

OUR INNER ACTORS

The Theory and Application of Subpersonality Work in Psychosynthesis

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INTRODUCTION

The first time I encountered one of my subpersonalities, an ugly dwarf or "Zwerg," was in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1982. At that time Molly Brown, a Psychosynthesis therapist trained by Assagioli, lived in Los Alamos, New Mexico. She gave an introduction to Psychosynthesis in which I participated. I shall never forget this event. I no longer remember the exact words Molly used in that exercise, yet I still can see the result of it. In my imagination I saw a crippled, ugly dwarf. It responded to the question "What do you want from me?" with "I would like to kill you." I was shocked to be confronted so directly with a part of myself which I had sensed, but had never encountered. This was the beginning of my working with subpersonalities and with Roberto Assagioli's Psychosynthesis. In my own therapy, as a psychotherapist, and as a group facilitator, I have since worked intensively with

subpersonalities. I have become acquainted with them, I have learned to accept them, and to transform them.

In this book I would like to share how I apply this approach in a practical setting. In order to work with subpersonalities, it is necessary to set a transpersonal framework. All exercises in this book, practical applications, and theoretical explanations are based on Roberto Assagioli's Psychosynthesis model of the human consciousness (1989, *The Act of Will*; 1988, *Psychosynthesis*). This model presumes the existence of the "Self" and the "Transpersonal Self" with the function of an observer. Subpersonalities, an expression of the "Self" in this world, can be influenced by this observer. This implies acquiring the tool of conscious disidentification from and identification with our subpersonalities. It also includes the responsibility to make conscious choices and to direct our life energy in new directions. Within the transpersonal framework, the "Self" and the "Transpersonal Self" are an inherent part of human nature. The work with subpersonalities is a process of becoming conscious, a process of acceptance and transformation of the various parts of our personality. Only then can our true potential unfold. Problems can then be looked upon as chances for inner and outer growth. Working with these problems can be seen as cooperating with the unfolding of our inner potential. This view changes our perspective on our own suffering dramatically and allows a far more positive approach to it.

This book weaves theory and practice together organically. The first part is an introduction to the theory of subpersonality work with its multidimensional perspectives and possibilities of application. A theoretical description of subpersonality, its origin, birth, and expressions follows. This leads to the various stages of transformation of subpersonalities and to the question: "Why engage in subpersonality work?" This is followed by instructions on how to work in this way.

The subsequent section consists of a number of visualization exercises to familiarize ourselves with the subpersonality as it presents itself in our daily life. These exercises use visualization, drawing, movement, and an introduction to the "Wise Inner Being." The dialogue with subpersonalities in the next chapter offers a way to direct knowledge of our inner parts. The questions described in this dialogue help us to recognize and to accept distorted and unwanted qualities in our personality structures. Case histories from my psychotherapeutic practice and seminars complete this section.

To deepen subpersonality work, exercises are described which lead us to the roots of our psychodynamic structures in childhood, e.g., how positive and negative events with primary caretakers create the environment out of which subpersonalities can be born. Traumatic events throughout various stages of childhood development create the basic psychodynamic structures which turn into subpersonalities. Recognition of their origin allows the development of techniques for our own healing process. Examples of how to use the various methods and techniques leading to the "Inner Child" and how to free our creative potential complete this part of the book.

This is followed by a broader and even deeper dimension of subpersonality work which I call the "Emotional Archive," i.e., that part of an individual which contains the deep interconnectedness which reaches far beyond the personal level. Through applying subpersonality work this interconnectedness and its expression in daily life become visible. Subpersonality work is then used to explore our psychological inheritance and as a technique to transform collective traumata. Looking at subpersonality work from such a transpersonal perspective allows us to view personal growth as a part of human evolution and invites us to review our life's purpose from a profoundly different angle.