

THE HUMAN JOURNEY

Translated by Achille Cattaneo

Alberto Alberti

28



Roberto Assagioli with some of his disciples, Florence 1973. During this meeting, Francesco Brunelli (first from the left in the photograph) asked Assagioli to speak to us about the problem of the Self. This was Assagioli's reply: "There is no 'problem' with the Self. The Self is a living reality, which can be experienced directly, immediately and self-evidently."

"The Self is a living reality."⁽¹⁾

Roberto Assagioli

A fundamental aspect of the human being is movement.

We can consider the human being as a presence, a being that is there, that is an *existence*, a living subject who moves, who proceeds, follows a path.

The human being therefore not only "is" – and is what he is –, but also "becomes". We can say that the human journey is that of becoming what one is, and of being what one becomes ("become-being").

It is a circular journey, which returns to itself, but always in a new way, centering itself in a more mature point of itself.

The human journey has, as its ultimate goal, the human being himself, human fullness, his "humus", the completion and fulfillment of his humanity.

It is a process of identity development, which does not end with adulthood and the period of so-called maturity, but lasts a whole life, and beyond.

This "walking" of the human being is not only a physical proceeding, but also an inner movement, a motion of the soul. It is a total human movement, biopsychospiritual and relational, that is, the movement of the entire *humanitas*.

It is a path that includes various phases, in each of which the human being takes a further step of maturation and adds another piece to the puzzle of his humanity.

In the personality this proceeding is expressed as physical and psychic action, while at the level of the Self or soul it seems to manifest mainly as free feeling, which seeks expression, dialogue, confirmation and sharing.

If we observe carefully the various phases of development, we can recognize in each of them a fine and subtle emotion that characterizes it: it is a movement of the soul, a vibration of feeling which, placing itself in relation, tends to become *commotion*.

The pre-identity of origins

Everything seems to begin from a commotion of love: the union of the couple at all levels (physical, emotional, mental, volitional and spiritual).

Thus a division is recomposed and two halves reunite: if the union is fruitful, a new life is born.

The Self, the soul, is in its depth relation.

Every relationship that is realized is not only a connection and a dialogue of feeling and the possibility of a recomposition in love, but also a possible creative event, a creation therefore, a new Self that is born, a soul that comes (recalled) to life.

The new unity of life is therefore born from a duality

in a relationship of love. The new one originates from the two: it is a unitary synthesis that preserves and correlates within itself both individual genetic imprints from which it derives.

But above all it carries with it the imprinting of the commotion of love that made everything possible. Every human being carries within himself a particle of love.

The first human identity, the first human movement therefore has its origin in an act of love.

It is a vulnerable identity, but at the same time also very powerful. We can define it *omni-potential*: it is the fertilized cell, endowed with unlimited potentialities.

But it is also very fragile, delicate, sensitive. It takes little to wound it, alter it, spoil it. It therefore needs to be protected, guarded, safeguarded.

It is the psycho-spiritual stem cell, it is the “nascent child” who is memory and imagination. It is a soul-project that, perhaps remembering what it was, dreams what it can become.

It is waiting.

The second human identity is characterized by dependence.

We are in relation with an adult, a “mother”, whom we need, and from whom we expect to be seen, looked at, recognized and loved.

We expect her Yes to our having entered the world.

Our attitude is what can be defined as a kind of “positive naivety”.

It is as if we instinctively had a positive vision of existence. Life has a meaning, and this meaning is something good. We are here and we are happy to be here.

In this phase we say Yes to life and we entrust ourselves to it and to those who act as its intermediary.

It is trust.

The third human identity is at its core a search for independence.

We now feel the need to individuate ourselves, to free ourselves from the “identity confusion” with adults, and we aspire to become autonomous.

We affirm: “...I am not the other, I am myself.”

We experience self-awareness and with it solitude. Now we no longer expect help from outside, but try to take for ourselves what we desire and need.

With the awareness of our Ego, we also discover our freedom to will.

We feel we can be the cause of effects within us and outside of us.

We become aware of our abilities and our vulnerabilities. We measure our strengths and our limits, and we venture into life.

It is courage.

The fourth human identity is based on the recognition of the central truth of life: coexistence.

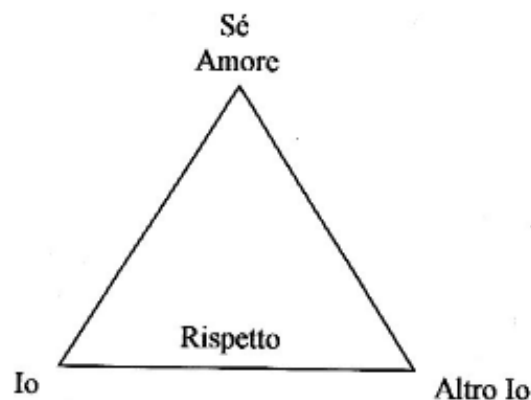
We are not alone: the other also exists. The other exists and exists in himself, independently of us.

The other is not a “you” referred to our individuality (a mixture of reality and projective fantasies), but an “Other Ego”, distinct from us.

We affirm: “The other is not me, he is himself.”

We experience diversity.

Our Self is like a sun that radiates its light in a constellation made of infinite “suns”, each with its own light.



The triangular model illustrates, at its base, the connection between the 'I' and the 'Other I', founded on respect (a space of freedom between individualities), and, at its apex, the experience of love, which is union whilst preserving individual identities and differences (the shared Self).

Our task, in this phase, is to realize a distance, to create a space of freedom between the identity of the other and ours. By freeing the other from us (from identity confusion with us), we can now truly see him for what he is, and also manage to understand him.⁽²⁾ It is respect.

The fifth identity : we become aware of the interdependence of life.

We are distinct from others, but not separate. There is a web in between that connects and makes fluid and alive the relationship between every single living reality. We do not exist alone, and in any case alone is not enough. We are always, consciously or not, in relation with others and with the world.

We carry deep within something important, an innate value, which we perceive as a task. It is our human fullness, our particle of love to deliver to the world. But we also feel that inside us there is a void, an absence. This void is like a wound, and it is our opening to relationship. There is something we lack and that we need to receive.

Our Self is at the same time a being and a becoming: something that is and something that is missing, a presence and an absence. For this reason it at the same time “is” and “becomes”.

The Self is therefore an unfinished or perhaps more precisely an eternal fulfilling.⁽³⁾

Fulfillment happens through relationship, in that dynamic space of suspension between one Ego and another Ego. And it is in this “middle land” that life manifests itself in its fecundity, in the right relationship between presence and absence, fullness and lack, substance and void.

We have something to give to the world and something to receive.⁽⁴⁾

The void we feel is the groaning of our wounds, our opening to relationship, love in its receiving. The fullness we feel is the possible healing of wounds, love in its giving.

A courageous act is necessary. We now feel the need to become aware and expose the wounds that have marked our existence, those inflicted and those suffered, and we

can decide once and for all to take care of them in ourselves and in others, healing them and letting them be healed. It is the naked exposure of wounds and their healing. It is the courage to love and to let oneself be loved. It is a phase of deep transformation and also of great creativity. It is the hidden power of vulnerability.⁽⁵⁾ It is love.

The sixth identity

*“I feel the presence of God,
a God made of infinite love and understanding.
I feel like a great symphony,
in which I participate in the form of a small note.”*
Testimony



Il Sé tra Noi (The Self Among Us), a painting by Lorenza Berni, Florence 2011. The Self is the evolving essence of Life. It is the relational atmosphere of love, joy and freedom that pervades the dynamic space 'between' one human being and another, and between every single form of existence and another

The sixth human identity is what we can call *trans-dependent*.

We feel ourselves, as brothers, also children of the same reality.

We become aware of being particles, together with others, of a larger, broader, universal reality. We feel ourselves as living beings, participants in a single Life.

There is a single reality: a living reality made of “infinite love and understanding”, a “great mother”, an *amor mundi*, which, like a “web of relationship”, correlates, includes within itself and sustains everything that exists in its multiple forms, and like an incessant “vital flow” moves and stirs everything, “ensouls” everything, infusing in everything the spark of life.

It is a one reality, holistic and dynamic, which is never the same in each instant:

“It is like a symphony, which eternally becomes and renews itself, recreates itself and re-understands itself in order to welcome – in the cyclic rhythm of the incessant lighting and extinguishing of the fire of life – every new note that arrives, and let go every other note that leaves, because it has already given itself.”⁽⁶⁾

This is a clear image of love in its arriving and in its giving, in its blooming and in its dying.

The totality of what exists is pervaded by this love.

*Every human being is
bearer of a unit of feeling –
unique and specific for him –,
which will then have the task
of making it manifest
in the world.*

As we see from the cited testimony⁽⁷⁾, of this reality, at once individual and universal, we can have direct, immediate, intuitive experience.

It is a sweet, calm, but also intense and deep experience.

We have the impression that everything, every form of life, has its place and its meaning in universal harmony.

It is that experience that the Greeks called *eudaimonia*⁽⁸⁾. Eudaimonia, in Greek culture, is happiness, the realization of oneself, of one’s nature and vocation, but contains within itself implicitly the concept of “right

measure” (*kata metron*). One must not exaggerate, one must not go beyond the limit.

It is therefore happiness in respect of the limit.

It is joy.

The ultimate identity

“Beings blossom, then each returns to its own root [...] this means laying down one’s task.”⁽⁹⁾

Tao Te Ching

We finally prepare for the last act of our humanity: dying, that is, the restitution to life.

In reality, being born and dying, appearing and vanishing are not only the initial and final acts of a single existence, but fundamental experiences of every moment of living. In every instant something in us dies and something else is born (the cells of our body, emotions, thoughts, actions).

The god Shiva is represented covered in ash, because he is simultaneously living and dying. And this is also the human condition.

Every emotion, impulse, thought, at the moment of their appearing and fulfilling, vanish, die in the act of giving themselves, of offering themselves.

Every soul is bearer of a particle of love – fragment of a universal love – which has the task of inserting, through every gesture of daily life, into the interstices between the torn and broken parts of this dual world in which it has found itself, perhaps by free choice or perhaps by necessity⁽¹⁰⁾, in order to contribute to healing it.

All existence is pervaded by an *amor mundi* which is not a static reality, but an essence in continuous becoming, which incessantly is born, dies and is reborn, through an eternal creation, dissolution and new creation (“becomingness”⁽¹¹⁾).

The image of the ultimate revelation can only be an eternal metamorphosis: a continuous composition of love and beauty, which, like a spring flower, manifests itself, then dissolves and dies, and then, like another flower, recomposes itself anew, in other love and beauty,

and so on in an endless succession without end.

This is the eternity of impermanence.

In the last act of his journey, the human being, born from a commotion of love, returns his individual particle of complete and fulfilled humanity to life.

It is the definitive dissolving of individual boundaries.

It is the complete entrusting of oneself to life, without conditions. It is letting oneself be crossed by the incessant transformative flow of life. It is true living.

It is the final commotion.

It is faith.



Reproduction of a detail from the Nativity by Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli (c. 1480–85 – 1553), held at the Accademia Albertina in Turin. Curated by Carmen Selles de Oro.

Notes

1. Roberto Assagioli, verbal communication in answer to a question about the Self addressed to him in the course of di un incontro con i suoi allievi, Florence 1973.
2. Only now, after the distinction of the other from us, will it be a real process of empathy is possible.
3. Alberto Alberti, L'Io, l'Altro e l'Oltre. Una svolta umanistica, Ed. L'UOMO, Firenze 2021.
4. Wounds, in the history of humanity, are the incessant repeated and multiplied over time by man of the wound of the origins, the primary wound, which divided one into two, separating the spirit from the matter, good from evil, masculine from feminine.
5. Alberto Alberti, Il coraggio della vulnerabilità. L'uomo tra potenzialità e limiti, Ed. L'UOMO, Firenze 2022.
6. Alberto Alberti, L'avventura dell'anima. Esistere per amare, ed. L'UOMO, p. 44, Firenze 2025.
7. Verbal communication during a Starry sky view.
8. Eudaimonia (eu = good, good and daemon = nature, vocation) means good realization of the daemon, of the natural vocation. The daemon is the spirit that guides us in this realization.
9. Tao Te Ching. The Book of the Way and Virtue. Zip code. XVI; edited by J.J.L. Duyvendak, tr. it. by Anna Devoto, Adelphi, Milan 1996, p. 57. The Tao Te Ching is a work traditionally attributed to Lao-tzu.
10. According to the European existentialist philosophy in this world we have been "thrown out" (Heidegger) and paradoxically within this constraint, we are given freedom, and with it the will and the responsibility. Piovani said: man is a "willingly not wanted".
11. Becoming is a neologism, with which I intend to combine essence and becoming.