

From soma to psyche. The journey of the Sapiens

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"That which I say 'I', therefore, that is, the soul for which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body, and is indeed all the more easily known, so that, even if the body did not exist, it would not cease to be all that it is" (Descartes, 1637, pp. 23-4).

"Could it be that the primordial function that we are trying to conceptualize would have its origin in a single band that would be in the middle between two worlds, the psychological and the biological? Yes, it is possible. ... could we think (...) of a beta function on whose functioning the development and stability of the alpha function would depend? Here too, yes, it is possible" (Ribeiro, Ferrari, 1975, pp. 198-9).

"I know from tradition that in High Antiquity authentic men lived: they took possession of Heaven and Earth, they held ying and yang in their hands, they inhaled and exhaled the essences and blows, firm in themselves thanks to the custody of the Spirits, they realized unity in their flesh" (Rochat De La Vallée, Larre, 2018, p. 49).

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Abstract - for all contributions

Ferrari's psychoanalytic hypothesis is based on the idea that the mind acquires the drive for its own evolution from the body. From this approach also derives the idea that disharmonious balances can be created between the components of the individual system, especially between the body dimension and the psychic dimension, which are in mutual relation, and sometimes also that a rediscovered balance of the body can help a path of recovery in states of mental suffering. The experience that Fausta

Romano has been developing for some time, searching for practices that can accompany the path between analyst and analysand can be placed in this framework. After several attempts, the practice of Tai Chi Chuan, an ancient Chinese martial art in which balance and mental centering is fundamental, has been considered suitable to promote some initiatives to support the analysis. The following articles illustrate: the development of Ferrari's hypothesis and thought, resulting from a constant study and theoretical/clinical research with the group of colleagues at the Institute, together with other Brazilian and French psychoanalysts interested in the subject; the personal journey carried out by Fausta Romano with Tai Chi Chuan, and the one made by some analysands; the results of the seminar with other therapists conducted by Anna Siniscalco, and assisted by Fausta Romano herself; an article by Anna Siniscalco on the origin and meaning of Tai Chi Chuan and an article by Roberto Seghetti, on the inseparable relationship between mental balance and body balance in Eastern martial arts as the result of a very ancient thought which, unlike what happened in the Western world with the clear separation between soma and psyche, has ended up permeating the Chinese mental universe, from medicine to philosophy, from military strategy to family life. Each contribution, although signed in a personal capacity, was nevertheless the result of an exchange of ideas and collaboration between the three authors who consider teamwork and mutual cooperation to be of great scientific value.

Key words: body/mind, Tai Chi Chuan, Yin/Yang, group, comparison/integration, experience.

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Soma and psyche

Harmony and conflict: a history of reciprocity (1)

Fausta Romano

'The first object for the newborn is not the mother nor the mother's breast, but it is the baby's own hunger' (Ferrari A.B. 1992)

According to Ferrari, a relationship starts from the very first breath, in which the body generates the mind and the body accompanies us until death. It is a relationship that experiences different events in life and implies searching for harmony. In this relationship, conflict is never completely pacified. Periodically, the bodily dimension will tend to emerge from the *eclipsy* in which the mind must be able to place it, in order to facilitate adapting to life: adolescence, with the catastrophic changes started by the dramatic and radical body transformations; pregnancy; giving birth; the transformations connected to the passing of time, which are first seen on the body; illnesses and healing, etc.; all these things challenge the mind, which would naturally tend towards order and stillness, to find adjustments and new balances.

For us Westerners, coming from a thousand-year-old culture, in which body and soul are clearly separate, and even in contrast, this relationship has become more and more lacerating, as the world has established a vision that erases the existence of the body as it is (including death, illness, aging, diseases or simple limitations) in favour of being psychologically and physically young, beautiful, able, successful and tending to be unchanging over time.

The result of this laceration is a suffering that is often dramatic and produces extraordinary pain, which can be tackled and eased through a clinical practice leading to the rediscovery of *having* a body and *being* a body. This is a process that concerns psychoanalysis and, for this very reason, it is also and inevitably the analyst before the analysand who starts a relationship without preconceptions, a relationship built through doing and which produces results for both.

In this context, using instruments to support, integrate and accompany the psychoanalysis that can awaken the awareness of being and having a body, as some Eastern disciplines teach, as well as working on harmonizing the basic relationship in our life, could be decisive for both the analyst and the analysand.

Among the different disciplines that I have encountered and experienced, Tai Chi Chuan proved to be the one that produces the most encouraging results, both on myself and on various analysands who gradually tried it.

Among the most recent psychoanalysts, starting with the theories of Freud and M. Klein and through his collaboration with W.R. Bion, Armando B. Ferrari has recovered the body dimension in the psychoanalytic thought and practice as the foundation for the development of the mental function (Carignani, 2006).

His hypothesis, which places the body dimension as the origin of mental functioning and as its first and only object, comes mainly from his studies as a psychoanalyst and from his clinical experience.

He defined this hypothesis as the Concrete Original Object:

Concrete, because its main characteristic is being concrete.

Original, because the mind originates from it and because it includes the originality of each one of us.

Object, because the body is the only 'object' of the mind

More precisely, the body is, at the same time, concreteness in its essential reality and symbolism, as we represent our own body to ourselves.

An anarchist partisan in his youth, Armando B. Ferrari was an anthropologist and psychoanalyst (2), a scholar of Freud and Melanie Klein. He met W.R. Bion in Brazil in 1973, when he was invited to give lectures and clinical seminars at the Psychoanalytical Societies of São Paulo and Brasilia (3). There what we could define as a fruitful and unrepeatable experience of collaboration between these two great thinkers and psychoanalysts began (Romano, 2016i). In those years and during this collaboration, Ferrari wrote an article for the Brazilian Journal of Psychoanalysis in which we can find the essence of what would later take shape as the *eclipse of the body hypothesis* (Ferrari, 1992).

In this article, Ferrari wrote "...in Bion's hypothesis would the *beta elements* be mental elements produced by a defect in the *alpha function*? Or are they primary phenomena of the mind that existed prior to the alpha function and that should be processed by it?" (Ferrari, Ribeiro, 1975 p. 195).

Ferrari discussed this point with Bion who "did not oppose the conceptualisation of *beta elements* as something that pre-exists the *alpha function* and referred to the importance of "the animal part as a large component of the human being". (...) Bion (1962) considered bursts of movements as a way in which the mind rids itself of *beta elements* when the *alpha function* is unaltered; here, we should ask ourselves: are *beta elements* simple products of a failure of the *alpha function*? Or are they primordial elements of an animal and psychobiological nature that may or may not be subject to elaboration by the *alpha function*? In Bion's studies, these issues are not clarified (...). Is it known that if a higher function is altered, a lower function can emerge in a more active form; could it be that the origin of the primordial function that we are trying to conceptualise is located in a single area in the middle of two realms, the psychological and the biological? Yes, it could. If it were possible to confirm this hypothesis, could one, even in an abstract way, think of a *beta function*, on the functioning of which the development and stability of the alpha function would depend? Also in this case, yes, it could be so." (Ferrari, Ribeiro, , pp 198-199). It is possible to already foresee in this paper the hypothesis that Ferrari would be developing and articulating in the years to come, up until his death in 2006. According to this hypothesis, the human being must confront the complexity of sensations and perceptions emerging from the body dimension and orient himself within this complex world right from his first breath (Ferrari A.B., 1992, 1994, 1998, 2005). The mental function, at first immanent in the body dimension, immediately begins its function, through the perception and recording of sensory data, of progressively decreasing their intensity. Ferrari defined this function as an *eclipse of the body*, indicating the process of shading the intensity of sensations and perceptions emerging from the body dimension. The progressive development of the psychic function tends to shade the body dimension in order to allow the complex psycho-

physical functioning to begin. Shade, but never turning off, because it is precisely from the body dimension that sensations and perceptions continue to emerge, pushing to be represented and conceivable.

Mental functions must be continually realigned with body functions.

Considering the terms body and mind, excessively laden with multiple and confusing meanings, and, instead, wanting to refer rather to the dynamic and procedural aspect of the relationship between mind and body, Ferrari chose to define the bodily function with the term Onefold and the mental function with the term Twofold, to indicate that it is the Onefold function (the *beta function*, as hypothesised in the article of 1975) that exerts pressure to activate the Twofold function (the *alpha function*), the purpose of which is to shade (or eclipse), without ever completely obscuring it, what comes from the Onefold dimension.

This complex operation is mediated and made initially possible by the presence of the mother (or any caregiver), who performs the important function of a *catalyst* of the psycho-physical needs expressed by the newborn baby.

This means that, according to this hypothesis, the first object of the newborn are no longer the mother or her breast, but it is *his own hunger*, the sensations emerging from his body and therefore the potential meanings are present inside him and not in the 'other': it is not the mother (or any caregiver) who knows what the baby needs, but the newborn baby himself. It is not the mother who holds the key to his needs and meanings, but it is the child, whose task is to signal and manifest his own needs, while the mother's task is to listen, to be attuned starting from her own corporeity.

If we observe the behaviour of animals, in mammals, during lactation, the mother offers herself to her cubs: she stays, she is at their disposal, whilst they actively look for her and rush around her nipples, looking for nourishment.

And if we observe the newborn baby without interfering, we may find the same behaviour. The child, placed next to the mother's body, is able to climb onto her, looking for something that is already known to him: the colostrum produced by the mother has the same smell as the amniotic fluid, and hunger, the survival instinct, push him to look for what he needs to live.

According to Ferrari, the relationship between body and mind, between the Onefold and its Twofold, begins right from our birth, from that very first breath, and will take place through alternate events and through ways that are more or less harmonious or not harmonious at all, until the last moment of life. A relationship that is always more or less conflicting; a conflict that, while constantly tending towards the search for harmony, can never be completely pacified except by death itself. A share, even if minimal, of conflict between Onefold and Twofold will constitute that differential of potential necessary for thought and, I would say, for life itself to take place. It is from the comparison between difference and similarity that thought, knowledge and life can arise.

As this dynamic relationship occurs within the individual, throughout their entire existence, the Onefold, the body dimension, will periodically tend to emerge from the *eclipse* and the Twofold will periodically be urged towards the search for new balances, towards a new *eclipse*: adolescence, with the catastrophic change set in

motion by the sudden and radical transformations that occur within the body; pregnancy; childbirth; the transformations related to the passage of time that are evident first of all in the body; states of illness and healing, etc. ... all these challenge the Twofold, the nature of which tends towards order and calm and towards the search for adjustments and new balances.

We could say that every day, in every moment of our lives, the emerging mental function unfolds from our corporeity and the balance that derives from this dynamic relationship is not always and not immediately the best possible balance.

It is necessary, as I said, to align the mind with the body in a dynamic process of continuous research.

Especially in our Western culture, there is an increasingly dangerous and growing dichotomy between the two poles of this relationship: the mind is increasingly inclined to overwhelmingly dominate its own body, ignoring its signals and its demands, and giving rise to a dichotomous polarization aimed at eliminating the co-presence of opposites.

A logical/discursive use of mental functions, detaches and separates, instead of interconnecting, in an attempt to simplify what is complex. A mind that rejects the signs in the body of the passing of time, of vulnerability and finiteness, a mind that ceases to learn from the experience of a body that is instead a mind in itself, with its extraordinarily sensitive systems, a body which is able to distinguish, differentiate, select what is functional to its own life from what is not. First of all, the immune system, which is capable of distinguishing the Self from the Non-Self and of activating itself to expel what is considered a threat to the body. And this is how we realize that we have a friend, our body, when it emerges, sometimes even violently, from the *eclipse*, through pain and illness.

So, perhaps, we can stop limiting ourselves to *being a body*, and realizing that we *have a body*. We will then begin to deal with it, as if forced by necessity, at first with fear and also to quickly return to the status quo... it sometimes takes time for us to discover that we have a faithful and intelligent friend in our system: our body. We can start to turn to it with respect, attention and curiosity.

Between the body and the mind in the context of the analytic relationship

So every day, in my clinical work, I meet people lost in a more or less serious and deep condition of disharmony in their system. In the internal separation between omnipotence and impotence, between illusion and disillusionment, between Onefold and Twofold, the hatred of disappointment, the anguish and sometimes panic, they all saturate these people's minds and are a hindrance to their lives.

I am therefore preparing myself, in the attempt to awaken in them the *curiosity about themselves* and about their own way of functioning, to lead those lost minds back to a new relationship with their body; most of the time it is a matter of helping them to realize that they *are a body* and that they *have a body*, that they are unity in otherness, to find the root of their being and of their knowledge of themselves and of the world in their body.

Abandoning illusion and opening up to hope.
The body dimension is usually my ally in carrying out this function.

For example:

During a session my eyes fall on the ankles of the analysand, who had a serious heart complaint since birth, which were swollen and huge. I ask her what she knew about this swelling and it emerged that the woman has such a way of addressing the doctors who are treating her, that they consider her complaints about her symptoms to be the effect of her anxiety. So, her complaining about her swollen ankles was not considered a reason for further examinations. After talking about it in our session, the patient contacted her cardiologist again and this time she asked more forcefully to be examined. In this way, they can intervene for an initial congestive heart failure.

This episode leads us to reflect, in the following sessions, on her own confusion between the concreteness of her disorders and her anxieties about a body that involves so many impediments in her life, so that she has to deal with its finiteness and vulnerability daily.

She begins to consider that the possibility of taking care of herself, starting from her vulnerability, may be the basis for a life in which, as well as the pain and illness, could also appear pleasure.

In another situation of very serious obesity in a patient with bulimic functioning, overloaded with hypochondriac anxieties, a temporary visual disturbance caused him such an anxiety over the thing he feared the most, blindness, that he decided to go to a dietician and a personal trainer to start taking care of his overweight condition. The analytic work done so far has supported and activated that drive within him that leads to the healing and well-being of the whole person, through a reduction of claustrophobic and agoraphobic anxieties which, together with a deep anguish for his vulnerability and finiteness, had saturated his mental space for a long time. But even if the progress of the analysis had achieved this result, it had not yet been possible for him to decide to concretely address the problem of being overweight, which was now seriously threatening the balance in his body.

And here, I could mention many cases in which at a some point in the analytic work, problems related to the body represented the key to developing an attitude of care and respect for one's own life.

I think that in order for analysts to carry out this function, it is necessary that they themselves are able to take care of their own inner dialogue, in their vertical axis (Ferrari, 1992): between their perceptions, sensations, emotions about thoughts, between their body and their mind and between their Onefold and their Twofold, so that they can continuously align their mind with their body.

Ferrari defined this process (1983, 1986) as the analyst's *returning to himself*, distinguishing this movement from the other, which is present in the analytic relationship: the analysand's *approaching himself*.

This means that in their analytic relationship, the analyst and analysand both bring in their own world of emotions, experience, knowledge, in order to build together something that is new, new for both (4): the analyst, listening to what the analysand

says and manifests, turns continuously towards all that urges in him, in his feeling and perceiving, keeping his own knowledge in the background, and *returns to himself*, enriched by the relationship with the other. The analyst's function is to transform all this into a pertinent and plausible formulation with what is emerging, to be proposed to the analysand, who is responsible for accepting it, rejecting it or transforming it again. This movement, this 'vertente', is defined as *returning to oneself*, since it is assumed that, as a result of training and experience, analysts are already able, having done so many times, to listen to what emerges from their own feeling and perception, based on their own knowledge that will emerge ad hoc, perhaps reassuring, but also impeding the perception and experience, if used *a priori*. That of the analysand is defined as *approaching*, because it is assumed that he asks for help precisely because he has lost the way with regard to this dialogue with himself and he relies upon the analyst's proposal, like a thread around which he can gather what is emerging from his own world, in order to be able to see, touch, observe and finally represent and think.

This means that precisely because we are able to know the world through our sensory and emotional experience alone, that is, through our subjectivity, which is first of all contained in the context of our corporeity, the relationship is configured as equal in its asymmetry. Equal inasmuch as both analyst and analysand *know* about themselves. Asymmetrical inasmuch as the analysand presumably *doesn't know that he knows* about himself, while the analyst already knows how to use the dialogue with himself as an tool of investigation, experience and knowledge. Equal inasmuch as the analyst's knowledge can in no way constitute a priori knowledge and it does not give him any power over the analysand. The analyst accesses the analytic encounter by forgetting or putting his own knowledge to the back of his mind and aligns himself, like the analysand, towards the new and towards the unknown, at every encounter. Asymmetrical inasmuch as the analyst has already used his cognitive tools several times, while the analysand is discovering them during the course of the encounter. Both contribute to the construction of something new, each one for their own part, they build together a dialogue, an experiencing, they build ad hoc communicative codes in common, both can come out of each session transformed by the experience of the meeting through a dialogue that both have built, together, each one through their own contribution and that of the other.

I believe that the deep essence and transformative value of the analytic relationship lies in this ability to tolerate *not knowing* and to encounter what has not yet been discovered at each session. In this sense, the object of the analytic relationship is the relationship itself (Ferrari 1983; Garroni, Ferrari, 1979).

Just as it is not the mother who holds the knowledge about the needs and meanings in the infant's psycho-physical world, so the analyst cannot presume to know what is happening within the analysand: in both cases it is a matter of being willing to listen to what is happening within oneself in the encounter with the other, in order to search for a proposition, a rough answer, which will be up to the other to accept or reject. As I said, being there, in the *hic et nunc*, available.

Ultimately, it is always about meeting oneself through the other. And this *other* performs the fundamental and indispensable function of facilitator of the encounter with oneself.

I believe that this represents the profound meaning of the statement that today risks becoming a slogan: "enter every encounter without memory and without desire".

"Abandoning memory, desire, understanding and the use of preconceptions. Each session always represents the first day of analysis. Do not remember the previous sessions, leaving them to remind you spontaneously and do not desire the patient's cure (...) Get into a state of reverie in order to be at the highest level of receptivity with respect to your own (analyst's) unconscious emotional resonances with the patient's emotions and be optimally able to recruit them (...) freely use speculative imagination and speculative reasoning (...)" (Bion 1970, p. 46).

It is a matter of entering every encounter with the analysand by concentrating the maximum of one's perceptive and listening capacity, with the maximum of awareness: awareness of oneself in the encounter with the other, in the *here and now* of each session.

During a conversation that I had the privilege of having with a Buddhist Lama, in which I asked him if, in this statement of Bion's, we could recognize some similarity with his way of understanding time, in its articulation between present, past and future, he replied: "The wise Seneca says: - In reality it is not true that we have little time, rather we waste a lot of it-. *The analyst should have access to the session without memory and without desire*: if he manages to accomplish this ideal, he is already an enlightened being! In reality, this is the result of advanced and well realized meditation. In the tradition of the school, of which I am a part, this is called *mahamudra*, that is, *great symbol* or even *great gesture*. It is the mind in its state of rest, in which it experiences the inner freedom that allows it to observe the nature of all things (...) To reach this state, the therapist must achieve the *wisdom that surpasses any concept*, thus understanding the unity of *clarity (or luminosity) and emptiness*" (Romano, Siniscalco, 2019; 2020).

Emptiness means freedom from a priori ideas and preconceptions. A void, therefore, full of attention and presence, which increases and extends the possibilities of perception.

This concept strongly reminds me of the necessity Freud was talking about: to be artificially blinded in order to be able to see better in the dark areas of the mind. Or the night vision, to which Grotstein refers, characterized by the ability of the human eye to see in darkness, moving the focus laterally to the object being observed. That *ray of intense darkness*, which is necessary in order to be able to look at and perceive what would be otherwise obscured by a ray of blinding light.

This is the question: can this specific way for analysts to prepare themselves be an object of learning? What Bion called *réverie*. Can one learn this capacity of awareness of oneself?

If the term refers to the mother/infant relationship, we might think that the mother's body dimension should be naturally and biologically willing to be attuned to what

comes from the infant's body dimension, giving rise to this special kind of attention that lies between the body and the mind.

But how do the analysts achieve the activation of this type of attention? What can help to promote its development?

First of all, undoubtedly their training, their personal analysis combined with clinical experience, which, if understood as we are describing it, is itself transformed into a form of self-analysis, through which they continuously transform their own experience of life and experience as an analyst. They constitute the field of development and experience for practicing this capacity of awareness: awareness of oneself and of one's own feeling, perceiving, thinking, in the relationship with the other.

It is necessary to learn both to be an observer and to be observed at the same time.

I believe it is about accompanying one's mind towards a continuous encounter with one's own body dimension, context and origin of the emotional and perceptive sphere, seeking, in this encounter, the way to open up in a broader and deeper way to one's own capacity for perception and intuition, to which Freud first and then Bion and Ferrari referred.

How can the analyst effectively support the analysand towards the possibility of encountering and accepting his own body dimension if he or she, in turn, ignores or does not accept the limits of his or her own corporeity?

Breathing: how many of us are aware that we are breathing? And how many times a day?

"Do you realize you are breathing?" I asked an analysand, whose way of living and speaking is so rushed that I find it very difficult focus during the analytic dialogue.

"In Eastern thinking life consists of a single respiratory act: we inhale when we are born, we breathe out while dying. We can be aware of our breathing while we are moving: the mind guides the movement, but breathing gives the rhythm and has its own circularity. "(Anna Siniscalco, personal communication). Breathing, the way we breathe, tells us about ourselves and constitutes the true connection with ourselves and with the outside world.

In a way, the psychic function resides first of all in the rhythm of breathing.

My personal experience over the years has led me to discover how little and badly we breathe and how fundamental it is to learn how to breathe and to be aware of it, to meet oneself, to manage the body's perceptions and signals and to calm the mind.

Learning to breathe in order to manage pain and to diminish it, for example, during childbirth, to anchor oneself to rhythmic and calibrated breathing in order to administer energy and calm the mind in painful moments; to realize that one should be breathing during a physical effort, instead of holding one's breath, as I discover at every second while practicing Tai Chi Chuan and while I am engaged in a dialogue or in listening in the context of the analytic relationship. Realising that the better we breathe the greater the sense of well-being and mental lucidity we have.

Remembering to breathe, to move one's body, learning to recognize its signals, respect its needs and dialogue with what is emerging from inside it in terms of sensations, perceptions, emotions, to modulate one's posture, which is constantly

changing, in the continuous tension of listening, and more ... are these not the basis in order to realize that when an analysand enters the analysis room, it is first of all a body that enters, occupying and filling the meeting space, a body that is not always loved and respected nor considered by the individual who inhabits it?

If I myself, in my analytic capacity, do not experience what it means for me to search for my centre, to lose it and find it again several times during the day, if I do not know how much my muscles contract or relax, also according to what is happening in the *here and now* of the meeting, and so much more, will I be able to draw the analysand's attention towards listening, becoming curious and interested in what he or she is there for, alive, in the flesh, in front of me?

The clinical psychoanalytic practice between East and West

In Eastern thought and philosophy, the search for a balance between the physical and mental dimension has been based on ancient knowledge and experience for thousands of years. Long before our evidence-based medicine, they knew how to stimulate intelligent bodily functions, such as the immune system, the elasticity of the muscular and skeletal system and cardiovascular functioning. They also knew that all this requires special mental attention and that it stimulates a capacity for awareness and perception. Many things can be done by our brain, if properly stimulated, and they already knew this thousands of years ago... in the West, we are perhaps beginning to approach this knowledge today.

In that ancient culture, the individual is seen as a complex whole, in which unity and otherness coexist and tend towards harmony. The human being is considered to be a link between the earth and the universe, deeply-rooted to the earth and, at the same time, connected to the universe that surrounds and dominates us.

During my clinical experience, which began years ago in the Mental Health Services, in accordance with the Basaglia law in 1980, in close contact with people who were enduring very deep and intense mental suffering, aggravated by many years of confinement in asylums, I became aware of the need to find methods of therapeutic relationship marked by a certain concreteness, where the words had often lost their communicative power. I have since then realized the risk, implicit in the role of the analyst, of recourse to processes of intellectualisation, and of getting lost in the fascination of one's own theories, that takes us away from an even vague possibility of perceiving who we are and to whom we are trying to relate.

So, I often found myself inventing uncodified methods, in an attempt to approach people whose mental functioning seemed unknown and complex, not so easily reducible to the nosographic diagnostic categories provided by psychiatry and also by a certain way of understanding psychoanalytic thought.

Inventing in the field, in order to try to contain the anguish of not knowing, in the presence of the new and the unknown.

The focus was primarily on how to use words. Words can open the way to rationalisation and intellectualisation, or they can themselves be concrete, a vehicle of experience towards knowledge. Words can have sound, color, smell and can touch or

create a distance, they can caress or hit hard; in a certain sense, the word is itself corporeality. .

But sometimes words are still insufficient.

It is not enough to understand the profile of the analysand's mental functioning. It is then also necessary to find out how to propose, how to approach that suffering, which sometimes seems like "being perpetually immersed in a pan of boiling oil", as one of my youngest analysands said. The only solution he found appeared to be suicide - to end it all. Even the drug he was taking was of little use, and its effect was transitory.

Moved by the need to *give body* to my role as analyst, although always based on the word and its fundamental tool, I continued to search other disciplines for something that would allow me to integrate and expand my analytic training and, at the same time, to improve my psycho-physical functioning, to offer a practical way to what I am studying in the context of my clinical practice.

I practised the discipline of Yoga for several years, undoubtedly drawing personal benefit from it, but failing to find a connection with the clinical practice.

I then came across a very ancient Chinese art: Tai Chi Chuan, the therapeutic value of which has been recognized by the World Health Organization. It emerged in China as a self-defense martial art and has its roots in the Taoist philosophy and the Buddhist thought.

I have been practising this discipline for some years now, specifically the form created in China by the Yang family. This line of Tai Chi Chuan bears the name of the Yang family that codified it over time, transmitting its traditional form from father to son. Because of its characteristics of simplicity and clarity, which distinguish it from other Tai Chi Chuan styles, it is the most widespread in the West and has been the subject of the largest number of studies oriented towards its application in medical and psycho-emotional therapies. (see *Soma Psyche. The dynamic balance. Origin and meaning of Tai Chi Chuan* by Anna Siniscalco)

The first principle, on which the exercise of this discipline rests, invites us to empty our mind from everything that is occupying it, so as to focus completely on the awareness in *the here and now*: in order to move your body, you should align your mind with it, careful to eliminate any tension and placing every part of the body in active and vigilant relaxation, so that every movement is more precise and directed by intention rather than by force. It is the ability to concentrate on oneself, to maximize the capacity for attention and presence of mind. It is the ability to be aware of where one's own centre is located in each movement, in the space in which it finds itself, to look for it, find it and lose it, and then find it again, in a dynamic continuum. 'Centring', the preparation before starting the practice, is essential in this discipline.

I was surprised, at first, because I thought I was taking care of my body, I then "felt at home": it is impossible not to feel a connection with the "without memory and without desire" to which Bion invites the analyst in every new encounter with the analysand. A connection and, I would perhaps say, an expansion of the same principle. An expansion towards the relationship between mind and body.

The whole structure of Taoist philosophy is based on the distinction and coexistence of opposites, first of all the unifying principle of Yin/Yang, feminine and masculine energy, distinct from each other and united in a whole, each one containing a fragment of the other within it: *otherness in unity*. And then other opposites, such as the full with the empty, tranquility with movement, the soft with the hard, and more. In my clinical practice, I often find myself observing and pointing out how the coexistence of opposites in one's own psycho-physical system, such as life and death, love and hate, joy and sadness, pleasure and pain, etc., if accepted in their apparent contradiction, can allow people to give body, depth and colour to their life, and diminish fear, to the point of being able to tolerate ignorance, unpredictability, vulnerability and finiteness.

The relational encounter between those who, in this martial art, are defined as opponents and not fighters, is based on the ability to listen, on the intuition of one towards the other, and on the ability to accept the energy expressed by the movement of the other, to transform and redirect it, to protect oneself without aiming at attacking. Ultimately, to better and more deeply meet with one's own personal way of placing themselves through this encounter.

I seem to be able to see a parallel here with a certain way of understanding the analyst-analysand relationship, in which the priority is the analyst's ability to take care of his own mind, a fundamental instrument in his clinical practice, and at the same time of the relationship with another individual by himself or herself. A relationship with a therapeutic value, which consists first of all of the ability to initiate *transformative* processes in both participants.

Tai Chi Chuan is the extending of the founding principles of Taoist philosophy and Buddhist philosophy into practice. The constant call to observe oneself during the practice of this discipline also makes it a form of meditation in movement. Learning to move the body not based on the use of force, but on the exercise of intentionality: giving direction to movement and action, through a progressive abandonment of muscular and mental tensions, it all makes possible to gather the maximum energy in every movement. This energy is activated and strengthened first of all within the system (body and mind), and it is not dissipated outwards through, for example, a posture that challenges one's own limits.

"In practising this discipline, internal movement and vital energy are activated. There is solicitation and activation of keeping the mind focused on what you are doing, consequently activating and calming it. In order to achieve balance, during practice, we seek balance in the position, in standing, avoiding excessive effort, in the understanding that we can *do it without exhaustion*. This progressive acquisition is gained more and more consciously also as a capacity for relationship: what is built within this circle that tends towards a balance, neither fixed nor static, in a second phase expands outwards and helps us to maintain the balance without exceeding, in order to maintain a mental and even physical balance" Anna Siniscalco (personal communication) (5).

Therefore, willingness to change: we are mutants, we change continuously. Our mind tends to seek affinities and similarities, in order to obtain calm and reassurance, disturbed by discontinuity and in search of continuity.

But it is differences that cause thought to arise.

On the contrary, in the effort to avoid the friction generated by the collision with what is different, fear, anguish and pain can only increase. I would say that, in this sense, we generate trauma ourselves, when we build supposed certainties, rigid theories about the world and about ourselves in our mind, while the reality of living regularly shows us their limits and sometimes their ineffectiveness.

It is not the earthquake that generates the trauma, it is not death or illness itself, but the claim that everything must always be firm, stable, unchanging, eternal, which is not possible in reality.

Facing and tolerating pain is necessary, but it is when we are unable to do so that anguish appears and we talk about trauma. (Freud, 1915).

Proceeding in my study of Tai Chi Chuan I seem to identify, in the practice of this discipline, both possible integration and extension of clinical work.

I find myself feeling surprised at how some analysands, who have, at a certain point, chosen to combine their analytic experience with the experience of Tai Chi Chuan, come to perceive a feeling of calm and solidity: "I feel more serene with myself, I am less afraid of not succeeding, I know I can cope even with difficult moments like those I am going through", etc..

In these cases, I have the impression that they *take shape*, that they are able to *take root within themselves*, with roots that sink deeply into the ground, even if stormy winds might temporarily ruffle the foliage of the trees.

Both the analytic experience and the practice of Tai Chi Chuan often involve a break with previous balances, towards the construction of a more harmonious and functional balance in life. Therefore, these are not simple or painless paths, but the possibility of integrating them seems to me to add quality to the experience.

Analyzands, whose system appears profoundly disharmonious, cannot access the practice of this discipline without first having partially reduced the distance between the body and the mental dimension: for example, a person cannot approach Tai Chi Chuan, if they believe that they can treat their body arrogantly, pretending to bend it to the will of the powerful, invincible, immortal mind. I met analysands who, through practices such as *body building* and taking anabolic steroids, insisted upon "sculpting their bodies". Others used piercing and tattoos, in order to feel that "*that body is my body and I do what I want with it*". Or, in situations of claustrophobia/agoraphobia (which sometimes lead to anorexic and bulimic behaviour), the slowness of movement, the calm required by the practice of this discipline, the attention and concentration within oneself and in the movement of one's body, prove to be sources of intolerable anguish.

For example, to an analysand, in a situation of dispersion and deep anxiety, whose main symptom was an a-finalistic and disorderly way of doing things, without direction or intentionality, the hypothesis that a discipline such as Tai Chi could help them to build a more harmonious balance with himself, proved to be useless. During

the only session he managed to attend, the anxiety about being urged to get into unusual and *finalized* positions in movement rose to the point of increasing his feeling of inadequacy and he decided to stop immediately.

In fact, it also happens that during the practice of Tai Chi Chuan, concurrently with the experience of deconstructing previous physical (and consequently mental) balances, moments of anxiety and anguish may emerge and cannot always be controlled by the mental function available and it can be useful to integrate that experience with the beginning of an analytic experience.

I believe that, in the example that follows, we can instead find some useful hints regarding the consideration of the encounter and integration between analytic experience within the hypothesis of the Original Concrete Object and the practical way to achieve integration between mind and body represented by Tai Chi Chuan.

"I went from one side to the other, in one night! Time didn't exist for me, now I feel as if I have aged twenty years. I have so much time for myself now, but I'm caught up in emotions that change continuously."

This is what a woman who has hemiparesis after a stroke says. In the context of the analytic relationship, I acknowledge the pain of her dependence due to her bodily impairment, she who had always taken care of everyone and who could run here and there in the pursuit of her duties. Pain and hatred on the one hand, the ever-growing awareness of being in a privileged situation today on the other: forced into a body that cannot move freely, now, in the great amount of time she suddenly has, she has the opportunity to look at herself. Not always with pleasure, but she understands its importance.

Alongside this, and through this, I am willing to work with her so that she can accept her body today.

The mental scenario is similar to that of a teenager, who, from one day to the next finds himself or herself having to inhabit a different and unknown body, without knowing yet how this new body functions. They both suffer a loss, even in the emotional difference that there can, of course, be between the one who faces the outcome of an impairment and the other who is opening up to countless vital potentials.

On her own initiative, alongside the rehabilitation program, carried out with the help of physiotherapists at home, the analysand decides to begin practicing Tai Chi Chuan, also at home, thanks to a suggestion made by a friend of hers.

She knew nothing about Tai Chi Chuan before, she didn't know what it was about.

Although Tai Chi Chuan and physiotherapy were welcomed in the same way at the beginning, that is as a means to come out of the hemiparesis quickly, progressively, she ends up significantly differentiating the two experiences.

Physiotherapy is in tune with her haste. The experience of Tai Chi Chuan is slow but profound.

In the context of the analytic relationship, she begins to observe that she is facing the bodily experience in the same way she faced the illness, hospitalization, resignation, and her life in general: in a challenging and omnipotent way, hasty and arrogant towards the limit imposed by the bodily condition. In this sense the paralyzed body is

equivalent to everything that disappointed her, as well as everything she would have wanted in her life and that she has not had, starting with a mother who has always felt distant and non affective. And in facing the resulting pain, she tries to use the usual defense: *I hurry to resolve, in order to avoid thinking about it, to avoid feeling.*

"Now I can paralyze myself with envy for those who have what I didn't and don't have, or I can open myself up to my desire."

From here, she begins a work by focusing on herself, through which she perceives the difference between what she can obtain from the experience of Tai Chi Chuan, in terms of self-knowledge in the broadest sense, and how much she risks to distancing herself with physiotherapy instead. So now it is much more important for her to move around in the space of her home: "The physiotherapist invited me out into the street to encourage me, but now I realize that I can't do this yet, because too many stimuli distract me from myself in the street. Here, I can pay attention to how I move and what it means for me: I realize that I perceive one side of my body to be heavier than the other and that when I raise my arms above my head, one is slower than the other: it's a reality. That's all right. I felt an intense happiness when I saw that I was able to move from one couch to another, without looking for support".

"Yesterday, Anna pointed out to me that I did the entire activity standing up... I didn't realize".

"It's very interesting to experience this and I owe it to the stroke... it seems crazy, but sometimes I think the stroke saved me."

"Or" I say "you can now use the aftermath of the stroke to do what you never did: return to yourself."

"I realize that if my mind goes beyond ... it tends to move away, I call it back to me, to where I am, to my body. Before, I was unable to stop, neither physically nor mentally... I used to light a cigarette during breaks, so as not to feel, I think. I didn't even listen, I asked a question and didn't wait for the answer, I just couldn't"

I am under the impression that the two contexts of experience, the analytic one and the one of practising Tai Chi Chuan, integrate within this person and allow her to transform a condition of dramatic loss of physical integrity into an opportunity to meet herself, to accept her limits and to know her potential. The analytic work encounters moments of pain because she is no longer able to freely frequent her loved ones, moments of nostalgia because of her lost autonomy, moments in which it appears more possible to accept a condition of depending on others.

In our session she reflects and observes her way of dealing with herself and the world, she finds a way of speaking about sensations, feelings and perceptions; in her practice of Tai Chi, she concretely experiences how the mind can align itself with her moving body, and how this contributes to increasing a feeling of calm within her, how her perception of time is modified and how she learns to respect herself.

"I realize now that I have always believed that I have so many relationships with people, but I was actually isolated, because I wasn't there for myself... now I realize that first I have to get to myself and then I can really meet someone else. A slow pace is actually an asset.

I feel fragile. It's as if I need to grow up... I'm young at heart".

It seems to me that my role is to welcome the testimony of a woman who, through illness and through the discovery of a new way of moving in space, is meeting herself for the first time.

The analytical and practical functions of Tai Chi Chuan converge towards the development of the self-observation function: the ability of body perception and emotional perception expand, amplifying within her the mental space necessary to focalize what emerges from her. The practical way of doing things continuously calls the mind to the bodily dimension, through the fragmentation of complex, learned and memorized movements into small units. The effort of memorizing new movements stimulates the activation of areas of the brain and flows into an increase of curiosity towards herself and the possibility of accepting the limit imposed by the condition of illness, progressively reducing the will to challenge and overcome it. The limit becomes more and more a useful and faithful friend.

In the context of the sessions, accepting feelings, doubts, fears and moments of discouragement, all allows the analysand to be more and more willing to accept and distinguish new body perceptions and new thoughts.

The suicidal ideas that crossed her mind in the first period after returning home from the long hospitalization are now a memory. Today, the possibility of accepting help at home, which in the beginning meant, in her mind that her family "want to get rid of me, putting a caregiver at home... I don't want her, I'll do it alone, I can do everything by myself!" is now less intolerable.

The particular sensitivity and vital energy expressed by this woman help us to focus on the possibilities and limits of this work of integration between the two disciplines, which is still pioneering in our Western culture, while in China, where this discipline emerged, Tai Chi Chuan is an integral part of their culture and is also practised in hospitals, as we saw in the recent case of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I believe I can observe that, over time, my approach to analytical work gains solidity and complexity, also through my experience of myself while learning this discipline. My language, my capacity for attention and listening to what I perceive and think in the relationship with others are enriched and deepened, as well as my attention towards myself and the signals that come from my body: breathing, posture, movements, attitudes, tone of voice, etc....

At the same time, I perceive the limits of the analytical tool more clearly and I have the impression that, in some cases, I can accompany the analysand to a limit beyond which the hypothetical possibility of accessing the practical and concrete experience of the relationship between the body and mental dimensions would contribute to increasing the depth of the transformative processes, which was possible to set in motion through the analytical experience.

I consider it interesting and perhaps necessary for knowledge and for the advancement of clinical potential in the psychoanalytical field, to continue to research and deepen the study of this possible integration.

I found, in my initial study of the practice of this discipline, the possibility of obtaining a deeper and broader use of my clinical tools and a possibility to return to

myself enriched by the encounter with this world, the richness of which I can still only perceive through intuition today.

I think that the study and practice of this discipline can also complement the analytical training of those who are interested in the encounter between these different, but in essence also related, worlds and cultures, and I am also noticing that the integration between the analytical relationship and practice of Tai Chi Chuan can, in some cases, favour the search for a harmonious balance in one's own system.

In collaboration with Anna Siniscalco, we have collected, in the chapter dedicated to this topic, several considerations on the experience of Tai Chi Chuan with a group of psychotherapists who were attending a training course by 'A.B. Ferrari Institute', conducted by herself and in which I have the pleasure of participating.

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Notes

1) Critical and technical revision of concepts expressed in this article regarding Tai Chi Chuan by Anna Siniscalco and additions by Roberto Seghetti.

2) Armando Ferrari collaborated for several years with the anthropologist Villasboas and lived for three years in the Amazonian forest, with Indian tribes of the Alto Xingù, because he was interested in studying death rituals in those cultures. At that time Ferrari was interested in studying and deepening the Freudian concept of life instinct and death instinct, a subject on which he published two writings for the Brazilian Journal of Psychoanalysis (1967). He came to suppose that one could speak of instinct with regard to life, doubting that one could also consider death instinct as an instinct, although in many cases our mind may wish to kill the body in which it lives.

3) During an interview, when asked who his teachers were, he replied that in addition to "the supreme Freud", Melanie Klein and W. R. Bion, his teachers were the Austrian Jew Henrique Schlomann, Virginia Bicudo, from the Kleinian school, and Frank Philips, from Bion's school. But both in Brazil and in Italy he considered as "teachers" - that is, as a source of learning, sometimes even as "suppliers" of intuitions and solutions - the young or not so young students of his team, with whom he shared his work. "Our working together - together discovering and contrasting and correcting each other through frequent and sometimes lively discussions - is for me the source of my continuous enriching and perfecting myself. An opportunity to find myself also a perennial "disciple", a conditioning, if you like, within that humility which is the indispensable carburant of science (Santucci, 2010, p. 102-103).

4) "Even for the analyst, establishing an analytical relationship is in some way a novelty, in the sense that analysts and analysand present themselves with different and functionally differentiated baggage and cultural roles, but still initially present themselves to each other in a space not yet determined and structured. (...) in short: they are two strangers to each other (...) and both are given the task of elaborating something that did not exist before or did not exist in the form of that elaboration" (Ferrari, Garroni, 1979, p. 301).

5) During a lesson of the integrated course Psychoanalysis - Tai Chi Chuan, addressed to a group of psychotherapists and conducted by Anna Siniscalco, whom I have the pleasure and fortune to assist in this pioneering experience.

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She has personally experienced the Chinese discipline Tai Chi Chuan, which she has been studying and practising for about six years at the Dinamica Tai Chi Chuan e Arti Associate a.s.d association.

For the past two years she has organised an integrated training seminar (psychoanalysis and Tai Chi Chuan) in partnership with the Dinamica Tai Chi Chuan e Arti Associate a.s.d association., with other therapists from the "A.B. Ferrari" Psychoanalytic Institute for Training and Research, which will continue in the academic year 2020-2021. Starting from this experience, a training module was developed to be proposed in situations where professionals of various types are exposed to work stress and burn-out risk, such as doctors, nurses and hospital staff in general, teachers, professionals working in companies with a high risk of work tension, etc..

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Soma and psyche

The dynamic balance

Origin and sense of Tai Chi Chuan

Anna Siniscalco

Meeting and comparing

I met Dr. Romano 7 years ago, when she decided to enrol in one of the schools where I still teach Tai Chi Chuan today. After a few years of practice at my school, she started to share with me what this meant to her, in relation to her experience as a therapist.

I remember the first time she told me about Ferrari's hypothesis; what impressed and intrigued me was the centrality of the function of the relationship. Since then, we have been having a dialogue based on a comparison of our journeys that progressively highlighted the similarities and differences between Ferrari's hypothesis and his method on the one hand, and the philosophy, the principles from which Tai Chi Chuan derives and my teaching method on the other. The similarities that emerged

included the fundamental vision that everything is reflected in everything, the centrality and the function of the relationship. This is also at the core of the most recent theories and discoveries in quantum physics, biology and medicine, which largely translate the ancient Eastern philosophical thinking expressed in Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism into scientific language.

Tai Chi Chuan

The results of scientific research indicate that the benefits of the practice of Tai Chi Chuan can be traced back to its specific characteristics, which actually put into practice the philosophical theories to which it refers. The term *Taiji*, which is in the first part of the name of this Chinese art, and the Yin Yang theory appear for the first time in the *I Ching* (1). *Taiji*, which can be translated as *supreme ultimate polarity*, represents harmony, the balanced union of the two Yin Yang polarities always united in a relationship that characterised by interdependence movement and transformation, constitutes the essence of everything. The term *Chuan* which, together with *Taiji*, completes the name of this discipline is translated literally as *fist* and, by extension, takes on the meaning of *physical vehicle, method*. Tai Chi Chuan is a method and a practical way, based on the philosophical theory of *Taiji*, that allows one to develop the ability to reach an equilibrium. Practising Tai Chi Chuan activates and amplifies the system of communication and interaction that, by acting simultaneously on the perceptive, emotional, psychic, biological and neuronal levels, enables the processes of transformation and adaptation aimed at achieving new equilibriums.

The philosophical theories from which Tai Chi Chuan derives, i.e. Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, are indispensable masterpieces for the understanding and for the correct practice of Tai Chi Chuan. Among the fundamental texts, there are the classical texts of Chinese philosophy and energy theory of which the *I Ching*, the *Tao Te Ching* (2), and the *Classics of Tai Chi Chuan* (3), poetic compositions which play a fundamental role in the conservation and transmission of the knowledge and wisdom of masters of the past. Part of the Tai Chi Chuan Classics are the *10 essentials of Tai Chi Chuan* (4), orally transmitted from Yang Cheng Fu (5) to Chen Weiming (6) in the early twentieth century. Their application allows you to reach the objective of the practice: balance. They can be read by dividing them into three areas. The first area gives indications on how to structure the body; the second concerns the coordination and practice of the method, which are connected to vital energy; the third refers to the use of the mind and spirit. First, you have to regulate the body, correct the posture; then the breathing, making it natural, deep and moved by the diaphragm; then the mind will be able to calm down and thus activate its potential.

Mind, breathing and movement are united in a dynamic and interdependent relationship. In the Tai Chi Chuan movement, the mind is always engaged in guiding the body and decoding the sensations that derive from the movement, which, due to its characteristics, reflects the laws of balance and harmony expressed in philosophical theory. The body is stable and centred and so the mind, in turn, stabilises itself and is educated to be in the here and now.

This concept is expressed in different ways in the Classic texts. To name a few: *you have to master movement through quietness* (Lao Tzū, 1994); *the body moves, but the mind is calm* (Yang Cheng Fu, 2013). What you must not move and keep stable is the mind. Even if you move, you are in a state of deep stillness and peace. This state of mind in Buddhism coincides with the spirit. It is pure, not conditioned. The word *mind* is used because it is wisdom, there are no obstacles to understanding and solving problems; its manifestation and the way it works is the *intelligence*, the ability to understand, free from doubt. It is a mind free from thought and conditioned actions.

Quietness is reached after rooting, tranquillity is reached after quietness, maximum attention happens after a state of tranquillity and the goal occurs after reflection (Zeng Zi, 2011) (7). In short, this concept is divided into 3 phases: foundation, calm and reflection.

One should achieve the *Vacuum at the highest level, be on guard against immobility with untiring energy. In the same way, all things go through their processes of activity and return to their essence* (Lao Tzū, 1994).

Practicing Tai Chi Chuan consists first of all in learning and repeating a series of positions and movements based on martial techniques. It is a martial art: in practice, we simulate a fight, so the gestures and positions must be precise, effective and consistent with our intention. However, when practising Taijiquan, the meaning of being scrupulous and precise does not only concern the martial aspect and does not only refer to the movements and coordination of the hands, the position of the feet and steps, the gaze, but it also refers to the awareness of *Shen Yun*. Shen Yun is a Chinese concept that is difficult to translate: it is linked to the energy of Shen, of the spirit.

This is what Yang Cheng Fu tells us in the first of the 10 Essentials:

Empty, Lively, Pushing Up and Energetic. Pushing up the energy (or with energy) means the position of the head is upright and straight and the spirit is infused into its apex. You must have an intention, which is empty, lively, present (or free) and natural. Without intention, that is empty, lively, free and present, pushing up and energetic, we won't be able to raise our spirit. (Yang Cheng Fu, 2013)

In my opinion, the martial aspect is also a metaphor for the relationship with others. When we come into contact with other people, we measure our capacity for listening, perception, understanding and transformation developed with single practice, with ourselves.

The objective is always balance and keeping calm; in conflict, disharmonies are turned into opportunities for change in order to find a new equilibrium.

Out of balance there is a change and after the change a more stable condition is reached, because we return to balance (I Ching, 1995).

Tai Chi Chuan is a way. Many things can be said about it, but none can fully convey its deep meaning, which can only be understood by practising it. The first masters tried to transmit the philosophical theories and principles of Tai Chi Chuan by using a poetic language or by telling anecdotes. This form, which has also been used by

thinkers and masters of other times and cultures, not only Eastern but also Western, allows a teaching to pass on, bypassing the logical discursive mental function that decides on the basis of analysis and separation. Not only do all these classics represent important literature, but they are also essential for the understanding and correct practice of Tai Chi Chuan. Grand Master Yang Chen Fu concludes the 10 Essentials in this way: *if the student perseveres with awareness in practice, he will be able to understand the meaning beyond these words* (Yang Cheng Fu, 2013).

Traditional Yang Style

There are different styles of Tai Chi Chuan and all refer to the same theories. In particular, the style that I study and teach is the traditional Yang style. The concatenation of movements, which is called the Form, is performed with a slow and constant rhythm, the passages are graceful, the movement of the body is extended and rounded, fluid and relaxed.

I have been studying and practicing Tai Chi Chuan traditional Yang style for 20 years., I was lucky enough to study with the direct descendants of the founder of the style, Yang Lu Chan. I have developed a direct and functional teaching method for the integrated training of specialists in physiotherapy, rehabilitation and psychology and it is suitable for preventive and therapeutic use in the same areas.

Experience and reflection

In conclusion I would like to offer you a reading of the reflections of Nicola Fini, a psychologist and psychotherapist who participated in the "A.B. Ferrari" Psychoanalytic Institute for Training and Research training course, integrated with the practice of Tai Chi Chuan:

"A concept that often recurs in our reflections is that of 'awareness'. How many times have we happened to think about performing a movement correctly, but thanks to external observation we are able to realise that our mind was not able to "map" the whole body. From this experience we already learn that building awareness is a constant task, and it improves with "practice": with attention, commitment and work, we are able to attach an increasing number of "territories" to the mapping of our "knowledge". In fact, the practice of Tai Chi Chuan refines the representation and perception of one's body in space by providing a "mental space" in which one can observe one's physical, emotional and relational postures through a mirror. An example of all this can be represented by the practice of the "centering", thereby establishing a dynamic balance with one's body in the present moment, a way of moving towards one's own sensations and perceptions that restores a sense of body-mind solidarity. This workout/practice of concentrating and "feeling" one's own body is very similar to, and indeed supports, what happens in the analysis room when we connect with the main tool at our disposal: ourselves".

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Notes

1) I Ching. The book of changes is considered one of the first classical Chinese texts since before the birth of the Chinese empire.

2) Tao Te Ching - The Book of the Way and of Virtue. It is a Chinese text of prose, sometimes rhyming, the composition of which dates back to a period between the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. The work is attributed to Lao Tzū. There are no certain historical data about him.

3) The Treatise on Tai Chi Chuan, attributed to Chan San Feng, is part of the Tai Chi Chuan Classics. The Tai Chi Chuan Classics and The Song of 13 Postures attributed to Wang Zhongyue. The Song of True Meaning, The Song of the Thrust with the Hands, The Song of the Eight Terms, by unknown authors.

4) Also known as The 10 Principles for the correct practice of Tai Chi Chuan attributed to Yang Chenfu.

5) Yang Chengfu (1883 - 1936). He received the teachings on Tai Chi Chuan from his father Yang Jan Hou, son of the founder of the Yang style, Yang Lu Chan. He revised his father's medium form by codifying the long form of the Yang family Tai Chi Chuan, becoming the most widespread of the Yang styles today.

6) Chen Weiming (1881 - 1958) was a scholar, a teacher of Tai Chi Chuan and an author. He was a pupil of Yang Chengfu.

7) Zengzi was one of Confucius' disciples.

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Soma and psyche

The way of the East. Find your centre in martial arts

Roberto Seghetti

Since the dawn of time, in the Eastern world psyche and soma have been considered consubstantial and potentially capable of having two-way effects, the mind on the body and the body on the mind.

This fundamental vision can be found in the history of thought in traditional medicine, as well as in the innumerable and extraordinary techniques of: breathing, meditation, healthy movement and longevity invented over the millennia, martial arts with bare hands and with weapons. All those activities have the same teachings in common and they all eventually bring matter and spirit, psyche and soma back to unity.

Anyone who has seriously practiced and persevered with an oriental martial art, especially Chinese and Japanese, whether internal or external, i.e. linked to the purely external expression of energy or to the mainly internal cultivation and circulation of vital energy, known as “qi” for the Chinese, “ki” for the Japanese and “ci” for the Koreans, has made it a concrete experience.

In each of these disciplines, physical training involves exercise of the mind, self-government in coordination and confrontation with the opponent, to the point of discovering, after long practice, that only the calm and balance of the mind allows the balance of the body. It is no coincidence that, unlike what happened in the West, the warrior's path in China as in Japan is inextricably linked to meditation, to chan Buddhism and to Zen, as well as to poetry, art, calligraphy, literature and philosophy. The growth of physical coordination helps the centring of the mind; and the centring of the mind supports the body more than physical strength. In judo, for example, when you learn to fall (the first action that is taught) you unwittingly learn balance in movement, serenity in defeat and the disappearance of fear: it is the first and fundamental step towards abandoning the rigidity of the body and towards self-confidence. After 50 years of tatami I still remember the feeling of freedom and security that this experience gave me: not being afraid to fall means walking safely in the world; a physical sensation that ends up creating an echo in the mind. Children show that wonderfully. Anyone who has taught children to fall will never forget, after following fear and the first few awkward attempts, the direct gaze of the little judokas.

In observing your fears and overcoming them, you are alone, facing yourself: it is a process of getting to know yourself and your resources. And as Sun Tzu explains in

Pin-fa (The Art of War), knowing yourself is as indispensable for fighting as knowing the learning opponent.

For each of the martial disciplines the way is the same: for Aikido, the way of ki, of vital energy. For Tai Chi Chuan, which is at the same time martial art, meditation, breathing, healthy movement, it is mental presence, attention focused on abandoning any rigidity, coordination of movements between high and low, between the two sides, between the inside and the outside, comfortable balance in every movement and a search for calm in the movement, until you achieve the ability to govern the intention to move the energy. Each person who practises the discipline faces himself or herself every time he or she starts the form in solitude. Each one finds himself or herself connecting his or her own energy to that of others in group practice. Each one experiences listening to the other in the two-person practice exercise, following the movements of the opponent, using his or her energy to neutralise them, thus learning to nullify the fear of contact. At all times, abdominal breathing, reverse breathing, taking care to complete inhalation and exhalation. These are ancient practices that grew first within Taoism and then also within Buddhism.

Just leaf through the classics to find illuminating examples. In the Huangdi Neijing Su Wen, a fundamental text of traditional Chinese medicine that, according to legend, dates back to the Yellow Emperor (2,500 years before Christ, even though experts believe it to be the result of oral tradition reported during the period of the fighting kingdoms 403-222 BC), it is said that in High Antiquity, Authentic men "had taken possession of Heaven and Earth, held yin and yang in their hands, inhaled and exhaled the essences and the breaths, firmly within themselves thanks to the custody of the spirits, they achieved unity in their flesh".

This is also true throughout the entire history of the middle world thought. "In ancient times, the perfect man did not dream in his sleep; and he had no worries when he woke up; he did not eat very tasty meals. *He breathed very deeply and his breathing came from his heels; whereas the breathing of ordinary men came only from their throats.* Anyone who is a slave to his passions spews his words out as if he were vomiting. Whoever sinks into the depths of appetite and lust has only superficial gifts" (Zhuang-zi, 1992, p. 58). In this passage, the philosopher Chuang Tzu (or Zhunag-zi, 4th century BC, one of the fathers of Taoism, together with Lao Tzu) alludes to diaphragmatic breathing, typical of the martial arts and of different forms of healthy movement and meditation: a form that allows the body to relax and to root it on the ground at the same time, to bring calm and concentrate energy in what is called Dan Tian both in Chinese medicine and in Taiji Quan.

And again. "Blowing and breathing, exhaling and inhaling, expelling stale air and absorbing pure air, stretching yourself like the bear, or like a bird spreading its wings; the aim of all this is longevity. This is held in high esteem by he who strives to direct and induce life energy" (Anne Cheng, 2000, p. 125). As Anne Cheng writes in the first volume of the History of Chinese thought, Chuang Tzu thinks that the body is in the densest and most compact state. "In order to merge with the Dao, the Saint must therefore refine his body to the tenuousness and subtlety of the quintessence (jing), that is, to the spiritual state (shen)". (p. 127). As Anne Cheng

explains, referring to the work of the great Taoist thinker, the refinement would therefore concern the excessive heaviness of the body, but also, inevitably, the excessive heaviness of the ego, "which is too cumbersome to enter into the fluidity of the Dao" (*idem*).

But how can all this be achieved? "Only – as Anne Cheng explains again - at the price of long and rigorous practice" (*idem*). Learning to consider material reality as looking at it reflected in a mirror (a metaphor also widely used by Buddhists) in order to remain centred so that you will not be distracted by sensations and events, desires, passions. Doing this through very concrete activities, "grouped under the generic name of work on qi (qigong): controlling the breathing, physical exercise, meditation, sexual discipline, etc.". To indicate this aspect, Chuang Tzu prefers the more poetic name of *fasting of the heart*, described in a dialogue between Confucius and the favourite disciple Yan Hui". (*idem*): "When Hui is pushing to have the master's teaching on fasting of the heart, Confucius replies: "Unify your attention. Instead of listening with your ears, listen with your heart. Instead of listening with your heart, listen with qi. Hearing stops at the ear, the heart stops at what is attuned to it. Qi is the emptiness that welcomes all things. Only the Dao accepts all things. Only the Dao accumulates emptiness. This emptiness is the fasting of the heart" (Anne Cheng, 2000, p. 127).

In conclusion, the contribution of Eastern thought to psyche and soma lies in the inseparability and the biuniqueness: not only can the psyche influence the body, but so can the body influence the psyche; and not only can the influence be negative, but it can also be positive. This is true to the point that some of the ancient Eastern practices that have survived to this day and that concern the awakening of the body, can today prove to be useful instruments in helping, supporting and accompanying work where an awakening of the psyche is necessary.

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Soma and Psyche

Analysts at the Tai Chi Chuan Test. A concrete experience in progress

Anna Siniscalco, Fausta Romano (1)

We refer to an experience which began two and a half years ago, starting from the idea that a certain psychoanalytic practice and thinking, mainly based on the hypothesis proposed by Armando Ferrari, who considers the body dimension as central in the process of activating some psychic functions (Ferrari, 1992, 1994, 2005), could find expansion and integration in Tai Chi Chuan, the ancient Chinese art and discipline (2), in a sort of theoretical/practical continuum.

This discipline has a strong relational value: practising Tai Chi Chuan helps and strengthens the contact and the relationship with oneself, between the body and the psychic dimensions, through a concatenation of movements aimed at the relationship with the "other": it is not a self-referential discipline.

Through the exercise of this art, the mind is urged to concentrate on the action that is being performed, activating it and calming it at the same time, through continuous attention to the concrete fact of moving the body and of the new sensations that derive from it.

This is why it differs from a certain contemporary mode of sport practices oriented towards muscular strengthening to achieve good physical fitness, but not necessarily connected with the attention and perception of what is being done: "I ran a lot today, I surpassed myself... I put on headphones and listening to music I ran several kilometres".

In the practice of Tai Chi Chuan, there is a continuous search for balance in the position one is assuming, in standing avoiding excessive effort, in the understanding of being able to do it without exhausting one's own energy and that of the other. It is an increasingly conscious acquisition that extends and implies the ability to be in relation with oneself and with the other.

Seeking balance implies the possibility of abandoning the old for the new, continuously and concretely. Deconstructing and constructing follow one another incessantly in the movement, analogous with what happens in the course of the analytical experience (Ferrari, 1983) (3). The internal process that is activated by its specific modes of functioning leads to a dynamic balance based on the qualities of vision and understanding, adaptation and transformation; in this sense, the practice of Tai Chi Chuan becomes a metaphor for life.

In each sequence of movement, the presence of another, the observer, is always implied. In the course of the learning experience, one develops the ability to observe oneself through the constant care that the teacher puts into rectifying the various positions. This allows one to perceive to what extent one's posture is correct. Without the help of the other, first of all of the teacher and then the other participants in the group, one might mistakenly believe that one is performing the movement correctly. It takes time to expand one's ability to perceive one's own body pattern through the interaction with the other.

Moreover, each movement, each sequence, each action is hypothetically directed towards another by itself. Whether physically present or in the imagination, as a potential recipient of the action being performed, the other contributes to giving intention and direction to the movement.

The other, in this art that was born in China thousands of years ago, is, therefore, the source and completion of self-knowledge: of one's own capacity for intuition, one's own potential and one's own limits.

Through the encounter with the other, there is continuous learning of respect, humility, patience and knowledge. Here too, as in the hypothesis of the Original Concrete Object proposed by Armando Ferrari, it acts as a catalyst of the individual's potential capabilities (4).

In the exercise of this discipline, continuous attention is developed to manage the psycho-physical energy, so as never to bring it to the extreme limit of exhaustion, so as never to exhaust neither one's own energy nor that of the other.

We hypothesized that an experience of integration between the two disciplines, Tai Chi Chuan and the analytical relationship as proposed by Ferrari starting from his hypothesis (1983, 1992), could contribute to widen and deepen psychotherapy training by offering an opportunity to turn the attention concretely towards the body dimension, through the movement proposed in the practice of this discipline and by discovering how one can reach, free and harmonize the mind dimension through it. Tai Chi Chuan has the characteristics to be a complete and effective way to accomplish this purpose.

"Mens sana in corpore sano" is still a foundation for health. We know that analysts, people who usually focus their attention mainly on the mental functioning of

themselves and of the analysed, spend a considerable number of hours in a static position, sitting down, mentally focused on the unfolding of the analytical relationship and on the use of speech and their ability to observe the relationship between themselves and the other. We believe it is fundamental to integrate training with the experience of moving one's body, realizing one's difficulties and potential: being able to soften rigid postures, dissolve blocks in areas of the body, trying to modify dysfunctional and disharmonious balances, etc..

It takes time to acquire all the complexity behind the movement and to realise the extent of the lack of connection with one's body and to reactivate it according to the principles of Tai Chi Chuan.

History of the experience

We have therefore proposed to a group of psychotherapists engaged in a theoretical-clinical in-depth course promoted and carried out by the I.P.F.R. "A.B. Ferrari" (5), to integrate the training with some hours of practical experience of this discipline coming from China.

It was and continues to be an experience in progress, the structure of which changes as it unfolds. This is what happens with something that develops starting from a hypothesis and it is then transformed, while living, according to what happens, leaving out or critically reconsidering preconceived ideas and theories, in a continuous process of learning from the experience itself. For this reason, both the duration and the modalities of developing the practices and theoretical/clinical reflections have been extended over time.

During the first year, the Tai Chi Chuan lesson preceded the theoretical/clinical group meeting organized by the Institute Course.

At the end of this first year, the desire for a second year of experience was born in the group, periodically expanding the time of practice, with a space dedicated to the study and the group reflections on the points of affinity and difference and on the possible integration between the two disciplines.

During this time the participants tried to describe their impressions and perceptions experienced during the practice part and the changes detected. During the dialogue and reflection often emerged points of affinity and comparison with aspects of their clinical work. Associations with ongoing clinical situations have also sometimes emerged.

At the end of the second year of experience, there is a strong perception in everyone that the group has worked at levels of depth that are usually difficult to reach.

It is difficult to express in words the essence of this work, which involves multiple levels at the same time: mind, body, emotions, individual and group, movement of the body in space, relationship, reciprocity, reflection on the experience in progress, etc.. Yet, in everyone, there is the perception that the experience carried out in the group is a significant reinforcement of the learning done so far.

It is now possible to begin to identify in this experience a training method that is in continuous progress, following the path of constant evolution: it is something that continually transforms itself. It does not end in a performance to be achieved once

and for all, but consists in a form of learning that can subsequently be enriched and extended at one's own discretion throughout one's entire existence, even beyond the conclusion of the experience itself.

This aspect also covers some interesting analogies with the analytic experience which, while on the one hand, in its historical aspect, must be concluded in a period of time compatible with the necessity of life, on the other hand, it can be said to never end, since the process of experience, knowledge and learning from experience cannot be exhausted, if not with the end of life itself.

Moving together, guided by the teacher, sharing the difficulties and discovering the potentialities and limits of each one, in the continuous sharing with the whole group, accessing the knowledge of individual units of movement, which then flow into a harmonic and sequential concatenation, sharing the experience as it unfolds, then trying to talk about it together; all this seems to have allowed the growth of individual potentialities as well as group potentialities.

The experience

We have therefore decided to relate here an extract of the report of the exchange that occurred in one of the meetings, together with some of the considerations that emerged during the various moments of reflection and discussion in the group.

Since this experience is still in progress, perhaps entrusting the understanding of our experimental context to the transcription of our dialogue can allow the reader to become part of the process and the progress of our experience.

The first thing that Tai Chi Chuan allows to be is “*centred*”: the psychological /physical experience of seeking one's own centre in a dynamic way; it is similar to the analyst's *return to oneself* (Ferrari, 1986) (6), it is a return to a feeling, to a place that is never the same.

The experience is concrete.

There is an analogy in the context of analytical experience with being able to refer to theories and to our own perceptions, using them as guidelines and not as absolute truths, being able to modify them continuously starting from the practical experience and the consequent degree of understanding in this context (Ferrari, 1983).

The continuous movement in the Tai Chi Chuan practice, through completely rooting oneself in the present moment and simultaneously understanding the body, emotion, perception, thought, widens the possibility of connecting with the outside world without distracting from oneself, from one's own centre.

Being with myself and with the other, simultaneously, in the present moment.

In the context of group work, everyone has been able to encounter their specific characteristics.

The meeting

F.R.: What I wanted to say to this group is that it has been two full years that we've been working together and I realise that there's a path that we're taking together and on which we're proceeding, with the necessary time, without any rush, but we're moving forward.

I am under the impression that we are doing a rich and creative work. I would like to share this thought.

G.N.: Can I speak now, since, unfortunately, I have to say goodbye to you?

F.R.: Of course! You see?! The end allows you to live in the present things.

G.N.: That's right! The experience with this group, which for me is the same thing as the other, in the sense that ... there is a continuity between the training group on analytical work and this work we do together guided by Anna ... I would never want to interrupt it, in the sense that I really like what happens, I find it very useful, so I don't know what will be the form and what will be the modality, but there is certainly an interest of mine in the desire to continue. That's it!

C.D.A.: For me something is developing concretely...with projects, ideas and presence.

L.P.: I, like G., think that the group is unique, in fact, the theoretical and practical training with Anna (A.S.) seem to be one in a continuum.

A.S.: I like the fact that there is more and more awareness, that your work, study and growth group is special because you have integrated this aspect and that is already creating transformations. I think that each of you can be a testimony of this...you, your way of positioning things, of seeing them and applying them.

I can also see very good originality for the future.

F.R.: What impressions can each of you get from this work, which has been done so far in practice with Anna, including this morning's work? Has anything in particular impressed you?

The experience of being: rooting and action

A.B.: I was struck by the moment when Anna invited us to keep the position: I felt the fatigue at that moment, but it seemed interesting to me because through this maintaining the position one can understand how one feels at that moment. I am always struck by the intention to lead a movement; to be able to stay and create the conditions for the intention to move in one direction.

I.M.: I have noticed that when I practice I skip rooting, moving from putting the foot on the ground directly to the step. Today I was able to realize how much movement there is also in the rooting phase. It strikes me because I believe that rooting is fundamental and I would like to pay more attention to it, also for the clinical work. It is also important to know how to name the steps and this helps me to define the movement, to understand if I am parrying or pushing.

On my own it is more difficult, I certainly prefer to practise together with the group and with Anna's guidance. It helps me to memorize the movement sequences.

Move only my feet and then reconnect my whole body

D.G.: I am very impressed by having only exercised the steps and the theme of balance in the movement today. I often lost my balance while I was moving during the practice, while today, by working on the steps only, I can concentrate on the movement and on the knowledge of what clear path to take. Today I am surprised because I find that I have so much balance. This makes me think about the clinical

practice, during which a therapist can move if he feels that there is a balance, perhaps if he feels that there is a centre to start from.

R.P.: [...] when we had to connect the movement of the arms to the movement of the steps, I got confused, while in reality when I practice I feel like I am starting from the arms... that is to say, in the visualization, thinking about the arms becomes primary.

So reversing the perspectives and then joining them seems to me another important step.

R.L.: For me, all the work we did and we are doing on the steps makes this very clear, very visible. I see that it is not fruitful to visualize and take a step if the previous one has not been completed first or if a sufficiently stable position has not been created.

It is not fruitful: I see it in the clinical practice, I see it in the steps and this helps me to transform, to have a very clear picture of what is happening to me.

The importance of constant practice, movement promotes reconnection between mind and body. Time

A.S.: The videos I am sending you are to accompany you in your practice even when you are alone, to make you feel more secure.

The objective of transmitting a tool, which can integrate the analyst's training, which can provide the missing connection with the body dimension and allow you to become aware of it, can only be achieved by dedicating time to study, practice in groups and on your own and finally to sharing and reflecting. It takes time to implement all the aspects of this method that are suitable to activate the complex processes behind the movement.

You haven't done many hours of lessons, adding them up is as if we had worked 10 days in total, spread over 15 months. For this reason I insist: if between one lesson and the other you are able to practise, the time needed to understand the deep meaning of what we are saying to each other decreases proportionally to the growth of listening, understanding and perception skills.

A.B.: I was talking to a patient about her new ability to express her emotions and she described this as a downward climbing...it was the first time I heard someone describe their evolution as a downward movement.

And I have to say that I find this in my experience with Tai Chi... like a process that doesn't lead upwards, but that gradually I am gradually anchored... here... maybe to my body, first of all... it's like a dive into the water... something that surrounds you and allows you to get to know yourself better... probably meeting oneself but in another way.

N.S.: Yes, and this anchoring also helps us to distribute our energy upwards... in the sense that we have to start again from the base, also changing our priorities.

Breathing

R.P.: What strikes me today is the reference to breathing which gives rhythm to the movement, it seems to me the evolution of when we are told to follow the body and

our steps, when breathing risks being shifted to the background. Anna says that the rhythm is breathing. This contains in itself the circularity that Anna often reminds us of. Instead, we tend more towards being linear in our gestures, both regarding the twists of the wrist and waist, and, as a broader aspect also linked to our therapeutic practice. We are often in search of circularity, but we lose it because we punctuate and observe it in a partial, more linear way. It seems to me to return to the roots and to the breathing that dictates a rhythm, which we often lose, individually and as therapists, as the patients also lose theirs. We must remember the fluidity and the circle, which is life, and be careful not to shift to the linear timeline.

F.R.: I find these observations of yours...not a synthesis, but an elaboration of everything you are as a whole, through the activity you do with Anna. The breathing..... I thank R. because it really seems to me that it opens up the question of the dichotomy between body and mind; it opens it and finds a fulcrum, a core on Anna's indication to work coordinating the movement on one's own breath, it's all in there. There is also the 'centring', there is also being oneself. Of course, we are talking about something conscious, therefore the mind as self-consciousness and self-awareness is always there. However, being able to talk about it in this way takes us away from linearity... R. is a family therapist, like many here, and some time ago there was a lot of talk about replacing circular thought with linear thought; but then it was understood that circular thought is another form of linearity because it is always a line, circular instead of straight. So, we came to think in terms of complexity rather than circularity or linearity.

But this story of breathing which is the centre of everything and which gives rhythm looks really very important to me. I am thinking of Ezio Bosso, the musician who recently passed away, who composed a piece of music entitled "The six breaths", for piano and six cellos.

There is a comment of his about breathing: "We have various breaths, from crying to wheezing to laughing, etc.; exhaling is our last breath and in Eastern disciplines, the last breath is not a sad thing. In their last breath, there is a person's whole life, it is the most important because the last breath is what we leave to the world, and the world, the history of the world, is composed of the last breaths. How beautiful, we pass it on and so we become one".

I find that the attention to the breath is the core: it can give openness of experience, thought as experience.

R.P.: Thank you. I said it because in the end I really feel that I can breathe more, in the sense that because of the heat, in the first fifteen minutes I struggled, I felt like sitting down, the weight of pregnancy, standing is not easy for me, while in the end I would have continued, in the sense that somewhere you reconnect.

Without exaggerating, but in the end I have the feeling that I have reactivated this circularity.

A.S: In the oriental vision, I share what Dr Romano said about breathing...life is a breath: it starts by inhaling and ends with exhalation. This is their circular vision of breath and life. Life is a breath. It is a powerful image...

N.F.: I'd like to intervene with something I had thought, but after all these deep reflections I think I'll say it in half an hour...but I want to say something about this other dimension we went to and I wanted to say.... blame Dr. Romano and Anna who brought out Ezio Bosso and the fact that life is a breath because it was a deflagration in me: they led me to think...and I was also a little absent, listening to what I had in mind. I am thinking..... in short, it came to my mind that somehow we are also our breath. I was also thinking that I actually got to the emotions. Every emotion has its breath. Now I was actually imagining my experience, on my skin, that if I am angry I breathe in one way, if I am sad I breathe in another way, if I love I breathe in one way, if I am excited, as maybe happened to me now with these powerful suggestions, I breathe in another way. And I thought that, precisely, breathing is something that says who we are, also because in some way it puts us in relation with the world, that is, it is one of those forms in which the outside enters inside. I thought: that's fine, but even food, even food could say who we are... but we don't eat every second of our life, so maybe breathing is something even more radical in giving a circularity to our essence.

A.S.: Practise only the steps, continue to practise only the steps.

Observe and perceive

F.R.: Anna, today you recalled the importance of observing, and I thought that I already know a bit about its function, also because I know how important the ability to self-observe is. In our job self-observing is the tool and we know that the most difficult thing is to be observer and observed at the same time. I am at the same time the object of the observation and the subject who observes. This is also necessary in our clinical practice: in reality, I do not observe the patient, I observe me in my being with him. And therefore this is a continuous training.

Today, however, I felt it in another way, because this observing me as the object being observed is an internal observation. 'Nice discovery!' you could say. Yes, but today I felt it differently. It is not a persecutory, judgment-oriented observation. It is an observation that is a feeling, you said this today, it is a feeling and a perception from within. Perception is a form of self-observation perhaps, but it is deeply rooted in concrete experience. It is something more than the concept of me observing myself as an object to be observed.

D.G.: Expressing my limit in this experience brings me closer to my human needs and to pursue them in real-time because through the body I can feel them and if I can feel them even those who come to me in clinical practice can do so; therefore I can now look at my patients not only as those who need, but as those who already have something and who do not yet know how to recognize it.

Not that I haven't studied all this in books, but experiencing it practically speeds up understanding.

Perception and imagination

N.F.: I found today's form particularly harmonious... a succession of movements, of balances that move, perhaps faster in my image, I found this last sequence very similar to a dance.

But what I wanted to say is that, compared to the others, something a little different happened to me: it also led me to imagine something that is outside of me. While in the other forms I was very concentrated on my movements... it must be that this has awakened ancient memories of martial arts that I have done. It's as if I also visualized someone other than me. I visualized both a person, since we have to block, deflect, and I also imagined what; and then, when you were talking about the eye of the fist, to help me, to give me a greater visualization of the space I occupy, I also imagined having in my hands something like the hilt of a sword. This also gave me an idea of how the body occupied the space, even those small movements that you are not aware of. That is, if I had a sword I would have seen very well the axis of rotation of the fist... I don't know, my mind visualized this.

R.L.: I would then like to share something perhaps strange that is happening to me: sometimes, when I am not able to identify what I am feeling, what kind of emotion, maybe something too intense, it has happened to me lately, I remember a movement that we practice, for example, I don't know, the movement of punching in the air with my eyes wide open, and, I don't know if it is possible, this allowed me to identify that what I was feeling was really too intense. The memory of the body helped me to work on my emotionality. I don't know if you can understand it

N.F.: I wanted to say something that made me laugh a bit, but I don't know if it's valid: sometimes even though I can't practise I can visualize the movements mentally: now I can't do it, but in my mind... I was visualizing the form, I don't know if it's valid as a means...

A. S.: It absolutely is!

L.R.: The slowness of movement required by this practice allows one to perceive the being in the present moment, present to one's own body and I see here an analogy with the analytical process as proposed by Ferrari. I am under the impression that we are slowly building something important.

More on perception

F.R.: One of the things you said, I think it was D., she was talking about the legs and the solidity on the leg I guess, about the balance while moving. I think this is a central aspect, if you don't learn how to stand on your legs, you can't do anything else.

I talked about this with one of my patients, it was very interesting. This patient, who has been recently attending the Tai Chi course, came to me two years ago, sick in his body. He was pale, thin...he seemed inconsistent... This person has come a long way in the work of analysis. So much so that he resumed an old desire of his, that of getting closer to the art of Tai Chi.

Now we are in an almost conclusive phase of our journey and he talks about the perception of greater solidity, he says "I don't care if things happen outside of me, they can also be serious or worrying things, but I know I can hold on".

During the process of analysis he focused on the feeling of a darkness within himself that he distinguished from the fear of blindness that terrified him. He understood that it was not blindness that terrified him, but the darkness within him, a dark zone within himself. So a big part of the work was done by bringing light into that darkness.

And a number of aspects came out, of himself and of life, that were unacceptable to him. Later, his analysis began to integrate with the practice of Tai Chi and today he said to me "I know that I can face things even if I don't know what things, even if things are serious". I proposed to him: "So you feel more solid?". "Yes, I feel more solid". He started the session saying that he wanted to start running again but that for health reasons this is risky for him. The whole session revolved around something about legs, running, walking, solidity, being able to hold. At a certain point I asked him if what he was saying could also include his new experience of his body, which is also happening through Tai Chi. As if he discovered it in that moment: "Of course, yes" and he started to say something very intellectual, about balance, mind etc.. After a while I asked him: "After a year of exercises (which he also does at home) what are the muscles of your legs like?". "Ah, they are much more substantial!" "Here, so you can hold.... your legs are holding, you are centred and your feet are rooted, you feel more solid. What do you think?" I realized that he couldn't connect the experience of the body dimension with the emotional and mental one: there was still a link missing inside him. He theorized about his solidity which also derived from Tai Chi, but he did not connect it to the bodily experience of the leg that holds, and to the related emotion. In any case, for my personal experience, I know that the world completely changes if I can feel that the muscles of my legs are holding me up, I can make the movement more slowly if the muscle is holding me and therefore the perception of balance and space changes. This affects my confidence in me in general. So it seemed to me that while I was connecting all these things, he could realize that he is still not fully connected, even though the experience is beginning to be there.

It is interesting for me to observe that this sense of holding up and this sense of solidity are closely connected to the bodily experience...he is taking 'body'. From the day when one could say about him "he looks like a bacterium", minute and inconsistent, to today, he has a much more relaxed and consistent face and expression. He is taking shape, taking 'body' in combining the work he does with me and his Tai Chi experience. So that concept of solidity that D. brought with her seems to me one of the core aspects...Anna correct me if I am wrong".

A.S.: It is not a question of correction.

What emerges from your patient's story, which it is not easy to explain, is that this practice activates the bodily function of repairing disharmonies using a complex system of connections that starting from experiences, sensations, perceptions, moves on the level of self-consciousness and the way of using the mind. What should be understood and accepted is that the process is activated and things happen even before we can describe them, recognize them, give them a name. It takes time to find the words, which are often not even in one's own vocabulary. It is like the sketch of a painting in which you have to distinguish and refine colours and shapes and levels of

depth: new experiences with a focus on the concrete here and now, like standing, generate a new world of sensations and emotions, therefore a new way of thinking and acting. On the other hand, what emerges at the conscious level through this practice could not be entirely expressed with words because it would then be caged, crystallized, limiting what is its fundamental essence: a 'becoming', a progress, a change.

F.R.: I also found the intention important. Knowing that you move that way for a reason helps you to understand it. I was wondering if in other sports or in other movements you can find the same thing. I was wondering in dancing ...for example. It seems to me that, compared to other ways of moving the body, knowledge and intention play a central role here. It's true, if I know that between this point and this other point there should be space for an arm to pass through, I understand the distance, then the whole series of indications that Anna gives us when she guides us to practice are a powerful way to gain and understand that what moves is not strength but intention. Knowing that I want to go in that direction, I need to put my foot straight, or 45 degrees because it is necessary to have a support, and it is necessary because I want to go in one direction rather than another one. In this way I am inside the movement, I understand it better.

S.L.B.: What is emerging has prompted many reflections and it has also given rise to a specific question. For now I relate the temporal aspect to the centring. How being centred actually puts us in contact with a very present body dimension. In my little experience, what I have noticed is that it seems as if time dilates, when I am in contact, when I am aware of what is happening in my body and in my mind, I am aware of what I am experiencing in this moment, it is as if the external physical time did not exist... I know it does, but the time inside, the time of contact, seems to dilate both space and time itself. So it gives me the sense that precisely being centred has a specific time, which is precisely the time of being in contact with oneself in terms of awareness.

About seeing: the importance of the gaze

F.R: And another thing: Anna reminds us to be careful not to move your hands in front of your eyes... it seems a banality, it seems obvious... but if I think that the movement I make is also aimed at someone else outside of me and I cover my eyes with my hands when I move, do you imagine what can happen? Either I expose myself or at most I don't see what the other person is doing... it seems obvious, and instead I have to think about it, because for example in the movement of the *clouds*, where I have to raise my arm and hand in front of me, I have to find the right measure, the reference: right under my eyes and no higher, because that arm and that hand are raised to protect me and not to blind me.

A.S.: Seeing is a way to know. If you want to know yourself you must see the actions you do and their consequences. Following the principles, practicing Tai Chi, you learn to move the body in a scenario: you develop the consciousness of the space, the distances and the relationships between the things that occupy it. It is like when you take a photo, you have to focus. To have a clear overview from the foreground to

infinity you have to put many photos together. Near, far, above, below, light and shadow. But in space I move and make gestures and to be able to do them I have to be aware of the distances and the function of my movement so I can move safely. In this case the hand you raise must be far enough from you to protect you from an attack and to transform it, but at the same time you must not deprive yourself of the careful vision of the inside, a scenario in which that same attack and your gesture can acquire different significance. It is a matter of developing the capacity of a wide and at the same time detailed vision. This, which you experience through the practice of Tai Chi Chuan, reflects the way you use your mind.

Accepting without judging in order to build the new

I.M.: I thank you both, Fausta and Anna: both of you are able to value the things that happen, encouraging and never judging. It is giving value to what is there and this is not so easy or obvious: it is important, because in this way, through being encouraged and not judged, we can find the way to test our limits, without challenging them and without judging them. To go on, to learn continuously means to evolve rather than always judging insufficient what has been achieved. Thank you for this

R.L.: I agree, leave the judgement and know how to be with what there is and can be it is also needed in the analysis room. This feeling that we record as students and participants in this group is perhaps also what is created in the analytical relationship. I would then like to share a strange thing that is happening to me: sometimes, when I can well identify what I am feeling, what kind of emotion, maybe something too intense, it has happened to me lately that a movement that we practice comes to my mind, for example, I don't know, the movement of punching in the air with our eyes wide open, and, I don't know if this is possible, this allowed me to identify, that what I was feeling was really too intense. The memory of the body is helping me to work on my emotionality. I don't know if you can understand this.

And so I see how practice, especially on a personal level and consequently in my analytical work, is helping me to work with myself.

The group

R.L.: For this I thank you two and the group, because all this happens together with all of you and it would not certainly be the same without you!

C.G.: I realise that my concentration increases when I practice with you, in a group. I feel more concentrated and focused, while by myself I am dispersed and distracted, I can't find a constancy and this is certainly my limit and I am trying to confront this. With Anna's videos I felt that there was a guide and this helped me.

F.R.: Yes, I agree: also the group. Not also: the group is the cornerstone. You are individual and identified people, but you share your energy: together. It's a very beautiful thing: it's 'choral'. I agree with R. : it is not "me alone", it is "something together", it is something else.

N.F.: I too find the group one of the most stimulating elements and I thought of the group as a forge, the blacksmith's forge (I refer to the sword before). I have seen how blacksmiths work and how they make swords too. They assemble pieces of iron that

have another shape, they work them and melt them, these are then subjected to stress and then immersed in a liquid that gives compactness and transforms that metal into another metal with another consistency. In my opinion the group works like this: so many thoughts and experiences are united and the conditions are created for certain things to remain and transform... they are born and remain with another consistency; and I like this very much because the interesting thing is that first some things are not there, but then also through the group some things exist and remain more solid.

G.N.: I'm not a person who considers everything he hears as the truth, I need to put it to the test. Here I find authenticity and willingness to question yourself. So I thank everyone for their dedication and patience.

Frequency and time dedicated to practice and experience

A.S.: Can I ask you a question? How much do you practice?

A useful question to perceive and understand how often you tend to live distractedly, far from yourself: not on your axis, the mind not aligned with the body.

Everyone answers this question based on their own experience: everyone manages to find remnants of time and space to dedicate to the practice of Tai Chi. Many people at night, in silence and solitude, while everyone is sleeping, find time for themselves, time to dedicate to this exercise. Others in the morning; they feel that the day that begins with the practice of this discipline is a better day, full of energy and well-being, it increases the flexibility that during the night was, for example, a little lost. For some people, the practice of Tai Chi at night, before going to sleep, is not indicated, because it activate energy that then finds no room to be channeled and used.

A.S.: The ideal is to practise in the morning, you will have more vital energy and more lucidity throughout the day.

Also, the question, how much time is dedicated to the practice on a daily basis. And even here the answers are very varied.

A.S.: I don't ask you if you practice to hear you say "a lot" or "little" but to invite you to realize the effects of the practice. Obviously if you do not practise there are no effects. As for frequency and duration, this depends not only on the time you have, but also on how progressively you become aware of the positive effects.

C.D.A.: At first I was very methodical, but now I realize that I am trying to concentrate on movement that I am able to do naturally at that moment. So once I do the eight exercises, and another time I am able to practice the entire form. Even when I have little time I do what I can, without forcing myself, and this, for who I am, is new and important,.

Today we are quieter and I was thinking about my silence: it is something I am also working on in the clinical practice and it is really a mirror image. When I am taken by enthusiasm, passion or other things I feel in clinical practice, I often hasten to take a step without first being well rooted. Instead, right now I know that something is shaping... right now... a thought is forming... also listening to what is being said in the group... but it is not yet formed and so I am waiting... when it is formed it will come.

For me all the work we did and we are still doing on the steps makes this very clear, very visible to me. I see that it is not fruitful to visualise and take the step if the previous one has not been completed, or if a sufficiently stable position has not been reached. It is not fruitful: I see it in the clinical practice, I see it in the steps and this helps me to transform, to have a very clear image of what is happening to me.

R.P.: I used to do it as a duty too, and now I practice maybe less, but with more spontaneity and presence, so also the performance is different, I can practise maybe less, but with more attention and intensity... maybe I practise 10 minutes, but with more emotional participation and I'm happy because maybe I've been able to remember the movements... more presence, even if sometimes for less time.

I.M.: So do I, too. I don't practise every day, at least in the last few weeks. But with the help of the videos that you gave us, I was able to study the *shuttles*, for example. I could better understand how to move my hands... I concentrated a lot on watching them and then I was able to do the movement: I dedicated more time, as if we were in class... like when we practise together.

For me it is important to calm down, not to get too anxious, for lots of things. I arrive with little time and I get anxious, so I have to find a time when I am calmer and the speech you used to give us about blocking came back to me, I remembered when you told us: "loosen your joints, relax your waist", maybe I have five minutes, but I start from that, I just try to loosen everything a little bit, and if my time is over I stop there, or other times I also do the form and I think it is important because I saw that when I could practise the form even twice in a row it becomes more and more fluid...

A.S.: Everyone makes his own experience in his own time.

Starting and allowing certain functions to be activated requires a constant frequency over a certain period of time. Only after that you can have more or less intense periods of practice; this intensity refers to time, not to the quality of practice and attention: again, I have asked this question to stimulate your attention also on the effects. There are those who feel spontaneous, those who focus on the work of the joints, those who use it as a tool for their work. Everyone has their own experience... the individual cannot have the same experience as everyone.

R.L.: As I said before, I can visualize and other than the intensity I have noticed that if I can practise in the morning it is as if the day takes a better direction, that is, I feel clearer, as if things are clearer inside me all day long, while when I feel more tired or fatigued, for example, rooting or the eight exercises help me to concentrate more, to feel calmer and also to have more energy. Sometimes I have to be careful because if I do it in the evening I can't fall asleep afterwards, I don't know if it happens to you as well.

A.S.: You are experiencing the effects on the vital energy level.

R.L.: It's as if there is an energy trigger, so if I do it too late in the evening, I then find myself in bed, wide awake and I wish I wouldn't stop.

Anyway, the eight exercises and also the rooting are in my opinion what I can practice the most and they are more precious to me, because maybe I concentrate on the quality of the... on the small and I feel good.

A.S.: The ideal is to practise in the morning, you'll have more vital energy and lucidity all day long.

A.B.: The *eight exercises* are a great thing, they are something you feel the moment you do them, right away... I don't know, they unlock everything, they relax me, so that's why it's easier for me to do them in the morning because the effect is immediate and it remains, and then... I don't know how it happens, but... it works a lot, yes.

A. S.: They are powerful, they are very powerful and immediate, that is why I have taught them to you.

F.R.: There is a patient who has serious physical problems and whom I follow in an integrated way with Anna. For her the perception of the difference between the Tai Chi exercises Anna chose for her and what she does with the physiotherapist is very clear. But she cannot find words to describe the difference. She can only say something about the feeling of an intense energy that is activated during the lesson with Anna, so that she then continues to perform all the exercises during the time between meetings, even though she "has never been a sportswoman".

It is difficult to talk about this practice, about the benefit that one perceives and feels but cannot put it into words, it is difficult to express.

A.S. It is difficult to talk about the effects perceived with this practice, and for this reason I think that the work we are doing in groups has a specific value: the practice of Tai Chi accompanied by a space where we try to put it into words and then think about the experience: if it is true that the practice of Tai Chi in itself supports the mind through the movement of the body, and that the analytical process tends to reduce the distance between psychicity and corporeity, mind and body, the possibility of sharing everyone's experience by looking for words to express the perceived effects seems to us to amplify and strengthen the experience by activating all aspects at the same time. In this way the possibility of learning from experience is realised.

Is something transforming?

A.S.: Before starting again with the practice of Tai Chi I would like to ask you again: has something changed in you, comparing before this experience and now? Do you happen to think about your body, to visualize your body, did you happen to feel it? Do you happen to realize if you are standing straight, crooked, contracted? And what about breathing?

D.G.: Well, personally it has changed a lot, in the sense that at the beginning I could perceive the body essentially when there was something wrong with it, and therefore when there was pain and I could detect that there was pain in that part of my body and therefore I know that it exists.

Here, on the other hand, I feel it in a healthy way, in the sense that I realise when I stand if I have a centred balance, if I am leaning more on one side or the other, when I am sitting if I am awry, and then why my back hurts, because I am awry while I am sitting, so while I am doing it I feel that pain, it does not come afterwards and therefore I can immediately change my position, I am not waiting to reach the apex of that difficulty and then understand what has happened but I understand it while it is happening to me. So this is very clear in me as far as the contact with my body is

concerned, even though I come from a dancing experience where the body was central anyway but it was central to the performance, in the sense that you were making certain movements to get to that performance goal, which was not understanding what was happening in your body while you were doing it, so in me there was this kind of modification of my contact with my body, definitely.

L.P. So, I share what D. said, actually it was a passage like, let's say, from theory to practice, in the moment I'm practising it there's actually a greater concreteness, both for myself and in relation with others. And then another aspect that has changed me is the use of calm, because I run around a lot and so instead I can learn to do things calmly, slowly. Tai chi is, how can I say, perhaps what it takes because it puts me right in front of my limit, that is, I can't go slowly, I can't do the exercises so I have a hard time, but I realise that this is the point for me... and so, since I am stubborn, I resist and let's see where I get to..

We are mutants. About transforming

F.R.: ... the possibility of being ready to transform. Because we are mutants and we don't notice it... we are constantly changing... and we don't notice it, on the contrary, our mind searches for similarities... and identities, identical things to calm down and reassure oneself. But it is not like that, it is never like that... it is never true... a geologist told me how important earthquakes are for the earth, for the planet... because the earthquake upsets the balance and breaks the earth's crust enabling the minerals and gases that make our planet fertile to reach the surface. If there is one thing that I fear more than any other, it is the earthquake. Though I had to admit that if don't think about myself, of course it is true, the earthquake is fundamental for the planet. This is to say that... C. it's like this... we must always make ourselves available body and mind to our transformations and to the transformations around us. The more we stiffen in our balance, the more we lose. Now these are words, these are concepts. When I try to apply this through Tai Chi Chuan the difficulties begin ... because there transforming my balance means transforming something deep, something radical, it is a painful process sometimes, not simple, it takes a lot of patience, a lot of humility, a lot of perseverance. But then it rewards you, all this rewards you...certainly...not in the sense of having new certainties...but in the sense of accepting the possibility of transforming oneself continuously, compatibly with one's own limits. At least this is what I get and it is not easy, it is a training... a constant training.... As far as the possibility of accepting transformations... and maybe even navigating inside them and accompanying them and not only being dragged by them but also favouring them.

A.S.: Can I intervene? Remarkable things have emerged as far as my experience goes. And I think this is due to the fact that you have been doing a journey with yourselves and with Dr. Fausta for a long time. So it is easier for you to let some things emerge, things you can see and even tell. It is a good starting point and an advantage that you can have over many other people. I'll try to follow the trend if you'll allow me Fausta...three minutes... what you said about being a mutant is fundamental. Precisely because when we become aware of this ability we could really

get rid of a lot of problems... Because often what creates suffering for us is this very thing that keeps us attached to an idea, a habit, a person, an object and the inability to transform it inside and outside of us and in relation to us. We as human beings have one more faculty... we have legs... because we can move in space and already taking three steps changes the perspective on our horizon.

However, I also refer to an example that comes from nature as Fausta did, quoting the earthquake... think of plants... plants are rooted on the ground and cannot be moved... it's hot, it's cold, the fire approaches them, an animal, they have an extraordinary capacity to do everything to preserve the movement of the vital sap, of the vital energy inside them and to be able to express it outside and multiply...they find incredible ways...they have developed systems of colours, of smells, in order to attract insects to multiply. They can't move and yet they are an extraordinary example of the ability to change and mutate and they start from within from their roots...

S.L.B.: And another aspect, while you were talking about the theme of transformation, I was thinking about the experience that I've been doing very recently, that is to *move hands like clouds* which is a transformative movement, I put inside and touch outside, maybe I'm saying a great nonsense, but I think this is an important movement...

In conclusion

R.P.: In short, all the themes highlighted seem to be aspects of the process of self-knowledge that we repeatedly stress as the objective and core aspect of both Tai Chi and analytical work, for both the protagonists of the relationship.

Centrality, intentionality, breath, posture, balance in movement, perception and sensation create connections in the individual and in the group as well as in clinical practice, giving a procedural value to every action in daily life and in the analysis room. An intrinsic continuity that reactivates thoughts and, in turn, sensations in a dynamic and consistent flow, which is at the basis of clinical work: integration, the search for the unity of the individual, of his/her meeting themselves. An individual process, even if relational, in which Anna has accompanied us, leaving the practice and its effects to us; in the same way we accompany the patient who personally lives his/her own life.

Just as in our theoretical-practical journey we have witnessed the emerging of a third element, elicited by the group within us, by reactivating both self-observation and therefore the relationship with ourselves, and with the group in exchanges and reciprocity, so the parallelism brings me back to the analytical relationship as that third element which is other and more than the sum of the parts.

A S.: All right, I'd say let's move on to practice, okay?

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Notes

1) The work has been done in collaboration with the participants in the group of psychotherapists led by Anna Siniscalco: Andrea Bianchi, Chiara Dell'Aquila, Cristiana Gatto, Cristiana Picconi, Donatella Girgenti, Federica Thomas, Francesca Lamanna, Giulia Natale, Ilaria Milletti, Liliana Rizzo, Stefania Lo Basso, Lorella Palumbo, Nadia Stabile, Nicola Fini, Raffaella Peri; Roberta Lella.

2) For hints on the philosophical origins of Tai Chi Chuan we refer to the chapter by Anna Siniscalco.

3) See also Romano F., *Soma and Psyche. Harmony and conflict: a history of reciprocity*.

4) Cf. Romano. F., *Soma and Psyche. Harmony and conflict: a history of reciprocity*.

5) A.B. Ferrari Psychoanalytic Institute for Training and Research, founded by Armando Ferrari in 2005, transforming the study group that had been working with him since the 1980s into an Association. After his death in 2006, the I.P.F.R. worked to deepen, widen and transform the still explorable hypotheses he proposed, through a continuous activity of study and theoretical/clinical research, in collaboration with Brazilian and French psychoanalysts, promoting study days, conferences, publications and training courses offered to psychotherapists interested in the study of these hypotheses and this way of understanding the psychoanalytic clinic.

6) See Romano F., *Soma and Psyche. Harmony and conflict. A history of reciprocity*.

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e Arti Associate a.s.d association., with other therapists from the "A.B. Ferrari" Psychoanalytic Institute for Training and Research, which will continue in the academic year 2020-2021. Starting from this experience, a training module was developed to be proposed in situations where professionals of various types are exposed to work stress and burn-out risk, such as doctors, nurses and hospital staff in general, teachers, professionals working in companies with a high risk of work tension, etc..

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Cristiana Picconi: Psychologist and individual Psychotherapist, with analytical-transactional training, music-therapist, with clinical experience with children diagnosed with DSA and autistic spectrum, regular member of the "A.B. Ferrari" Psychoanalytic Institute for Training and Research.

Liliana Rizzo: Psychologist and Psychotherapist of the individual and the family with a systemic-relational approach.

Nadia Stabile: Systemic-relational Psychologist and Psychotherapist of the individual and the family, expert in teaching to students with visual impairment at the Sant'Alessio Regional Institute.

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