

You cannot have read it because after having read so much Dante came to me spontaneously, it was written by me. We always look at the ground because it is relatively easy to understand partial truths. Recognizing the real is extremely difficult, but the One who was able to do it embraces humanity, has become the Love itself. Understanding and loving are the same thing.

Sergio Guarino

THE REPRESSION OF SUBLIME

16

(Translation by Achille Cattaneo)

Man's journey towards full self-realization is long and tortuous and does not always proceed in a peaceful and smooth way, but it is littered with obstacles, conflicts and crisis. However, this should not scare us or do hesitate, because these difficulties have a purpose and a meaning useful to our maturity that we need to understand and use. The obstacles are in fact actually "steps" to climb, conflicts reveal dualities and polarities to be balanced, crisis indicate choices and maturation that we have to do. The man has a very complex psychological structure, and he lives, without knowing it, on various dimensions and levels of consciousness, as indicates the ovoid of Assagioli. However, he generally is aware only of a small part of himself, and lives identified with an Ego that, at best, is only a limited and distorted reflection of his true Being, the Self.

Our field of usual consciousness is limited to only those psychic contents that our attention reveals, and is conditioned by identifications, unconscious automatism and external influences that we have absorbed. We believe to be aware, to know us, and instead we are "false" and conditioned, and we know (in a vague and incomplete way) only what appears on the surface of consciousness, ignoring or underestimating all the deep and vast world of the unconscious.

Quite rightly Jung says that "the consciousness is by nature a kind of superficial layer of epidermis, floating

on the unconscious, which extends into the depths, like a vast ocean of perfect continuity."

However, this superficial "consciousness field" (or the conscious, as psychoanalysis calls) is susceptible to expansion and insights, and its "quality" and contents may become increasingly clear, authentic and profound as the man evolves and gets in touch with the deeper dimensions of his psyche, both down, that is towards the inferior unconscious, both upwards, that is towards the superior unconscious or Superconsciousness. The average unconscious is more easily explorable, because it consists of all those psychic states which we could call "current" and that continually "enter and exit" from the field of consciousness (is the preconscious of psychoanalysis). On the contrary, the inferior unconscious represents our past, and it is that area which is occupied mainly by Freudian psychoanalysis and that contains the instincts, the atavistic impulses, the complexes, the trauma, the buried memories and everything that the conscious I *wanted* to forget. The superior unconscious represents, in a sense, our future, that is what we potentially are, all our capacities and higher and authentic faculties: intuition, creativity, love, idealism, truth, beauty, universal feelings, etc. In short, everything that is most noble and "sublime" in the man, and that is his more real and authentic dimension. However, strangely these two areas of the psyche, the inferior and the superior, are not easily accessible to our investigation and our exploration because between the conscious part of our psyche and the unconscious there is a barrier, a diaphragm which can be more or less impenetrable or thin.

Few are the persons who have created a harmonious relationship between the conscious and the unconscious, two poles of our psyche, as this represents the achievement of an integration and a balance that require a long process of development of the consciousness. On the contrary, many are those who have a diaphragm very durable and often between these two poles, because without realizing, continuously repress the instances and the flow of energy that come from the unconscious, and have created a "removal".

The term "removal" was introduced by Freud and indicates an unconscious mechanism that has been formed

gradually, as a result of a voluntary repression, repeated and continuous of impulses, moods and contents coming from the unconscious that for a reason or another are not accepted the conscious Self. Usually we talk about removal with reference to the inferior unconscious, but there is a similar mechanism, as we shall see, even for what concerns the superior unconscious.

The important fact that we have to keep in mind is that this mechanism of repression, which initially was conscious and voluntary, has become an *unconscious automatic reaction*, due to our inborn tendency to insist on us to form habits and automatisms, and this prevents the conscious Self to perceive, not only the impulse or the mood, but also the repression.

In fact, even when there is no removal, the unconscious is difficult to be perceived because of its nature. Suffice it to say that the unconscious consists in large part "of what the conscious I does not want to perceive"; and also needs special methods and attitudes to emerge, because generally we are too extroverted, too polarized on the conscious and rational plane, and turn our backs to the unconscious life.

This difficulty in perceiving the unconscious exists both for what concerns the inferior part of it (subconscious), both for what concerns the superior part (Superconscious), and there may be a repression (and subsequent removal) both of one and of the other.

In this conversation we want to deal with this second type of removal, that psychologists have called "repression of the sublime." The word "sublime" refers to all the aspirations, impulses, higher trends of the man; the need for truth, beauty, justice and love; the sense of the transcendent and the divine, the insight into states of universal and impersonal consciousness... In other words, the "sublime" is the Superconscious of Assagioli, or the "noetic" dimension by Victor Frankl (from *nous* = spirit), and is not only the highest aspect of man, but also the most true and the *most truly human*. In fact it is the area of the psyche through which reveals the Self, which is not a metaphysical concept, an abstraction, but it is the true Ego of man, his true Being, his individuality. The man, however, is generally unaware of this reality, he is identified in the personal I staff, closed the limited circle and conditioned by his selfishness, his pride, his attachments, and without knowing it he may create a barrier to the Superconscious and prevent the occurrence of Self, and the contents of the Superconscious to reveal. He suffers from "repression of the sublime." This inner state is not without consequences, but, as it happens with the removal of the inferior unconscious, can lead to illnesses, ailments and crises more or less serious, and lead to a real neurosis, what Victor Frankl called, to distinguish from common neuroses, *noogenic neurosis*.

At this point we can ask to ourselves: "Why man represses its most authentic? Why is he afraid to grow? Why refuses his greatness?"

Yet in human beings, as noted by many scholars and psychologists, there is a natural boost to grow, to be realized, to evolve, to "be more"... This is true, but we forget that in him there is also another opposite trend, namely that of adaptation, balance, stability, which is continually opposed to the evolving push...

Without our fully realization, these two forces are in perpetual conflict within us, because one keeps us tied to the past, the other pushes us towards the future. This conflict generates that kind of suffering that we call "crisis", and is caused by the repression of the highest part of ourselves, that pushes us forward. All growth is preceded by a crisis, even at biological level (adolescent crisis, crisis of maturity, crisis of old age, etc.), because man must always exceed a certain stage, giving up a balance in order to grow, he must stop a series of automatisms and habits to open up to the new, and this makes him unconsciously fear.

"We are afraid to grow, because growing up means to leave the known for the unknown, and that always involves risks." (Andras Angyal)

So the man generally has a deep and strong resistance to abandon the "status quo", which gives him the illusion of security and the known, although he suffers and is unhappy at a conscious level.

We must not forget that the opposition and resistance are unconscious, and the individual who is the prey is completely unaware of them, and consciously try just a malaise, a depression, an anxiety of which he ignores the causes.

More severe are malaise and crisis, when the inner growth no longer refers only to evolutionary personal problems, but involves a deeper change of consciousness, an opening up to the Superconscious and towards the Self, and then an overcoming of the personal I, closed in his habits and illusions, identified with his ambitions and attachments, and unconsciously rebellious and stubborn. This is the time on the inner journey of man in which we can really speak of "repression of the sublime", because the contents of this highest part of the unconscious are ready to manifest themselves, and press to turn out to consciousness, but there is at a conscious level a strong-willed I - but conditional and crystallized - which unknowingly resists.

Therefore, we can say that this type of growth crisis mainly occurs in people more evolved and mature than others and that would be inwardly ready for an awakening of consciousness towards the Self, and in which the contents of the Superconscious are already active and developed, but who ignore this maturity, perhaps because there was not yet in their lives a suitable opportunity to reveal it, or because, without knowing it, they repress them, with a system of defences and unconscious resistances.

The intensity of such repression can be more or less strong and can produce, as we have already said, a form of neurosis, that Victor Frankl calls *noogena*.

Assagioli too in a paper speaks of disorders, crisis or illnesses of varying severity that can arise when that one is close to the event decisive in man's inner growth that is the awakening of the consciousness of the Self, that moment of illumination for which the individual self-recognizes himself, makes contact with his true Being, and exceeds the identification with the personal Ego built and false.

These ills and sufferings may also be confused, he says, with illnesses and disorders caused by common neurosis namely anxiety, depression, a sense of futility, anxiety, fear, guilt, etc. at psychic level, and at physical neuro-vegetative disorders, functional diseases, etc. However the crisis preceding the awakening of the Self also have other symptoms that are of ethical and existential nature. The individual feels came to a standstill. Nothing interests him more, nothing satisfies him more. His life seems without meaning and purpose, and he feels invaded by a very painful sense of barrenness and futility. Everything in which he believed the first appears now to be empty and meaningless, and he feels enveloped in a kind of mist and a darkness without hope, and therefore he falls into a state of silent desperation. Many times to these sufferings also joins a moral crisis, a sense of guilt with no reason, a deep sense of indignity and contempt for himself..

All these signs point to the presence of a serious existential crisis, which usually does not improve with the common psychotherapy, unless the psychotherapist is a mature spiritually person and so intuitive to understand that the patient is ready to a inner growth, which has the need to open up to the "sublime", but is blocked by an unconscious resistance. Then he will help him to unlock and to become aware of this need to be open to it and satisfy it. This claim many psychologists, such as Victor Frankl with his "logotherapy", Desoille, Jung, mainly Assagioli and with the technique of psycho-synthesis, which helps man to realize himself as a whole to be bio-psycho-spiritual. But before going on and talking of the attitudes and methods that can help to overcome this repression of the sublime, it is natural to ask to ourselves: "How can distinguish the common, psychogenic neurosis, from those noogene that precede the awakening of the Self? How can we understand if our crises are meant to show

the need for an opening to the Superconscious, or rather are not common crisis of growth on a personal level? "

Given that every crisis (and every neurosis in severe cases) is always a symptom of an attempt of growth and maturation to a wider standard of life, stuck somewhere resistance, is for us to identify with a patient and serene self-analysis, what is the progress it takes silently indicate. In each of our psychological conflict, be it conscious or unconscious, there is always a hidden possibility of maturation and integration with a new aspect of ourselves; there is always a stimulus to an awakening of consciousness, to a greater understanding of ourselves, to the development of a ignored or repressed faculty... So, always, after an analysis of the unconscious, even in a common neurosis there is a need for growth, maturation, an opening to Superconscious. However in cases of crisis of awakening of the Self, and a precise resistance to "sublime", there is something different and special, that the individual himself who suffers guess, because his illnesses and anxieties may also occur in periods of his life when he is satisfied and happy on a personal level, and in which everything seems to be fine. He does not suffer from deficiencies, frustrations, or failures, has no inhibitions and blocks; is a harmonious and integrated personality. So his crisis and dissatisfaction seem unjustified from a purely psychological and exterior point of view. However, there is a situation of lack of consciousness towards the needs and requests coming from the Superconscious, and this unconsciousness is the cause of suffering, because it creates an involuntary removal and an unconscious resistance to the Self, which presses to manifest itself. Nevertheless there is such a vague "presentiment", an obscure intuition of what is happening inside, but it is filtered from the superficial consciousness and results in a sense of guilt, unworthiness for not voluntary "treason" and "rebellion " towards the truest part of ourselves. Sometimes there are telltale signs in behaviour that can make us understand that we, without knowing it, are falling into the "repression of the sublime", and prepare ourselves with our own hands a crisis, more or less severe. These signs could be summarized in one unique sentence:

“The refusal to accept our own inner maturity.” However I will list some of these signs of behaviour, because they serve to help us to better understand ourselves:

- 1) Fear of love, while having the ability to do so.
- 2) Fear of knowing, because knowledge means to act in accordance with.
- 3) Fear to take on new responsibilities, by inertia and selfishness, while being equipped to do so.
- 4) Fear and envy of superior persons, because unknowingly they show us what we could be.
- 5) Fear of death, which hides the fear of death of the personal I.
- 6) Fear of our own destiny, that we foretell like a complete and total renovation and then as “a leap into the unknown.”

It is evident from the list of these signs of the behaviour of those who unknowingly repress the “sublime”, that they have established a system of defences and resistances to protect the I, which feels threatened by the pressure of the new contents, because *he does not want to die*. This situation is totally false and illusory, because in reality the personal I does not exist, it is just a mask, a building, a set of habits and constraints with which the man identified himself, alienating his true I, his real Being, the Self. Often we feel the Self as something external, and almost enemy, as if we had created a duality between the I of surface from the deep I, while in reality there is only one I, the real one, who painstakingly try to enter our habitual consciousness and to make its presence felt. We are not the personal I, but a centre of pure self-consciousness devoid of contents, and the only way to realizing it is precisely to expel such contents, make the silence and neglect, and open ourselves to the reality of Being that already exists and lives within us.

The apparent conflict between the personal I closed in his resistance, and that rejects the Self, strangely is not solved by the effort, with the direct intervention, but with an attitude of calm, of abandonment, of trust, of unconditional “surrender”, of relaxation of all tensions, and of inner silence. “You have to be able to leave it to the Soul” says Jung, having understood that only in the apparent inaction and abandonment of every fight can make in roads the authentic consciousness of the Self, which produces the liberating and healing process. We must always bear in mind that to overcome a problem we should not fight, but climb higher, breaking the identification and out of the conflict to dissolve the false identification with the built I and weaken his resistance seeing them for what they are: illusory defences of illusory achievements, automatic and mechanical movements due to constraints, repetitive movements of the psychic energies that bind, unconsciousness and unreality. We must break this vicious circle, stop this mechanical nature, overcome these illusions and influences,

becoming aware of ourselves as centres of true awareness, freedom and will, as Authentic Beings and Real Men. So the most suitable methods to overcome the “repression of the sublime” are the technique of disidentification and receptive meditation, techniques described by psychosynthesis with two different but complementary purposes: a) the first one to liberate the I from false identifications going up with the consciousness towards the Self, and single out a centre of self-consciousness detached and free. b) the second one to open ourselves to the contents of the Superconscious doing the silence and calm within ourselves, and “bring down” the consciousness of the Self, because with his light cancel the false consciousness of the personal I. And above all, we must have **confidence in the Self**, that is in our deep Being, no objection to His Will and little by little recognizing in Him, because “we must become what we already are.”

Angela Maria La Sala Batà

ONE YEAR-END NIGHT IN FRONT OF THE FIRE PLACE

(Translation by Achille Cattaneo)

From “*Quaderno di Psicointesi*” del Centro di Roma, n° 21, maggio 1982.

I watch the flame be agitated, changing and elusive, in the great hearth of the room, and I naturally reflect on the meaning of winter. It is the night of December 31 and only a few days ago, on 22, fell the winter solstice with the shortest day of the year. So this is the period of greatest darkness or *introversion* of the Earth. The light illuminates for about nine hours a day and during the other fifteen our planet lives immersed in “Light the Night”, in a planetary consciousness probably similar to our sleep. If we compare the earth’s crust and all forms in