

# BRIEF NOTES ON TRAINING IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Translated by Alberto Gabba

Aldo Scarpulla

The training offered by psychosynthesis in its Centres takes the form of ongoing development, the prerequisites for which are: growing self-awareness; the voluntary, constantly active engagement required of the participant – failing which the training itself would be rendered futile – and the full autonomy of choice that each individual involved is called upon to exercise.

It therefore responds to the higher needs for personal knowledge and growth that consciences, spurred on by their emergence, perceive – albeit initially in a confused manner – at the moment when they seek to define themselves by breaking away from conventional thinking and from the *prevailing social mindset* of the historical period in which they live, or even when driven by an inner unease.

Thus begins a critical phase of existential exploration that takes place chiefly within the inner self, aiming at a deeper meaning and maturity which, through ups and downs, will find their defining foundation, for the most part, in the development of a personal and higher sense of responsibility. Assagioli illustrates this existential moment well and, by referring to Tolstoy's life, provides a concrete example of it.

More recently, too, we have had an account in Federico Faggin's autobiography, "Silicio", which parallels Tolstoy's narrative. As if to bear witness to the universality of the existential situation described.

Whilst the concepts outlined above represent the basic principles shared by the whole field of humanistic psychology, the process they initiate within the psychosynthetic approach is entirely dependent on two factors:

*"An intuitive understanding of  
the spirit of psychosynthesis  
and a solid technical  
knowledge".*

These two factors go hand in hand, and each depends on the other. For Assagioli, to think that a thorough mastery of the many techniques is sufficient, means to distort the work of psychosynthesis. And whilst their number may be expanded at will, this is possible only on condition

that, when correctly applied, they always remain true to the spirit of psychosynthesis. "Although psychosynthesis may be regarded as a synthesis of various therapies and educational methods, it is important to bear in mind that the central core constituting its essence is *original*". This originality must be jealously guarded.

However, whilst considering it fundamental to draw inspiration from *the spirit of psychosynthesis* – without which it would lose its distinctive character – Assagioli refrains from defining it once and for all in conceptually precise terms.

Indeed, it is no coincidence that understanding it is described as *intuitive*; and intuition, as conceived by Assagioli and others, while on the one hand transcending the function of thought, on the other manifests itself in a non-discursive manner, providing immediate and direct knowledge without, however, providing a rationale for it. We might say, to use a metaphor, that intuition operates through 'flashes of light' which deeply touch the consciousness and evoke its full consensus, generating *an intimate inner certainty*.

It therefore seems essential for those seeking training in psychosynthesis that cultivating intuition – as a supra-rational form of understanding and, consequently, a function that takes precedence over thought – is an indispensable prerequisite.

Thought is certainly not to be excluded, but the 'I' is called upon to draw initially from the source of higher mental energy inherent in intuition; only afterwards should thought be entrusted with the precious, necessary task of processing and integrating its contents into the knowledge already acquired.

An important aspect of the initial stage of the formative process – disidentification – is precisely this: creating distance from the historical data present in consciousness, that hold us back, whether these be cognitive, emotional or sensory, in order to give rise, so to speak, to alternative paths of knowledge, characterised by the use of intuition: "The only way out is the way up".

Motto of PS  
"The only way out  
is the way up."

20

Here too, the will – the use of which is central and omnipresent in psychosynthetic training – can exert its power in two ways: both by “temporarily putting the brakes on the distracting activities of the other psychological functions” and by “formulating questions to be directed towards the superconscious sphere, the seat of intuition”.

Assagioli’s countless, very brief writings, affectionately known as ‘*assagiolini*’, clearly have this origin. As well as demonstrating the inherent fruitfulness of the intuitive function, they suggest to every student of psychosynthesis the need to follow the same path and point them towards a very specific technique.

When formulating the questions to be addressed to the superconscious sphere, Assagioli advises that they must be given *a clear and precise form*. This is not a trivial detail, but rather an approach that reveals the seriousness required in practising the proposed exercises and, at the same time, the profound and real presence of the superconscious sphere within the human psyche.

Another simple technique that serves the same purpose and aims to develop intuition is that of evocative words. Those who practise it are like miners who go into a mine to extract a valuable ore, so that they may then benefit from it and enrich themselves.

Fixing one’s attention on the chosen words, allowing oneself to be influenced by them, and waiting patiently, that is, not necessarily immediately, for new content to emerge into consciousness – to be ‘evoked’, as it were

– content that is not merely mental, such as ideas, but also unexpected images, sensations and feelings upon which to reflect subsequently, forms part of the work of developing the intuitive function, for which it is essential to maintain constant attention.

These techniques are then fully integrated into the practice of meditation. This practice, with its distinct phases of mental attention on freely chosen themes, of listening to and accepting without prejudice the contents arising from within and surfacing in consciousness, finds its ultimate expression in the creative elaboration of concrete actions and behaviours to be adopted.

In attempting a brief summary of what has been said, I believe it can be stated that

*the spirit of Psychosynthesis  
lies in being in a state of  
striving towards the best,*

a state that cannot be defined ‘a priori’, is not the same for everyone, and is not to be sought in something already formulated within a given body of knowledge, but rather to *be grasped intuitively* and then translated into concrete projects – whether small or large, it matters not – to be put into practice.

The framework through which the “initial tension directed towards the best” finds its practical application consists of the seven fundamental points, the experience of which Assagioli considers essential if one is to speak of psychosynthetic training. Although minimal, this experience is necessary and must always be repeated and explored in greater depth. I believe that the distortion and dilution feared by Assagioli lie precisely in failing to channel the variety of techniques towards the progression of the path marked by the seven experiences<sup>(1)</sup>.

Taken together, they are comparable to a ladder of elevation and evolution, whose starting point is already a significant milestone and whose destination is a luminous achievement. Placing the distinction between what one has and what one is on the first rung of the

ladder, and seeking to remain steadfastly in what one is, immediately conveys the high starting point of the path that is proposed. And the self-identification that immediately follows disidentification, with the strong affirmation: "...I am a centre of awareness, a centre of will", immediately brings to the fore a potential which, step by step, must find its fulfilment in the Self. It is not easy "... to have a complete experience" of the Self, but it is beneficial to have a certain theoretical understanding of its characteristics and *the experience of its guidance*".

The most concise and profound version of the disidentification exercise is depicted on the left-hand side of the entrance door to Assagioli's study at the Institute in Florence, as if to serve as a constant reminder, alongside its originality, of the complexity of the psychosynthetic process and its surprising ability to stimulate inner exploration. The fruits of this, however, are only possible through continuous experimentation, attempted time and again with patience and humility.

Nevertheless, whilst aiming to bring out the full potential of the human being, the psychosynthetic path is accessible at all levels, depending on the different psychological ages of those who undertake the journey. "Different levels of meaning, none of which is clearly defined or complete, are associated with each experience, but *persistence in the training leads to the revelation of new and more interesting aspects, which form a link between them*. In other words, each experience will no longer be seen as something in its own right, but as part of other experiences".

These experiences, which at first glance appear distinct, are linked by a compelling psychodynamic logic that is revealed only if the preceding one has been experienced in some way.

From the unique personal history of each individual – from which one must disidentify and which must be addressed from the core of one's own individuality – to the strong, good and wise will to which the *I* cannot help but entrust the task of choosing the life one intends to lead.

From here, moving through the synthesis that life's necessities inevitably impose – implementing a whole

series of adjustments and various prunings of the non-essential – up to the invocative engagement with the superconscious, the gateway to listening to the Self. This is a rapid succession of profound experiences, even at the most basic level.

Today, whilst the whole of humanity seems to be descending into an ever-widening and disorientating chaos, we cannot do without this radical method of human development, focused as it is on tenaciously extracting the latent spiritual essence of every human being.

We, as psychosynthesis trainers who have fully grasped its value, have the honour and the duty to preserve its original power in its entirety, becoming its convinced and credible bearers to all those who refuse to stand by and watch the dissolution of all human values and the constant decline of Goodwill, which never tires of working for the greatest possible good and for the greatest number of people.

Let us certainly change the syllabuses of our training courses and make them more appealing; what matters, however, is to preserve the indispensable spirit imbued in them by Assagioli, which we have attempted to briefly highlight here through these notes.

### Note

1. Seven Psychosynthesis' steps : Disidentification, the Multiple Self, the Will, the Ideal Model, Synthesis, the Superconscious, the Transpersonal Self.

