

in small letter. Why we must strive to judge without “pre-judgments”, to maintain a necessary impartiality, to draw conclusions that are not too much affected by external factors, to impose, at the end of a judgment, a pain which affects the relationship (a negative assessment, an advice of non-attendance, a loosening or even a cessation of relations), but always leaving a space for forgiveness, that is the re-establishment of a harmonious relationship?

After all, everyone feels and acts as a judge, not always consciously, but each of us plays in turn the role of judged, and even then not always making himself conscious.

Interpretation to the best one and the other role is, or can be, hallmark and goal to strive for, for whom, quoting Assagioli, knows, owns and transforms himself.

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Vito D’Ambrosio

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COMMON GOOD AND EGO

“Now the individual will faces another and higher task, that of disciplining itself and choosing such aims as are consistent with the welfare of others and the common good of humanity.”

Roberto Assagioli

The expression common good is often found in social and political contexts; we will use it in its original and simplest sense, meaning by common good something good and positive both for us and for others.

During an interview, the Dalai Lama was asked why in his teachings, and more generally in the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, there is much talk of love in the different forms of selfless love, compassion, joyful love, equanimity, but little mention of love for themselves.

The Dalai Lama answered that, when he speaks of love, he means a love which is at the same time love for ourselves and for the others.

Even Christian spirituality, that permeates our European culture, stands on a Commandment focused on love; answering to a question about which was the first of the Commandments, Jesus said: “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And

you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31). Therefore, in the Christian spiritual roots as well, love for ourselves is inextricably linked to love for others.

Social and political news, as well as our personal experience in various contexts, such as family, work, sports, seem to take us in constant contact with initiatives sometimes aimed mainly at common good, other times mainly at personal and individual good, sought for without regard for, or even at the expense of other people’s welfare. Around us, along with demonstrations of giving one’s time and resources, along with examples of solidarity, voluntary work, we see manifestations of oppression, research of power and affirmation over others, or even search for personal prosperity pursued harming other people and their rights or their opportunity to feel good or feel better.

Roberto Assagioli speaks of the “common good” and of the obstacles to its realization in his book “The Act of Will”, particularly in the chapter on good will.

Assagioli writes: “... in reality the isolated man does not exist: he is in constant interaction with his family, his working associates, and society in general. His relationships are many and diverse. However strong and able he may be, an individual who fails to take these relationships into consideration inevitably arouses reactions and conflicts that often defeat his aims. This seems obvious, yet modern life presents the spectacle of a general clash of wills on the part of those who compete for dominance in all fields. [...] Thus many attempts are being made to replace competition with cooperation, conflict with arbitration and agreement, based on an understanding of right relations between groups, classes, and nations. The success of these attempts depends on the gradual harmonization of the wills of all concerned. Such harmonization is difficult indeed, but it is possible_ the differing individual aims can be made to fit into the circle of a wider human solidarity.”

Psychosynthesis offers instruments to work individually and socially to the realization of a greater common good. One main instrument, in this sense, is the realization of a wiser, more mature and harmonious personality. Another fundamental area of work are relations (interpersonal and social psychosynthesis).

In the psychosynthetic vision, the work on maturation and harmonization of personality implies, as a fundamental step, that we realize our being an I-Center, meaning that we recognize that we have an inner director of the transformation whose outstanding qualities as awareness, will and - since for Assagioli will must be "good", that is will to do good - benevolence. Psychosynthesis also recognizes that human being's most intimate and profound nature, its "soul" we might say, is positive, wise, pure, permeated with goodness.

Roberto Assagioli uses the word "Self" (as distinct from "personal self" or I-Center of the personality) to indicate this ultimate nature of human being.

The Self expresses itself in everyone's life and its expression is mediated by one's personality and physical-biological nature.

Perception and manifestation of the Self is difficult, uncertain, rare, because of the many limitations and the many problems we struggle in, both physical, psychological, and relational. However, it is possible to experience the guidance of the Self, for example in the form of intuitions.

In order to grow and to enjoy a greater well-being for ourselves and for persons around us, it is not enough to activate our positively evolving parts, or our latent qualities, it is also necessary to reduce, dissolve, weaken those parts of us - such as attitudes, beliefs, ways of thinking, feeling, seeing, relating to ourselves, to the world and to others - that produce suffering and that orient to a personal good at the expense of others. Similarly, in order to sail a boat needs the sails to be raised and inflated by the wind and at the same time the ropes to be lifted from the bollards that keep it tied in the port. If the sails are stretched by the wind, but the ropes are tied, the boat can not move; on the contrary, it remains under strain

between what pushes it forward and what holds it still. For this reason, in order to grow and to contribute to common good, it is important that in personal psychosynthetic work, in addition to the work of construction of the I-Center and of opening to the transpersonal Self, there is also a parallel work of acknowledgment and rescaling of our ego.

The ego is the part of us that feeds on its own good, separate from the good of others; on the attention to itself, separate from attention to others; on the care of itself, separate from the care of others. The more developed is our ego, the less is our attention to what does not concern ourselves and the less is our interest for others and for their good.

The ego is part of every human being as driven by self-preservation and self-assertion instincts, that all people own to some extent.

There are situations, such as selfishness and self-centeredness, in which the ego plays a dominant role in our personalities and in our social life.

Self-centeredness is the attitude in which the ego is the predominant - but not absolute - inspiring principle; perceiving of others is still present, but is subordinated to that of the ego. Self-centered people can see and recognize other people's thoughts, emotions, needs and values, but their own ideas, emotional reactions and values are perceived as a priority. Assagioli writes in this regard: "Such an attitude is a fundamental error of perspective, a real Ptolemaic rather than Copernican outlook". The self-centered person tends to put himself at the center of his representation of the world, with others revolving around him, rather than seeing himself as part of a set, moving in a complex network of relationships and interdependencies. Self-centeredness is to some extent a constitutive attitude of all human beings (especially at certain stages of life such as early childhood) and all those who are committed to a path of growth and self-realization are therefore to come to terms with it.

Self-centeredness is particularly marked when a part of our personality is suffering, being structured around a core of fear and discomfort (neurotic sub-personality).

Our suffering parts are egoistic in themselves; they lead us to focus on themselves all our care and attention; they often make us to disregard our other parts, and to put other persons, in their authentic presence, into the background. However, it is worth noting that people full of qualities, sufficiently adapted to the context of their life and with a wide network of social relations, can be self-centered. Self-centeredness is a perceptive and cognitive style, innate in each of us; to change it, requires a maturity leap to be made during our life through an educational and self-transformation path.

Selfishness is the attitude in which the ego is an absolute inspiring principle; it directs actions, structures thoughts, conditions feelings in so pronounced a manner as to become almost one's god. In this situation, the others are considered only marginally and mostly as potential followers, instruments of satisfaction or worshippers of the god-ego. Selfishness is one of the main characteristics of the individuals whose personality is marked by a strong, dominant narcissistic component (sub-personality). We could say that selfishness is an extreme version of a self-centered attitude.

The presence of the ego in us can be the cause of much suffering and violence. Roberto Assagioli writes about it in his book "The act of will": "Inevitably [the ego] comes into collision with obstructions that block its satisfaction_ aggressiveness and violence are thereby aroused, and the will used to destroy whatever is interfering with the attainment of the desired objects."

Anyone aspiring to a greater degree of individual and collective welfare, and engaged in a process aimed to realize it, can not disregard to work on his ego, reducing its influence in his life and cultivating a point of view and an attitude characterized by love and care in which you and I, I and others are kept present at the same level. It's important to note that, for a person to develop a state of deeper understanding of others and a guidance to pursue common good, it is not enough to love others, but it is also necessary to give up selfishness. Assagioli writes about this subject: "Unfortunately personal love does not in itself, as many are apt to believe, create mutual understanding. We can often observe the sad spectacle of people who love each other dearly, but do not understand or appreciate one another's vital needs and thus cause each other great suffering. The elimination of self-centeredness and lack of understanding—they are generally associated—calls for a complex and skillful approach. It requires primarily the will-to-understand. This, in turn, requires the intention to understand and also the relinquishing of the self-centeredness that prevents understanding of others."

The motivation to work on our ego and towards a common good is linked not only to a stimulus of the heart. There is also a foundation of reasonableness; in fact, at first glance it may seem that personal good results from gratification of egoistic push; but if we increase our

awareness, we can realize that an even greater and more lasting individual well-being can result from pursuing common good.

At this point, we may wonder how to rescale our ego. We have different tools and techniques.

To acknowledge the presence of the other and to be in a receptive listening position is a basic premise of the work on our ego.

An important field of work then consists in the development of a greater degree of empathy. Empathy is the ability to look at the world through the eyes of another person. The greater our empathy towards a person, the more we are able to put ourselves in his feelings, emotions, thoughts, views, values, needs, desires and feelings. To develop empathy is prerequisite in order to be less focused on our ego.

Being more empathetic also helps us to relativize our point of view. It often happens to feel that the way we see things is the correct interpretation. When we have an opinion about something, it is important to realize that this is not the "truth" but only our point of view. And even if our point of view may be shared and verified by others, it remains an expression of our own feeling, thinking and believing. It's important to relativize our point of view even in relation to ourselves, to be aware that opinions, ideas and beliefs change over time. Sometimes we identify deeply with ideas and beliefs, so we become categorical and show great difficulty in changing judgments and opinions. Wise men remember having changed opinion not only on secondary issues but also on important issues during their life; they try to maintain flexibility of judgment and do not take themselves too seriously.

Being able to empathize and relativize our point of view, by putting ourselves under discussion, helps us to develop an important relational ability, the ability to mediate, which consists in finding practical and proactive points of contact, starting from different points of view. To mediate means to open ourselves to a convergence that goes beyond the strictly personal benefit or the fulfillment of our own needs or desires in order to integrate

the acknowledgement and satisfaction of other people's needs into a wider vision and solution.

To rescale our ego is also very useful to practice gratitude. Melanie Klein wrote: "The feeling of gratitude is one of the most obvious expressions of the ability to love. Gratitude is a key factor in determining the relationship with the good object and in appreciating the goodness of others and our own." Having someone or something to thank, first of all makes us feel loved, reminds us that outside ourselves someone loves us and wants our good. It also raises the challenge of a reciprocity of love that can begin right out of gratitude. Gratitude, causing us to recognize every act of love towards us as a gift to "show gratitude" for, also diverts us from the self-centered claim that love from other people is due, especially from persons for us significant and that we love.

Moreover, gratitude allows us to recognize our limitations, our weaknesses, our inadequacy, our need to be helped, accompanied, supported. It allows us to avoid showing or pretending to possess a strength, a skill, a value that we do not really own; on the opposite, it helps us to develop the true power that comes from being humbly but lovingly and constructively aware of our limitations. Working to reduce our ego also implies an exercise of respect for what is different from us, starting from people, animals, things, places that surround us, from the laws and rules of social coexistence. Respect is the minimum love and benevolence that is required for ourselves and for others.

Everyday, life presents us with many opportunities to recognize the presence of others, to listen, to empathize, to relativize our point of view, to take ourselves less seriously, to mediate, to thank, to be humble, to respect.

In this article, we have mentioned some ways to work at rescaling our ego. The basis for the opportunity to devote time and energy to this task and to the required training, is always an act of awareness and will: awareness that the ego is part of everybody's inner life and that transcending it is a component of the progress of every human being; will to decide, moment by moment, to go beyond our ego to choose "such aims as are consistent with the welfare of others and the common good of humanity."

Ego is not the only major obstacle we may incur in the pursuit of "common good" and in its accomplishment. In fact there is a second obstacle, diametrically opposed to the ego: the lack of self-love, often accompanied by a underrating self-judgment. It is a vast and important topic that we cannot analyze thoroughly here, and that we intend to discuss later on.

The opportunity to move towards a more sustainable civilization, characterized by gift and dialogue, also depends on our commitment to rescale our ego and, instead, to increase the importance of common good; each of us is entrusted with an opportunity and the pertinent responsibility.

Andrea Bonacchi - Piero Marovelli

WISDOM

Wisdom, in the common opinion, is the ability of choosing what, within a long space of time, occurs to obtain the approval of several people.

We can consider "wise" the action or the non-action which is shared by the majority.

As for other people, the ones who keep their feet on the ground, wise is he who knows how to conform himself to reality, modifying himself as for circumstances.

The one who thinks that it's important to have "an enlightened view" in effects gives a very opportunist definition.

The Buddhist way says : "You don't have to be drawn by tradition, by habit or hearsay, by holy books, by logic or dialectic, or the bent to a theory. Don't let yourselves be influenced by someone's apparent intelligence or by the respect towards a master.

When you perceive what is wrong, bad or silly, leave it, and when you understand what is right, do nourish it".

It is a common opinion that Wisdom is not given, we have to discover it by ourselves, to work it over through an individual path.

As nobody can give it to others, we have previously to define the qualities and the ways to find it out, even if we know that, as the horizon line, the more we approach it, the more it flows far apart.

Somebody says that it can be pursued, but never achieved.

The first way of wisdom is to aim at it, because it always gets back.

As for Psychosynthesis how do we acquire it? The first step is to get consciously inside the evolving path of the psychological growth.