means and legal pacts, as the pacifists claimed and attempted”. However, or initially because of his valgus foot that prevented him from wearing standard boots, he was nevertheless enlisted in 1917 as a medical lieutenant and assigned to care for neurotic patients suffering from psychological war trauma.

After his discharge, Assagioli resumed his work as a psychiatrist, but continued to maintain his commitment to the spiritual realm. Indeed, the pages of the theosophical periodicals of the time reveal his intense

activity as a populariser within the movement. As an evidence of this, he founded the “Florence Group” of the *Independent Theosophical League*, becoming its president. It was probably in this environment that he met Nella Ciapetti, his future wife, also very active in the theosophical movement, with whom he began a lifelong relationship.

In the early 1920s, Assagioli was just past thirty. His life was oriented along a dual path, combining his professional psychological and scientific interests with intense spiritual exploration; this represents the most subtle dimension, focused on the search for meaning, the mystery of the soul, and the overcoming of the limitations of personality. In my opinion, these two paths, at this time and throughout his life, enriched each other, touching upon areas of psychic reality that would transcend the individual to activate transpersonal states of consciousness. The effects of this path must have been evident even then, according to the testimonies of those who approached him during this period. Among them, in 1921, was banker Frank Vanderlip, president of one of the most important American banks and a key figure in the creation of the Federal Reserve System, the central bank of the United States. During his trip to Europe to analyse the postwar financial and political situation, the banker, no stranger to innovative spiritual and educational interests—he had founded, with his wife, the first Montessori school in New York—met several times with Assagioli in Florence, being deeply impressed by the young Florentine psychiatrist’s dedication and insight into the human soul, to the point of comparing him to a “modern-day Saint Francis”. The meeting marked the beginning of a deep respect that, thanks to the banker’s services and considerable influence, would help raise awareness of Assagioli’s thought in the United States, thus paving the way for the subsequent penetration of psychosynthesis in the 1960s.

#### *The second marriage and the birth of his son Ilario*

Assagioli married Nella Ciapetti in Florence in 1922 in a religious ceremony celebrated by the Tolstoyan Don Brizio Casciola, known as the “street priest” for

his often counter-current social and cultural activism, a charismatic figure who would have a significant impact on Assagioli's life. Don Brizio, who had previously faced ecclesiastical censorship for his closeness to Catholic modernism and the Milan group around the magazine *Il Rinnovamento*, later showed sympathy for the Fascist regime, earning him high regard by it. His stance likely played a role in Assagioli's release from prison in August 1940 and the lifting of subsequent restrictions against him.

On September 12, 1923, their only child, Francesco Ilario, was born in Capolona, the family's summer residence. A precociously mature young man with an innate spirituality, he enrolled in medical school with the clear intention of joining his father's practice. Unfortunately, his hopes were dashed by a serious case of tuberculosis that would lead to his death in 1951.

### *The Roman period*

In 1923 Assagioli began a periodical collaboration on *Ultra*, a magazine linked to the Independent Theosophical League, with a column dedicated to the Inner Life, as a service to silent and lost human consciousnesses seeking help. A precise and targeted path aimed at introducing readers, in a simple and clear way, to the most important principles, laws, and methods of inner work, such as knowledge of this world, self-study, the elimination of inhibitions, methods of control, meditation, the development of intuition, and the awakening of profound energies. Readers were encouraged to share their experiences, reproducing a model of questions and answers tested years earlier in *Psiche*.

At the same time, his courses and lectures intensified within the Roman Theosophical group, which Assagioli had begun attending for some time, becoming a key figure. This, in a short while, was the prelude to the family's move to Rome, likely for personal reasons and also because he couldn't afford to be away for long after the birth of his son. Thus, in 1924, the family moved to Rome, temporarily staying with his wife's parents.

A year earlier, *Ultra*, in its July 1923 issue, drawing

on an article that had appeared that year in the British periodical *Lloyd's Sunday News* of London on Assagioli's successes in treating nervous disorders, featured an interview with Assagioli regarding his psychotherapeutic methods. Assagioli's responses are interesting because they anticipate, even without ever naming it, the architecture of the future psychosynthesis. The definitive public consecration of this would take a few more years, when the *Istituto di Cultura e Terapia psichica* (Institute of Psychic Culture and Therapy) was founded in Rome in 1926, where the term psychosynthesis was openly used for the first time. The Institute would then take its definitive name, *Istituto di Psicossintesi* (Institute of Psychosynthesis), in 1933.



1926 was also an important year for other achievements. The following July, Assagioli participated in an interesting and futuristic medical-climatic stay project in Grottaferrata, the only one of its kind in Italy, a precursor

to today's wellness centres. The name was "Naturesana", a hilltop villa that aimed to offer cutting-edge treatments in natural healing and prophylaxis, physiodietetics, physical culture, and psychotherapy. Precisely the latter, considered "hygiene of the soul and spirit", would be entrusted to Assagioli's management.

That same year, Assagioli, having consolidated his activity in Rome, launched a highly innovative and, in some ways, ahead of its time initiative, centred on self-work on a bio-psycho-spiritual level, to be experienced in a group. The ideal setting was found in a villa in Chiochio, a small village in the heart of the Chianti region, where the aforementioned activity would take place during the summer months with residential groups of people driven by a desire for inner exploration, but also simply needing to live in contact with nature, prioritizing physical care and following a predominantly vegetarian diet.

The villa, originally called "Paradiso", was later renamed *nomina sunt omina* in "Villa Serena", which, even in its name, prefigured a suitable environment for addressing inner problems and suffering through an approach that we might define as holistic, in contact with nature and with healing methods "offered by modern applied psychology, especially in its most elevated and spiritual aspects". It was at Villa Serena that he was arrested in 1940.

Indeed, a few years earlier, Assagioli, in a particularly inspired piece, had envisioned the emergence of a "House of Peace" where one could rediscover oneself in meditation and contemplation, trusting in one's own strengths and in life itself. It is no coincidence that half a century later, this experience of Assagioli's inspired one of his students, Sergio Bartoli, to establish a Psychosynthesis Community, later known as Community of Living Ethics, near Città della Pieve, based on the same principles.

From the 1930s, Assagioli increased his psychosynthesis activities and theosophical meetings. After the closure of *Ultra* these were held on Tuesday evenings at his home. These consisted of lectures and public meditation

practices about peace. These meetings continued until the 1939 dissolution of the Theosophical Society and its affiliated movements, ordered by the Fascist government for their opposition to the racial laws. Affected by the government's measures against Jews, Assagioli was removed from the Register of Physicians of the Province of Rome. As the war approached, his calls for peace, contrary to the regime's propaganda, deemed dangerous for its influence on public opinion, earned him serious trouble and even imprisonment on charges of pacifist activities and propaganda. This was also contributed to by the slander contained in anonymous complaints against him, with poisonous insinuations that had nothing to do with politics, but were due to the professional jealousies that had long been simmering in Roman circles, where Assagioli had gained a reputation among the people as a "doctor who performs miracles" and among the younger ones as "the doctor who helps people pass exams".

Locked up in Regina Coeli prison, from which he would be released a month later, probably thanks to the intervention of influential people who frequented the Institute of Psychosynthesis and of Don Casciola, he remained subject to probation, as a person considered a danger to State security.

In prison, Assagioli took extensive notes, but was hesitant to publish this "prison diary", feeling, as he later said, "strongly reluctant to draw public attention to my personality". Only after much hesitation and second thoughts did he decide to make it public, both because "it might be of interest to people who have been or are about to go to prison—how to best live that experience", and because "biographies and autobiographies have a strong and unparalleled educational value [...] an influence that no other form of teaching can achieve", but above all because it gave evidence to the ability to rise above difficult situations, events, incidents, and personal experiences at any time and in any circumstance, indeed to use them "for constructive purposes, to train and develop some part of one's being". The writing was published under the title *Libertà in prigione* (Freedom in Prison).

His regained freedom was a short-lived respite, because when the Nazis seized complete power in Italy in 1943, things took a turn for the worse for him too, and he was actively sought for deportation to the extermination camps. Hastily leaving his family in Capolona to hide in the Catenaia Alps and the Apennine mountains north of Arezzo, he was forced to constantly change hiding places, in stables, barns, and cellars, risking capture several times.

#### *The second Florentine period*

After the end of the war, in his new headquarters on Via San Domenico, Assagioli began his second Florentine experience. He did not, however, immediately resume the psychosynthesis work he had interrupted in Rome, but opened a *Centro di metapsichica* (Centre for Metapsychics), which in 1955 became the *Centro di parapsicologia* (Centre for Parapsychology). The program included a course of weekly lectures on *Le facoltà psichiche supernormali e il loro sviluppo* (The supernormal psychic faculties and their development), accompanied by group exercises (later repeated individually) in visualization, auditory evocation, mental concentration, and telepathy. This choice was not surprising, as Assagioli, in keeping with his spirit as a “scientist of life”, was completely free of prejudice toward any experience that presented itself.

And the phenomena studied by parapsychology, especially supernormal faculties, assumed scientific importance for him, to be studied and brought back into the realm of the superconscious, as they too constituted a valuable resource for diagnosis and treatment.

There were other reasons that drove him to this choice, such as his assessment that in Italy at the time, interest in paranormal psychic phenomena and in general in all things mysterious and occult prevailed. Another was the observation that interest in and appreciation for psychosynthesis abroad, especially in the United States, were more vivid and widespread than in Italy, and therefore sufficient to induce him, indeed, as he says, compel him, to work internationally<sup>(6)</sup>.

#### *Progressive Judaism*

Born into a secular family, Assagioli never practiced the Jewish religion or followed any of its rites, but he always maintained contact and great respect for this spiritual tradition, particularly with Martin Buber, due to his tireless pursuit of harmony in relations between East and West, between Jews and Arabs. After the war and the dramatic experience of persecution as a Jew, Assagioli felt the need to engage positively with the Jewish question. In

1950, the Florentine house on Via San Domenico became the headquarters of the *Unione italiana per l'ebraismo progressivo* (Italian Union for Progressive Judaism), whose aim was to foster an attitude of openness and collaboration toward all peoples and religions. Assagioli and his group never even ventured to hypothesize a reform within Judaism, nor did they define it as a *doctrine*, but only as a way of living it in open and respectful dialogue with other attitudes, with a cultural program in which three aspects should receive “particular emphasis and greater development [...] spirituality, universality and messianism”<sup>(7)</sup>.

In his article *L'ebraismo progressivo e la psicologia* (Progressive Judaism and Psychology), Assagioli clearly outlines his relationship with it and the contribution that Jewish tradition had made to psychosynthesis, precisely because of the living experience of its mystics and the precious psychological data it contained, which combined well with the best that modern psychology had to offer<sup>(8)</sup>.

In his vision, this represented the overcoming of materialistic tendencies and prejudices toward the superconscious, giving value to the spiritual sphere, so that psychology would assume the role that truly belongs to it according to its very name: that is, the *science of the soul*. After a few years, the Florentine group's commitment waned, especially due to the “disconnection” of its collaborators, so that Assagioli, now advanced in years, preferred to dedicate his energies to psychosynthesis and spiritual research.

## Appeal to friends

At the end of the war, Assagioli wrote several letters to reconnect with friends and deliver a heartfelt appeal to a humanity suffering in the face of “a civilization, a culture [...] in rapid decline, its forms exhausted or collapsing resoundingly”. For Assagioli, this end was nothing but a beginning, albeit “a disorderly and confused beginning of a new era”, heralding the birth of a new humanity. We could say that, despite past difficulties, Assagioli already positioned himself as a detached observer of a final, apocalyptic time, revealing the imperfections and often hidden distortions of an old world. At the same time, he announced the good news of the emergence of new trends: right relationships in communication, a tendency toward

unification, that is, “a group spirit, fusion, identification with a greater whole, the result of collaboration, teamwork, and service”. Assagioli’s optimism was fuelled by a prophetic vision of a renewal process already underway that would lead unstoppably to “an organic synthesis and a global synthesis—a *one* humanity”, capable of overcoming its state of separateness, which has always been the source of conflict and destruction. He also indicated the method as “the systematic use of all possible psychological techniques active through psychosynthesis, emphasizing the fundamental one—the awakening and development of will”. The expression of this new realized humanity would be “*nations as living entities, as psychological realities*”, in which one senses a reference to Mazzinian themes.

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Capolona (Arezzo), Settembre 1941.

Cari amici,

Desidero di riallacciare il più presto possibile i buoni fili che ci collegavano in passato, ho pensato di cominciare con l'inviarvi questa prima lettera collettiva, data le limitazioni pratiche del momento.

Son lieto di potervi dire che io e i miei siamo vivi e liberi. I tedeschi e i fascisti mi hanno fatto l'onore (se non proprio il piacere) di ricercarmi personalmente; perciò ho dovuto per parecchi mesi giocare a rimpiattino con loro nella zona dell'Alpe di Catenaiola, in provincia di Arezzo, e nell'Alta Val Tiberina. Con l'aiuto di Dio e di varie buone persone (amici del posto, contadini, un paracadutista e vari altri inglesi di cui condividevo in parte le sorti) i ricercatori sono arrivati sempre troppo tardi. Riguardo alle condizioni di vita, ho preferito indicarle sotto forma umoristica nella nota in calce (1).

La nostra casa alla Nussa, Capolona, è stata svaligiata e poi fatta saltare con la dinamite. Nella cantina ho trovato per terra, in disordine, cumuli di scritti e di appunti, che rappresentavano il mio lavoro di oltre 35 anni. Ho cominciato a ripulirli e a riordinarli. Siamo temporaneamente alloggiati nella parte della fattoria meno colpita dalle granate.

Di Villa Serena non abbiamo ancora notizie. Sono pronto al peggio perché anche colà avevo... cattiva fama politica. Come molti di voi sapete, vi fui arrestato nell'anno 1940, sotto l'accusa di elevare e diffondere preghiere per la pace e di altri simili delitti di internazionalismo. (2).

By the early 1960s, despite the death of his son, persecution, and exile, Assagioli's thought had continued its journey and was ready to spread throughout the world. In June 1961, after constituting in an association, the Institute of Psychosynthesis vigorously resumed its activities in Florence, with conferences, annual courses, lectures, and individual and group therapy, which were very advanced for the time.

Consistent with the ideas he expressed, particularly in progressive Judaism, in 1963 Assagioli joined a unique initiative born after the Second World War: the "citizen of the world" identity card, a badge he held dear and never parted with. For him, this belonging meant embracing the idea that humans are, in fact, one people with the same rights and duties. It was the awareness of a specific state of mind, an acquisition of consciousness that sees equity as a guarantee of opportunities for all, not equality as standardization, but rather one that values distinctive diversity. His motto was "unity in diversity". It's no coincidence that he believed in groups and, well ahead of his time, hoped that their activity should be conducted according to a principle of unanimity, which is not uniformity but identity of purpose, that is, a feeling of being united in a purpose for a common enterprise. He wrote in personal notes that the "diversities of effort, of expression, of form are perfectly compatible with a unanimous aim and are indeed the guarantees of a living unanimity that springs from within".

*The founding of the Meetings and Collaboration Centre.  
The "Voce Amica" telephone.*

Sensitivity and a strong humanitarian commitment were the basis of Assagioli's 1963 founding in Florence of a "civil association" called the *Centro Incontri e Collaborazione* (Meetings and Collaboration Centre), of which he would be the first president. The bylaw stated that the association's purpose was to "provide opportunities for meeting between people who desire or need to establish social contacts, fostering the development of various group and individual skills: specifically, it aims to promote these relationships between individuals and society". In reality, the

association was inspired by the work of the *Centre de Recherche et Rencontres* in Paris, an activity Assagioli had learned about at the inauguration of the Psychosynthesis Centre in that city. The initiative attracted considerable interest from the outset, also because, following the French example, the association included the "Voce Amica" (Friend Voice), which could be contacted by telephone. In this initial phase of the project, the telephone was simply a tool offered to users to make initial contact with the Association and then go to the Centre, which was located in the Psychosynthesis Institute, moving from individual contact to group sharing of their problems.

*The idea of a Centre for super-gifted children at Villa Ilario*

Assagioli firmly believed that psychagogy, as a guide for souls, was a comprehensive education of the entire psyche from birth throughout life, so much so that it constituted the cornerstone of his psychosynthesis. With this in mind, until his final years he nurtured the idea of creating a centre for integral education. Around the 1920s, he wrote two particularly inspired articles on the subject: the first on the House of Peace, which we have discussed, and the other, a couple of years later, in which he advocated the establishment of an *International Centre* for the education and training of particularly advanced young people who would become leaders in the project for the birth of a new humanity.

This project seemed to materialize in the early 1960s in Capolona, an attempt to overcome the disadvantage of a school essentially geared toward downwards levelled teaching. According to Assagioli, this was damaging not only to students but also to society, as it ignored the superior human qualities of "children who potentially have special gifts and who can socially contribute much more than others". In his educational plan, these gifted children would require spiritual as well as mental education, as they were more open to the influence of the superconscious, more in touch with inspiration and intuition, precisely the channels through which superconscious elements descend into

the realm of consciousness. His psychagogy was aimed, on the one hand, at contact with the higher elements through “training in recollection, silence, reflective and receptive meditation”, while on the other, it focused on cultivating “proper human relations, good will, harmony, cooperation with others—individually and in increasingly larger groups, a sense of responsibility, and a spirit of service”. The central educational core was represented by the active techniques of Psychosynthesis, such as visualization and creative imagination, which Assagioli was famous for having developed and successfully tested during the Roman period.

His belief was that spiritual and mental labour was much more demanding than manual labour, and therefore the Educational Centre would require outdoor activities, where manual skills would prove “very soothing for an overactive brain”. To this end, he had increasingly developed a vision for an agricultural colony and holiday camps in a place called “Il Pino”, a hill opposite their home in Capolona, donated by the maternal grandmother in memory of her grandson, where the agricultural colony would be built. The organizational preliminary stages were well underway, and Assagioli had already given legal authority to “prepare a draft of the Bylaws of the Hilarion Agricultural Cooperative for the Centres for the Education of Super-Gifted Children”, a name that probably referred to that of his son, but also to one of the inspiring Masters of the Theosophical movement.

It is not unnoticed that in this project there were references to significant national and international experiences, such as the educational centres and the farms, which Don Brizio Casciola had brought to life on several occasions, and the “Schools of Wisdom”, founded in Germany by Hermann Keyserling, whose thinking and work Assagioli admired; these were first and foremost “schools of consciousness” and aimed to convey a sense of “being” rather than “power”.

Despite his enthusiasm, Assagioli was unable to realize the project due to his advancing age and poor health. There were only preliminary seminars and conferences during the “International Summer Weeks” in Capolona, where Assagioli was careful to invite spiritually

“innovative” educators and speakers who represented the new in themselves, not so much in the topics or doctrines they covered.

But his long flight was now drawing to a close, just as he was still dedicating himself to the study of the transpersonal aspects of the psyche, also with a view to writing a book on the nature and requirements of the “Self”. After the death of his wife Nella in 1973, Roberto too, in August 1974, passed away at Villa Ilario, the very place where he had nurtured the birth of that educational centre that would pave the way for a new humanity.



Roberto Assagioli  
Summer 1966  
Capolona

#### Notes

1. Roberto Assagioli in his own Words, Fragments of an Autobiography, Recorded by E. Smith, edited by G. Dattilo, P. Ferrucci, and V. Reid Ferrucci, Ed. Istituto di Psicosintesi, Florence 2019, p. 12.
2. Interview with Peter De Coppens, in Giovetti P., Roberto Assagioli, Ed. Mediterranee, Rome 1995, p. 105.
3. Assagioli R., Ibidem, p.11.
4. Assagioli R., La psicologia dell'esistenza umana, Corso di lezioni (The Psychology of Human Existence, Course of Lectures), Istituto di Psicosintesi, lez.1 a.1971.
5. Assagioli R., Roberto Assagioli in his own Words, op. cit., p.31.
6. Assagioli R., Psicosintesi e parapsicologia (Psychosynthesis and parapsychology), Archivio Assagioli, ID 17893. In 1957, with the generous help and fervent collaboration of some friends, the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation was created with its own headquarters in Valmy, Greenville, Delaware (USA). In 1959, the Centre de Psychosynthèse in Paris and the Psychoeducational Center in Athens, Georgia (USA) were founded; later, the Zentrum für Psychosynthesis in Munich.
7. Italian Union for Progressive Judaism, Bulletin, No. 1, April 1952, Psychosynthesis Archive.
8. Assagioli R., L'ebraismo progressivo e la psicologia (Progressive Judaism and Psychology), op. cit.