

“LIFE TO LIFE” THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

Translation by Achille Cattaneo

78 I start from the title itself, which was originally *Life to Life* and subtitled *The creative potential of childhood and adolescence*. I understand that, being quite long, the heart of the theme was chosen, but in reality, as I wrote in the abstract, to recognize, evoke and value, by educators (parents, teachers, sports coaches, or adults in general who come into contact with children and young people) the evolutionary heritage of these age groups, represents an investment for the whole human race. That's why I chose to talk about the creative potential of childhood and adolescence, in them it lies the very future of Humanity, Life to Life, in fact.

The theme of human potential lies at the base of all the psychosynthetic vision, so congratulations for the choice of the theme of this congressional meeting and congratulations to the colleagues who have already investigated it in different areas, among these, that of meditation, done by Andrea Bonacchi, via regia, to paraphrase Freud, for self-knowledge, and also by Francesco Lamioni, in his work, the body becomes the symbolic place of the search for harmony and the healing dances between compassion and the joy of living. And speaking of the term healing, since each individual is endowed, in potential, with the necessary resources for self-realization, with his own individual project, I believe that it is the betrayal or the lack of knowledge of his own accomplishments or of his own potential, depending on as we want to say, to favor the onset of sufferings, inconveniences, up to the most important pathologies, which, paradoxically, if understood in time, can induce themselves to seek their meaning, reorienting the person towards his own self-realization project. Of course, first

of all we need a knowledge of ourselves, of our own typology, a real personal psychosynthesis, starting from childhood and continuing into adolescence. Children, young people are hungry to know the mysteries of life, the why of so many things, they are physiologically curious. How beautiful it would be to study at school, from the primary classes, the geography of the inner worlds, that of feelings, emotions, thoughts, and with the help of psychosynthetic maps, to study the structure of personalities in formation, where children and young people become themselves, the living matter of study. Teachers should be the first to live, experiment with the psychosynthetic model, self-educating, in order to educate as Assagioli always reminds us. We know how much need educators in general have to manage operational tools to address the many educational, training, interdisciplinary demands.

Working with children and young people means being aware of handling psychic, precious and valuable fabrics, since childhood and adolescence represent the visiting card for future psychic ages; knowing the characteristics, the potentiality, it is essential, and above all, it is important to prevent or correct educational behaviors that block, ignore, distort the individual characteristics, favoring the emergence of various problems in later periods, up to quite serious disorders.

Now, to get away from all this talk, before diving into other considerations, I ask you to close your eyes for a moment, to relax as much as possible and after a few quiet breaths of ...

Imagine a wonderful day in early spring, the air is still fresh despite the sun shining. You are sitting on the ground, perhaps with your back resting on an olive tree, or an oak tree, in front of you a sea of grass, of that emerald green mottled here and there by other chromatic shades thanks to the many colors of flowers, yellow, pink, white, blue, purple. Well I ask you to imagine placing a hand on the grass with a light pressure, without crushing it, place it gently, feeling under the palm, yes, the fresh contact, but also a sort of crackling coming from the depth of the earth, as if under the

turf, warns of the vibration of the force of nature, of the life that wants to manifest itself; from the bowels, every seed seeks light, the hole through which to be born, and every seed will follow its project, a flower will become a flower, so the tree will become a tree. But I beg you to dwell on the crackle, on the vibration, and for a moment, from the hand resting on the ground, imagine that your whole body is going through it, making you realize that you are also, Life in life.

Slowly we come back here, and we open our eyes.

Whatever happened, anyway, try to maintain that feeling of Energy, of magmatic strength, keep the memory of that vibration, like a sort of electric current that pervades the whole body, shakes the mind and the emotions, a real “Life explosion”.

What they say about children, an old expression said, they have quicksilver on them, they never stand still, they are always in motion; as well as the ferment of young people, the “torment and ecstasy” of adolescents, backpackers and the desire to conquer the world but probably also their internal world.

All this ENERGY we find in the various levels, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual, it is therefore the energy, the creative potential that flows pure in this phase of life, as a precious fuel to administer and know how to use during the subsequent phases of life. The adults must accompany the children and young people in this process, directing them wisely, following their natural lines of development, and this is where the educational task lies.

Let's see, in a quick overview how this vital energy is manifested in the various levels. In the **body**, for example, we know that the heartbeats of children have higher frequencies than that of adults; just as elevated are the growth rates, already from the gestation phase up to the successive stages of development reaching the threshold of adulthood. From the laws of psychodynamics, we know that the energies seek to be manifested, according to various channels; the bodily ones, so exuberant in these ages, may well be expressed through physical

activity, gymnastics (a sort of Cinderella among the different subjects of study), dance or some types of sport; there should be an alternation between moments of rest and movement so as to guarantee a good psychophysical balance. On the other hand, spending too much time in front of the television or tablet, in video games, as unfortunately happens more and more often, feeds a sedentary lifestyle that engages unspoken energies, to the point of finding an outlet in harmful ways, not only in terms of aggressive behavior towards others but also towards oneself, for example with problems of overweight and consequent metabolic diseases. We know how juvenile diabetes is on the rise and how many children suffer from obesity.

On an **emotional level**, from the famous “whims” of the little ones, to the so-called caprices, to the fickleness of the feelings, to the explosion of uncontrolled anger; to then merge into mood swings, real emotional storms characterizing the pre-adolescent age. This age group, usually overshadowed by the later phase of proper adolescence, was investigated by Alberto Pellai in one of his last books, calling it, “The Age of the Tsunami”; goes from 9 to 12/13 years. In these few years the energies are in turmoil, compressed between physical development with hormonal variations, desires to grow and feel older and still feel imprisoned in a pseudo-infantile body. In the metamorphosis from child to adult, the adolescent (from 13/14 years up to over 20 years) begins the search for his own identity, alternating moments of discouragement, depression, and moments of euphoria. It is the age of excesses, of life trials, the age of the “first time”, for better or for worse. Everything is very immoderate because the energies of feelings and emotions are extreme. But these manifestations must not give a pathological view of this period. It is all the energy magma that flows into this complex transition phase, of great physical and psychological changes; these humoral, hormonal explosions must be recognized and well directed by adults able to help young people correctly channeling them according to their unique and individual development project. We all survived long faces, sudden crying, joys, fears, moods, of our adolescence. And I believe that each of us is still grateful to those adults who

believed in us and glimpsed our potential, helping us to find the right way to develop us. It is increasingly evident that the appropriate preparation of educators is the fundamental requisite to relate effectively in educational intervention.

Now let's see what happens on the **mental level**. The creative potential of the mind is realized in the design of thought forms that are increasingly elaborate, from imagination to the analytical and synthetic phases. The function of the imagination represents the reservoir par excellence of the creative potential, it is the imagination that arouses and makes the subconscious act as the laws of psychodynamics remind us; trying to inhibit it, suffocate it, means depriving the children, the young boys of a precious evolutionary resource. Too often in the scholastic programs the rational-analytical side is privileged, stifling the power of the imagination. In primary school it has been shown that even in mathematical calculations, if imaginative capacity is introduced, for example by visualizing a series of objects, the main operations of addition and subtraction are easier for certain subjects than through an abstract reasoning. Also the playful function, typical of childhood, represents an extension of the imaginative function, becoming a sort of break-in for the subsequent well-known learning processes, thanks to the studies, first of Jean Piaget, on cognitive development.

During the adolescence years important changes take place at the mental level: from memory, to thinking, to reasoning, to the ability to concentrate, to decision-making processes, of planning and design. In this age group it is very important to be able to introduce the technique of the ideal model, because young people begin to sow the seeds of what they want and can become. The latest studies on adolescence have identified the years from 13/14 to 24, those where the most intense acceleration of psychophysical growth and maturation of the individual occurs. Adolescence represents the most fertile moment in life. This ferment represents the enormous potential of this evolutionary belt, a patrimony, in fact, to be administered wisely and to which to resort in the subsequent stages of maturation. Adolescence is the moment of li-

fe with the greatest resources in terms of creativity and courage. Adults who relate to them, regardless of their role, have an enormous social responsibility, both at an educational and training level; their guidance should give them confidence and authority.

One last word regarding the **spiritual level**. A thought by Edward Bach on the task of parents, but addressed to every educator, underlines the importance during the first years of the child's life of "facilitating the contact of a soul with the way, so that he can carry out his evolution, (...) willingness to give the newcomer, as well as physical protection, all the spiritual and intellectual support they need to grow without ever forgetting that the child is an individual soul who must gain experience and knowledge in complete freedom, following the dictates of his Higher Self. "Every child from birth bears within himself the seed of his own individuality, coming from the transpersonal and Universal Self, from this inexhaustible, cosmic source, he draws his creative potential.

Understand well that considering children as embodied souls totally changes the educational approach. The formation of the young personality, exuberant and at times rebellious, requires containment, the observance of rules, a strong but at the same time loving guide, but also respect and kindness. With children we should always educate with a smile on our hearts, even when we scold them. The punishments, Assagioli reminds us, must always be "impersonal" and always based on the principle of cause and effect. For this reason, it will never be repeated enough, as it is appropriate for parents, educators, to carry out a self-educational journey, the one that psychosynthesis offers, with a specific reference to spiritual education. If the one who educates does not recognize in the first place, his own potentials, his own limits, he is not capable of self-mastery, self-knowledge, how can he be credible in his educational interventions? But above all if one does not recognize himself as soul among souls, how can he follow the unfolding of the little ones, the flowering of the soul in the young personalities.

The same discourse is valid for recognizing the spiritual energies that are released during adolescence; this pe-

riod is not only characterized by the search for Identity, by the suffered existential passage from childhood to adulthood, but it is the call of the Soul, which becomes even more urgent, between the desire to be in Life and fear itself of Living. Let's try to understand all this in terms of energy, children, young people, burn incredible reserves of energy, in other words, their vitality represents the gift that life gives to Life itself, and in this lies their creative heritage, their potential. It is up to educators to identify the expressive forms of young personalities, recognizing the prevailing individual typology, helping them to develop their psychic functions harmoniously. Children, but also young people do not ask for anything other than being "seen", understood, directed, guided in their life journey that has just begun, but they are asking for conscious, balanced, authoritative adults, credible models from which to draw useful, constructive and authentic experiences .

Sometimes it happens that children in their spiritual essence are invisible to the eyes of adults, but acquire visibility, only, due to health problems, or academic performance, in general, only when they become objects of concern, rather than being considered subjects of care and of love.

And teenagers, from *adolescere* (Latin), in growth. "Growing", among the many terminological meanings, means taking responsibility for one's own words. How much importance do we give to the words of adolescents? We often associate them with juvenile distress, the use of alcohol, drugs. Perhaps this daze is a way, to the negative (Erikson spoke of "negative identities", rather than not being anyone, I become someone with behavior deviant from the norm), a modality, precisely, to make oneself visible. Even their bizarre way of dressing, dressing their hair, piercings, tattoos are nothing but forms of visibility. Young people are the target of marketing, the beauty of youth represents a good business for the smoke merchants who wander like vultures in search of climbing in the stock market ...

There is a lot of talk about young people, but they have little voice, perhaps this is the purpose of the songs of the young raps that are so popular, that as insisting sing-songs speak of their problems, their desires and their dreams, often stolen by those who should take care of them.

In the creative potential of childhood and adolescence it lies the largest energy resource, for the future of all mankind and the planet itself, because as was reiterated in the chorus of young environmentalists, we do not have another reserve. Those who care about Life, must put the well-being of children and young people, in every part of the world, in the first place. Life to Life.

Elena Morbidelli

TESTIMONY OR AUTHENTICITY?

Translation by Achille Cattaneo

For some time now, I have had a desire, a longing, an aspiration to bear witness to Psychosynthesis, which I have studied for so many years, have loved, and to carry it with me, beyond myself, like something intimate and precious that doesn't die, like a gift to be passed on not with words or teaching, but with my life itself, precisely, as a silent testimony of life lived fully.

For Psychosynthesis is not a family affair, friendship, social, or just personal, but above all it concerns the soul. Finally, my soul has understood within itself, and without speaking and ranting or preaching, I carry in my heart this precious Good, sacred and profane, daily and ever present. And when I see, I observe that Psychosynthesis relives, as in this period at our Center in Naples, a moment of vitality, of new presence and language, I feel inside a profound joy that is permanent, as opposed to the spreading pain of today, which however is temporary. It's almost an internal emotion that happens, like when you listen to an old beloved song that makes your heart vibrate again, and everything starts again, is reborn, and recreates itself to infinity.

In fact, the psychosynthetic attitude consists in constantly going out, in the daily life of small gestures, from the mechanical, from the obvious, from the known, from the usual. It is a creative attention that puts you in touch with the infinite, with the mysterious, with the knowable and the unknowable, with the possible and the impossible, and then everything becomes open, visible and simple. And, constantly keeping "the observer" with me, I realize that what I want is a very beautiful dream, very simple to say, but difficult to implement: in short, it is a question of wanting to live an authentic life.

And so, the whole discourse shifts to authenticity: what is it? Why this desire? How to reach it?