

# Our Inner Actors

The Theory and Application of  
Subpersonality Work in Psychosynthesis

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**OF SUBPERSONALITY WORK IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS**

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## PROLOGUE

What is Psychosynthesis? Where does the name originate? What does it mean? All these are natural questions, but before I respond I would like to provide a framework for "Psychosynthesis" as an experiential psychology. "Psychosynthesis" is a Transpersonal Psychology which leads to another question: "What is Transpersonal Psychology?" Let's explore this first.

*We are what we think.  
All we are is based on our thoughts.  
With our thoughts we create the world.  
Buddha (Byrom, 1976)*

These words, spoken by the Buddha centuries ago, are the basis of Transpersonal Psychology. The term has its roots in Latin and Greek. The Greek word "Psychology" contains "Psyche" which represents spirit, life, soul, and breath and "Logos" signifying word, talk, and basis. The original meaning of "Psychology" would be, then, the word of the spirit or the word of the soul. "Transpersonal" derives its origins from the Latin "trans" and "persona," which translate as "through," "beyond," and "mask." The true meaning of "Transpersonal Psychology," then, is "through the mask and beyond, the word of the soul."

It's not the goal of Transpersonal Psychology to create a new psychology in place of the old, but to take the existing psychology, expand on it, and add new perspectives. The individual who chooses a transpersonal path enters a path of discovery. This path is one of many which lead to inner sources of wisdom (Clark, 1974).

"Transpersonal Psychology" could also be called "Spiritual Psychology." Grof expresses the meaning of spirituality:

*Spirituality has nothing to do with exterior religious programming. Spirituality arises when a person connects with certain areas of his or her consciousness. An individual has the insight to overcome the psychological fragmentation and reaches a state of one-ness with the other, nature, the cosmos and god. (Grof, 1987)*

Transpersonal psychology may also be interpreted as a "spiritual orientation."

How did this psychological direction develop? Transpersonal Psychology developed out of traditional psychology. One of its aims is to make conscious the spiritual dimension of the human psyche, to experience it and to integrate it. Experimentation with consciousness expanding drugs in the sixties and various states of consciousness in meditation created the desire to research these dimensions of consciousness. Transpersonal psychologists were interested in finding a connecting link between the practices of the Eastern disciplines of raising consciousness and Western empirical research methods (Walsh & Vaughan, 1980).

It soon became clear, though, that the Western model of the human psyche did not lend itself to approaching this large spectrum of phenomena. Today, Transpersonal Psychology is understood as follows:

*It provides a whole spectrum model of development of consciousness which bridges psychological and spiritual disciplines. It [Transpersonal Psychology] is especially interesting for people who wish to grow spiritually and develop good psychological health. (Vaughan, 1988)*

"Transpersonal Psychology" based on traditional Psychology leads into new dimensions of consciousness. Psychosynthesis as a "Transpersonal Psychology" has existed since the Italian Roberto Assagioli (1888-1976) began to develop it in 1910. His first dissertation dates from 1906, a time before his graduation as a medical doctor at the age of twenty two. Assagioli specialized in Zurich in psychiatry. He studied psychoanalysis, corresponded with Freud, and introduced psychoanalysis in Italy. He also had a close relationship over many years with C.G. Jung (Keen, 1974) and a deep connection and friendship with Maslow whose booklet "Creative Behavior" was published by the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation.

## PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

As early as 1920, through the development of Psychosynthesis, Assagioli introduced a spiritual approach to psychology (Assagioli, 1965). He developed guidelines to teach transpersonal approaches including expansions of consciousness. Called the Father of Psychosynthesis, Assagioli wrote two books in his lifetime, "The Act of Will" and "Psychosynthesis." He published many articles, some on psychosomatic approaches.

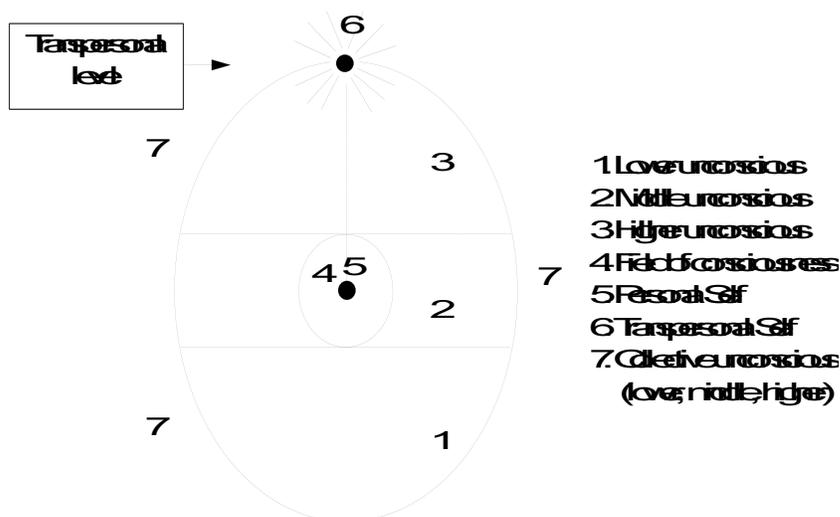
Various of these were collected in a book and published under the title "Transpersonal Development." He died at the age of ninety-six in Florence, Italy.

What is Psychosynthesis? Psychosynthesis is primarily a dynamic concept of our psychological life which expresses itself in the interplay between the many different and seemingly contradictory forces within ourselves. It is a concept which posits the presence of a spiritual center in each individual and works with methods to allow it to flow creatively and harmoniously through our own life energy as an expression of our natural spirituality.

Perhaps Assagioli's most important contribution to psychology was his development of a model of consciousness of the human psyche with the "Self" and the "Transpersonal Self" as focal points. Assagioli developed a program for training the will in which different stages of will can be experienced and different qualities of will can be acquired. A third major contribution of Assagioli to traditional psychology was his work with subpersonalities which was developed by different schools of Psychosynthesis.

### The Model of the Individual Psyche, the "Self" and the "Transpersonal Self"

To better understand subpersonality work from Assagioli's model of human consciousness, note the diagram of his model of human consciousness, the "Self" and the "Transpersonal Self" shown below. This facilitates understanding of the potential and unfolding of a healthy personality. Assagioli's model shows the human psyche from both a personal and a transpersonal perspective and includes different areas of the unconscious.



Assagioli (1965) describes his model as "... a rough, nearly anatomic replica of our inner constitution ..." and divides the unconscious of the human psyche into three areas:

1. "higher unconscious" or "superconscious"
2. "middle unconscious"
3. "lower unconscious" or "unconscious"

These three realms have different contents, yet are closely interrelated.

*All lines are dotted to show that a continuous exchange of elements and energies takes place.*  
(Assagioli, 1974)

The "lower unconscious" is referred to in most traditional psychological approaches as the "unconscious." Its contents, like those of the superconscious, can be accessed through experience. Here are housed our fundamental and aggressive urges, our developmentally based traumata, and our unconscious conditioning through familial, ethnic, and social patterns.

The contents of the "middle unconscious" are closer to our awareness. They can appear momentarily in consciousness and then disappear from our awareness. The middle unconscious is outside of our immediate awareness, but is easily accessible. For example, memories of our last vacation or the birthday of a girlfriend can be recalled readily and easily.

The "higher unconscious" or "superconscious" is the area of our highly developed impulses such as altruistic love, humanitarian action, artistic and spiritual understanding, and the search for the purpose and the meaning of life. These energies can be experienced and put at the disposal of the individual. Experiences in the realm of the superconscious are moments of expansion of normal consciousness; these are peak experiences which bring the individual in touch with the deeper meaning of the purpose of life and the universe. The "Personal Self" is our essential being. It can be compared to an energetic vortex around which, through its spiritual gravity, constellate the various parts and characteristics of the personality. There are two functions to the "Self": a receptive function (to become aware, to observe) and a dynamic, expressive function (to choose to guide will or life energy into the content of our awareness). One can choose to identify with the content of consciousness or to disidentify and to simply observe it.

Assagioli saw in the "Transpersonal Self" a deeper and broader source of identity, something which expands through and beyond the individual psyche.

In his "egg-diagram" he draws this source of identity on the upper edge into the area of the superconscious. This source is accessible to the psyche and, simultaneously, transcends it.

*The true nature of the "Self" is universally transcendent, immanent and unique. Transcendence and immanence differ from all other ideas about matter, energy, space and time. Be it material, biological or spiritual. Transcendence is immanent, it means, always present and actively engaged in content and process. (Firman, 1991).*

Maslow (1954), Jung (1954), and Assagioli (1973) call this transpersonal source which allows us access to wisdom and fulfillment of our potential, the "Self." The "Self" is the essential nature of the human being and is its inherent potential to unlimited development. The basis of human existence is viewed as the inherent search of the human being to fulfil itself and to find purpose and meaning of life. In Eastern meditative approaches such as Japanese Zen, Tibetan Dzogchen, or Buddhist Vipassana the emphasis is on the experience of actually being a "Self" and experiencing the continuity of existence (Wilber, Engler, Brown, 1986). In Eastern philosophies and psychologies the concept of a "Self" or the experience of a "Self" is the goal of meditation. For Sogyal Rinpoche (1992) the ignorance and repression in our society of what we truly are is deeply unsettling: The repression of these concepts of the "Self" in Western cultures causes serious psychological imbalances.

After years of application of Psychosynthesis in practice, translating this model of consciousness into experience, the theory needed adaptation. The most important change was to acknowledge the immanence and transcendence of the "Transpersonal Self," the "Self" which is present in and at the same time transcending the middle, higher and lower unconscious (Firman, Russel 1994). This leads to a fundamental change in the healing process. The tendency to identify with the qualities of the higher unconscious and to exclude the lower unconscious is thereby greatly diminished. In the adapted model (Firman, Russel) the "Self" and "Transpersonal Self" are located in the center of the diagram. This change implies a personal growth process as a becoming conscious of both the higher and the lower unconscious. Heretofore, the tendency had been to move up through the higher unconscious to meet the "Transpersonal Self." Developing a lasting relationship with the "Self," however, leads to the integration of the heights and depths of the human experience within the psyche. As a result human consciousness naturally expands. This, in turn, leads to a process of growth and healing, allowing the individual's potential to unfold and express itself more fully.

The "Self," the center of the personality, is both immanent and transcendent, as stated. It is the focal point of the personality, permeating the field of personal consciousness and unconsciousness. Thus, it is present everywhere and at all times. All levels of human consciousness are embedded in it: the superconscious or higher unconscious, the lower unconscious, and the middle unconscious, and reaching beyond the boundaries of the personal into the collective psyche. Perceiving human consciousness from this perspective allows us to view each area of consciousness or unconsciousness as being of equal value. This results in the acceptance of individual experiences as a process of "Self" realization, the goal of individual growth. To engage in the process, the power of "Will," as Assagioli calls it, is needed. This force, closely interrelated with the "Self," expresses itself through the various parts of the personality. I call it "Life energy." Life energy manifests and expresses itself in different forms: On a mental level it could be called "LoveWill"; its emotional expressions

are feelings; on a physical level "Life energy", then translates into action. Without "Life energy" the process of "Self" realization is unthinkable.

Psychosynthesis, a Transpersonal Psychology, is an open system based on the principle of the "Self" as the model of human consciousness, on "Will" training, and on subpersonality theory in which diverse techniques can be introduced and applied. The above named principles create a spiritual framework, a basis which accommodates the methods used. Gestalt, art, dance, movement therapy, analysis, et al., can be drawn upon. Placed within the psychosynthetic frame, they allow an indepth approach.

Assagioli mentions both a personal and a transpersonal Psychosynthesis. A personal Psychosynthesis is concerned with personal growth, the working through of developmental issues. This type of Psychosynthesis occurs on a regular basis in daily life. Healing old wounds literally transforms the quality of our living. A transpersonal or spiritual Psychosynthesis, though, also includes the transpersonal dimension. Generally, both personal and transpersonal Psychosynthesis occur simultaneously. Both are concerned with changes of quality of life: The personal leads from mere survival to the acknowledgment of the "Self"; the transpersonal refines the individual quality of life, expressing the love and creativity of the "Self."

Since Assagioli's death, Psychosynthesis has been developed in a multiplicity of ways and areas. One of these developments, the work with subpersonalities, is described in this book. Assagioli's Psychosynthesis furnished the seeds out of which, after years of application and experience, this work has grown.

## 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.

## WHAT IS A SUBPERSONALITY?

### Aspects and Perspectives

Before presenting what is available in today's psychological literature about subpersonalities, I would like to differentiate between a psychodynamic structure and a subpersonality. A psychodynamic structure is a living, energetic part in our psyche which reacts to stimuli, a characteristic or a quality which expresses itself through us. This structure is more or less complex, more or less flexible; it can be crystallized and rigid as well as malleable and fluid. These structures constellate around the "Self," our spiritual well of gravity. They form the wholeness and integrity of the personality and can be either in conflict or in harmony with each other.

Psychodynamic structures can be tendencies already present as a matrix in utero. They begin to unfold through various stimuli: the comportment of the mother during the pregnancy, her nutrition, emotions, and so on. During childhood development these structures are reinforced. Through continuous affirmation and repetition, they stabilize and form a pattern. They are considered *subpersonalities*, however, when through repetition and affirmation, a part of the personality is structured. **A subpersonality is a psychodynamic structure which once a complex then seeks its own existence. It has its own characteristics and demands its own existence and the fulfillment of its wishes, wants, and needs through the personality.** Subpersonalities have different ages and levels of complexity. An older structure is more rigidified and crystallized and is more resistant to transformation.

Although most psychotherapists and psychiatrists are acquainted with the phenomenon of subpersonalities, there are very few writings on the theory and application of working with them. Roberto Assagioli himself structured his subpersonality work on the concepts of William James (Jean Hardy, 1987).

How can we describe a subpersonality? John Rowan's (1990) working definition of a subpersonality reads as follows:

*... a halfpermanent and halfautonome region of the personality which is capable of acting as a person ...*

Piero Ferrucci, an Italian therapist trained by Assagioli, sees subpersonalities as:

*... psychological satellites which simultaneously do exist as a multitude of diverse lives. Each subpersonality has its own style and own motivation which differs from the others ... (1982).*

Virginia Satir, a family therapist from Palo Alto, California, calls the subpersonality "My Many Faces" (1988) and perceives them as parts of our personality which are interdependent with each other and cannot exist alone. Janette Rainwater, a Californian psychologist trained by Assagioli, describes subpersonalities as follows:

*Each subpersonality organizes itself around a need of the whole personality. The strength of each is probably the result of the circumstances out of which the need initially was born. Each human being is a manifold mixture of very individual subpersonalities. (1979)*

Subpersonalities serve as instruments of the expression of the person in the world and as lenses through which the personality can be perceived, lived, and experienced.

As energetic psychodynamic structures they seek their fulfillment, i.e., their expression, in the outer world. A human being can be completely unconscious of which subpersonality dominates its life; however, becoming aware of the way in which a subpersonality expresses itself offers access to the individual psyche and shows the psychodynamic structures with which the person identifies. Through their expressions subpersonalities represent our inner and outer roles which influence each other. The change or the transformation of just one subpersonality has an effect on the system of the individual psyche as a whole.

Roberto Assagioli emphasizes that understanding the function of the subpersonality or psychodynamic structure opens access to a systematic developmental process:

*For every man and every woman who wishes to live consciously, it is unavoidable to become aware of the elements or components of the personality. This means an assessment and evaluation, knowledge and control over these. (1965)*

A subpersonality, a psychodynamic energetic structure, a part of the personality, shows its qualities, needs, and wants. It expresses these through the person's mental/emotional patterns.

In different situations different psychodynamic structures express themselves. Different circumstances elicit different reactions in our system of subpersonalities.

## The Birth of Subpersonalities

If we look for the origin of subpersonalities, it seems obvious that their structures are related to the psychological environment and to childhood development.

For Gretchen Sliker (1992) the development of subpersonalities originates in the first months of early childhood. By the age of one or two years, psychological structures already exist. They manifest themselves as characteristic behaviors and are connected to certain needs and wants. Subpersonalities in time become multidimensional and complex, depending on experience and memory.

Chris Meriam, a therapist in the state of Washington, relates the origin of subpersonalities to early childhood development and the inability to integrate "object relations." He examines the splitting of the positive and negative qualities of subpersonalities in detail and concludes that possibly there is no subpersonality which is not born through early trauma, that everyone of us was deeply wounded in childhood (Meriam, 1994).

I would like to go a little further in looking at the origin and birth of a subpersonality. Often these are our psychological heritage, their origins tracing back to parents, grandparents, and beyond. Similar psychological patterns can be recognized in the cultural heritage and seem to be present for hundreds of years in culture and religion. These unconscious psychological patterns are passed on from mother to child in utero.

Psychodynamic structures, latent in the fetus and in the newly born, are reinforced through experiences with role models and principal caretakers. This takes place through the early developmental phases and until the phase of "Object Constancy" at the age of twentytwo to thirty months (Mahler, 1975). At this period, the inner images of the outer world stabilize in the child.

The child interiorizes the behavior of its principal caretakers, parents, and environment. Its reaction to these behaviors reinforces the psychodynamic structures. When these behaviors form an inner image, it can be considered the phase of "Object Constancy," as the beginning of a subpersonality. The subpersonality crystallizes through repetition of learned responses. Each repetition serves to reinforce the existing structure. This is valid both for a subpersonality with negative and with positive qualities. Environment and primary caretakers determine to a profound degree the behavior and the reaction of the child.

These embryonic subpersonalities initially serve to protect the personality. They develop out of a need to adapt to the environment and are often necessary to survive. The birth of a subpersonality takes place when subpersonalities can be recognized as parts of the personality. Then they need to realize their own wishes, needs, and wants. It seems as though individual characteristics are reinforced and attracted to each other, and now have their own life, their own will, and their own goals. Often this is in conflict with other parts of the personality. The subpersonality then pushes to express and realize its qualities, destructive or constructive. Such a process often takes place unconsciously and leads to the all too familiar phenomenon of: "I didn't want to do that and yet I did it again!"

Throughout our lives, subpersonalities are formed by steady repetition. Fortunately, though, they can be unformed and transformed as well.

## How to Recognize a Subpersonality

How do subpersonalities express themselves? To give voice to their needs and wants, they require the tools of body, emotions, and thought patterns. Different parts of the psyche react to different outer circumstances and environments. These reactions occur with the speed of light and are often unconscious processes. The role a person plays at any given time is determined by circumstances. Who doesn't know in a relationship, for example, that when one partner uses a certain phrase in a certain tone of voice, the scene is being set for a familiar drama to unfold? Although the play is often recognized, ways and tools to write a new script are usually unavailable.

Thus, the play takes its old habitual path and patterns; it runs in the office, in private life, and, of course, in our inner worlds as well. The battle between the inner voices, one of which asserts, "Yes, this is very good, go ahead and do it" and the other of which maintains, "You will never be able to do it" is well known to all of us.

To experience a subpersonality means that in certain areas of life we relate and behave in unwanted ways, yet are unable to change our behavior. This is often accompanied by an inner battle between two conflicting voices, each trying to convince the other of the rightness of its beliefs. In this inner conflict creativity and life energy are caught up and used to fuel the conflict. As a result, no energy is left for creative action. The body is tired, exhausted, and in pain; thoughts chase each other and feelings are split. Subpersonalities are seeking the fulfillment of their life's purpose. It is their nature to aim at this goal, with or without our conscious knowledge. They are alive in our body, emotions and thoughts. Body posture, physical sensations, emotions, feelings, and thought processes change according to the role being played. Different roles evoke different body postures, corresponding physical sensations, etc. Such sensations may include pressure on the shoulders or in the heart area, tension in the stomach area, discomfort or well being and expansion, depending on the inner actor. Body posture and body feeling are accompanied by corresponding emotional states such as sadness, joy, depression, or the feeling of a "high." The thought patterns which are interconnected with specific roles are often repetitive. These thought patterns, emotions, body posture, and body feelings are all intimately related to each other. A specific body posture can evoke corresponding feelings, emotions, and thoughts. Similarly, specific emotions provoke their corresponding thought patterns, body posture, and body feelings. Specific thought patterns likewise provoke related emotions, body posture, and body feelings.

The psychodynamic structures in our psyche, then, make their presence felt, here and now, through the body, the emotions, and the thought patterns. Childhood traumata, the origin of subpersonalities, are not forgotten; they are accessible in the present, stored in the body, and interconnected with emotions and thought patterns which they stimulate or evoke. Transformation of these subpersonalities and childhood traumata clearly needs, then, to include approaches to the body's emotional and mental patterns.

Fortunately, subpersonalities, rigidified over many years, can experience profound changes if the transformational approach includes physical, emotional, and mental patterns.

Subpersonalities differ radically in nature. The "Inner Father," the "Inner Mother," and the "Inner Child" seem to be important parts of the personality, having been interiorized in early childhood. Other subpersonalities include the "Inner Judge," the "Monk," the "Pragmatic," the "Mystic," the "Coward," the "Hater," the "Fearful One," the "Victim," the "Oppressor," the "Wild Woman," the "Obedient," the "Adapted One," et. al. The list is endless. All subpersonalities do have one thing in common, though: part of our vital life energy is contained and held in their psychodynamic structure. In the transformational process, however, this life energy can be freed and used to express our own creativity more fully and joyously.

## The Stages of Transformation

In subpersonality work the psychodynamic structure, its behavior, and its quality are brought to consciousness and into focus. This attention illuminates the structure. Then we can turn towards these parts of the personality with their negative and positive qualities and lovingly accept and express their feelings. This allows space for new thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. **Loving acceptance is the key factor in this transformation.** Affirmations and repetitions reinforce this process of new learning. Once completed, the subpersonalities, now displaying different behaviors, can be reintegrated into the personality. The previous pattern is no longer needed. Transformed and changed, they return into the unconscious.

To change individual psychodynamic structures and patterns means to free the life energy caught up within them. In order to express this life energy in the personal creative process, the following stages of transformation are required:

1. *Awareness and Recognition*
2. *Acceptance*
3. *Coordination and Transformation*
4. *Integration*
5. *Synthesis*

A necessary basis for this transformational process is the work with the "observer" and the capability of becoming conscious of one's own center. This is reinforced through the work with subpersonalities in the process of change.

### **Awareness and Recognition**

"Awareness and recognition" of our own psychological structures is the first step in subpersonality work. This includes developing the capability of **disidentification from** and **identification with** a subpersonality. In order to change something in our lives, an awareness of both our own psychological structures and the behaviors which we would like to change is needed. In order to recognize something, we first direct our attention to it. The fact that we do so in and of itself causes a change in the psyche! The structure upon which we direct our focused attention is illuminated and so becomes visible to us.

### **Acceptance**

The second stage in this transformational process is "acceptance." It is not easy to become aware of unwanted and uncomfortable parts of our personality. Sometimes it can be most frightening. It demands courage and strength to look at these parts and to accept them as they are, with all their anger, fear, hatred, and other negative qualities. True love and compassion are needed to attend to these largely repressed parts. Such unwanted psychodynamic structures, often developed out of early childhood traumata, need this acceptance urgently. True acceptance, loving one's own weaknesses and strengths, is an act of love, which can bring a resolution to the inner battle. Acceptance initiates deep transformations which allow encounters with unwanted parts of the personality to become compassionate, understanding interactions. Acceptance means returning to the "Self" and opening the doors for a better knowledge of it. This includes permission to experience deep feelings and emotions such as sadness, anger, loneliness, et. al. which are stored within these psychodynamic structures.

### **Coordination and Transformation**

The second step, acceptance, allows access to "coordination and transformation." Initially it is an intelligent restructuring of old belief systems. Belief systems which are restrictive, perhaps destructive, can be changed, transformed to expand the world view in which the subpersonality structures are enmeshed. In accord with the subpersonality and in its own rhythm, transformation can and does occur. The rhythm of transformation is determined by the age, depth, and rigidity of the psychodynamic structure. Heretofore, life energy and the will, contained in the structures of the subpersonalities, were focused on battle, withdrawal, and resistance; now they can be freed and coordinated with the will to live and the creative expression of the personality.

The resistance of a psychodynamic structure to change originates in childhood, as noted. Originally this protective function was necessary to survive and so deserves to be honored and treated respectfully. What needs to be changed is how the subpersonality applies this protective function and thereby disrupts the flow of creativity and constructive relationships (and responses) in daily life. Its motivation to protect, however, can be readily and honestly acknowledged and accepted. Only the current application of this protective function needs to change; the original motivation to protect does not. Coordination and transformation also imply changing the interactions of these subpersonalities among themselves. If these changes take place and new thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations can be experienced and strengthened, the subpersonality can then be reintegrated into the personality proper.

## Integration

An "integration" is a coming together of various parts, often of seemingly opposite nature, which retain their own characteristics. However, their behaviors have been transformed and they operate in harmony with the wish of the personality to live its creativity and to translate it into daily life.

## Synthesis

A "synthesis" can occur when two or more subpersonalities are ready to form a new whole. The individuality of the parts will be lost; however, their qualities will be retained in the new whole which contains the sum of these qualities and is simultaneously more than their sum. This process demands deep transformation of the personality. A synthesis permits both the "Self" and the "Transpersonal Self" to express more freely through the personality and its qualities.

The stages of transformation described above are the stages of personal growth and evolution, stages of refining one's personal qualities. In most psychotherapeutic approaches the process of "awareness and recognition" serves as a first step. This is accompanied by the reexperiencing or the repression of the contents of the recognized material. Through the approach of "acceptance" in subpersonality work, a significant further step is taken - the conscious step of turning towards the painful content. This implies a loving embrace of the psychological structure, whatever its content may be. The heart's innate capacity to love is trained. The mental process of "awareness" through "acceptance" as a quality of the heart is incorporated in the personal process. This heart quality of loving embrace allows a safe space for the subpersonality to rest and to relax its structures.

To proceed through the next stage of "coordination and transformation" the presence of a well developed inner observer is needed. The observer, honoring the rhythm of the psychodynamic structures, can then effect the changes. To be lasting and profound, however, these changes need to include the individual's thought patterns, emotional content, and body consciousness. During the phase of "integration," the transformed parts are reintegrated into the personality to serve their original purpose, which is to support the personality as a whole.

"Synthesis," the last stage of transformation, the steps of individual growth, is a truly evolutionary stage, a paradigm shift.

Moving from the first stage of transformation, "becoming aware" to the stage of "acceptance" seems to be a simple and logical step. In actual everyday life, though, it is not an easy one, yet this is one of the most important stages of the process. Once acceptance is gained, transformation, using a respectful and intelligent approach to the psychodynamic structures, is followed inevitably by integration.

The examples presented in this book delineate the various stages of transformation.

## The Individual Psyche as a System

The psychodynamic structures of an individual psyche always exist in relationship to each other, both in the inner and outer worlds. They are interwoven and interconnected. Each change or influence on one part affects the system of the individual psyche as a whole.

Transforming a psychodynamic structure through subpersonality work affects the other structures as well. The effect on the system depends both on the intensity and the depth of the impact of transformation. Once a psychodynamic structure is focused on, i.e., brought from the unconscious to the conscious mind and transformed, the system must adjust to the new positioning.

The system of the individual psyche is a living, everchanging energetic field in which the psychodynamic structures are embedded. Seen as interwoven parts embedded in the personality, each change brought about affects the personality as well as the conscious and unconscious mind. These interwoven parts are attracted by a spiritual center, a vortex around which they constellate. This center is the "Self." Some parts or psychodynamic structures are closer to the "Self" than others and can be more centrally or more peripherally placed. Some have a stronger nature than others. As they are worked with, their positions and relationships change. The "Self" as the spiritual focus of the psyche acts as a gravitational force on the various parts. Simultaneously, the "Self" expresses and expands itself outward through these parts. Part of this expression is becoming consciously aware of and using the capacity of choice in expressing through a given psychodynamic structure. Childhood traumata and the degree of intensity of the trauma effect the original formation of the

structures. Intensive deep traumata experienced in childhood affect the system of psychodynamic structures as a whole in that they contain deepest wounds at the roots of the psyche. Each subpersonality, then, carries a trace of the impact of this trauma. Tom Yeomans (1988) refers to it as having a pansystemic effect.

Conscious recognition of psychodynamic structures which hinder our creative expression is the first stage of transformation. Formed over many years through repetition, these structures can be softened and once again made flexible. Their thought patterns, emotional contents, and body symptoms, often connected to deep pain, can all be changed. Such a transformation permits the "Self" to express its potential more freely and fully through our daily actions.

Experiencing the "Self" causes a profound transformation and even changes how we perceive the content of the psyche. Psychological patterns, structures, and their interactions can be recognized and made accessible to change and transformation through **conscious choice**.

The individual psyche, a system of psychodynamic structures, is constellated around the vortex of the "Self," a spiritual focal point which is embedded in the larger field of the collective psyche. Both are intimately interwoven. Each change in a subpersonality in the individual psyche, then, has an influence not only on the personality as a whole but also, simultaneously, on the larger collective in which it is embedded. Therefore, each transformation of an individual part of the psyche influences the entire collective. This influence, depending on individual consciousness and choice, can be either constructive or destructive. Each person, consciously or unconsciously, then, influences both the collective and its development. Just by the wealth of seemingly insignificant choices made from day to day and even moment to moment, each individual draws on their innate capacity to contribute meaningfully to the larger whole. Seen in this light, inner work becomes a profound act of social responsibility, a gift bestowed on the common good.

## Why use Subpersonality Work ?

One of the most important reasons for doing subpersonality work is the personal empowerment which naturally occurs in this process. The processes of recognition and awareness lead to taking responsibility for oneself including both desirable and undesirable aspects of our personality. Accepting and transforming them leads to stronger self-esteem.

The method of subpersonality work is varied and can be applied in various therapeutic situations: for physical symptoms, complex psychological patterns, belief systems, etc. Subpersonality work is a loving turning to parts of ourselves, both negative and positive. The acceptance of uncomfortable parts allows access to the energy blocked and stored within them. Once these structures open and transform, the energy becomes available and can flow and flow fluidly towards creative expression. The inner energy change and subsequent flow manifest through creative action in the outer world.

Subpersonality work as a method is capable of transforming structures of various degrees of depth in the psyche. Such work can be applied to different levels of psychodynamic structures to influence the flow of creative potential in daily life. Obstacles preventing the unfolding of potential are treated with great respect as noted earlier: they are our opportunities for personal growth. These psychodynamic structures born of our cultural, familial, and personal environments are actually our chances to evolve psychologically and spiritually.

Through subpersonality work, the psychodynamic structures of our current personality can be radically transformed. To do so, we need to undergo the five stages of transformation detailed earlier: awareness and recognition, acceptance, coordination and transformation, integration, and synthesis.

Intensive work with the current psychodynamic structures of the personality reveals deeper levels of the psyche. These can be early developmental stages of childhood, including prenatal stages. Here, attention to the "Inner Child" is needed. Consciously taking responsibility to attend and give love to the "Inner Child" heals deep, old childhood wounds.

The wounds suffered by the "Inner Child," being the architect of the development of specific psychodynamic structures, are determined by the impact of the environment. This environment includes the primary caretakers, generally the father and mother. The behavior of the child, their psychodynamic structures, and the formation of subpersonalities are determined both by the presence or absence of these caretakers and the environment. Subpersonality work can be deepened and applied on this level as well. The behavior patterns of the inner structures, imprinted by the primary caretakers, the "Inner Father" or "Inner Mother," can be recognized, accepted, and, ultimately, transformed.

Work on this level often leads to the recognition that behavioral patterns or psychodynamic structures are deeply anchored in cultural and collective behavior and can be traced back many generations.

Using subpersonality work to reach such deep levels, it is advisable to not only work with the past but to work with expanding into new future patterns as well. Once the psychodynamic structures of the past are released, it is necessary to anchor the new possibilities into the personality since they will determine future behavioral patterns.

The transformational process catalyzed through subpersonality work finally releases old patterns. The new psychodynamic structure which replaces them needs time and space to be fully integrated into the personality. This new structure opens the possibility for the personality to move in a dramatically new direction. Happily, the probability of new behavior is great. To support and to reinforce this, subpersonality work can and should be continued; **the new psychodynamic structure, often related to new thought structures, unknown emotions, and physical sensations, needs continued affirmation and repetition** to be securely anchored.

What effect does our newly transformed behavior have on the people around us? How does it influence our cultural and collective environment? Subpersonality work can quite literally change our present, past, and future.

Our psychological heritage – the patterns and psychodynamic structures of our parents, ancestors, and our cultural past as well as our national traumata – can be made accessible through subpersonality work. More, they can be transformed. Such work can assist in recognizing patterns inherited from our ancestors and at long last in breaking the chain of this behavior. In short, it is a method of taking responsibility for the direction and rhythm of our own growth.

## Recommendations for Working with Subpersonalities

To be able to apply subpersonality work most constructively, we need to look at the goal and aim of therapy. In Psychosynthesis, the aim of therapy is to empower the client and to allow the potential and creativity inherent in each individual to flow and express itself freely. The goal is not only to rediscover old traumata. If these surface on the way, they are examined; in order to unfold individual potential, each obstacle is seen as an opportunity for growth. This means that each subpersonality with its often contradictory qualities, each resistance, pain, fear, hatred or suffering is recognized for its growth potential. Each is an evolutionary step on the path to transforming and living one's own potential in creative daily life.

In this approach resistance is a natural and necessary protection of the personality. The resistance of a subpersonality or a psychodynamic structure in fact contains the key to its transformation and growth. Resistance is a psychodynamic structure which often holds an enormous amount of energy and so is treated with honor. Initially, in early childhood, resistance served as a necessary protection to insure survival in daily life. Therefore, resistance is seen as a protective function, one which deserves recognition for that and for the service it has rendered. Its motivation must be acknowledged. It is only its current method of protecting the personality which now needs to be changed or transformed.

Since subpersonality work is based on Assagioli's model of human consciousness, the "Self" interconnected with the "Transpersonal Self" takes up a central position. The personality structures are held and bound together by the "Self." At the same time, it uses them to express its individuality, uniqueness, and multidimensionality. The "Self" and the "Transpersonal Self" are seen as basic principles both immanent in and transcending the human psyche. The "Self" and the "Transpersonal Self" are also a central focus or vortex from which the psychodynamic structures emanate. The spiritual gravity of the "Self" simultaneously attracts and keeps them bound into the personality.

We can thus logically reason that "if such a 'Self' exists in me, then it must exist in each human being." This attitude of respect for the "deepest" or "innermost" or "highest" in ourselves and others is the basis for subpersonality work. We can talk here about therapy in a transpersonal framework.

The "Self," the center, has at its disposal the function of an observer. The observer has a receptive and expressive quality; it can be aware, that is, it can recognize the structures of the personality and influence them. To apply subpersonality work successfully, an intensive training of the observer, of **disidentification from and identification with** the various structures is crucial.

The observer has the capacity to **identify with** and to **disidentify from** personality structures. It has the ability to choose which direction the vital life energy at the disposal of the personality will take. This vital life energy needs to flow, to express itself, and to be translated through action into daily life. In other words, as an individual, I can learn to use the observer consciously and to consciously choose the creative flow of life energy. Applied to subpersonalities, this means that I can learn to consciously choose which qualities I would like to encourage, energize, and express.

The goal of subpersonality work, then, is transformation and the creative actualization of human potential in daily life. It includes changing our perspectives and accepting our personal traumata and dramas as steps in our own healing processes. When subpersonality work is used in this context, it is a method which heals, transforms, and assists personal growth to an unparalleled degree.

## GETTING TO KNOW OUR SUBPERSONALITIES

### Inner Role Play

In daily life we play many different roles: business woman or business man, mother or father, child or teacher, victor or victim, to name a few. The role we play is a response to a given situation or moment and is often unconscious. Different situations in life evoke different parts of our personality which then emerge on the stage of life. These subpersonalities often have their origin in childhood, helping us to deal with difficult situations. In adulthood they are like faithful old friends who take over the situation and deal with it as they did so dutifully in childhood. Unfortunately, this can lead to problematic situations: for the reactions of subpersonalities to outer stimuli are the same as they were in childhood. In daily life, however, they are often no longer needed. It is like the well known feelings: "I reacted again like that, even though I didn't want to"; "I don't want to react like that in such situations, but I did it again."

The following exercise allows us to begin getting to know one of our inner actors and the role which it plays in our daily lives:

*Allow yourself the time to sit comfortably. Close your eyes, breathe deeply in and out, and turn your focus inwards.*

*Perhaps, you can recall a situation which happened to you in the past two days and which kept you preoccupied.*

*Imagine now that you can see yourself in this situation once again. Maybe you felt irritated, afraid, or angry and acted accordingly.*

*Just allow the whole scene to pass again before your inner eye and then place yourself back in that situation.*

*What are you thinking?*

*What are you feeling in your body?*

*What emotions are you aware of?*

*Where in your body do you feel them?*

*How does the world look from here?*

*How would you like to act?*

*Now breathe deeply in and out, step back and analyze that experience:*

*What can you observe?*

*What part of yourself expresses itself in this type of situation?*

*What is this part trying to do for you?*

*Does this part try to help you to keep this situation under control?*

*Would you like to thank this part for trying to help you?  
If so, do it. If not, observe your resistance to doing so.*

*What are your feelings towards this part of yourself?*

*How does this subpersonality limit you? Look at its limiting behavior. How does it see the world?*

*What do you think it truly needs from you?*

*Are you willing to give it what it needs?*

*How could you do that?*

*What special qualities or gift has this subpersonality to offer you?*

*How could you bring these qualities into your daily life?*

*Feel yourself in your body, feel your hands and feet, move them slowly, and then open your eyes.  
Perhaps you would like to take some notes.*

In the previous exercise, we **identify with** a role in order to better observe physical sensations, thought structures, and emotions. To gain an overview of the situation, we activate the "observer." This is called **disidentification from** the role. From this perspective the subpersonality, which in this specific moment directs the play, can be recognized and its behavioral patterns become clearer. This leads to the recognition that this particular part in its distorted way is actually trying to save the situation. Here, however, its limitations become visible. Clearly, the observer's discovery of such hidden qualities and the possibility of including these qualities in a more constructive way in daily life offer us a rich new perspective.

The following examples of three different people afford insight into the way this exercise can be used.

### **Example 1: Lori**

*Perhaps you can recall a situation which happened to you in the past two days and which kept you preoccupied. Imagine now that you can see yourself in this situation once again. Maybe you felt irritated, afraid, or angry and acted accordingly.*

The health insurance company refused my application for higher insurance claiming that my headaches and psychosomatic complaints are chronic. I am a higher risk, so, they would not increase my coverage.

*Just allow the whole scene to pass again before your inner eye and then place yourself back in that situation.*

*What are you thinking?*

I am chronic, a so-called chronic sufferer which means that I am not allowed to tell them the truth because if I do I will be considered a weak member of society. But they should be there for me. It's arrogant to exclude me. What is going to happen with truly ill people? Who has a chance! I probably should have continued to suffer quietly instead of going to the doctor.

*What are you feeling in your body?*

Tightness in my neck. I cannot see, my eyes are full of tears.

*What emotions are you aware of?*

Shame, despair, and outrage.

*Where in your body do you feel them?*

In my throat, neck, and head. And there is tightness in my chest.

*How does the world look from here?*

It feels incredibly threatening, a huge challenge which I am powerless to face because I have a disorder.

*How would you like to act?*

I would like to respond, to fight for myself and for others who also suffer psychosomatic problems or who are really truly ill. I would like to fight openly through the newspapers in order to be accepted as a "higher risk" to get insurance. I would like to tell my doctor what he did to me.

*Now breathe deeply in and out, step back and analyze that experience:*

*What can you observe?*

I am fully in it, I need an enormous amount of energy, and I truly cannot think. Now it would be necessary to think, to find out what is right and what is not right.

*What part of yourself expresses itself there?*

The hurt one who should be strong, the hurt warrior.

*What is this part trying to do for you?*

It is trying to protect me and to speak for me.

*Does this part try to help you to keep this situation under control?*

Yes.

*Would you like to thank this part for trying to help you?*

*If so, do it. If not, observe your resistance to doing this.*

I can see that this part defends the weak and also the weak parts within myself. This part has helped me very often, and I am very grateful to it.

*What are your feelings towards this part of yourself?*

I can accept this part, even though I see that its fighting is often inefficient.

*How does this subpersonality limit you? Look at its limiting behavior. How does it see the world?*

It sees the world as an enemy, as bad. It primarily perceives the failure of others and my own failure as well. It goes at it blindly, eyes full of tears. Then it can no longer see, hear, or feel.

*What do you think it truly needs from you?*

It needs recognition and also someone to stop it and say: "Look first. Exactly what do you see?" It is not possible to continuously send it into the battlefield.

*Are you willing to give it what it needs?*

Yes.

*How could you do that?*

I have to stop it from going to battle, help it to see, hear and feel what is really happening.

*What special qualities or gift has this subpersonality to offer you?*

Speed, engagement, and courage.

*How could you bring these qualities into your daily life?*

When I get hurt, by not counterattacking immediately, but fighting for myself with an intelligent strategy and with heart.

During this exercise, Lori becomes aware of her behavior in key situations. By observing herself she is able to recognize her self-defeating behavior and begin to modify it.

In the language of Psychosynthesis, Lori **disidentifies from** the content of her behavior and simply observes it. She is able to do so with no problem. This in turn leads to a deeper awareness of the physical sensations which accompany her behavior. Similarly, her recognition of some of her habitual response is related to localized emotions in the body and is expanded to include awareness of the limiting perspectives of her psychodynamic structures. Each question reveals different faces of the subpersonality.

Lori, by **disidentification from** and by **identification with** is able to perceive the behavior of the "Hurt One" from a different perspective. This perspective also allows her to see what this aspect of herself is trying to do for her. Such recognition leads to a loving turning towards this part of her personality to better understand its needs. By so doing Lori moves into the next stage of transformation – acceptance. Acceptance, in turn, opens her perception of the hidden qualities of the subpersonality.

Lori's next step will be to deepen the acceptance and to allow the hidden qualities to emerge more actively into her consciousness.

## **Example 2: Linda**

*Perhaps you can recall a situation which happened to you in the past two days and which kept you preoccupied. Imagine now that you can see yourself in this situation once again. Maybe you felt irritated, afraid, or angry and acted accordingly.*

I cannot be and show myself as I am, and I am afraid to participate. I have the feeling that my life is passing me by.

*Just allow the whole scene to pass again before your inner eye and then place yourself back in that situation.*

*What are you thinking?*

It stinks. I would like to kick myself, so I finally might take this step.

*What are you feeling in your body?*

Tightness, rigidity in my whole body.

*What emotions are you aware of?*

Powerlessness, impatience, anger, and sadness.

*Where in your body do you feel them?*

In my lower belly.

*How does the world look from here?*

Gigantic, overdimensional.

*How would you like to act?*

Liberated, experimental, spontaneous, fearless.

*Now breathe deeply in and out, step back and analyze that experience:*

*What can you observe?*

I just sat there, waiting.

*What part of yourself expresses itself there?*

The insecure part, with inner expectations which can never be fulfilled.

*What is this part trying to do for you?*

Nothing. This part blocks me and points to my failure in advance.

*Does this part try to help you to keep this situation under control?*

Yes.

*Would you like to thank this part for trying to help you?*

*If so, do it. If not, observe your resistance to doing this.*

I cannot thank this part. It stinks!

*What are your feelings towards this part of yourself?*

It protects me from failure, but I am angry because it doesn't allow me to experiment.

*How does this subpersonality limit you? Look at its limiting behavior. How does it see the world?*

It lets me become rigid and uptight, so I don't have to risk anything, risk making mistakes.

*What do you think it truly needs from you?*

The permission to rest, to not have to work so hard.

*Are you willing to give it what it needs?*

Yes.

*How could you do that?*

Again and again give it permission, and thank it for trying so hard for me.

*What special qualities or gift has this subpersonality to offer you?*

Relaxation and release.

Linda recognizes her fears and her subsequent anger at her inability to express herself. She feels and sees how this situation makes her body rigid. She stores her feelings of powerlessness, impatience, anger, and sadness in her lower abdomen. When identifying with the situation, she feels overwhelmed. The conscious step of disidentification ("breathe deeply and step back"), by using the observer, allows her to become aware of this insecure part and its expectations. At this point its actions can be recognized, but its motivation remains hidden. Linda is not yet ready to accept this subpersonality. She remains identified with the anger. However, she does perceive the future possibility of growth which this part has to offer. Her next steps could be deeper recognition and acceptance of her anger. Her current identification with her anger prevents her from approaching the subpersonality further.

### **Example 3: Elizabeth**

*Perhaps you can recall a situation which happened to you in the past two days and which kept you preoccupied. Imagine now that you can see yourself in this situation once again. Maybe you felt irritated, afraid, or angry and acted accordingly.*

My car doesn't work. Helpless, I feel helpless, weak. I miss people around me.

*Just allow the whole scene to pass again before your inner eye and place yourself back in that situation.*

*What are you thinking?*

I am sitting in the car, but it doesn't start. I'm expected somewhere, and I'm late. Shit! Everything gets confused! I just can't get this day organized! I feel like a victim, unable to control the situation.

*What are you feeling in your body?*

My hands are shaking, I feel naked. I have no protective skin layer. I feel physically exposed, very uncomfortable in my whole body.

*What emotions are you aware of?*

Anger.

*Where in your body do you feel this?*

In the shaking part.

*How does the world look from here?*

Terrible, frightening. It would be best if everything and everybody just stayed away from me.

*How would you like to act?*

I would like to hide, withdraw, and let my skin grow.

*Now breathe deeply in and out, step back and analyze that experience:*

*What can you observe?*

I see that I acted with common sense. I went to the telephone and called the Triple A using a normal voice. Afterwards, I cursed.

*What part of yourself expresses itself there?*

The reasonable one, the clear one, the one who can deal with each situation.

*What is this part trying to do for you?*

To make the car work as quickly as possible, so I can maintain my schedule in order to function properly.

*Does this part try to help you to keep this situation under control?*

Yes.

*Would you like to thank this part for trying to help you?*

*If so, do it. If not, observe your resistance to doing this.*

I am thanking this part.

*What are your feelings towards this part of yourself?*

I am happy that this part helps me and can organize things so well.

*How does this subpersonality limit you? Look at its limiting behavior. How does it see the world?*

I should include more creativity. Always organizing and controlling has no playful elements. Organization, however, makes a lot possible in this world. The world is strangely organized.

*What do you think it truly needs from you?*

That I involve it in the action once in a while and use it.

*Are you willing to give it what it needs?*

Yes.

*How could you do that?*

I think this is already happening in my daily life.

*What special qualities or gift has this subpersonality to offer you?*

Simplicity, unity, more intensity, free space and time to do new things.

*How could you bring these qualities into your daily life?*

By allowing this subpersonality to act at the appropriate moment.

Elizabeth allows herself to feel her anger. This leads her to perceive both her vulnerability and her strong physical reactions. By breathing deeply she is able to disidentify from these and observe that the vulnerable part calls the part with common sense onto the scene. She can fully accept this part. It protects the vulnerable one and organizes well. In a continued therapy it would be important for Elizabeth to approach the subpersonality which appeared first, the vulnerable one, the one without skin. That part needs her attention and loving care to eventually be able to "let its skin grow" and to feel safer.

## Tracing Subpersonalities

How do you trace a subpersonality? How do you recognize one? Moods, changes in physical sensations, body posture, change in breathing rhythm, tension, change in voice, appearance of certain thoughts, change in how we communicate with others, energy level fluctuation, and body language are all useful signs to trace a subpersonality. For example, perhaps you would like to observe more closely the subpersonality which you discovered in the previous exercise:

*Maybe you would like to stand up and act out or play out this subpersonality.*

*Where in your daily life do you recognize this subpersonality?*

*How often?*

*What circumstances provoke the appearance of this subpersonality?*

*Does this subpersonality help you and support what you are doing in this situation?*

*How does it help you?*

*Does the subpersonality hinder you?*

*What happens in your body?*

*What happens in your emotions?*

*What happens in your thoughts?*

*You may want to write down these things in order to more clearly recognize your subpersonality.*

The purpose of the previous exercise is to trace a subpersonality in daily life. Often, certain situations and circumstances call upon the same role of the subpersonality. Here we try to become aware of how frequently the subpersonality appears as well as the circumstances which elicit it. We examine the function of the subpersonality in a specific situation and check if it supports or hinders what we are doing. Remember, the appearance of the subpersonality is always related to corresponding physical sensations, emotions, feelings, and thought structures.

## Getting Acquainted with Our Inner Actors

The purpose of the following exercise is to approach subpersonalities through spontaneous images. The ability to visualize helps to intensify the content of the psyche and to render it visible.

How can we get to know our various subpersonalities? In order to work with them, one of the most important techniques is visualization, that is, allowing inner pictures and images to appear. Representing a wealth of personality aspects, these inner images can help us to become conscious of our various parts. We become aware of their needs, their desires, their special qualities, and behavioral patterns. Further, these inner images demonstrate our everyday behavioral pattern qualities, wishes, and needs. The following exercises facilitate our recognition and acceptance of our psychodynamic structures.

*Perhaps you would like to have a paper and pencil next to you and find a comfortable place to relax. You may want to close your eyes and take a deep breath in and out, and then gently begin to turn your focus inward.*

*Maybe you can imagine that you are the director of a play: You are in a theater, the curtain is closed, and you are sitting in a seat in front of the stage. Behind the curtain on stage are the participating actors in your play. They are pressing to present themselves to you.*

*The curtain opens and the first actor/actress appears. Look at him or her. What are your reactions? Perhaps you would like to ask a few questions.*

*Ask: "Why are you here?" (Let him or her answer.)*

*Then ask: "What do you want from me?" (Let him or her answer.)*

*Ask: "What do you need from me?" (Listen to what he or she has to say.)*

*And the last question: "What do you have to offer?" (Listen to him or her).*

*Now thank this subpersonality and close the curtain.*

*Feel your body and move your hands and feet before opening your eyes. Maybe you would like to make a few notes?*

This exercise can be repeated to get to know the many different actors in our inner play of life. Please reflect upon the following questions:

*As a director what are my expectations from my actors?*

*As a director, how would I like my actors to behave to allow for a good piece of theater to happen?*

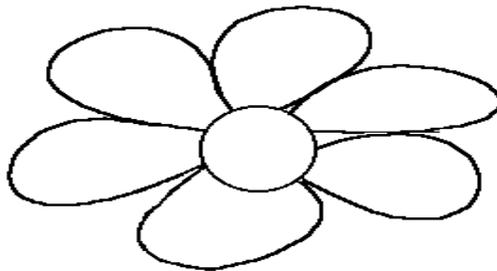
*Are some of the actors too radical, perhaps, too noble or too power hungry?*

*How can I sponsor and support their potential while simultaneously as a director allowing my own creativity to flow?*

On our inner stage, our inner actors and their roles can become known both to the director and to the observer. By asking key questions such as those suggested above, the observer becomes acquainted with the purpose and the goals, the desires and needs and hidden qualities of the various subpersonalities.

## The Center and Our Parts

How do subpersonalities get along with each other? The purpose of the following exercises is to strengthen the observer and to recognize why and how we act the way we do. The activities of our various subpersonalities and their interaction with each other often cause inner conflicts, depression, fear, indecisiveness. These interactions can be very complex, and naturally they need time to be recognized and transformed. Most important in this exercise is becoming aware of our "center," identifying with the observer, and getting acquainted with the subpersonalities. This is followed by recognizing the relationship and behavior of the subpersonalities with one another.



*Perhaps you would like to take some colored pencils and paper and draw a small circle surrounded by six leaves, like a flower.*

*You may want to reflect on which subpersonalities you became aware of during the day, or maybe you would like to use the ones which you got to know on the inner stage in the previous exercise.*

*Please give each leaf of the flower the name of a subpersonality or paint one subpersonality in each leaf. Now you might want to stand up, close your eyes and imagine this flower on the floor. Take a slow, deep breath, and as the observer step into the flower's center.*

*With your eyes closed imagine your subpersonalities around you.*

*Turn slowly and observe.*

*Maybe you can imagine that they are talking to each other.*

*What are they saying?*

*What subpersonality plays a major role?*

*Which ones support each other?*

*Which ones fight with each other?*

*Which ones are stronger?*

*Which ones are weaker?*

*Perhaps you would like to write down the most important aspects of what you have observed.*

*Can you recognize patterns which occur in your daily life?*

*Now try to talk to the images to negotiate a peace.*

*Can you help them to understand each other better?*

*Could they have a better relationship with each other?*

*What do they need from you?*

*What do you need from them?*

*You may want to keep this drawing for a while and look at it. After a few weeks, repeat the exercise from the beginning. Draw a new flower, and then compare the results with the previous one.*

This exercise allows you to acquaint yourself with your center. The subpersonalities are placed around this central core. The function of the observer is to recognize the individual structures and their interrelationships. Role playing and recurring patterns observable in daily life thus become visible. As negotiator, the observer can serve to resolve their conflicts and so help to create better interrelationships among the various parts.

### **Example 1: Elizabeth**

Elizabeth is 37 years old, single, and works as a nurses' trainer in a small hospital in the countryside. She is keenly aware of the inner conflicts preventing her from enjoying a different quality of life as well as a relationship.

*Name your six subpersonalities.*

The Critic, the Wit, the Happy One, the Understanding One, the Pusher, and the Vigilant One.



*Imagine your flower on the floor. Step into its center and look around you. Observe which subpersonalities need more space than others.*

The differences are not very big, but the Wit takes up a little more space than the others.

*Which ones are stronger?*

The strongest ones are the Pusher and the Vigilant One. The Critic, the Wit and the Happy One are about even. The Understanding One is the most undifferentiated.

*Which ones support each other?*

The Wit and the Happy One.

*Which ones fight with each other?*

The Pusher and the Vigilant.

*Now try to talk with your subpersonalities and to mediate among them. How can you help them better understanding each other?*

The Vigilant One and the Pusher decide what is good for me and the Pusher suggests rather than commands it to me. The Wit and the Happy One help the Critic. The Vigilant One and the Pusher should not take themselves so seriously. They should be less rigid, more able to laugh. This understanding allows me to accept all of them.

*How can you create a better relationship with them?*

I have to be very sincere, to learn to accept and to be grateful for everything they did for me. I need to find their protective function and to acknowledge that and ask them lovingly to support me with qualities appropriate to the present situation.

*What do they need from you?*

They would like to be seen, accepted, and loved. They would like to be acknowledged and taken seriously.

*What do you need from them?*

I need their readiness to work together with me. I need their flexibility to change and to be open to each other.

In this exercise Elizabeth tries to assess the strength of her subpersonalities as well as to recognize their differences. To do this she has to observe their interactions. From the center, she mediates and, becoming aware of their limiting behavioral patterns, gives them constructive advice.

In a therapeutic framework it is important to look at the two major opposing groupings: the Critic, the Pusher, and the Vigilant One versus the Wit and the Happy One. Observing these closely can lead to seeing which subpersonality activates another.

### **Example 2: George**

George, a single 39 year old insurance representative, is an excellent talker and very successful in his business. He wanted to learn more about himself after his two last relationships ended, both of his partners leaving him without further explanation.

*Name your six subpersonalities.*

Nobody Loves Me, Fear of Authority, Mr. Bourgeois, the Competent Professional, the Powerhungry One, and the Lustful One, the Dancer.



*Imagine your flower on the floor. Step into its center and look around you. Observe which subpersonalities need more space than others.*

No answer.

*Which ones are stronger?*

No answer.

*Which ones support each other?*

Nobody loves me, Fear of Authority, Mr. Bourgeois, the Professional, and the Powerhungry One.

*Which ones fight with each other?*

The Lustful One and the Professional; Mr. Bourgeois and the Lustful One; Powerhungry and Fear of Authority.

*Now try to talk with your subpersonalities and to mediate among them. How can you help them better understand each other?*

I can make them aware of the polarities. For example, Powerhungry and Fear of Authority versus Lustful and Mr. Bourgeois. I can help to mediate. The Professional would like to receive more creativity from the Lustful One. If he complies, the Lustful One can discover new areas of activity. Mr. Bourgeois needs the o.k. from Powerhungry to ask the Lustful One to help him.

*How can you create a better relationship?*

Through sensitivity and understanding.

*What do they need from you?*

More space and loving acknowledgment.

*What do you need from them?*

Reduced control, harmonious interaction among themselves, not fighting with each other.

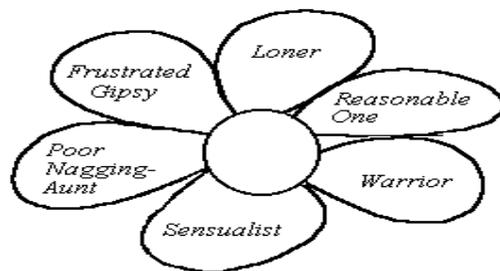
In George's psyche, three groupings of subpersonalities are in conflict with each other: Mr. Bourgeois and Lustful; Powerhungry and Fear of Authority; Lustful and the Professional. In his role as a mediator, George recognizes their polar opposition, as with, for example, Powerhungry and Fear of Authority or Lustful and Mr. Bourgeois. More, he is prepared to acknowledge them and to give them space. This represents the first step towards acceptance. In a therapeutic setting, initially each subpersonality could be worked with independently and in depth. Also, the conflict of Powerhungry and Fear of Authority, once accepted, could create a change in the dynamic interaction of all of the parts.

### **Example 3: Martha**

Martha, a 40 year old psychiatrist, is married, teaches at a university, and has a successful private practice. Her deep wish is to bring more quality into her daily life, both socially as well as with her partner.

Name your six subpersonalities.

The Reasonable One, the Warrior, the Sensualist, the Poor Nagging Aunt, the Frustrated Gypsy, the Loner.



Imagine your flower on the floor. Step into its center and look around you. Observe which subpersonalities need more space than others.

The Reasonable One takes most of the space. She influences and controls all the others.

Which ones are stronger?

The Warrior and the Frustrated Gypsy contain a lot of the energy. So does the Nagger. The clearest images are the Sensualist and the Reasonable One, and also the Loner.

Which ones support each other?

The Warrior and the Sensualist want to go ahead, to force forward. The Nagger and the Frustrated Gypsy support each other indirectly by blocking the whole movement forward, and the Loner blocks too, but he has the same goal as the Reasonable One, to continue to develop.

Which ones fight with each other?

The Reasonable One supports the blocking of the Frustrated Gypsy. It also controls the Warrior and the Sensualist. They are unable to live their potential. The Nagging One can overcome the Reasonable One. She also can overcome the Sensualist and so disperses the power of the Warrior in all directions, so that it becomes totally inefficient.

Now try to talk with your subpersonalities and to mediate among them. How can you help them better understand each other?

Certain very powerful subpersonalities need a little more discipline and guidelines so that their qualities can be properly expressed. The Reasonable One could withdraw a little. The Loner can only open up when the "house is stable," so to say. I need to know the Frustrated Gypsy better.

How can you create a better relationship?

Except for the Nagging One, I believe that I have a relatively accepting attitude towards all of them. I would like especially to introduce the Powerful Warrior, the Sensualist, and the Loner into my daily life. I have seen that the Nagger can be transformed into an actor or active person, and I am looking forward to seeing the positive powers of the Gypsy – for example, music, dance, magic-mystic thoughts, flexibility, and letting go.

What do they need from you?

The Reasonable One needs for me to develop my emotional world. The Loner needs to know that I am able to be in my center more often. And the Frustrated Gypsy needs me to give it permission to exist. The Warrior needs a goal. The Complaining One needs clarity about daily problems, permission to express these qualities without exaggerating too much or causing any damage.

What do you need from them?

The Reasonable One needs to give me a clear picture of the present situation without fear and acquiescence. The Loner needs to place less demands on me; he needs to let me participate more in his light and inner quietude. The Frustrated Gypsy can slowly accept the fact that she is freed and now get to know the other subpersonalities. I would like to have the Warrior on my side and to learn some Aikido or Karate and stop going through walls with my head. The complaining part should focus its

energy and use it properly. The Sensualist can help me to take things a little easier, to appreciate when I am in privileged situations and to see the beauty in nature and in other human beings.

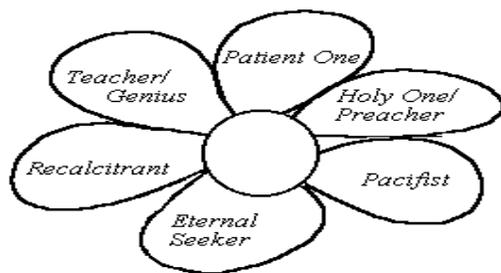
Martha here has become aware of the power held in her psychodynamic structures and now recognizes her fear of the energy contained in this power. Her reasonable part controls the energy of both the Gypsy and the Warrior. It would be helpful for Martha to learn to accept her fear. In following through sessions, Martha's powerful energies contained in the subpersonalities could be allowed to flow as a part of her natural life energy.

#### Example 4: Joe

Joe, a computer specialist, is 39 years old and has a reasonably well functioning marriage but feels a deep discontent with his job and workplace. He is searching for ways and means to find the strength to change his job and to find a vocation through which he can express more of himself.

*Name your six subpersonalities.*

The Patient One, the Holy One/Preacher, the Pacifist, the Eternal Seeker, the Recalcitrant, and the Teacher/Genius.



*Imagine your flower on the floor. Step into its center and look around you. Observe which subpersonalities need more space than others.*

The Holy Preacher, the Teacher/Genius and the Pacifist seem much bigger. The Eternal Seeker is not very clearly visible.

*Which ones are stronger?*

The Patient One, the Recalcitrant and the Pacifist have very strong structures.

*Which ones support each other?*

The Holy Preacher and the Teacher/Genius work intensively together, but the Patient One and the Pacifist also have a good working relationship. The Recalcitrant and the Eternal Seeker conflict with each other. But the Pacifist doesn't allow these conflicts and tensions to become visible.

*Which ones fight with each other?*

None of the subpersonalities fight each other.

*Now try to talk with your subpersonalities and to mediate among them. How could you help them better understand each other?*

When I worked with the "Self" and the subpersonalities, the "Self" offered the subpersonalities its help and its aid. The "Self" granted acceptance to the Patient One. The observer advised the Patient One that the quality of having time and being patient has two sides to it: one is to have time and the other one is that time flows and, therefore, will be gone forever. Having this insight, the Patient One can now begin to have the courage to work with the Eternal Seeker. Both can complement the other well. Also, in the act of living out conflicts the observer makes the Pacifist aware that a different type of harmony may arise. Facing conflicts in a loving way means gaining more insights. This will assist all subpersonalities to grow, especially the Eternal Seeker. The Recalcitrant One is taken into the arms of the observer, and the observer gives him the right to live and to be. This

particular constellation allows plenty of room for growth and recognition. It is beautiful that this part can be allowed to be. Similarly, the observer tells the Preacher that his love and caring is always welcome. He should simply focus more on their qualities and less on preaching. The Preacher's fear of not having enough love is calmed by the observer's promise that it will give him the love he needs. The observer thanks the Teacher/Genius for the protection given in childhood, protection from being the underdog. The observer acknowledges that his intelligence and ability to adapt are very useful, but points out that his own intellect has not yet allowed him to recognize his own potential for growth.

*How can you create a better relationship?*

By increasing mutual acceptance and loving attention, I can initiate constructive respectful dialogue. This will change both their interrelationships and my relationship with them as well.

*What do they need from you?*

They need me to guide them, to recognize them and support them in becoming aware of the present and future roles they can play in my life. They welcome my help in helping themselves and my loving support and acceptance.

*What do you need from them?*

I need their openness. Their readiness to develop and their actual development and mutual acceptance is my chance to unfold my inner potential.

Here Joe discovers the inability of his subpersonalities to allow or to face a conflict. They support each other to avoid conflicts, and so they have created a false harmony. Joe mediates among his subpersonalities and is able to begin to change their relationships. He is aware that he needs to take responsibility and has to guide the development of his qualities and the growth of his parts in the future.

**Fifth example: Anne**

Anne, a 32 year old economist, is the mother of a young daughter. She wants to go back to work as soon as possible in order to experience herself once again as a professional.

*Name your six subpersonalities.*

The Child, the Wounded Healer, the Controlling One, the Authoritarian One, the Questioning One, the Freedom Fighter.



*Imagine your flower on the floor. Step into its center and look around you. Observe which subpersonalities need more space than others.*

The Child needs a lot of space, as do the Wounded Healer and the Questioning One.

*Which ones are stronger?*

The Controlling One is very strong; she is becoming increasingly aware of her manipulating aspects. The Wounded Healer, the Questioning One, and the Authoritarian One are also becoming more aware of their roles, and they, too, are quite strong. The Child and the Freedom Fighter are less structured.

*Which ones support each other?*

The Freedom Fighter, the Wounded Healer, and the Child.

*Which ones fight with each other?*

The Controlling One and the Freedom Fighter fight each other. The Questioning One and the Authoritarian One are in conflict as are the Child and the Authoritarian One.

*Now try to talk with your subpersonalities and to mediate among them. How can you help them better understand each other?*

I can see myself as a mediator between the subpersonalities. I try to explain that they need each other to develop each one's own potential, and that it would be in their own best interest to work closely together since they can support each other very well.

*How can you create a better relationship?*

I am starting to learn to accept them fully and let them know that I do so. By turning towards them and getting involved in a dialogue, I can get to know and understand them more and more.

*What do they need from you?*

They need me to know them much better and make them my friends. They also need me to develop my understanding of them, so they can become helpful tools with whom I communicate and show my gratitude.

*What do you need from them?*

I need their support so that they can help me to resolve my daily tasks in a very concrete way. Each task resolved will lead me further in my inner growth.

Anne becomes aware here of the inner conflict between the Controlling One and the Freedom Fighter as well as of the battle between the Child and the Authoritarian One. She recognizes the importance of acceptance to stimulate the learning process of the individual parts. A better and deeper understanding of her

subpersonalities will allow more of her hidden positive qualities to emerge in the future and to become useful tools in her everyday life.

## The Temple of Silence

As we all know too well, it is not easy to find inner and outer silence today. In the following exercise, however, subpersonality work is connected with a silence which can be experienced in order to access the "Wise Inner Being."

This exercise allows us to contact the quality of silence and to contemplate it. As we do so, subpersonalities are put in touch with the "Wise Being," an energy of the "Superconscious" (Assagioli, 1988). Very often, without using any other additional methods of transformation, the energy of the superconscious alone can affect old psychodynamic structures!

*Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Perhaps you would like to put some paper and pencils next to you to take some notes. Seat yourself comfortably and close your eyes. Then take a deep breath and allow yourself begin to relax.*

*Imagine that you are in a beautiful meadow in a lush forest at the foot of a mountain. It is a lovely sunny day. You can feel the warmth of the sunshine on your skin. A path leads to the top of the mountain. When you look towards the top you can see a temple.*

*You may want to go up the mountain; the path is not very steep. As you go higher, the air becomes progressively clearer and lighter.*

*When you arrive at the top, take a moment to allow yourself to become aware of the silence and the quietude present. Each cell of your body can feel this silence. As you slowly approach the entrance to the temple, the silence becomes stronger. Your feelings, emotions, and thoughts seem to automatically quiet down.*

*Perhaps you would like to enter the temple. Sunlight pours through an opening in the roof at the center. This sunlight too evokes a pronounced feeling of deep silence. Take as much time as you like.*

*If you look up to where the sunlight is streaming, you can see a small staircase leading to the entrance to a roof terrace. You may want to go up onto the terrace and into the sunlight. If you wish, turn towards the sun. Allow yourself to feel the warmth and energy it provides. Take as much time as you want.*

*Perhaps you would like to call one of your most important subpersonalities and ask it to come up the staircase and join you on the terrace. Invite it to enjoy the sunlight next to you. Simply observe what happens when both of you stand in the warmth of the light.*

*The face of a "Wise Being" may appear in the sun looking lovingly at you. You can feel this love emanating towards you. Perhaps it has something to tell you. Or maybe you would like to ask it some questions.*

*You can initiate a dialogue with this "Wise Being." Ask it what your next step is concerning the development of your subpersonality. Maybe you would like to ask the "Wise Being" to assist you.*

*When you sense that the conversation is completed, ask the "Wise Being" to envelope you and your subpersonality with light and love and warmth.*

*Be aware of any changes between you and your subpersonality.*

*You might want to thank the "Wise Being" and say good bye to it. Slowly move back down the staircase and walk back down the mountain path.*

*Feel your body, moving your hands and feet before you open your eyes.  
You may wish to take a few notes of what happened up on the mountain and to ask yourself how the experience of the silence, the sun, and the "Wise Being" influenced your relationship to your subpersonality.*

*Did anything change in the sunlight?*

*If something changed, how can you apply it in your daily life?*

The previous exercise helps to evoke and stimulate deep relaxation through visualization of a natural environment with peaceful surroundings and sunshine. Climbing to the temple on top of the mountain allows us to get in touch with the dimension of the superconscious. The quality of silence is of particular significance. A second climb up the staircase onto the roof of the temple and into the sunlight, experienced bodily via imagination, facilitates contact with the "Wise Inner Being." This source of information, guidance, and inner wisdom is always available. Simply creating the time to expose a subpersonality to the influence and energies of the superconscious is often sufficient for deep transformation.

## HOW TO RELATE TO SUBPERSONALITIES

### Questions and Answers

In Psychosynthesis the subpersonalities can be worked with through inner dialogue. One of the techniques used is to imagine a subpersonality and to initiate dialogue. This is a customary technique in Psychosynthesis therapy, said to originate with Roberto Assagioli.

The following questions were developed to lead to better knowledge of the subpersonality.

1. *What is your purpose?*
2. *Why are you here?*
3. *What do you want from me?*
4. *What do you need from me?*
5. *What do you have to offer me?*
6. *What are you protecting me from?*

The first question "*What is your purpose?*" allows the subpersonality to inform us about the purpose of its existence and to see if that purpose is in harmony with the direction in life we would like to take consciously. Is the subpersonality's purpose helpful to us in realizing our potential, or is its purpose opposed to our conscious goals, interests, and ideals?

The question "*Why are you here?*" informs us about the actual activity of the subpersonality. The answer to this question affords access to valuable information about its actions. Are these actions supportive of the conscious personality, or do they obstruct it from fully expressing itself?

The next question "*What do you want from me?*" offers us insights into the hopes and wishes of the subpersonality. As observers we become aware of the demands of the subpersonality and their expression (sometimes against the will of the personality) in daily life.

*"What do you need from me?"* reveals the underlying actual needs of the subpersonality. The answer allows us to become aware of the secret longings buried within the subpersonality and whether or not the personality can fulfill these.

*"What do you have to offer me?"* shows us the hidden qualities of the subpersonality. These qualities are present and can be made accessible to the personality. Simultaneously, they make us aware both of the possibilities of transformation within the subpersonality and its potential effect on the personality.

*"What are you protecting me from?"* gives us insight into the motivation of the subpersonality. Although its original motivation is to protect us, the ways and means it chooses to do so, unfortunately, often leave much to be desired. The subpersonality often produces a reaction opposite to its original intent. Recognizing its original protective function, though, is extremely helpful, especially in attempting to deal with a difficult and uncomfortable subpersonality with genuine understanding and compassion. Acceptance of seemingly unacceptable qualities can result from this and can lead to increased understanding of very difficult and negative parts of our personality. Such understanding and direct confrontation is the most direct and loving way to soften and to transform rigid structures.

## Dialoguing with Subpersonalities

In the following examples the questions detailed above are applied to actual subpersonality work. The participant visualizes one subpersonality. Through inner dialoguing the standard six questions are addressed to the subpersonality, and it replies. (Sometimes it takes a while before a subpersonality gives a reply, so if you choose to work in this way be sure to allow ample time for responses.) This inner dialoguing gives precise and detailed information about the subpersonality structure, its purpose, needs, wants, hidden qualities, and protective functions. It offers a very direct way to get to know one's inner parts.

### **Example 1: George**

George, a cook by profession, is a gentle, softspoken young man of 27 years. He has quite a lot of hobbies, such as rowing, skiing, and computers. Based on the previous exercise, "The Center and Our Parts," George chose one subpersonality out of the six to relate more deeply to by asking detailed questions.

*Choose a subpersonality.*

The Dancer, the Happy One.

*What is your purpose?*

To experience joy of life, creativity, the ability to enjoy life.

*Why are you here?*

I act in opposition to Mr. Everyone.

*What do you want from me?*

I need more space, less work, and more enjoyment.

*What do you need from me?*

Attention, caring, time, and space in your everyday life, as well as at work.

*What do you have to offer?*

I offer you joy of life, movement, creativity, and the know-how to live playfully.

*What are you protecting me from?*

I protect you from becoming stiff and rigid and depressed.

In this exercise the Dancer, a lighthearted subpersonality, shows itself to George. It wants to express fun and dancing in order to balance the subpersonality of Mr. Everyone (George's conforming part). The Dancer asks for more time and space, less work, and the opportunity to enjoy life. Its true needs are attention, acknowledgment, and caring. To nurture this quality, George could learn how to dance, for example, or he could let the dancer dance daily in his imagination. Once these needs are met, its joy of life, movement, and creativity could become more accessible and could be integrated more readily into George's daily life.

**Example 2: Susan**

Susan is a very emotional young woman of 23, with a very domineering mother. When beginning her therapy, she asked to work on her relationship with her mother. During our work together she focused on the subpersonality of the Cautious One, feeling she needed to get to know that part of herself better.

*Choose a subpersonality*

The Cautious One.

*What is your purpose?*

To see that you don't take on too much.

*Why are you here?*

To protect you from a breakdown.

*What do you want from me?*

To be listened to.

*What do you need from me?*

Your acceptance, to be taken seriously.

*What do you have to offer?*

A peaceful, more balanced, simple life. A forward progression that's straight ahead, without treacherous highs and lows.

*What are you protecting me from?*

I protect you from losing your physical health.

Susan then interjected at this point, saying, "The subpersonality disturbs and frustrates me quite a bit. I can not give it the acceptance it needs. I do see, however, that it really means well, so I can thank it and make it aware that it protects me too much. We agree that we will find a way to work together."

In working with this exercise Susan discovers a part of herself which she aptly names the Cautious One. This subpersonality protects her from taking on too much. Its main interest is to prevent Susan from having a breakdown. The Cautious One needs to be heard as well as taken seriously and wants to be accepted. Her gift or hidden quality which she can add to Susan's life is a peaceful rhythm without too many highs and lows. Susan has indicated that she can accept this subpersonality and is willing to begin to work with.

**Example 3: Betty**

Betty, a 55 year old high school teacher, has gone into early retirement after thirty years of teaching. She is a very shy, slim woman, afraid of taking up too much space. This subpersonality work took place after replaying an incident which occurred at her doctor's office.

*Choose a subpersonality.*

Being in the Wrong Place.

*What is your purpose?*

(A very long pause, unbroken by any response whatsoever.)

*Why are you here?*

(Another extended silence.)

*What do you want from me?*

(More silence.)

*What do you need from me?*

Loving attention.

*What do you have to offer?*

The feeling of being very special.

*What are you protecting me from?*

I protect you from being too much in demand.

Betty then interrupted at this point saying, "I guess that 'Being in the Wrong Place' needs loving acceptance and attention from me. It wants to be held and taken into my arms. In my mind I am doing this now. The tension between us is dissolving – I can experience it physically. She is looking at me for the first time, and I am able to hold her lovingly. It feels wonderful."

Although Betty tries to get to know "Being in the Wrong Place," the subpersonality at this point is not very willing to share information about itself. It is able, however, to let Betty know of its needs for acceptance and caring. In the visualization, Betty finally embraces it, though, and experiences a bona fide physical release of tension in her body as a direct result.

#### **Example 4: Vivian**

Vivian, a slightly overweight young woman of 35, works as a counselor in a city agency with abused teenagers. An abused child herself, she has been working on her own healing for a long time. After observing herself in a office situation, she got in touch with the subpersonality of the Disorderly One.

*Choose a subpersonality*

The Disorderly One. She looks like a confused teenager sitting in an untidy room full of smoke.

*What is your purpose?*

To bring life into this room, to throw a few things around and prevent it from becoming too fixed and rigid.

*Why are you here?*

To shake you awake, to confuse you so you start thinking anew. I protest against everything fixed and rigid, especially the tightness in you and around you.

*What do you want from me?*

I want you to stay with me in this chaos, accept it, and find it o.k.

*What do you need from me?*

I need someone who walks alongside me and helps me to understand this chaos. There are so many questions in me which need to be answered. I want you to understand and acknowledge that I have something valuable to offer.

*What do you have to offer?*

I can help you to find life's natural order and to be much more relaxed.

*What are you protecting me from?*

From the tightness, rigidity, and fixation you tend toward instead of relaxing and letting go as you should.

In this session, the untidy teenager, chaotic and disorderly, appears. It sees its life purpose as the prevention of fixation and rigidity in Vivian's responses. It wants to wake Vivian up and shake her, to help her to reflect and, simultaneously, to remain "together" (i.e., integrated) in chaos. Its true needs, however, appear quite different. This subpersonality in fact longs to understand the chaos and needs acknowledgment for her gifts. Once these needs are satisfied, her hidden qualities could emerge more fully, and could bring Vivian a flexibility and fluidity she hasn't as yet truly experienced.

**Example 5: Charles**

Charles, a 52 year old father of four, works as an executive of a manufacturing company. He entered therapy with the goal of increasing his communication skills. During a session in which he reviewed a board meeting, he got in touch with a subpersonality which he dubbed the Super-Clever One.

*Choose a subpersonality.*

The Super-Clever One.

*What is your purpose?*

I cannot let you know my purpose. But physically I immediately feel a distinct tightness in my neck when I breathe. And my larynx feels as if it is closing down. The subpersonality feels kind of ashamed.

*Why are you here?*

(No answer.)

*What do you want from me?*

With this question, my larynx and neck tighten again. The subpersonality answers, "I am looking for structure and support."

*What do you need from me?*

I need acknowledgment, recognition, space. (Charles interjected, "Simultaneously, I experienced a strong physical feeling of expansion and space as the Super-Clever One said that.")

*What do you have to offer?*  
 Knowledge and experience.

*What are you protecting me from?*  
 I help you not to feel like the underdog.

In this exercise Charles begins to open a dialogue with his Super-Clever subpersonality. When focusing on this part he experiences physical symptoms such as a lack of breath and tightness. The subpersonality believes that it wants structure and support; however, what it really needs is acknowledgment, recognition, and room to expand. Knowledge and experience are its hidden qualities which, once acknowledged, could be a tremendous asset at the disposal of Charles' conscious personality.

## Recognizing Distorted Qualities

Subpersonalities, with all their positive and negative aspects, carry within them hidden qualities which can be made available to the personality. How these qualities can be recognized and discovered will be shown in the next exercise. It is sometimes very difficult to discover a hidden positive quality in a negative subpersonality. It is important to note, though, that the opposite of the negative aspect embodied by the subpersonality is not its hidden quality. Rather, the hidden quality is to be found between both extremes. It is not the opposite of its manifested qualities, but rather an inherent gift which the subpersonality has to offer.

To express the new quality, to experience it and to reinforce it, opens new horizons and new possibilities both for changing the behavior of the subpersonality and for transforming future behavioral patterns through its acceptance. These transformations can profoundly affect our private, familial, and professional lives.

In the following exercise, the focus is on a subpersonality and its distorted qualities. Its purpose is to discover inherent hidden qualities.

*Perhaps you would like to have a pen and paper handy. Take a deep breath and begin to relax, closing your eyes and turning your inner focus towards your subpersonality.*

*What would you like to name it?*

*When and where do you meet this subpersonality in your daily life?*

*Become aware of your physical sensations and feelings.*

*What does this subpersonality protect you from?*

*What are its distorted qualities?*

*What are its opposite qualities?*

*What are its hidden qualities?*

*How would it be if you could actually manifest these qualities?*

*How would your life change if you could fully express or live out these hidden qualities?*

*How would it change your relationship, your partnership, your family, and/or your environment?*

*Allow yourself to feel this possibility in your body and see yourself living this quality.*

Once consciously recognized in daily life, the subpersonality is first given a name in this exercise. Then we try to unearth its distorted and hidden qualities. The hidden qualities are reinforced and experienced as already existent in the body. This experience is intensified through imagining how this would affect and change one's life, relationships, and environment.

Once these inherent hidden qualities are awakened in a subpersonality, they can be supported and activated in daily life. These new qualities can also be reinforced by being contemplated in meditation. This type of subpersonality work highlights the distorted, opposing, and the hidden qualities. Five examples follow to show how vastly different these qualities can be.

**Example 1: Lynn**

*Name the subpersonality.*

The Powerless.

*When and where do you meet this subpersonality in your daily life?*

It comes into play when I get the feeling that something I have done or that I am talking about is being put down or destroyed by others.

*Become aware of your physical sensations and feelings.*

My thoughts and my head turn, my fists are weak and rubber-like. I feel powerless and speechless.

*What does this subpersonality protect you from?*

(No answer.)

*What are its distorted, opposite, and hidden qualities?*

<b>Distorted qualities</b>	<b>Opposite qualities</b>	<b>Hidden qualities</b>
I have no right to my own opinion.	Others have no right to have their opinions.	I have an opinion, you have an opinion, and both are opinions.
I am worthless.	I am invaluable.	I am I.
I would like to shake my opponent so that he/she/it becomes aware of me.	I am shaking my opponent so that he/she/it becomes aware of me.	I am becoming self-aware.
I lack confidence	I am overly confident.	I can allow myself some confidence.
My head is full of thoughts which cannot be articulated.	All my thoughts obsess on the other person.	All my thoughts are available, and I can articulate them.
I have rubber fists.	My fists are made of iron.	I have fists and I may, if necessary, use them.
I am powerless.	I am omnipotent.	I can give orders and I can execute orders.
I am speechless.	I am totally articulate at all times.	I can use language when I need to.
I have no chance against "the big ones."	I am stronger than "the big ones"!	You may be bigger and stronger than I, but I do have my own value.

*How would your life change if you could fully express or live out these hidden qualities?*

I would feel like I was resting within myself, accepted. I would feel I was acting from my middle, my center, and therefore would not be vulnerable.

*How would it change your relationship, your partnership, your family, and/or your environment?*

I need to be valued as a human being. I know out of my own personal experience that if something truly has been transformed within me, it has a definite effect externally. I just realized that when I have to talk to my father or husband I play this same role! Maybe it has to do with fear of authority.

### **Example 2: Bob**

*Name the subpersonality.*

The Leader.

*When and where do you meet this subpersonality in your daily life?*

It comes into action in situations where I am not in control. This could be in a group setting where I am "only" a participant and not the leader. Or when I see resistance, when someone else has a different opinion or wants to have things a different way. It is a feeling of powerlessness, of not being loved.

*Become aware of your physical sensations and feelings.*

I feel a lot of tension and cramps in my stomach. I am hot and perspiring, and I have a strong heart beat.

*What does this subpersonality protect you from?*

It protects me from making mistakes, from being a failure, and from facing unknown situations unprepared.

*What are its distorted, opposite, and hidden qualities?*

<b>Distorted qualities</b>	<b>Opposite qualities</b>	<b>Hidden qualities</b>
Clear images and clear ideas.	Vague ideas and images.	A common path.
Aggression.	Passivity.	Assertive activity.
Stubbornness.	Indecisiveness.	Being open and yet present, a clear perspective.
Impose my will.	Subordinate my will.	Integrate both.

*How would your life change if you could fully express or live out these hidden qualities?*

(No answer.)

*How would it change your relationship, your partnership, your family, and/or your environment?*

(No answer.)

**Example 3: Allan**

*Name the subpersonality.*

Fear of Authority.

*When and where do you meet this subpersonality in your daily life?*

In business, in classrooms, when encountering police and people who emanate a natural authority, in a one-sided dependency situation, for example, with my boss or with certain business people. Also, when specific behavior is expected (my own expectancy), for example, towards the waiter in the very elegant restaurant or towards the facilitator when I am a participant in groups. When I encounter people who seem secure and competent it is present as well.

*Become aware of your physical sensations and feelings.*

It hinders and blocks me. I am afraid that it separates me from my own creativity.

*What does this subpersonality protect you from?*

Originally, this subpersonality "bought" me love and recognition.

*What are its distorted, opposite, and hidden qualities?*

<b>Distorted qualities</b>	<b>Opposite qualities</b>	<b>Hidden qualities</b>
Conformity	Idiosyncrasy.	Individuality.
Ignorance.	Omniscience.	I have my own critical opinions.
Formality.	Formlessness.	My own form.
Loyalty.	Disloyalty.	Self-Assertion.
Stiff.	Limp.	Agile.
Yes-sayer.	No-sayer.	Own opinion.

*How would your life change if you could fully express or live out these hidden qualities?*

Just thinking about that makes my body react with tightness, my breath becomes tight, and my buttock constricts.

*How would it change your relationship, your partnership, your family, and/or your environment?*

(No answer.)

**Example 4: Penny**

*Name the subpersonality.*

People-Pleaser and Superwoman.

*When and where do you meet this subpersonality in your daily life?*

She appears often in my private life, when I am with strangers, or when I am supposed to participate in a conversation. She also appears with people I am not very familiar with or when a lot of people are present and I am to be the center of attention, say the hostess of some event. She helps me to present myself. I would say that this part helps me to communicate my presence to others. She makes other people aware that I exist and gets me admiration and recognition. But she often prevents

me from being myself with others, especially with those who could accept me for who and what I truly am. She stands in the way of my relating deeply and closely. She uses lots of my energy, attention, and emotional intensity.

*Become aware of your physical sensations and feelings.*

She prevents me from being myself and blocks me.

I feel fear; she separates me from my own creativity.

*What does this subpersonality protect you from?*

She protects me from making myself ridiculous, from making mistakes, and from my own inabilities.

*What are its distorted, opposite, and hidden qualities?*

<b>Distorted qualities</b>	<b>Opposite qualities</b>	<b>Hidden qualities</b>
Overly communicative.	Totally uncommunicative.	Open.
Noble.	Base.	Alive.
Knowing, intelligent.	Naive, stupid.	Becoming aware, alert.
Arrogant.	Submissive.	To be myself, to be human.

*How would your life change if you could fully express or live out these hidden qualities?*

I would no longer need this subpersonality. My relationships with people and friends would be much closer to my gut. I would no longer be this idealized woman on a pedestal, untouchable. People would approach me with ease, connect with me and hug me. It means that I would get what I am looking for – love, warmth, and so forth. The feeling in my body is a connection between my belly and my heart. As it is right now, this subpersonality provokes exactly the opposite of what I really need.

*How would it change your relationship, your partnership, your family and/or your environment?*

(No answer.)

### **Example 5: Eva**

*Name the subpersonality:*

The Whiner.

*When and where do you meet this subpersonality in your daily life?*

The Whiner is present in the office, especially when everyone expects me to finish their job first, or when the necessary environment or right tools for work are missing. I complain, and I whine. Sometimes this subpersonality appears with my boyfriend, when he expects me to act as an emancipated partner which involves working in the garden and being a craftsman. It happens especially when I am "supposed" to do something. People in authority always expect something of me or I expect something of them. The subpersonality serves me well in that I remain passive and push responsibility away from myself. She hinders me too, though, since she prevents me from thinking properly and clearly about the work I am faced with, whether to refuse or accept it.

*Become aware of your physical sensations and feelings.*

I lose my energy. It moves from my body to my neck, into this whining and complaining. Often I feel that I am outside of myself.

*What does this subpersonality protect you from?*

It protects me from the pressure and demands others try to exert on me.

*What are its distorted, opposite, and hidden qualities?*

<b>Distorted qualities</b>	<b>Opposite qualities</b>	<b>Hidden qualities</b>
Complaining, whining.	False cheer.	Honest Communication.
Defense.	Vulnerability.	Being open
Powerlessness.	Omnipotence.	Ability to act.
Rebellion.	Conformity.	Autonomy.
Demanding.	Desireless.	Express wishes assertively.
Shirk responsibility.	Being overly responsible.	To be responsible for myself.
Independent.	Dependent.	Self reliant.
Overtaxed.	Undertaxed.	Balanced.
Refusal.	Acquiescent.	Decisive.

*How would your life change if you could fully express or live out these hidden qualities?*

Right now, my body is tired. I have a straight, stiff neck, my upper pectoral vertebra are stiff and I have rigid posture generally. If I express these hidden qualities, I may be open to the approaches and demands of others. But I would be able to decide case by case what I would like to do and what I can do and be responsible for. I would also be able to communicate my reasons for sometimes refusing additional work and to express my own demands openly. Others would have a better understanding and acceptance of me. I would communicate with them on the same level (mentally) instead of emotionally. If I decide myself what to do, others will not put such great demands on me. The mountain of "I shoulds" will disappear.

*How would it change your relationship, your partnership, your family and your environment?*  
(No answer.)

Note, that of the five examples given above, only one was able to answer the last question about the effects of integrating the hidden qualities on relationships, family, environment and the like. These are highly charged emotional areas. To be aware of both the subpersonality as it currently manifests and its hidden qualities, how it can potentially manifest, will have positive effects on relationships, family, and environment and naturally emerge in response to the question.

## DEEPENING OF SUBPERSONALITY WORK

Psychotherapy often begins with the work on subpersonalities as they are present in everyday life. This work can lead to profound changes in our relationship with ourselves as well as with others as we have seen. Once the faculties of the observer, disidentification, and identification, are awakened, the "Self" can become more consciously available to the individual. The qualities of loving attention and acceptance are also more accessible. At this point, we can consider deepening the subpersonality work in order to rediscover the roots of early psychodynamic structures and to attempt to transform them.

These early structures need to be approached with great care and gentleness. They contain a wide range of feelings, often characterized by deep pain and suffering. An organic process of development is needed to support the transformation of these structures in their own rhythm and time, when they are ready to be transformed. Each individual follows their own inherent rhythm of growth and process of becoming whole. It is the role of the therapist to focus on this rhythm, to follow and support it, not to force it. Once the deep underlying individual rhythm of transformation is recognized, an unwavering trust in the process can be established, one which honors an organic opening of the structure at the right time and in the appropriate rhythm. This allows the personality to access the emotions contained here, to live through them, and ultimately to set them free.

At this point gentle, loving acceptance is of utmost importance. The opening which occurs creates enormous vulnerability. But loving acceptance can embrace, hold, and interweave the pain with an abiding love. This eventually transforms the pain and allows it to develop a new healing dimension. There is an immense difference between returning to old pain in the old way numerous times and turning towards it lovingly and acceptingly: this acceptance, an act of love, is in itself a transformation. (Acceptance may also mean that one cannot as yet turn lovingly towards the pain of the subpersonality.)

This understanding is based on an awareness of the "Self," our inner source which flows through us and stimulates us to constant growth and transformation.

### The "Inner Child"

The "Inner Child" is a psychodynamic structure of the individual psyche which is close to the center of the personality. It contains among other traits the hidden qualities of creativity and joy. Working on and reawakening the "Inner Child" is one of the main challenges in therapy.

Work with the "Inner Child" can be applied in all the phases of childhood development. In the following chapters this work is shown relating to the autistic-symbiotic and the practicing phases of childhood. Emotional and physical abuse and traumata in early childhood need intensive attention, love, and patience to heal. Eventually, this will enable the "Inner Child" to reexperience joy and creativity. Practical application of subpersonality techniques shows that with time traumata can be lovingly accepted and thus become accessible and open to transformation.

## The "Inner Parents"

Creativity repressed by various traumata throughout the different stages of our prenatal and developmental growth can be made available once again. The "Inner Mother" and "Inner Father," that is, the internalized early caretakers, are crystallized psychodynamic structures. They are often the obstacles and, simultaneously, the steps of growth on a path towards rediscovering the creativity of the "Inner Child." Unfortunately, the "Inner Parents" too often obstruct the healing process of the "Inner Child."

The "Inner Father" and the "Inner Mother" are often unable to accept the "Inner Child." They need transformation themselves in order to do so. Sometimes it may happen that they are resistant to change. In that case we can use ourselves to "re-father" or "re-mother" the "Inner Child." The interiorized and crystallized triad of child, mother, and father needs transforming in order to allow the "Inner Child" a new environment: security, safety, stimulation – and, ultimately, its latent creativity.

A new inner environment in which the child can become healthy opens a whole new perspective on the behavior of the adult. It affects the wholeness of the individual psyche as well as its interrelation with the environment. The child's past is lovingly accepted and a different, more wholesome one is imaginatively constructed.

Past conditioning determines the future direction of the child's development. It is most encouraging to realize that building a different past for the "Inner Child" leads into a dramatically different future for the adult.

## Developmental Stages and Subpersonality Work

Early childhood experiences and its various developmental stages can be made conscious and worked with systematically. Traditionally, they have been systematized as follows:

0 - birth	in utero	<i>prenatal phase</i>
1 - 2	months	<i>autistic phase</i>
2 - 6	months	<i>symbiosis</i>
6 - 10	months	<i>individuation, differentiation</i>
10 - 15	months	<i>practicing</i>
15 - 22	months	<i>rapproachment</i>
22 -	months	<i>object constancy, consolidation</i>

(Mahler, 1981)

In the developmental phases which follow we see the possibility of in depth work with subpersonalities. The first exercise in the examples focuses on specific behaviors in the autistic and symbiotic phases. These examples offer insights and bring to conscious awareness which particular circumstances and reactions during the autistic and symbiotic phases caused which behaviors. The second exercise explores the phase of practicing.

In both exercises the first step is becoming aware of one's own behaviors. The symptoms caused by various circumstances during the early developmental stages are signs suggesting the optimal path towards wholeness. Techniques and exercises can be developed which are tailored to deal specifically with healing these symptoms. Through repetition, old feelings from the past are changed. This in turn elicits different behavior in the present and future and demonstrates how the symptoms and patterns of early traumata and conditioned behavior can, indeed, be changed.

This, of course, is only possible if the individual is ready to accept the pain and suffering which are held within the psychodynamic structures. It presupposes both a trained observer and the ability to identify with the "Self." The "Self" is ready to turn towards this early pain and suffering and to acknowledge the child, giving it love, security, and safety. Although it is not easy to turn towards a wounded, angry and suffering part and accept it lovingly, it is this very love which allows deep inner healing to take place. If this process is facilitated, love and inner acceptance of the wounded child will automatically express itself externally in behavior with others. Once lovingly accepted, the psychodynamic structure becomes softer and more malleable allowing pent up emotions formerly repressed and restrained to flow again freely. Through repetition, a new structure can be built which allows creativity to flow in cooperation with the personality. Patience and perseverance are needed in this process. Once the structures are changed, they can be released from intense focus and allowed to return into the unconscious. Nonetheless, their changed attitude and expression will be reintegrated into the personality proper.

## Autistic-Symbiotic Phase

The autistic-symbiotic phase is recalled through guided inner attunement. It is an intensive process and may well lead to deep emotional release. By lovingly accepting the needs of the "Inner Child" this emotional release can be elevated into a healing process. Individuals then develop their own healing methods which, through repetition and affirmation, reinforce the healing.

The specific exercise included below is focused on the autistic-symbiotic phase (1 to 6 months). It facilitates discovery of basic patterns of the personality which have their origin during this period of development. As the feelings and emotions contained in the psychodynamic structures are lovingly held and accepted, they are reexperienced, relived, and finally released. The client is empowered to develop her/his own healing plan and to apply it regularly. The client thus takes responsibility for her/his own growth.

Work with the early developmental phases can be systematically applied to all the different developmental phases. It leads to the very origin of important personality structures and their need to be unconditionally loved in order to transform. Each client carries the requisite information for her/his own healing process within. It is the therapist's job to support this warmly and to allow and follow the client's unique rhythm of growth. In this context, healing translates to fulfil these needs which remained unfulfilled in childhood. Such profound healing can be done only by the individual. Unfulfilled, these needs will always be projected outward onto a partner who is clearly unable to fulfill them.

During the autistic and symbiotic phase the experiences of childhood are anchored in the body's sensations and feelings. Consequently, they must be approached through physical sensations and feelings in order to be open to transformation. Each cell in the body carries emotional and structural memories; each cell, therefore, needs to release them.

*Perhaps you would like to close your eyes now, take a deep breath, in and out, and allow yourself to be carried back through time. Allow your physical sensation/feeling to carry you back to the time when you were lying at your mother's breast or in the arms of a primary caretaker. Give yourself permission to feel the sensation.*

*Maybe you are sucking right now.*

*What sensations and feelings does this evoke in you?*

*What do you feel? Are you comfortable or uncomfortable?*

*How is it to feel the physical closeness of the caretaker or the mother?*

*Do you have enough time?*

*Do you feel safe?*

*Are you satisfied?*

*Now bring yourself back slowly, feel your body, and take a deep breath before opening your eyes.*

*Take an inventory.*

*What particular feelings and sensations from that time evoke what type of reactions in your body?*

*What subpersonality you are aware of today that may be a result of this?*

*What needs to happen for your "Inner Child" to experience different feelings?*

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

**Example 1: Sandy**

*Give yourself permission to feel that you are lying at your mother's breast or in the arms of your primary caretaker.*

My heart beats, fearful of the exercise. I feel very little. I don't like the images appearing.

*Perhaps you are sucking now?*

I don't have any specific desire to suck. I spit out the breast.

*What feelings does this evoke in you?*

Disgust of the milk and the physicality of the mother. I don't want to drink.

*What do you feel? Are you comfortable or uncomfortable?*

My feelings are stale. Refusal, rejection.

*How is it to feel the physical proximity of the caretaker or mother?*

I don't need the physical closeness of the mother.

*Do you have enough time?*

She doesn't push me, she is not even interested. She doesn't hold me close.

*Do you feel safe?*

Neither safe, nor unsafe.

*Are you satisfied?*

I feel a gentle yearning for safety and security, but not with her.

*Gently bring yourself back, become aware of your body and physical sensations, and take a deep breath before you open your eyes.*

*Take an Inventory.*

I am not hungry, I am not stimulated, I am not asked to drink. I reject the mother and her physicality

*Which feelings from that time evoke which reactions in you today?*

I eat often without being hungry, just to eat, and I eat too much. I have no natural moderation in my eating habits. I don't listen to my body. I have problems with showing my femininity, and I reject anything to do with being motherly.

*Which one of today's subpersonalities originates from that time?*

The one which yearns to be held and simultaneously doesn't allow it except when she feels very, very safe.

*What needs to happen to change the feelings of the "Inner Child"?*

I need to embrace it lovingly. I need to caress my "Inner Child," to talk gently with it, and let it experience eye contact during nursing.

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

I am going to learn to enjoy an embrace, enjoy sensuality. For example, I will practice consciously feeling the wind on my skin. And I will try to eat slowly and to enjoy my food without having interruptions.

In the previous exercise, Sandy becomes keenly aware of her rejection of her mother's milk and physicality. Definite structures of subpersonalities have emerged which have their origin in these early events. These influence her present life to a considerable extent: it is difficult for her to feel emotions, to even be aware of her physical body, or to express her femininity. She rejects anything to do with motherhood and has no moderation in controlling her eating habits. Yet she experiences a deep yearning to give love and to be held. Up until now, though, she has been incapable of doing so.

The next step for Sandy is to learn how to re-mother her "Inner Child." Through visualizations she can now practice holding it lovingly in her arms, caressing it and talking gently to it. Both verbally and tacitly through stroking it soothingly, Sandy can give it permission to feel its body. It will be important for her to keep eye contact with it while breastfeeding in her imagination. This will give the "Inner Child" the sense of being seen. Repeated over time these exercises will allow the "Inner Child" to develop different, more positive reactions to food and physicality. Sandy will be able to perceive the impact of this on her present life quite distinctly. She most probably will be able to allow and to enjoy physical embraces, to learn to eat sensuously and slowly, and to live out her sensuality.

## **Example 2: Danny**

*Give yourself permission to feel that you are lying at your mother's breast or in the arms of your primary caretaker.*

My whole body is warm and feels comfortable.

*Perhaps you are sucking now?*

I am sucking strongly and drinking the milk.

*What feelings does this evoke in you?*

I feel very tranquil and protected.

*What do you feel? Are you comfortable or uncomfortable?*

After sucking I feel a good tiredness.

*How is it to feel the physical proximity of the caretaker or mother?*

I am experiencing feelings of inner calm and safety.

*Do you have enough time?*

I feel that I have a lot of time. It's like a feeling of non-existing time.

*Do you feel safe?*  
I feel very safe and protected.

*Are you satisfied?*  
I am happy and satisfied.

*Gently bring yourself back, become aware of your body and physical sensations, and take a deep breath before you open your eyes.*

*Take an Inventory.*  
I experienced the autistic phase as very sensuous and with very comfortable physical sensations and feelings.

*Which feelings from that time evoke which reactions in you today?*  
Today, when I feel well fed and protected, I feel very safe, and I become very tired.

*Which one of today's subpersonalities originates from that time?*  
There are two subpersonalities: one is the Sensualist and the other one is the Lazy One.

*What needs to happen to change the feelings of the "Inner Child"?*  
Nothing. I enjoy the feelings and feel good doing so.

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*  
I would like to become more aware of these two subpersonalities and to give myself permission to enjoy food more consciously and also to enjoy being tired.  
Danny recognizes his experiences at his mother's breast as both satisfying and very sensuous. The subpersonalities which originate from this early childhood events seem to be quite acceptable to him. He likes his Lazy One and his Sensualist.

### **Example 3: Jim**

*Give yourself permission to feel that you are lying at your mother's breast or in the arms of your primary caretaker.*

I was a premature birth (less than seven months). All I see is a red light in a dark room.

*Perhaps you are sucking now?*  
I have no idea. I feel sterile and alone.

*What feelings does this evoke in you?*  
Everything seems so factitious. I have no feelings.

*What do you feel? Are you comfortable or uncomfortable?*  
I don't feel anything.

*How is it to feel the physical proximity of the caretaker or mother?*  
There is no primary caretaker. If I think about physical closeness I see the face of my grandfather over my bed (I was approximately six months old).

*Do you have enough time?*  
I have nothing to say to that.

*Do you feel safe?*  
The fear of being left alone, not to mention safety, is like a real thread running throughout my whole life.

*Are you satisfied?*  
I don't know since I don't feel anything.

*Gently bring yourself back, become aware of your body and physical sensations, and take a deep breath before you open your eyes.*

*Take an Inventory.*

Looking back at my life a major theme I now realize is the fear of being left alone. This is not an accusation, but a fact. People always left me or died.

It was always very difficult to create a close emotional relationship with someone. Being too close creates fear and is too much for me. To have boundaries means also to have lots of distance. It doesn't mean neighborhood. To build a relationship with someone was always an obligatory exercise, rarely an affair of the heart.

"Mother" is a word with six letters for me. I never developed a true feeling for my body. There is a numb and deeply hidden feeling somewhere of "I didn't get enough." Basic trust in life is missing. And if I feel any confidence, it is because I worked hard to gain it. I always have had a very strong if diffuse fear of existence and life. A true and deep heart connection has been possible only with my present partner. She never puts demands on me. She allows me my own rhythm and freedom. She is a very peaceful being.

*Which feelings from that time evoke which reactions in you today?*

Loneliness, being left alone, produces fear, mistrust, distrust and a lack of sensations in my body. Also, I think that my old eating habits and gluttony can be placed there too.

*Which one of today's subpersonalities originates from that time?*

There is a Functionalist who functions and pays attention to staying within carefully prescribed boundaries. He is cold, he distrusts everyone, is egocentric and disciplined. He is a Loner and can be alone very well.

*What needs to happen to change the feelings of the "Inner Child"?*

It needs physical attention and respect for its boundaries.

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

The only thing I can do is to take the small child in my arms each day and tell him: "I am your mother." I know that I'll need to be able to bear its distrust, its coldness, and to accept it lovingly. I'll use the doll which sits on my couch. It is like getting a puzzle together. There are damaged pieces, some are missing, but it is the picture of my child which falls into place. I will give it form, I will develop it. Now it will be able to ask me for warmth if it needs to.

Here, Jim has become keenly aware of his loneliness and the absence of caretaking persons in his early childhood. Because he was a premature birth, touch during that phase is unknown to him. Deep feelings of emotional and physical loneliness are still leaving their imprints on his life as an adult. He also recognizes the repetitiveness of this pattern; his daily life has a continual undercurrent of deep existential distrust and fear. This expresses itself in a lack of contact with his physical body too. A major psychodynamic structure which dominates him is the Functionalist, the Loner who likes to be alone. Jim's path towards becoming whole may be a life long exercise, and however slowly, he will be able to transform the Functionalist by practicing his chosen technique for healing.

#### **Example 4: Rita**

*Give yourself permission to feel that you are lying at your mother's breast or in the arms of your primary caretaker.*

I am terribly hungry and experience great tension in my body.

*Perhaps you are sucking now?*

I am at my mother's breast, but I can not find the nipple, and I am very hungry.

*What feelings does this evoke in you?*

I am hungry, and I cannot satisfy my needs. I am very impatient.

*What do you feel? Are you comfortable or uncomfortable?*

I have a great urge to eat. It is very uncomfortable to be hungry.

*How is it to feel the physical proximity of the caretaker or mother?*

The physical proximity gives me a feeling of safety. I know I will get something from this breast which will calm me down.

*Do you have enough time?*

After finally finding the nipple, I drink urgently, but I swallow the wrong way. At first I am afraid I won't get enough to eat. Later I have more time, and I know I don't have to hurry that much.

*Do you feel safe?*

I feel carried and held by my mother, safe and well.

*Are you satisfied?*

I am satisfied, content and tired, full of food.

*Gently bring yourself back, become aware of your body and physical sensations, and take a deep breath before you open your eyes.*

*Take an Inventory.*

I was so hungry that I didn't find the nipple. I was afraid that the source of my satisfaction would not be there.

*Which feelings from that time evoke which reactions in you today?*

Fear, helplessness, seeking, despair and hunger.

*Which one of today's subpersonalities originates from that time?*

The Fearful/Helpless One and the Seeker.

*What needs to happen to change the feelings of the "Inner Child"?*

It needs the help of the mother in holding the nipple to the child, so it doesn't experience such great hunger. It also needs the mother's help to putting it properly to the breast in order not to search so despairingly.

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

As my "Inner Mother" I will take my child into my arms, lifting it out of its bed often, take it to my breast and help it to find the breast. It will no longer be so desperate and no longer need to fear. I will give the child the support and help it needs to suck properly.

Rita experienced safety and physical proximity during her autistic phase of early childhood development. However, due to extreme hunger pangs and the fear of not getting enough milk, a subpersonality which is helpless and afraid has emerged in her later life. But now Rita recognizes clearly the changes which she needs to make in order to satisfy the needs of her "Inner Child." She will now re-mother her "Inner Child" by guiding it to the nipple, the source of its frantic search. Though the use of regular visualizations, the "Inner Child's" feelings of desperation can be transformed into well being. This transformation is primarily related to physical sensations and needs to be reexperienced on this level to allow a change. The adult Rita can then let go of her old "Inner Child."

**Example 5: Cindy**

*Give yourself permission to feel that you are lying at your mother's breast or in the arms of your primary caretaker.*

I feel feelings of indifference.

*Perhaps you are sucking now?*

I finished sucking. I see the breast, my mouth is slightly opened around the nipple. I fall into a twilight.

*What feelings does this evoke in you?*

Indefinable feelings, twilight, also emotional twilight. But I feel my mother would like to stop nursing. She has had enough. She has to feed the other twin as well.

*What do you feel? Are you comfortable or uncomfortable?*

Neither one nor the other, neither comfort nor discomfort.

*How is it to feel the physical proximity of the caretaker or mother?*

I am at my mother's breast but I don't feel her body. It is the same in my life today: although I have a physical relationship, I still cannot experience the sensuousness of my body.

*Do you have enough time?*

She gives me some time, but the feeling that I should stop now is ever present, the feeling of being hurried.

*Do you feel safe?*

I neither feel safe nor especially unsafe.

*Are you satisfied?*

I don't know what satisfied means. The feeling is "I am full"; that is it.

*Gently bring yourself back, become aware of your body and physical sensations, and take a deep breath before you open your eyes.*

*Take an Inventory.*

There is no particular feeling connected to the experience of the mother's breast, only a sense of "my time is finished." Mother would like to put me away. There is no experience of physicality or sensuousness.

*Which feelings from that time evoke which reactions in you today?*

The feeling of being hurried. I cannot take any more of my mother's time, only the time absolutely necessary to drink.

*Which one of today's subpersonalities originates from that time?*

The Hurried One. Basically, in all of my activities I feel this rush without having an outer reason. Behavioral patterns? If I ask someone to give me some of his time, the fear is always that he will get tired of me. I am very alert to the smallest sign from another if he or she has had enough of me. I react immediately to it, and I stop talking or asking anything.

*What needs to happen to change the feelings of the "Inner Child"?*

She needs the time to be at the breast. To be there even when she has finished drinking. She would like to feel the mother's body, soft and warm. This would allow her to get in touch with and to contact her own body. She would like to be played with and to be caressed.

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

Inventory: I will hold my "Inner Child" after she has been nursing and gently rock her, play with her little hands and legs, let her play with my hands, with my breast. I will caress her, hum melodies to her, and allow her all the time she wants. I will be in a deep calm and relaxed state and massage her body when she is awake.

In my daily life as an adult I will cream my body after each shower joyfully (until now I have never creamed myself at all after a shower). I will allow myself to reflect afterwards and also after some other sensual experiences I have. I have never permitted myself to do this yet. Now I want to give this to myself.

In her autistic phase of childhood development Cindy clearly experienced her mother's distress in nursing twins. This led to an underlying pattern of not being able to ask for time for herself. Her adult life has been deeply impressed by the feeling of never having enough time, of having to constantly move over. The early feeling of not having enough time disconnected her as a child from her bodily sensations and feelings. (In the autistic phase especially, physical sensuality is developed by the closeness of the mother's body and the feeling of being nursed and having one's hunger satisfied.) Cindy never really experienced this. It is of utmost importance to her, then, to relive this phase in order to allow the "Inner Child" access to sensuality. Naturally, this will assist her as an adult to access her sensuality as well.

These missing experiences can be re-lived through visualization and corresponding physical sensations. Cindy can, in this fashion, rock her "Inner Child," play with its body, hum to it, and give it all the time it needs. In her visualization she can gently massage its body and, simultaneously, experience this in her own body as well. These feelings could eventually be integrated beautifully into her life as an adult and could contribute towards a growing sense of self-esteem.

## Individuation and Practicing Phase

Bodily sensations related to emotions such as fear, safety, and freedom are of major importance in the practicing phase of early childhood (10 to 18 months), during which time the child learns to walk. In order to be transformed, the psychodynamic structures which are generated at these developmental stages need to be worked with at their original formation. Since their recognition is primarily via bodily sensations and emotions, the process of transformation and healing needs to include both. These levels need to be addressed directly in order to release pent up energy stored in their cellular structure.

The questions that follow are designed to facilitate access to these structures:

*Perhaps you would like to close your eyes and allow yourself to move back to that moment in your childhood when you first began to walk.*

*Where are you?*

*Where is your mother or caretaker?*

*How is it to stand up alone and walk?*

*What feelings and sensations are evoked by this?*

*How does your body feel?*

*How is your relationship to your primary caretaker?*

*Take an Inventory.*

*Which feelings evoke which reactions?*

*Do you recognize a subpersonality which originates from that time?*

*What would need to happen to allow your "Inner Child" to feel differently?*

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

**Example 1: Cindy**

*Where are you?*

I am on a stone terrace leading to our garden in front of our house. The stone is very cold. My brother (my twin) is crawling on the floor. I pull myself up, and I can stand upright.

*Where is your mother or caretaker?*

Absent, somewhere in the house.

*How is it to stand up alone and walk?*

I do not experience a physical sensation that I can stand up.

*What feelings and sensations are evoked by this?*

I feel pride because I know I can do something mother has wanted from me for a long time. She is tired of my dependency on her. She wants me to become independent, and now I am taking the first step in that direction, independence. I feel pride because I will please her if I do so. And I feel superior because I know something that my brother doesn't know. I am better than my brother.

*How does your body feel?*

I feel this pride and superiority mainly in my head.

*How is your relationship to your primary caretaker?*

I am totally focused on my mother: I am doing something which will please her but since she isn't here, there is a feeling of painful solitude and loneliness.

*Take an Inventory.*

The result, the experience of standing up, has been determined by fulfilling what someone else wants. I have no feeling for my own experience of my body standing up. Instead, I have a huge feeling of loneliness and solitude.

*Which feelings evoke which reactions?*

Feeling great inner loneliness, I withdraw totally within myself. I have to learn to walk early! The feeling of needing to be independent, of not having permission to need help .... I see myself always in relation to others instead of in relation to myself. The success, the result, counts, and I do not feel my own reaction at all. I compare myself with my brother. Who does mother love more? During my childhood, I don't feel close to my brother.

*Do you recognize a subpersonality which originates from that time?*

I have a subpersonality which defines itself by the reactions it elicits from others. It is totally dependent on recognition by them. For five years of my life (from the age of 23 to 28) my most important emotional relationship was with a man who was rarely physically present. All my being, my doing, my actions, and my thoughts were focused on him, and I was totally under his control through the telephone.

*What would need to happen to allow your "Inner Child" to feel differently?*

The mother should be with the children, happy with the girl for standing up. The child has made a new discovery, and it is a joyful one, because the mother is tired of the twins only being in the crawling stage. She can be happy with the girl about her new developmental step. She also can be happy with the boy that he can crawl and show him that it is all right if he is not yet ready to stand up. Children and mother need to be in a place which is warmer and has more sun, a floor which is not so cold.

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

Inventory: I am with my "Inner Child" and with its twin in a warm sunny place. We are happy together and we are joyfully appreciating what each can do, the crawling and the standing up. I look at the children, and I move full of joy and lust. I am there for them.

Cindy recognizes basic experience patterns in her early childhood which are part of her life. She knows only too well the feeling of always being pressured not to occupy too much space or to take up too much room. All of her senses are attuned to pick up messages from others. Kim defines herself primarily by the reactions of others. This psychodynamic structure forms the basis of her adult behavior. By unlearning and restructuring her behavior in early childhood, she will be able to lessen her present day dependency on others and acquire a new sense of self worth and concomitant self satisfaction.

**Example 2: Dorothy***Where are you?*

At the end of a field, under a tent. I am alone. It's raining.

*Where is your mother or caretaker?*

On the other side of the field. My parents are working with other people. They pick potatoes.

*How is it to stand up alone and walk?*

I am determined. I am defiant.

*What feelings and sensations are evoked by this?*

Clumsiness, joy, a feeling of "Oh, I know how to do it; I don't have to sit still all the time."

*How does your body feel?*

I get a feeling of strength in my legs and in my head.

*How is your relationship to your primary caretaker?*

My relationship to my mother doesn't feel good. I sense that she lets me sit there. My father laughs heartily as I stand up.

*Take an Inventory.*

Standing upright and taking my first steps feels defiant. I have to show them over there that I can do it. The circumstances are difficult: I try my first successful steps in the heavy earth of a potato field. Maybe they are not as light-footed as they could be. I am reaching my limits. I am courageous, but this courage takes a lot of energy!

*Which feelings evoke which reactions?*

The feeling of being left sitting there all alone provokes courageous defiance and determination. But I also feel shame because I cannot walk yet. It is not easy. I am asking too much of myself.

*Do you recognize a subpersonality which originates from that time?*

The Defiant One. Doing everything with lots of energy, pushing. Doing things too fast is a guaranteed program for disappointment.

*What would need to happen to allow your "Inner Child" to feel differently?*

The child needs to be integrated into the family. Once in a while the parents should call the child's name, or sing to her, and take her to the other side of the field where they are. During a break, someone should hold the child, walk a few steps with her, and show her the fruits of the field.

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

I will allow myself to feel the child. She's bored. She is tall, but cannot walk yet, and she has lots of energy at her disposal. She is totally alone, isolated from the others who are laughing and having fun together. The child needs attention and laughter, to be called by name and included in the social fabric of the community. As I am sitting with her as an adult, she is shy. Slowly she connects with me, talks to me. She sings me a song, and we sing together. We take each other's hands, get up and turn in a circle. The child feels happy and accepted. She is no longer alone. She walks a few steps, falls in the grass and laughs. There is always someone around her.

Through this experience, Dorothy becomes aware of the origin of a personal pattern, a psychodynamic structure which acts too impulsively, applying undue energy and force. As an adult she still assumes that she has to prove that childhood courage. Even now, the Defiant One consumes an enormous amount of her energy. In this exercise, though, Dorothy has developed an effective visualization technique to transform that pattern. Giving loving care and support to the child as it is trying its first steps brings Dorothy into closer contact with this underlying pattern. This, in turn, may affect her adult life from day to day by allowing her to live more consciously and cooperatively and less defiantly.

**Example 3: Karin**

*Where are you?*

I am in a living room. I am standing inside a playpen, screaming.

*Where is your mother or caretaker?*

My mother is in the next room busily vacuuming.

*How is it to stand up alone and walk?*

I cannot stand up alone, and I cannot walk since I am in a playpen.

*What feelings and sensations are evoked by this?*

The child feels abandoned; the mother doesn't hear her. She screams like crazy. She is furious that she can't get out of the playpen, that she is unable to discover life outside of the playpen and feels totally dependent on the mother.

*How does your body feel?*

My body trembles a little and a gigantic fury is in my belly. My throat is dry.

*How is your relationship to your primary caretaker?*

I am very angry at my mother. I feel she doesn't really hear me. She doesn't listen to me, even though I know that she hears me.

*Take an Inventory.*

Unless my mother takes me out of the playpen, I cannot discover the world and continue to develop. I am totally dependent on her. I cannot do this alone in my present state of development, and I can only get out when my mother decides I can.

*Which feelings evoke which reactions?*

I realize I can only continue to develop if someone gives me permission and this in turn creates dependency. Not being heard evokes feelings of loneliness and anger. It blocks my development.

*Do you recognize a subpersonality which originates from that time?*

The Dependent One and the Ignored One.

*What would need to happen to allow your "Inner Child" to feel differently?*

The child must be taken out of the playpen; she doesn't need the playpen anymore, she is big enough. She should be able to run in the whole apartment, touch all the objects, touch and experience them. She needs a lot of space and permission to go wherever she needs to go and wants to go.

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

The mother will pick the screaming child up out of the playpen, lift her into her arms, and dry her tears. She will move the playpen into the cellar. The child needs to see that. She will then know and trust that the playpen is really, truly removed. The child will have permission to walk through the whole apartment and to discover everything. She will have lots of time and space. The child will tell the mother that she needs to have lots of space!

Karin has become aware of a powerful psychodynamic structure which has been determining her current behavioral patterns – the belief that development is possible for her only when someone gives her permission to develop. Further, not being heard and/or being left alone still elicit Karin's anger as an adult. Patterns of this sort originate in the early phases of childhood development, in this particular case during the practicing phase. Here, however, Karin has developed her own exercise to transform her behavior by lovingly accepting and fulfilling the needs of her "Inner Child." Once these needs are fulfilled, she may experience a transformation in her adult life, one that may involve newfound feelings of independence and self-sufficiency.

**Example 4: Maria**

*Where are you?*

I am in a green meadow in the sunshine in our garden. Everything is beautiful and grandios. I am chasing a butterfly.

*Where is your mother or caretaker?*

I don't see my mother. I know that someone is always there for me in this big house. Being aware of my father and my mother I get a vague feeling that something isn't the way it should be. But I prefer to push that aside and enjoy how beautiful life is.

*How is it to stand up alone and walk?*

It is grandios, a feeling of power and joy. I am very proud of my achievement. I feel a lot of strength and power flowing through my body.

*What feelings and sensations are evoked by this?*

The feeling of being in love with myself and with life and everything around me.

*How does your body feel?*

Fantastic. I feel a very powerful feeling in my legs as they move forward. It is finally possible for me to see everything, to touch and to explore.

*How is your relationship to your primary caretaker?*

I don't want to think about it. There is a vague feeling of discomfort.

*Take an Inventory.*

Generally a good impression, a feeling of power, vitality, and the joy of life.

*Which feelings evoke which reactions?*

If I can move freely in the sun and in nature, I am happy. I enjoy discovering the world alone tremendously. I push aside the uncomfortable and enjoy being in love with myself and with the world.

*Do you recognize a subpersonality which originates from that time?*

The one who is Eternally in Love, the one who needs to be in love as an elixir of life. The Easily Excited One who enjoys beautiful things and situations and life. The one who pushes discomfort under the rug. She doesn't want to be confronted with it. She would rather fall in love again; then life is beautiful again. I also recognize the Curious One who wants new impressions and needs a lot of changes. She feels content when there is something new to discover.

*What would need to happen to allow your "Inner Child" to feel differently?*

Basically the child feels very good in this phase. She has split feelings towards her parents. She should feel safe. The parents should lovingly cultivate her interesting life and her curiosity. They should accept her lovingly if she wishes to return to them.

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

Since the child doesn't know exactly (or doesn't want to know) what is not all right with the parents, I will assume the role of the parents and show her that I honor her activities and that I am there for her when she needs me.

Maria recognizes and appreciates her subpersonality, Eternally in Love, which she discovers in this exercise. She is fully identified with it and lives it in her daily adult life. The only limitation that she experiences from this period is that she consistently pushes away uncomfortable issues and situations and represses them. She doesn't like to look at them. The next step for Maria may be a closer look at this part, in order to acknowledge her resistance to confronting unpleasantness and to successfully resolve it within a safe environment. This may free her to tap into her own power when necessary and deal with troublesome situations that arise. This eventually may lend a better balance to Maria's otherwise one-sided approach to life.

**Example 5: Anna***Where are you?*

In a room in my parents' house.

*Where is your mother or caretaker?*

Nobody is present, I am completely alone.

*How is it to stand up alone and walk?*

I am free. I can go wherever I wish.

*What feelings and sensations are evoked by this?*

I feel like a true hero.

*How does your body feel?*

I feel the sunshine touching my heart, and I want to go outside.

*How is your relationship to your primary caretaker?*

It is unimportant and of no value to me.

*Take an Inventory.*

I am very surprised that it is so simple to go back in time and have such clear and impressive images. I have a very deep feeling as a child that "This is not where I belong."

*Which feelings evoke which reactions?*

The feeling of "standing on my two feet" makes me want to conquer the world and to leave home.

*Do you recognize a subpersonality which originates from that time?*

The one who does everything alone, who doesn't want to accept any help – the Loner.

*What would need to happen to allow your "Inner Child" to feel differently?*

(No answer.)

*Describe the method and technique you are going to use.*

(No answer.)

In this exercise Anna recognizes the subpersonality which is able to do everything on her own and doesn't need any help. This childhood pattern strongly influences her present day behavior. She often feels as if she is in the wrong place and that she is free to go where ever she likes. At this point she is only able to perceive the freedom of independence. Her dismissing the lack of bonding experience as "unimportant and of no value," foreshades her current behavior as a loner. She is not nearly as free as she likes to believe, but by her becoming aware of this, eventually these structures will be accepted and become more pliant.

## MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPLICATIONS OF SUBPERSONALITY WORK

### Individual Emotional Archives

During the process of psychotherapy deep insights are often gained through experiencing personal psychodynamic structures which are emotionladen. This means that past events are brought into consciousness and often lead to different and broader dimensions of therapy.

Psychodynamic structures are related to each other through their emotional content. For example, a feeling of powerlessness experienced currently can be used to move back into the past where similar feelings existed: the person identifies with the feeling of powerlessness, for example, and then follows feeling upon feeling like oceanic waves into the past. This does not occur chronologically, but is based on the event and the intensity of the feeling, here of powerlessness. The waves can carry back to the initial event in early youth connected to powerlessness and then back even further to the original circumstances surrounding this issue.

In other words, the emotional content of a psychodynamic structure or a subpersonality has formed through years by repetition of circumstances which elicit similar emotional reactions. The emotional content will be stronger or weaker dependent both on the age and the frequency of the repeated circumstances and reactions. The emotional content of a psychodynamic structure, its intensity and rigidity, depends on the age at formation and the number of repetitions.

In my therapeutic practice, I encounter various emotional dimensions which may harbor the original seeds of the psychodynamic structures. The first dimension to be touched is the present day personality level.

Another dimension are the childhood events that created the particular patterns which now contain the possibility of their transformation and healing.

Sometimes, however, a psychodynamic structure related to childhood trauma which has been recognized, accepted, and transformed has even deeper roots. In the following examples of subpersonality work, childhood events will be addressed first, followed by deeper emotional structures, apparently not originating in the present life, but their structure and emotional content carry the same issue.

### **Example 1: Andrew**

Andrew, a company executive, began therapy to deal with an issue of deep helplessness and powerlessness. Working with the various personal levels related to his powerlessness, the therapy touched upon a different emotional level, seemingly unrelated to his present day reality.

After two years of therapy I decided to use the technique described previously of being "carried from emotion to emotion." Andrew was carried back to an early childhood event of sexual abuse. He describes his feeling of powerlessness and helplessness in this situation as follows:

*Just a boy, I am being pulled into a big room. Other boys are already there, each one tied to his bed (the whole scene plays in a home for children). A man and a woman put me on a bed and tie my hands and feet to it. They put a rope across my neck and tighten it. I cannot move. I cannot breathe anymore. The man and the woman dance and make noises. We children scream and the more we scream the better they like it. They turn themselves on and play with our sexual parts: they "prepare" us. The woman mounts one of the other boys. The weight of this woman, like a demon kneeling on me, excited by my fear is heavy. In my therapy session I enter the scene as an adult. I walk into the room. I untie the little boy and the others and chase the man and the woman away.*

*The next therapy session is another act of liberation: I am holding the man and the woman accountable for what they did. Suddenly a huge knight appears in front of me with a long sword and cuts off their heads. As an observer, I am terrified. I see two heads and a lot of blood. And all of a sudden I see a whining woman at the foot of the bed. She is helpless as she pleads for the life of her children. The knight wants to take revenge on them. She appeals to his compassion. Her husband is here too. I recognize him as myself. That well known feeling of powerlessness and helplessness, the feeling of not being able to interfere in power abuse, is overwhelming. What does the man need to protect her? Strength, will, and so forth. I help him to place himself in front of the children: "You kill me first," I have him say. The stronger he becomes, the smaller and weaker the knight becomes. Finally I feel ready to let him go.*

To reach this level of emotional depth and the root of his psychodynamic patterns in a past life, Andrew needed two years of regular therapy. Yet he was committed to follow through with it, convinced that his issue of powerlessness contained enormous potential for personal growth.

The childhood trauma described appeared first in various dreams before it became accessible to Andrew in images and through physically reliving it: He experienced a skin disorder around the neck where he had been tied down so many years before. Identified with the emotions of the child he experienced the ropes being cut as a feeling of immense relief. Andrew needed a lot of time before accepting the unbelievable. The events which he detailed above were followed by other strong psychosomatic reactions. Clearly, it will take a long time and patience before his "Inner Child" can recuperate fully from these traumatic events.

Andrew also sees himself in his powerlessness as a man trying to protect his family from a knight's sword. He consciously enters the scene and supports and empowers the husband to free himself from his helplessness and powerlessness through decisive and courageous action.

Both events are experienced physically, through bodily sensations, and both contain the same issue and structure of helplessness and powerlessness. The deeper level became accessible only after working on the personal one. Such deep issues of sexual abuse, like Andrew's helplessness and powerlessness, have a pansystemic effect on the human psyche. In fact, most psychodynamic structures developed in childhood are defensive reactions to such traumatic events and are rooted in early abuse. Such deep issues, often reaching into past lives, offer enormous opportunities for dramatic growth.

## Example 2: Ellen

This example recounts Ellen's discovery of her deeper emotional levels. At this point she had been in psychotherapy for three years, prior to which she had worked with a different modality. When we started our work together, she had just escaped from a destructive cult and was profoundly traumatized. During the next two years she became aware of her deep injuries and developed a personal healing plan which she consistently applied. The following report in Ellen's words demonstrates one segment of the therapeutic events over the course of two months:

*I closed my eyes. On my left is a bright room. A child is in the playpen emanating joy and love. She is waiting for me. I can not go there, it is impossible. She calls me to come. She lifts her head, telling me again to come, that everything is all right. I am deeply touched by her love. As the observer I began to cry. Then a living image of a beautiful thirteen to fifteen year old girl appears. In the background are lovely white feathers with blue and red stones. The girl is very beautiful. A celebration is being prepared. There is an air of deep reverence, expectancy of something new, maybe an initiation. During all this time the fingers of my left hand move to form an oath. I ask my heart if it is appropriate to continue. It says "No!" My heart is in great pain as I try to remain connected to my higher Self. I then see a young girl on the ground, cowering next to a forest. I ask what she needs and cover her with a blanket. I feel good. I actually feel it physically. This happens to my left.*

*On the right appears a middle aged man full of hatred and contempt, without any compassion. I ask him to leave. He is strong and powerful. I sense that the girl has experienced something terrible, I don't know what, but far beyond her capacity to endure. She is incapable of defending herself, faint. I begin to hit the man, a Native American. He walks backwards and falls down the cliffs. I am surprised and frightened. I turn back to the place where the young girl is lying, a light figure, relieved, observing me lovingly. Again I am deeply touched. I feel joy in my heart and upper body. I realize immediately that the girl is dead. We walk towards each other and embrace. It is a beautiful moment. The girl is composed of two parts, a light and a dark one standing next to each other looking over the country. Then a white cloud, an arrow, something dark like an owl, crosses the circle. Most probably I was abused and killed there. I can vividly recall my feelings of powerlessness with certain men. My ovaries hurt a lot, and my lower body is bloated.*

*During this time I had a big dispute with my employer. I felt very angry and forbid him to talk to me the way he did. A part of me, a "fourteen to sixteen" year old girl, wants to die. She is tired, exhausted, feels misunderstood, rejected. She is gentle, like velvet. She embodies deep soul love and profound sadness and loneliness. She is curled up, without contact. I love this part. I feel touched, caring, protective of her. I accompany her on her way in the outer world. I want to make contacts for her. I defend her and try to explain for her when she is misunderstood. Yet she still gets hurt, still gets misunderstood. There is no connection between us, just hopelessness. She wants to leave and yet stays. I feel her at my right shoulder, my face, and ovary."*

These words speak for themselves. Reading these lines awakens a great respect for the depth and wisdom of the human psyche. Something in Ellen's psyche, the "Self," knows exactly which events need to appear from the unconscious in order to facilitate healing and growth. As a therapist I simply create the space and the supporting environment which allow such a process to unfold.

Since this session I have accompanied Ellen on many regular therapy sessions. The dramatic death of the native American girl in the interim has been transformed into Ellen's acceptance of the positive qualities of love and beauty that this particular part of herself has to offer. This newfound sense of self appreciation lends her a striking sense of quiet beauty which is obvious to any observer.

## Psychological Heritage and Personal Empowerment

In order to understand the impact of the various emotional layers from which psychodynamic structures originate and form, I would like to share the story of Martha. A forty-year-old Swiss woman, Martha came into therapy with a fear issue: fear of death of herself and her child in childbirth. We addressed this by using subpersonality work with its attendant inner images and inner dialogues. This led her to recognize her fear as a prenatal psychodynamic structure stemming from her *in utero* experience.

This in turn led Martha to reexperience a prenatal event in her mother's womb during which she recognized her fear as being her mother's fear when she was pregnant with Martha. Further identification with her mother led Martha to the recognition that her maternal grandmother also experienced the same fear! Through imagery, eventually Martha perceived the long succession of her maternal mothers, one lined up behind the other, passing to each daughter the same pattern: fear of her own death and that of her child in childbirth.

Exploring this ancestral inheritance (again using subpersonality work) Martha came to understand on a deep level that the fulfillment of feminine wisdom and creativity for generations of women had been reduced to conceiving, giving birth, children dying, and mothers dying during childbirth.

She was very much aware of the distinction between the personal, ancestral, and collective depth of her fear. She knew that as an individual she could heal both her mother's and the ancestral fears and thereby affect the collective unconscious as well.

Martha felt it her responsibility to effect a conscious "step-by-step-healing" of the individual, maternal, and collective levels of her psyche. She consciously made a choice to influence the deep dimensions of her psyche. To allow this healing to take place, it was necessary for her to become aware of these psychological layers as they currently exist. She decided to take the following steps:

On the personal level she turned towards her fear and brought an unconscious thought pattern into consciousness by first accepting and then expressing it. Martha also looked at the maternal and ancestral levels. By using subpersonality work it was possible for her to become conscious of her maternal inheritance, to accept it, and, ultimately, to transform it.

She recognized that the fear held on an ancestral level masked the collective distorted belief that feminine wisdom is limited to giving birth and survival. Recognizing, accepting, and transforming this belief gradually led to the integration of a new belief in her psyche. This opened new possibilities not only for Martha but also for changing a collectively held belief about feminine wisdom and creativity in general.

Martha's conscious choice to heal her part, then, allowed her to influence belief patterns which are held in the own personal, ancestral, and collective unconscious of humanity as a whole.

Influencing her psychological past and ancestral inheritance has changed her personal pattern of fear as well as her attitude towards feminine wisdom and creativity. By transforming these old beliefs she has broken the chain of inheritance: they will not be passed on to her children. As an individual, then, she has been able to change psychological patterns multidimensionally simply through healing her own personal past. Obviously, different psychological patterns will emerge in the future as a direct result of Martha's encounters with the unconscious.

Once an individual becomes conscious of their own psychodynamic structures or subpersonalities and their impact on the collective psyche (family, nation, humanity), they can make a conscious choice to participate in life fully. Each action and each event influences the greater whole. This implies that each action and event initiated by another necessarily also influences me and the larger whole. Similarly, events and actions of the greater whole (family, nation, humanity) impact the individual as a part of that whole.

Assagioli describes the individual and society as such:

*Each human and each group are elements, cells and organs, living parts of a larger organism which comprises the whole of humanity .... The essential unity in origin, nature and goal and the indestructible dependency and solidarity among all people and groups are a spiritual, psychological and practical reality. (1965)*

Each individual expresses their culture, religion, education and past (childhood, ancestors) by their present way of thinking, feeling, acting, and reacting – in short, by living.

Today, many of us are searching for deeper meaning in life. One way to get closer to that goal is the conscious acceptance of old patterns and the realization that these patterns are in fact living us! However, once such restricting patterns with their related emotions are recognized, accepted, transformed, and eventually integrated, they no longer are capable of controlling our current behavior. Instead, we have the ability to recognize, accept, transform, and eventually integrate them. Rather than remaining the haphazard structures of our heredity and environment, we can participate in designing our own future and become its co-architects.

## Collective Traumata

The previous chapters present a therapeutic approach using subpersonality work which affects different levels of the individual psyche. Since the individual psyche is embedded in the collective, though, individual work can positively influence the collective as we have seen. This is only possible, though, once all of these various levels have become conscious.

A collective of a nation is understood as a group of people who have a similar cultural and religious background and whose languages have similar roots. If the individual psyche is embedded in the cultural heritage of a nation, then repressed national traumata now unconscious can in fact be accessed by the individual.

Such unconscious traumata determine the attitude and direction of a nation in the future. Collective psychodynamic structures push to express themselves in the attitude of a nation just as they do in an individual psyche. Powerful complex structures such as the national trauma of the German "Third Reich" or Stalin's Russia are more or less repressed by the nation. Unfortunately, though, these structures will find their expression through individual groupings within the nation. National psychodynamic structures have their own will, wishes, and needs but can be made conscious in a manner similar to the process of becoming conscious of structures in the individual psyche: one can get to know them. This can be done through using subpersonality work in large groups. Because the individual psyche is interwoven within the system of the collective as noted, each transformation of an individual influences this collective; and this collective, in turn, with its various national traumata is accessible both through the individual and the collective.

The first two steps of transformation of the subpersonality work are readily applicable to approaching collective traumata in large group settings. The process of recognition, the first step in the transformation of subpersonality work, is the same in an individual and a national psyche. Just as unconscious childhood traumata influence an individual's daily actions, so in the national psyche do unconscious traumata influence the politics of a nation.

The following step is to discover our own patterns in the psychological inheritance of our family and ancestors. It allows us to acknowledge our own national inheritance of collective traumata. Once this is accepted, we become aware of our ability to influence the collective psyche via our own individual actions. It can also mean that an individual participating as a soldier in a war, for example, actually creates a part of national trauma. This perspective demands an in depth look at the victim-oppressor mentality. The time seems ripe to work in larger groups with the German national heritage, especially the third Reich and its consequences.

The rhythm of a national psyche has a beat different from that of the individual psyche. An individual having suffered a personal trauma needs many years before they can look at it. A nation, on the other hand, may need several generations before it is able to look at its trauma.

Oppressors, victims, and hanger-ons all suffer from a tremendous shock. One suffering from shock needs a safe environment first and then time to gain distance from the traumatic events. The post-Hitler generation in Germany had been informed about the activities of the third Reich primarily on an intellectual or mental level. The present generation, having had more distance from the events, is able to deal differently with this national trauma: It can accept the collective psychodynamic structure of the national trauma on an

emotional level as well. Doing so requires a collective mourning and the shedding of unshed tears for the oppressors, victims, and hanger-ons alike. Allowing love to flow into the collective suffering needs, in other words, the emotional acknowledgment of the trauma.

For many years now in my Psychosynthesis work, I have assisted groups from different nations to turn towards their respective psychopolitical heritage. The weight of guilty feelings often hampers this, however. National guilt, as a collective psychodynamic structure, paralyzes the individual and the nation and prevents the acceptance of the trauma. Here, Psychosynthesis techniques can be quite helpful. Guilt as one's national heritage can be approached via the technique of disidentification. To be able to accept the national trauma, it helps to temporarily put such guilt aside. This in turn opens new possibilities for working with the traumata.

### FIRST EXERCISE

The following exercise emphasizes experiential work with inherited psychodynamic structures through the individual psyche. The work with the subpersonality in this case is focused on the German national heritage. Such an exercise should be preceded by intensive training with the method of "identification with one's own center" in order to establish a contact with the "Self" and the "Transpersonal Self."

*Intervention: Try to give yourself permission to become aware of the positive and negative characteristics and qualities which you see as your national heritage. This can arise as an image, a thought, or feelings.*

#### **Sabina**

Guilt weighs heavily on my back. There is a woman curled up on the floor dressed in black. Everything is dark around her. How can we compensate for this guilt? The guilt seems gigantic. The woman is powerless and doesn't seem to have the right to stand up, to come into her own power. She is ashamed about what happened, ashamed to acknowledge that she is a German. I am conflicted about my national identity and am jumping from one nationality to the other (my parents come from Croatia). In order to adapt in Germany and accept my German nationality I do not openly recognize the heritage of my parents. In foreign countries when spoken to about my nationality, I have no problem in talking about my Croatian heritage and, of course, everybody's attitude towards me changes since I am not a real German. It is a very strange experience. I am very ambivalent about acknowledging my national identity. It depends on the country I am visiting.

#### **Marianne**

The image comes to me of one who is bent down, sitting on the sidewalk and observing – full of sadness, but detached with feelings of guilt and seeing many people. Question: What role would I have played in those times? Would I have been the victim? the oppressor? the hanger-on? the silent witness? I am resisting the burden of guilt. I don't want to run around with my head pulled in just because I am German. I don't want to see only bad things about being German. Actually, I do not wish my country to be destroyed by the Neo-Nazis.

**Magdalena**

Unspoken messages: "Life worth living" is "healthy, natural, normal." Everything "unworthy" will be destroyed. There are difficulties for my family in the village which cannot accept my brother's mental disability after a car accident. I support him, I am with him, yet I pay for this by being lonely, excluded, different.

To be German means order, cleanliness, discipline, obedience to the bitter end, abnegation of responsibility upstairs, doing your duty. I rebel against these so-called "virtues." I am afraid of my own abuse of power.

**Monika**

I see a blond child standing on a globe and walking around a grave. This is my father as a five-year-old child after his mother died. Separated from his own feelings, he leaves the little child alone at the cemetery. This allows for cruelty. He doesn't feel what he does to others. A very important part is perfection, the urge to have perfect, mathematical order in human relationships. Sentimentality is considered a feeling, for example: German songs (Deutsches Liedergut), fellowship (Kameradschaft), sentimentality (Rührseligkeit) – all are construed as false feelings.

**Heike**

Guilt, shame, hatred, anger, arrogance, fear, coldblooded-ness, uniforms, grandiosity, power, inferiority, obedience, "wounding." Reliability, philosophical thoughts, poetry, music, artistic potential, industriousness. Coziness. Cleanliness. Why the need to accept guilt, shame, arrogance and fear?

Becoming conscious. Creative potential is used for material things, the economy, not spiritual/playful values. Both victim and oppressor need quietude, silence, compassion and acceptance. I am upright in front of a deep bottomless pit of blackest black. A wave of deep sadness hits me (tears). I know I will not fall into this hole. I kneel in front of it and look into it. In spite of my tremendous sadness I have a feeling of great power (warmth in my heart). I have the image of a powerful darkness and a bright light and a feeling of a situation right at the border. The light could be too weak for the darkness. Fear, battle, fear of life, not for my life, but for the light quality of life, life itself. I sing.

**Claudia**

I sense an old woman with a wise face, dressed in black. She is bent under the burden of the national guilt. She is very sad but used to be very beautiful. She is holding a vicious dog on a leash. The dog has great white tearing teeth, is short-haired and light brown. It is totally stupid and greedy. It swallows everything. It feeds on negative emotions. It is in the process of growing and becoming stronger, and the old woman will soon be too old and too weak to keep it on the leash. An opposing image, the enthusiastic one. She can be excited by anything. She loves life and sees something beautiful in everything. With her enthusiasm she can carry others away as well. She emanates joy and love.

**Helga**

My mother's perspective – a woman has to give birth to children to rebuild a nation. She wanted to have eleven men, healthy and ready to fight and die for the fatherland. This dishonors her, her femininity, her person, and dishonors me, her daughter, as a woman, as a human being. Using oneself and using others. Being a fanatic for an idea. No weakness is allowed, no pain and no sensitivity. Her image is the strong, healthy woman. National pride determines her attitude to the handicapped and to foreigners.

**Peter**

It is difficult to have an image when several parts merge into each other. A soldier with a German helmet is very sad and desperate. He has nothing to do with the whole affair. He was never a follower of Hitler, but was a skeptic. Now he has to leave his family alone and go to war. Next I see a Gestapoman with a short blond haircut and a leathercoat. He is cold and full of hatred. Then a teacher of a school in the Third Reich. Inside he is stiff like a stick and full of principles, orders and duties. He has absolutely no feelings or lightness.

In the previous exercise the participants were asked to look at both the positive and the negative aspects of their national heritage. Sad to say, in the examples elicited here, only one person was able to perceive any positive national qualities.

## SECOND EXERCISE

Trying to address the national heritage, the burden and the guilt of World War II and the Holocaust seem to quickly paralyze a group. This guilt is interwoven with the collective, and each German carries it as a part of their heritage. This heritage is a national psychodynamic structure currently expressing its qualities both through groups and individuals.

Turning towards the guilt as a national subpersonality allows it to be accepted and a concomitant collective mourning to take place. In the following exercises the extent of this national suffering becomes more visible as does the need for higher powers to assist in its transformation. (This presupposes, of course, that each individual can accept and emotionally surrender this suffering to higher powers.)

*In the following exercise first a connection with the heart, the seat of the individual's, love and compassion, is sought and the heart is then asked what would be needed to heal the national heritage.*

**Sabina**

The message of the heart: It has to be very, very wide, and it has to fill my chest. It flows into my left side, into my arms and legs and then into the earth.

**Marianne**

The energy flows into the different parts of my body and carries images with it. Next to the national heritage was the image of the oppressor wanting to receive this energy I gave. I reflected on whether I would like to contribute something. I gave it to him, but reluctantly. The heart spoke to me and said: "Not now, another time."

**Monika**

My heart and I are pulled into the national heritage. I experience deep sadness and loneliness. But I can step out of it, disidentify. Then my heart flows into a large stream. It knows exactly where to flow.

**Claudia**

I realized during the exercise that I am identified with a part of the national inheritance. My heart could only expand to the right. To my question why it wouldn't expand to the left, it replied that it couldn't. When I asked it to flow, blood flowed out of it instead! I stepped back into my center and thought about all the beautiful qualities of the heart, and then my heart energy began to flow again.

**Helga**

During the heart exercise my heart acknowledged and said *yes* to the healing. The left side of my body was very bright, the right side dark. When I gave permission for the energy to flow I got goose bumps along the right side of my body. When I gave permission for the light to flow into the national inheritance, a huge tomb opened, and screaming, wounded, fearful, despairing skulls looked at me. I freaked and had the feeling that these beings have no possibility of receiving light and life. There was a moment of standstill. I wanted to let it flow, but I continued to just give it permission. There was also a measuring of powers: what is stronger, the darkness or the light? The thought that love and light could flow, simply giving permission to choose itself where it would like to flow, resolved the inner battle. I felt solid strength in me, and I was centered.

**Peter**

Allowing the heart energy to flow into national consciousness brought deep sadness. However, I was not pulled into that hole.

**Heike**

I am again in front of the dark hole and physically feel how the heart emits streams of energy. A spiral-like green light flows into the hole and is swallowed by it. I become very serious and aware of the immense power of the black hole. At the same time I feel my heart's power of acceptance. As yet, there is no connection between the two powers.

**Angela**

A golden stream of light travels from my head through my heart to the ground. A dark, sad, angry man appears. I send him the gold light. He smiles. I feel released. The golden light goes through my veins into my legs and down into my feet. Warmth spreads throughout my body.

**Karin**

I see many hands stretching and trying to get hold of the stream of heart energy.

A national trauma, much like an individual one, contains an opportunity for growth for a whole nation. The way the collective deals with it determines the circumstances and the length of the potential healing process. Of course, this presumes that, as in individual therapy, a nation becomes aware of the trauma and turns towards it consciously accepting it with courage and heart. Given these, I believe that national traumata can indeed be transformed through the healing power of the heart.

## Transpersonal Perspectives of Subpersonality Work

Contained in the psychodynamic structures of our psyche are all the qualities, both negative and positive, which represent our potential for growth. The traumata which occur in the prenatal and early childhood periods through environment and heredity create our inner dynamic structures. Seeing traumata as our inherent potential for growth requires a new perspective: traumata and problems can remain traumata and problems, or they can be transformed into gifts. Perceiving personal suffering solely as a problem, something negative which needs to be battled or overcome, does not allow us to become aware of its hidden treasures. Each psychodynamic structure contains suffering but also potential for growth. Once these structures can be made conscious, suffering can be looked at in a different light. One may ask "What is the purpose and the goal of my suffering? What does this suffering teach me? What do I have to learn by getting to know this inner psychodynamic structure or subpersonality?"

To become aware of this and to gain another perspective on it requires a much broader and deeper perspective as well as the art of disidentification. Only then can we work with our behavioral patterns in order to grow. As we have seen the stages of growth are awareness and recognition, acceptance, coordination and transformation, integration, and synthesis. Each stage broadens our awareness and our consciousness.

The questions of the purpose of life and the purpose of personal and collective suffering in this world are existential ones. Yet this suffering takes on a different meaning once our perspective is broadened and changed: The seemingly rigid and often destructive psychodynamic structures in our psyche are waiting to be transformed and released from their suffering. Since these inner patterns determine our outer behavior, change can only be made from the inside out.

The gift of growth is hidden within the process of transformation and answers the question regarding the purpose and meaning of life. Suffering transformed brings other qualities into conscious daily living. Each process of transformation contains the element of change. Inner growth and expansion of consciousness, then, are one continuous change. Growth is a gradual refinement of the quality of life and of our inner and outer values. The process of embracing and transforming traumata is a step by step one on the way to wholeness. Experiencing this, it becomes possible for the individual to acknowledge suffering as purposeful, as something which tries to call attention to itself in order to be healed. Suffering does hold our attention! From this

perspective each transformation can be understood as a step on our personal evolutionary ladder. Actually reaching the goal becomes relatively unimportant. What takes precedence instead is the quality of the transformational path which can refine our quality of life through inner transformation.

Seeing the composition of the inner psychodynamic structures, their purpose, suffering and pain, their joys and needs and the storehouse of energy that they in fact are leads to a yearning for our deeper qualities to be manifested and lived. To honor this is to cooperate with their true and deep desires.

Each of us has a "Self," a deep inner wisdom or spiritual center. This "Self" tries to realize and express itself through us as individuals. Its aim is to transform the quality of life to the point where unlimited growth becomes possible. This allows for vast learning and for an untellable expansion of consciousness into even vaster realms of the Self only hinted at here.

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## NOTES TO THE EXERCICES

### *Inner Role Play*

A combination of techniques taken from different schools synthesized by Margret Rueffler. Examples for these exercises were provided by first year training participants in Body/Psychosynthesis.

### *Tracing Subpersonalities*

This exercise is based on a psychosynthesis exercise by Molly Brown.

### *Getting Acquainted with Our Inner Actors*

An exercise dating from the training of Margret Rueffler at the Psychosynthesis Institute in New York.

### *The Center and Our Parts*

An adapted exercise originally described by Heidi Sloan, Synthesis 3-4.

### *The Temple of Silence*

An adapted exercise originally described by Tom Yeomans.

### *Dialoguing with Subpersonalities*

The examples shown were provided by participants in the training group in Body/Psychosynthesis.

### *Recognizing Distorted Qualities*

The exercise was developed by Margret Rueffler. The examples are from first year participants in the training group in Body/Psychosynthesis.

*Autistic-Symbiotic Phase, Individuation and Practicing Phase*

This exercise has been developed by Margret Rueffler. The examples are given by second year participants in training in Transpersonal Psychology and Counseling.

*Individual Emotional Archives*

The two examples are from clients in private practice with Margret Rueffler.

*Psychological Heritage and Personal Empowerment*

The example is a story of a client in private practice with Margret Rueffler.

*Collective Traumata*

These exercises have been developed by Margret Rueffler. The examples are given by seminar participants in Berlin in their first year of training in Body/Psychoanalysis.

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