

SHAPING OURSELVES – SELF-FORMATION IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS AS A LIFE PATH

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In recent days, I have reread the final paper of what is now called the CDA (Self-formation Course) at the Institute; at the time of my writing, it had not yet taken its current form, but was called *Didattica* (Didactics) and lasted five years instead of three as it does now.

Rereading those pages of mine, which I will partially include as a testimony, I became even more convinced of the function and validity of this path, even though it is difficult to measure its transformative power on ourselves. But let's take things in order.

Although in the past one arrived at the *Didattica* after attending the offerings of one's local Centre—courses, seminars, or other activities—for several years, I find that the underlying motivations have not changed over time: one may approach it out of a need to bring order or clarity, or because life places us before a difficulty and we question its meaning, as if we wanted to untangle a skein to find its origin.

I was 34 and had a great thirst for knowledge; I wanted answers, but above all, I was eager to know what was moving inside me, given that my external life was so rich in intensity and experience that I could not process it all simultaneously. Roles, work life, disappointments, unmet expectations—it was a crucible of lived experiences.

Times were different then; we did not fear the length of the commitment—on the contrary, it was a guarantee of the validity of the proposal. The lessons were in the evening, three hours long, and in Varese, where I attended, three different facilitators took turns, all very different from one another. I don't think I ever missed a meeting. Some dedicated more time to theory, some to practice, some stirred the waters, others calmed them. The group was large and, compared to now, very young. I, just over thirty, was chronologically in the middle.

At the end of the third year, I decided to leave the group. I was in the midst of a personal crisis; perhaps expectations had collided with reality, perhaps the *unspoken* within the group represented an obstacle for me, or perhaps, simply, there was an *overflow* to be disposed of and assimilated.

From the start, I experienced this interruption as a pause; after all, self-knowledge had revealed my own pace and the respect I owed to my slow and reflective attitude I needed to let what I had learned settle, to recognize it within myself, and to assimilate it not just with my head. In fact, I resumed and finished the last two years, after a three-year break, with another group and a new spirit.

During this period, other motivations behind my withdrawal became clear to me: I was living my psychological growth as a burden, not as a possibility. Instead of focusing on who I was, I had focused on how to improve myself.

"We have abandoned the truth according to which human beings should not be perfected but cultivated. Wishing to perfect ourselves confirms our inadequacy; wishing to cultivate ourselves instead ratifies who we are." (Quote).

Exactly 25 years have passed since I finished my CDA, and many things have changed. The five-year duration has become three; lessons, in most cases, are bundled into seminars to make everything more concentrated and functional for the fast-paced times of this historical moment.

From a student, I became a trainer, but since psychosynthesis is primarily praxis, the boundary between one's personal psychosynthesis and what is passed on in the group is almost non-existent.

We transmit only what we are.

For me, returning to the CDA as a trainer was a lesson in humility.

"Humble is the one who does not judge, does not criticize, does not boast, does not despise, does not exalt oneself, does not seek one's own glory, does not put oneself on display, recognizes and accepts one's own limits, and does not want to excel either within oneself or outside oneself... does not consider oneself better or more important than others, and whose behaviour is marked by awareness of one's own limits and detachment from every form of pride and excessive security." (P. Bonacina – *Rivista* n. 17 – April 2012).

Even in the joy and awareness of the great responsibility

of this task, humility continues to be my beacon and the quality I aspire to every time I set out to lead a group.

I prefer an experiential rather than a theoretical approach, even though I consider theory fundamental and not superfluous. It is important to deepen the lines of reference from which the praxis arises. The apparent simplicity of psychosynthesis reveals itself slowly: one must grant it time, reflection, and the capacity to include rather than exclude. We do not promise “everything right away”; it takes personal effort.

It is the science of man and his contradictory complexity that fuses spirit and matter.

Retracing the CDA program as a trainer is experiencing something new every time. The group changes, and each group represents a microcosm where typologies, motives, life, and humanity intertwine.

Since things do not always go smoothly, we learn impersonality—that is, the ability to observe ourselves, others, and events with inner detachment, overcoming egocentrism and identification with our emotions. We work without attachment to results, and recognizing one’s own position within a vaster whole train one for an inner serenity that admits limits and errors.

Group work, which is fundamental in the Self-formation Course, acts as an accelerator of transformation and change; sometimes it amplifies problems and makes them evident. Not everyone can handle it, but if a climate of trust is created, even the most difficult encounters become milestones of our evolutionary turning points and deep understandings.

I do not believe there exists an analogous path aimed at “forming” without any purpose other than that of discovering and bringing to light our best talents and that in which we must recognize ourselves. The CDA does not aspire to titles, diplomas, or professionalizing certifications. It is something we do for ourselves, for our *savoir-vivre*, for the meaning we give to our existence. It is the fruit of a choice that happens only when one is ready.

This is the peculiarity of this path, and it is, in my

opinion, something to be safeguarded and protected.

Being a trainer means continuing to self-form. I include here, in its entirety, a thought by Vittorio Viglienghi that I fully embrace and to which I am intimately attached:

“Regarding this ‘self-formation of the trainer,’ we must understand each other very well, because it is not about the sum of operational, professional, and didactic skills acquired over time by the trainer. Let’s say, the sum of his accrediting ‘titles’. Or it is only in the slightest part. The way I understand self-formation—especially that of a trainer! —is instead the living and real testimony—that is, in the here and now of every single lesson or seminar—of what the trainer is at that precise moment as an individual, and not as a trainer!!; of how they have become—always as an individual—thanks to their previous experience in psychosynthesis; and how they are becoming at that moment, thanks to their current relationship with those ‘trainees’.

In my opinion, it is inconceivable to be able to help others self-form if, at that same moment, one is not self-forming oneself, with them. Which is to say, if one has not put oneself on the line.

This is a very particular way of living the role (of trainer), for which the less identified one is with it, the better it is performed. Probably because the experience lived by the entire integrated personality can only be much more powerful, alive, and effective than the experience lived by a single subpersonality, even if perfectly synthesized” (Vittorio Viglienghi – *Why Psychosynthesis can only be Self-formation*).



Il Parnaso, Raffaello Sanzio 1510-1511