

PSYCHO-SOMATIC ONTOSOPHY DIDACTIC EXPLANATION OF THE THEORETIC MODEL

Excerpted from Francesco Palmirotta, "Humanistic Ontosophy: The Western Roots of European Wisdom, Theoretical-Methodological Bases and Clinical Practice", AMO Editrice, Bari, Italy, 2000. This material is offered as a means of re-connecting contemporary views of Humanistic Psychology with its historical, philosophical, artistic, and therapeutic roots in ancient culture.

Ontosophy is inspired by humanist existential psychology and, in particular, by Maslow's, Sutich's, Rogers' and May's psychology of being, from which emerges a specificity of its own, since its very roots lie in the ancient Magna Graecia conception of pre-Socratic and Pythagorean "wisdom of being". Although Humanistic Philosophy was born in Europe, we have seen its biggest development in the last decades in the USA. It was during the 1600 and 1700 centuries that "Schizophrenia" was exported from Europe to the new land, America, while Ontopsychology (the Psychology of Being) was exported from the United States back to Europe.

Like the humanistic existential model, Ontosophy avoids both the determinism and mechanical reductionism of certain previous psychological theories - since they also lacked the philosophical background of Greek and Magna Graecia thought. It also considers the importance of subjective interior experience, the "here and now", the way the individual experiences existence and "being in the world". More specifically, the Ontosophic school reappropriates the Rogerian principle of self realization as a natural instinct in the individual, one's capacity for inner growth, and Maslow's affirmation that the individual is naturally motivated towards health, growth and actuation of human potential. This is where Ontosophy connects humanistic psychology and philosophy of Being (from pre-Socratic philosophy to existential phenomenology) and recent achievements in psychosomatics, physics (Schroedinger's self organisation of matter) and biology (Maturana's and Varela's self poiesis).

Ontosophy reappropriates, from Pythagoras, the conception of the existence of matter as undefined entity (Ontos-Being) with respect to thought which, in order to understand, must subdivide, contour, limit, fragment and then mathematise reality. Thus, reality can only be thought of at the level of speech, which is made up of elements, one which has been fragmented and can only be brought to unity as a sum; original unity can only be regained as harmony. Being - which is the "full" - is therefore defined in relation with non-being: with emptiness such scanning is a physical sequence, it is a rhythm (= number). The life of the whole is defined by the alternate rhythm of the opposites (full ñ empty, forte ñ piano) and the conjunction of the opposites constitutes the harmony of the whole. Life, therefore, is the result of the balance of breathing, vital breath, which is the harmonic conjunction, balance, dialectic scanning of being and non-being: it is the ever-present psyche. When this balance fails, disease appears. That is the reason why humankind dies, because it is not capable of connecting the beginning with the end, because it fails to maintain this rhythm alive. This breath, according to Pythagoras, is not an individual breath. It is the individual who dies, the psyche lives in the whole because the whole is alive, we are just fragments, numbers, limitations of the whole, which are incapable of maintaining balance; but there is a cosmic balance, thus the psyche is, however, present, wherever there is life, even though individual living beings disappear. Physical care cannot be detached from psychic care: that compromised balance is to be pursued and recreated. It can be stated that Ontosophy, despite being a brand new word as a verbal and epistemic coinage, is based upon an ancient premise, on which is founded a systematic methodological possibility-potentiality (basically scientific) of removing disease and of re-establishing a responsible self-management of health, with good psychotherapeutic professionalism (without the help of any other means which is not psychic, behavioural, or related with either cognition-conscience or intentionality of psychosomatic wisdom).

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Through a deep knowledge of both etymological and hermeneutic aspects, the word *Sophos* fits in the sense of the sphere of action of luminous and enlightening psychic energy, as intentionality of the human being preceded *Logos* in both history and culture and its semantic field is much larger and more radically cosmic, although it has been removed from the language and emptied of its vital significance. In the conception and scientific practice of Ontosophy, *Sophos* regains a leading role because it reconstitutes and gives evidence to the psychosomatic sense of the action-word (agent-verb) in the therapeutic setting: authentic semantics are actuated by the therapist as intentionality of the being through the word-sound which, as such, spreads the energy of its strength in the individual world, in the subjective psyche. The therapeutic value of the word comes into being when, during a therapy session, communication between the psychotherapist who recognises his own psychosomatic signals, is able to fully recognise them in the other person (psycho-organismic perception) and the person-client, and through this, creates real and harmonic relationships on the ethic-intentional basis of the elimination of the initial symptom. Therefore *Sophos*, as projecting wisdom within the tendency to self organization or the principle of action (*logos*), is what guides *Logos*.

What in Ontosophy as named "Sphere of Action" is synthesized in the formula: $SphA = e \times i = PH$, that is, the sphere of action is the result of onto-existential intentionality (i) by the energy at the disposition of the individuated subjectivity and, as a result, has Psyche (P) in (H) Harmony: psychosomatic well-being in eco-systemic harmony. The existence of a nuclear micro and macrocosmic entity, more real than power fields (electromagnetic, energetic, of several kinds and magnitude, either semantic or not) is now hypothesized, so that it can always balance out either physical or psychic existence, which harmonizes and gives order to either physical dynamics and planetary life in a mathematic dimension which can presumably be expressed according to René Thom's idea of morpho-genesis (which can be connected with the Pythagorean mathesis of the number), though not an arithmetically summable quantity. All conceptions related to power fields, from Lewin onward, can be overcome by a vitalistic vision of the interacting forces: the "sphere of action". It embraces the sense of both macrocosm and microcosm (cf. the conception of Geosphere as reported by James Lovelock in his studies on ecology or terrestrial ecosystems, and, from the philosophical point of view, T. de Chardin's, with the Noosphere principle), pointing out the tendency to order, which is typical of matter, in other words, the claim towards formal configuration which is a stable component of every atomic and subatomic element, and therefore, the propensity to harmony with all other forms of matter.

The concept of sphere of action is also present in what Schroediger defines as the tendency to self-organization of matter (which inspired Watson's and Crick's discoveries on DNA and which can be assimilated into the Pythagorean concept of "harmony of the spheres" and also "tendency to altruism" as a sign of evolution of the species in terms of optimal collective organization. It also recalls Varela's and Maturana's concept of self-poiesis as something implicit in energy and thermodynamics of physically constituted components. Furthermore, the research in Einstein's unified fields and his image of universe as an infinite sphere, can be an indication from physics of the psychic idea of the sphere of action as a multidimensional energetic vector of humankind.

According to Ontosophy this tendency is also detectable in the cosmogenic intuition of Hesiod in Eros and Psyche as the creating principle of the world. We agree with Pugliese Carratelli that the tendency to love and harmony (in the orphic Pythagorean sense) as an edifying force of authentic human civilisation, unlike the warlike and destructive Homeric culture. Again, in pre-Socratic culture the idea of a harmonising, unifying force was very clear (to be found in Democritus' psychic atomistic theory, in Heraclitus' henanti-dromic theory of becoming, in Pythagorean mathematics, in Anaximander's *aperion*, in Alcmeone's *isonomia*). Today it might coincide with the idea-conjecture of the quantum leap as mutation, vibration and sound or light wave, as conceived by Schrodinger, Einstein and Selleri. According to Ontosophy, elements such as these might be structured identically in the psyche(*), a real harmonising entity of the physis-soma.

In conclusion, Psychosomatic Ontosophy, believes in psycho-physic-philosophic shades of the

psyche. It is the basis of the self-organisation of health and wellbeing of the human being and it becomes evident somatically through metamorphic (mutational) law and the capacity of organic dynamism. It corresponds to bioenergetic needs identifiable in the soma. In the same way, terms like "engastrimytoi", "pneumatikoi", "logotikoi", which in Greek culture express the visceral, passionate, and rational spirit, were conceptions-categories employed by ancient individual healers. This shows that the idea of the body as multidimensional with energy centres which converge during extatic illumination (exstatikoi, corresponding to the eastern samadhi) and which, in the recent clinical conception, correspond to self-relaxation and psychoenergetic self-poeisis, was already present in the roots of Western culture, even before importing the idea of chakras from the East.

In order to clarify the relationship between the Sphere of action and the Psyche, it can be stated that both are places of the same identical natural human being. Therefore, SphA = PH, where PH equals the Sphere of action which has completed a cycle of healthy wellbeing, creativity, historical self-realisation of the private self organisational plan. For example, it expresses the energy of all the interacting agents (physiological, mental, socio-cultural, natural, ecosystemic) involved in achieving harmony in the Psyche.

In analysing myths and symbols we differ fundamentally from the Jungians and Freudians because we embrace the etymological sense of the symbolic word in its connection with and effect on the psychosoma. The symbol (oneiric, artistic) must have a releasing function on the initial symptom in the psychotherapeutic setting. This does not take place at the psychosomatic level either in psychoanalysis or in analytical psychology. On the other hand, neither Freud nor Jung were aware of the recent archeological discoveries in South Italy related to the Pythagorean and Magno-Graecian eras, which describe the unification of psyche and soma, and use symbols which we believe portray the nurturer of the psychosoma, food of the soul for wellbeing. (cf. Francesco Palmirotta in XXXV Conference on Magna Graecia, Taranto, 1995, p.556).

ONTOSOPHIC MODEL OF PERSONALITY

Freud's theories, Sheldon's and Krethscmer's somatomorphic typologies, Jungian and Reichian characterology are not completely descriptive of the Ego's complex psychological dynamics. Psychosomatic Ontosophy outlines two fundamental polarities of the human Ego: the Virtual Alien Ego and the Real Ontic Ego, from which spring different variations and mixtures of the conscious Ego, related to the psycho-existential situation the subject is living in.

At the psychological level, the concept of alien, as a definition, can already be found in the old conceptions at the roots of Western culture to convey the idea of "other", "alteration", "fragmentation" and, in one word, of alienation of the human Self. This idea can be reconstructed starting from the myth of Dionysus, who looks at himself in a mirror and is afterwards torn into pieces as a consequence of the mirror breaking, or from the fact that, in the same myth, the Titans violate his physical integrity with a sword while he is looking at himself in the "estranging mirror".

Mythology also conveys the idea that Apollo and Zeus, each in his own way, rebuild Dionysus' gestalt (it can be said). Also Narcissus' reflection brings about moral alienation (he mistakes his real image for the virtual one, in which he identifies himself and gets lost). Therefore, what today is called alien virtual image, of psycho-computed origin, sketches the same meaning of mendacious image and estranging fragmentation as in the original Western mytho-philosophy. Amongst the modern scholars Laing, more than any other, underlined the aspect of the virtual alien Ego when referring to the robotization of the human Ego.

In Ontosophy, the Virtual Alien Ego is a superimposition of spheres in relation to the Real Ego, it is not implicit in individuation but is the result of a systemic interference, i.e. from the whole set of conditionings of alienating mythical non-scientific religious systems (some over thousands of years), denying the natural gift of the Being Ego in ecosystemic harmony. It can be defined as generated by

inner holograms, self-projecting nuclei of virtual realities, which are not consequential to psychosomatic wellbeing. Anxieties, phobias, psychoses, psychosomatoses and so on, are the symptomatic expression of this existing alienation which the subject suffers in the form of loss of consciousness of one's own psychosomatic and psychic sphere. With reference to mythology, the Ego is no longer metamorphically Philio/Phlyo, son to Earth, Dios, son to Apollo god of light, Museum, son to the Muses, but remains hologrammed or computed in a sub-human software with a self-destructive and consumistic aim. The main evidence of this complex reality alienating the Ego is the individual lack of awareness of an internal principle of self organization toward health enabling them to then seek the strength of a healthy Psyche within.

The mediation towards the Real Ontic Self is actuated through the psychosomatic Self. This implies rediscovering the capacity to listen to the self, of conscious discrimination of psychosomatic perceptions of malaise or wellbeing (also regarding dreams, daily thoughts and sensations), and, therefore, the rediscovery of awareness of one's own psychic and psychosomatic sphere of action.

The Real Ontic Self goes beyond sensory habits, relations, moral customs, and aims at a higher ethic which always and in any case saves the psychic, psychosomatic and biological life, a positive relationship, pleasure in life as a whole, and wellbeing. It can be claimed that it is the consequence of simply the presence of the intentionality of the Ontic Self's sphere of action.

Hypothesizing the presence of an intelligent entity which actuates through dreams, emotions, sentiments, perceptions, states of psychosomatic malaise or wellbeing and which is continuous memory (mneme) of one's own horizon of existential Being, means hypothesizing an egoic Being (Real Ontic Self) in everyday or (circadian) reality in generational space-temporality. So, there is an egoic Being who, in order to always reconstruct his own growing will and wellbeing, must constantly remember himself. The consciousness of a memory or mneme of the egoic Being happens independently of the consciousness of the individual Self. In this sense, the principle of self-organisation of psychosomatic wisdom, aiming constantly at restoring the psychobiological unity, is taking place despite the alienation of the Self, or the disactivation of the state of watchfulness, or the conditioned irresponsibility caused by an alienating socio-system.

DEFINITIONS

The terms Egoic Being and Real Ontic Self, in reference to Sphere of Action, have the following meaning: Egoic Being is a concept related to the universal Being spread through the various dimensions of the Self. Real Ontic Self is the consciousness of the Universal as "master of the current"; it is also the conscious configuration of the innate capacity to flow in the current of the Sphere of Action and to guide it according to its free inclination to the shores of the evolved soul.

SCIENTIFIC-CULTURAL INFORMATION

Psychosomatic Ontosophy is a psychosomato-dynamic approach. It is an integrated psychotherapeutic method which combines a psychotherapeutic specificity with beliefs related to both physics and philosophy. It came into being as a result of the exchange of ideas between Francesco Palmirotta, Davide Bigalli, and Franco Selleri.

Francesco Palmirotta, psychologist and psychotherapist, created a psychotherapeutic development group in Bari in 1981, which later on became the Scuola di Ontosofia Psicosomatica, a four year post graduate institution. The psycho-philosophical research, which Francesco Palmirotta had been pursuing since the '70s, lead him to recognise the existence of a principle of human self organisation of reality. At that time he was practicing Eastern meditation, autogenous training and bioenergetics, which, however did not satisfy him fully. He was searching for a psychotherapy school with a humanistic existential approach in therapy. He discovered Maslow's and Sutich's psychology of being, which he nonetheless held to be detached from both the pre-Socratic culture of philosophy

and psychic based therapy, which was earlier intuited by the Pythagoreans and Parmenides. Francesco Palmirotta started, then, to elaborate the theory and practice of Psycho-somatic Ontosophy, coining its definition, in order to unite Maslow's psychology of being and pre-Socratic philosophy of being.

BEGINNINGS AND SUMMARY OF THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

The method outlined by the school in 1981, was set out in 1993 under the name of Psycho-somatic Ontosophy. The school is connected to the AOP (Association of Psycho-somatic Ontosophy) which was founded in 1993 with the aim of promoting research and training in the psychosomatic field. Before, those activities were carried out by the Maieutic Ontic-Existential Association (previously called "Arte e Vita", 1985) which still exists today but concerns itself mainly with Musictherapy.

The AOP carries out both scientific and training programmes, works with universities in Italy and abroad, local institutions, state and private schools. Its annual "International Conference Solinio Art and Science" is organised with AMO and is partly sponsored by universities, associations, public institutions and international organisations. It organises conferences, seminars and training courses for its members and students as well as artistic and cultural exhibitions. The school also offers annual and two-yearly training and specialisation courses in psychotherapy, refresher and specific subject courses.

Some five years after the first request to the MURST for official recognition for our courses, the Psycho-somatic Ontosophy Association is a nationally and internationally acknowledged entity having officially consolidated those contacts which, though already existing since 1993, were still informal. It is important to point out that the AOP, already affiliated to the AHP (Association for Humanistic Psychology, San Francisco, California) since 1994, became an AHP Energy Centre (1997).

Besides forming national and international links the school has given a more complete definition to its theoretical model and to its clinical practice thanks to the number of resolved cases (with follow-up of over five years) and exchange with other schools through conferences both in Italy and abroad.