

RECOGNIZING ONESELF AMONG THE PARTS, KIND GENTLE WITNESSES TO A SERIOUS-GAME AN EXPERIENCE OF CDA (SELF-TRAINING COURSE) THROUGH TIME

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A longer silence. Eyes meeting. And that shiver I've come to know begins its journey once more, rising from the earth towards the heart, spreading that rediscovered Energy I'm trying to describe to you now, using the simplest – and undoubtedly inadequate – words at my disposal... but I'll give it a go! You probably know what I'm on about...

It is the truly rejuvenating experience of Selves reflecting one another, becoming witnesses one to the other as the collective Energy grows. We enter an ancient yet ever unique and new realm, the Space expands; together we feel we can be present with what we share: it doesn't matter whether it is joy or pain, there is room for everything, and the possibilities multiply.

January 2010. Let me take a step back. I'm a psychology student rushing to complete my dissertation. I've already wasted too many years trying to figure out *who I am*, changing forms and places countless times. Now I'm trying to stay focused; now I have in my heart a Model that has given new Meaning to my recent choices, which shapes my future and allows me to see it even when I feel crushed by the present, or rather, by some old sub-personality that inhabits it, trying to convince me of its truth.

The Psychosynthesis Centre is my home, almost literally.

The Milan I'd happily left behind a few years earlier is once again exerting an inexplicable pull. But it's no longer the Milan of aperitifs, theatre classes, and an adolescence lived in fast forward since my arrival in the city from my little village in Emilia: it's the experience of feeling part of a diverse, complex group, sometimes elusive to my understanding at the time, yet exquisitely real. As real as I wanted to be. At last.

I remember, as if it were yesterday, the excited anticipation of that day of the week when, from Pavia, from my somewhat isolated lair devoted solely to study and yoga I would make my way to the centre of Milan and the CTA – that's what it was called back then, and that's how we've always known it – opening myself up to that part of the world that let me breathe in the fresh,

light air of non-judgmental gazes.

Our trainers were masters at this: at embodying and making tangible a calm atmosphere in which you felt you could even drop your own bombs. All those unspeakable emotions.

Or those thoughts so stifled that they needed resuscitation!

And they always found it.

The Space was there: the group's collective Self knew how to hold us and lift us up, helping us discover unfamiliar perspectives.

Practice was the other great teacher. The right question, that drawing that gave shape to words not yet conceivable, the exercise in pairs that delved into mutual closeness through a more intimate bubble where we could recognize each other.

And step by step ... I was truly born.

*'Become who you are',
Assagioli used to said.*

Stringing together a few tears, laughs, and deep breaths, here I am on this stretch of road that is the present day, embodying, among other roles, that of a trainer: a grateful witness to the journey of other explorers of the multifaceted Soul.

It really is a wonderful experience to accompany a group on a CDA (editor's note: Corso Di Autoformazione, Self-Training Course).

While the Gift that Assagioli has bestowed upon us is already evident in the practice as a psychosynthetic therapist, through his insight into this approach to life – so resonant, immediate, and transformative for those who experience it – thanks to the amplifying power of the group, this change becomes tangible and accelerated: this is what I like to call the greenhouse effect. Fortunately, it is certainly not a hole in the ozone layer, but a multiplied warmth that radiates the seeds each person places at the centre and breaks through, yes, it does, when you least expect it, and very intensely at that.

This is the Energy I was talking about. In my experience,

it's like an internal bell that tells me this right down to my skin, literally, with shivers that I now recognize well: "Yes, ... here we are!"

The group Self is at work. And simply *Being* is everything.

At the beginning of the session, I find it very valuable to bring the "I" back to its Centre of Self-Awareness, because perhaps it is still lost outside the room, still caught up in its frantic rush: chasing a watch that's gone haywire or trapped within some more intrusive or reticent sub-personality.

After a moment of listening with our eyes closed, I then invite everyone, one by one, to state aloud their name and their intention to Be: that "I am here!" from which the Group Self draws its nourishment and through which it can become, precisely by virtue of this network of Presence, a safe harbour for each of us in the sea of our complexity.

The first year of CDA is truly special in this respect: step by step, the encounter with our recognised parts becomes increasingly concrete and verbalizable, we grow and support one another, even in the way we approach ourselves. Precisely for this reason, a vital ingredient for broadening our horizons and shedding light on our own steps in the shared process is the quality of our observation.

As Assagioli showed us, and I experienced first-hand as a member of my legendary CTA, we need a gentle gaze to reveal ourselves to others, but even before that, to ourselves. I like the term *gentle* because I feel it's delicate and respectful, just as all our parts deserve. It is not a question of being overly optimistic, but of being unburdensome.

There are gazes that weigh as heavily as boulders. And that critical sub-personality that readily disguises itself as our Observing I is a striking example of this gravity! Am I exaggerating...?

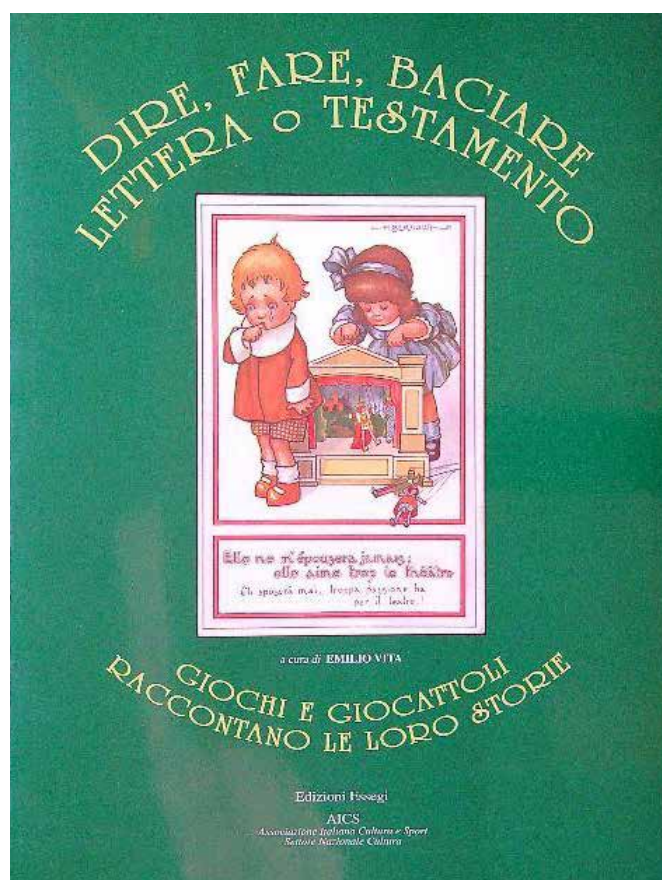
In any case, when in doubt, I have embraced Assagioli's vision of life as a game and a theatrical performance, through physical practices and games that can

spontaneously bring to the surface a more balanced and light-hearted view of our inner parliament.

Drawing on my own experiences in theatre and psychodrama, but also very much on the emotional baggage of my little part, over the years I've had the chance to try out a few exercises in the group that I've grown rather fond of.

I'll tell you about one that has the ability to summarise, with great immediacy and simplicity, the key stages of encountering one's own sub-personalities.

The exercise is called: Say-Do-Kiss-Letter-Testament.



Does this remind you of anything?

A serious-game, as it has often been described. For those who knew it as children, to be precise, a proper penance!

In reality, in this psychosynthetic version, it has become one of my favourite ways of working with the parts, bringing attention to one's own resonances, to what happens within us during its various stages.

Unlike the traditional penance, the actions listed are not options to choose from, but stages in a specific process of development.

Before proceeding with this phase, however, I ask the participants – who are still unaware of the exercise I am about to introduce – to freely list the aspects of themselves that they feel best represent who they are – at least for that day, without claiming to be exhaustive, of course.

Immediately afterwards, sheets of paper and felt-tip pens will appear taking them back, with a very simple request, to nursery school: "... trace the outline of your hand on the paper".

The group always comes alive as they repeat that old-fashioned gesture, getting just as messy as they did back then! And riding the wave of this gentle euphoria, the participants are then asked to choose, without overthinking it, five terms from the list they've just drawn up, to match each finger to their chosen parts, writing them directly onto the drawn hand.

The theme of matching qualities to fingers already arouses a certain intellectual interest in its own right, with the search for symbolic meanings of the fingers in relation to various aspects of the self. However, I deliberately leave out the in-depth interpretation to make way for the direct experience of the game, which I shall now briefly present, one step at a time.

SAY – First of all, I ask whoever wishes to begin to *say* something from the perspective of that aspect or part of themselves written on their thumb. Ideally, this part should speak in the first person, but if the exercise proves too embarrassing, it is also permissible to describe it to the group as the 'Observing I', taking care to maintain that intention of a gentle gaze described above. The others listen and gradually take their turn to speak, until

the circle is complete.

DO - Let's now move on to the second stage of the journey: *doing* a gesture or a more complex action to represent what has been associated with the index finger. This time, words are not allowed! Instead, you're free to move around and use your fellow participants as props in your mimed performance. This is also when the guessing game begins – trying to work out which aspect is being portrayed – whilst the person taking centre stage is tasked with constantly observing his or her own inner responses during the action and tuning into their fellow participants' reactions.

KISS - Once the round of actions is complete, we move on to the middle finger. At this point, I usually feel everyone's eyes fixed on me with a certain insistent curiosity: "And now how/what should I *kiss*?!". Suspense. This is an "academic" kiss: through a symbolic gesture or words of gratitude and appreciation. It's often a truly uncomfortable kiss if a part of oneself that one doesn't love has ended up on that finger! But this is what the serious-game entails, ultimately asking us to seek out the good even in what we still don't understand about ourselves or have never truly wanted to face, and to try to do so.

If in the previous two stages of *saying* and *doing* we had stumbled upon some difficult sub-personalities and the work of representation had been a bit of a struggle, here we're asked to take it one step further: a quantum leap to go beyond our current thinking, to creatively seek out new and perhaps interesting points of view.

LETTER - At the fourth finger, the tone changes. We prepare for a more intimate moment. On the ring finger, lies a part of ourselves with which we can try to strike up a dialogue, but in private, through the precious medium of the *letter*. I'll say straight away that the writings won't be read out to the group, but they can provide an opportunity for a full exchange of letters: everyone is free to choose to start by writing whatever they feel is useful at that moment (a piece of advice, a thank you, a request...) beginning with 'I', and then allowing that part of themselves the chance to reply, or vice versa.

At the end of this moment of reflection, I invite participants simply to share their impressions of the session that has just taken place. It is not uncommon for these conversations, which began by chance, to leave an aura of wonder clearly perceptible in the air and the sense of a shift taking place deep within.

The group acts as its precious guardian, respecting the pace of this psychological process.

And then, we reach the final stage.

TESTAMENT - More moments of restless suspense. Yes, that's exactly what you're thinking: the part associated with the little finger must leave us; its time has come.

We all know this only too well, and when working on sub-personalities it is emphasised time and again: no part of us ever dies completely. Rather, over time and through the process of partial syntheses, it is significantly scaled back; it may make room for new, less extreme parts and certainly loses its majority in our internal parliament, no longer usurping the throne of the "I". But it doesn't leave us just like that!

And yet, at this stage of the serious-game, no one makes any effort to hide their dismay – or their euphoria, in some cases – at what has happened. The idea immediately becomes extremely real, prompting thought-provoking responses. Precisely for this reason, everyone will be invited to tell the group what this part has left behind in their life and how they will now try to shape their future without its presence.

And here the game comes to an end: with this playfully somewhat forced Disidentification which, whilst on the one hand, recalls Assagioli's invitation not to become too attached to any role or part – not even the most noble and beloved – on the other hand becomes the starting point for valuing one's still timid and silent aspects, as well as the capacity of the I to reorganise itself and create a new *Synthesis*.

The emotional engagement with which the group

experiences this stage-by-stage journey together, with its ever-increasing stakes, is something that never ceases to amaze me.

With self-irony and sensitivity, one can touch upon truly profound chords, and when the group is already well-bonded and trust flows through the energy field like harmonious music, it is not uncommon for emotion to well up, and it is a balm that heals all of us, precious mirrors.

I've deliberately included myself in this *us* because I truly consider it an honour to be able to bear witness to the beauty of these moments, vibrating and growing alongside those who are at the centre of them.

These are just fragments of what I could recount from my brief experience as a trainer and a slightly longer journey of Self-discovery. But if my intention to spark memories and resonances has succeeded, I think you'll now be keen to share with someone your own personal experience of the group and those moments that perhaps gave you a slight shiver down your spine.

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