

SYMPHONY OR CACOPHONY?

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For years, our practice with MBTI has led us to “go further”, to look for other modalities of inner work to walk down the different paths of individuation. Three practical reasons have motivated us in this endeavor:

- MBTI enables us to gain a remarkable understanding of how the psyche functions; it does not however give us any concrete experience of this understanding. It gives us words, a vocabulary to understand oneself and others; to facilitate a person’s development, it is also necessary to add feelings, a connection with the energetic fields existing behind each function.
- This is very useful for those persons who do not recognize themselves as belonging to any one given type. At this stage, the quest for a type becomes an intellectual exercise, all solutions are possible and the person remains with his or her interrogations—or his or her excessive certainty.
- This is even more useful for type development; what must be done to gain better access to one’s shadow functions? How can one translate in concrete terms the awareness gained through the discovery of one’s own functioning?

To answer these questions, we have explored Voice Dialogue, developed by Hal and Sidra Stone. Voice Dialogue is based on the simple idea that we are all made up of various “sub-personalities”, “selves” or “voices”. This idea is ancient, and literature is filled with examples: R.L. Stevenson’s “Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde”, or Herman Hesse’s “Wolf of the Steppes” are but two examples among many others. Incidentally, each of us often experiences these inner tensions: it is not necessary to have a multiple personality to experience the torments of feeling divided—“torn apart”—by the various options when having to make a decision. To avoid being under the exclusive domination of one of these voices, the process proposed by Hal and Sidra Stone consists in giving each of them a chance to speak out, so that little by little an Aware Ego may emerge, capable of maintaining a certain balance between different polarities. The aim is to shift from the stage of cacophony where each voice wants to be heard to the detriment of the others, to that of a symphonic orchestra where each instrument plays its part under the director’s leadership.

The practice of Voice Dialogue requires very precise and operational working modalities. Our purpose is not to present them here. Anyway it is far more interesting to experience them than to describe them. Our goal is to offer a model of psychic functioning that will enable us to better understand the complementarity of these two approaches: MBTI and Voice Dialogue. This model rests very largely on Jungian concepts and on the Aware Ego theory developed by Hal and Sidra Stone. We have attempted to weave together threads coming from a variety of sources. In doing this, we have been led to modify certain notions, or to use them in a slightly different way than usual.

Thus we distinguish 5 levels in the psyche. We will describe each of them and specify in each case what specific contributions MBTI and Voice

Dialogue may bring.

1. THE PERSONA

“The Persona is a system of adaptation, or the way we communicate with the world” (Jung *Gesammelte Werke* 9/1 par. 221). The Persona is the mask that we use to deal with our environment, just as in an antique theater, actors used to put on masks to be heard far away, or as they nowadays put on make-up to play a part.

The Persona calls upon those elements of the personality which are best suited to enable us to adapt to our environment. Among them figure:

- In terms of psychic functioning, by order of logical probability, an order which it would be necessary to further validate through practice:
 1. the favorite extrovert function (dominant in the case of extroverts, auxiliary for introverts)
 2. the least preferred extrovert function (tertiary for extroverts, inferior for introverts). The constitution of a persona based on non-preferred functions occurs when the environment is favorable to a mode of functioning that is not natural for the person. This is one of the main difficulties encountered in the discovery of one’s type; the feeling of “re-appropriation of one’s self” becomes extremely powerful when the person is able to make the difference between what he/she is, and what his/her environment has led him/her to become, against his/her own will.
- In terms of Voice Dialogue, the Primary Selves. The young child learns very quickly in his life that certain types of behavior earn him approval from his environment and others not. He therefore develops behaviors that bring him recognition and gratification, even if he sometimes obtains them in roundabout ways. Thus, the child who is ignored will use negative behaviors to be punished, which is more gratifying to him than a complete absence of recognition. These behaviors, which lead to obtaining the approval of the environment, give birth to the primary selves.

In practice, the Persona seems to function under at least two main modes, with obviously many intermediate modalities. One may thus find

- An “adaptive Persona” that knows how to evolve and allows the following levels (which we are going to describe) express themselves. The Persona is thus the external face of the personality, its most frequent interface with the environment
- A “rigid Persona” that behaves as if it was the person itself. There is no awareness but a mere facade. This type of Persona may characterize itself notably by:
 1. the exclusive predominance of several Sub-Personalities, that are few and powerfully structured
 2. the extraverted orientation of the two favorite functions
 3. a powerful projective system, that transfers outside everything that is happening inside the psyche

The existence of a rigid Persona tends to make the use of MBTI extremely difficult, if not impossible. It is at this level that one encounters these reactions which are a source of despair for the practitioner, such as: “I have no preference, it all depends on the environment or circumstances”, or “I can do both”. At this stage to help the person to discover its preferences may be perceived as “pushy” and lead to a dead end or reactions of rejection whereas the method of Voice Dialogue makes it possible to get around the difficulty.

Confronted with such a reaction, the practitioner may quite simply invite the voice which esteems itself to be able to “do both” to speak out. This is a first step, which consists in differentiating the Self who can do it all from the Person herself. In other words, by allowing the Persona to speak out, the idea that it is only one voice among others is introduced, implying that therefore the Person cannot be reduced to it. It is useless, quite to the contrary, to explain why you are doing this; all you need to do is to let the Persona express itself, so that sooner or later—one should never be in a hurry in this type of process—an opposite inner voice introduces itself to say that no, not everything is possible. Opposed to the almighty Persona, there may be, rejected into the unconscious, a depressive child, or a strict critic, or a chronic failure that may bring out an objection against the Persona’s will. Voice Dialogue is useful here to unblock the system, to set off what Kurt Lewin called the “unfreezing process”.

2. THE OPERATING EGO

It is the psychic self which acts, but without any awareness of the action, without any distance with respect to its own actions. It corresponds to what is often called the “ego” or the “I”. In fact the Operating Ego is made up of the totality of the Primary Selves and of its favorite functions. The Operating Ego may present characteristics that are close to those of a rigid Persona. It differentiates itself from it, notably, by the fact that the Operating Ego includes introverted functions or Sub-Personalities, whereas the Persona is by its very nature extraverted.

The predominance of the Operating Ego may make it difficult to find the type. The identification of the person to its action, the lack of distance which results from it do not create the conditions necessary for observing oneself act. Thus the person may have a tendency to answer the questionnaire according to the way they behaved the last time they found themselves in a similar situation. In terms of Voice Dialogue, there is no difficulty here: it is indeed important to begin the work with the Primary Selves. These primary selves are positive in and by themselves. It is good policy to avoid, at any cost, the mistake which would consist in rejecting them to bring out the rapid appearance of the opposite polarity. The Primary Selves are indispensable. They have formed to enable the person to function, indeed to survive. If the person is there, it means that he/she has managed to live, thanks to them. Besides, if by any chance one would attempt to get rid of them, the Primary Selves would violently protest and the apprentice sorcerer practitioner would have to endure a violent reaction of rejection. Knowledge about the Primary Selves is a first, indispensable step and one must wait for their permission before going and seeing what is happening on the other side of the mirror.

At this stage, Voice Dialogue can therefore help launch a process of dis-identification of the person from its own Primary Sub-Personalities, and, consequently, a process of gradual development of an Aware Ego.

3. THE AWARE EGO

The Aware Ego is a process that regulates the tension between the opposite polarities of psychic life. It does not identify itself with any particular state, with any specific Sub-Personality or Self. It is the “authority” that is able to maintain a tension between them, without becoming associated with any one in particular, without taking sides for any of them. It provides the foundation, from which the person becomes able to choose the most adequate form of behavior.

To grow, the Aware Ego uses two elements:

- The Awareness that provides distance: without this clear-mindedness there is no Aware Ego. But lucidity alone is not enough because it is a form of detachment from action; it does not act in and by itself. Hal and Sidra Stone express this aspect very clearly by saying: “You don’t aware life, you live it”. Or, in a more ironic form, awareness could be illustrated by the story of the patient who was still peeing in bed after 10 years of psychoanalysis, but who at least finally knew why he was doing it!
- The experience of the Sub-Personalities or Selves. In a practical way, Voice Dialogue is a method that puts the Selves into play. It consists under appropriate conditions in letting them speak out, to get in touch with their energy, to recognize their usefulness and their limits. In short, the idea is to turn them into allies, not letting one of them slip up to the steering wheel, believing it is the whole person all by itself.

The Aware Ego is a process of dis-identification from the Sub-Personalities, or a process of expansion of one’s consciousness . It is in no way a state which might be reached, but a constantly evolving path. The Aware Ego “is” not; it “becomes”. This appears on two levels:

- An Aware Ego may exist in relationship to one given Sub-Personality, but not to another. I can hardly be aware of all my Sub-Personalities at the same time. I might be aware of one aspect, but clearly blind about another.
- The Aware Ego may exist in relationship to one Sub-Personality at a given moment, and disappear the next instant. Simple stress is sufficient for the Aware Ego which I thought I had gained to vanish and go up in smoke as I find myself confronted with a new situation. The role of Awareness will be indeed to reawaken the Aware Ego, just as the pilot flame in a water-heater may ignite the entire heating ramp!

At this stage, MBTI and Voice Dialogue work hand in hand. MBTI describes how the psyche functions. It is a map that I may draw of my inner territory, but the map is not the territory. The latter is infinitely more intricate and more lively. Voice Dialogue enables us to experience the various forms of energies related to functions. From then on they appear in full light, with their respective characteristics. Identifying the type becomes easy and the work of transformation may take place through an inner re-balancing.

EXAMPLE:

Paul thinks that he is ENFP. During a group seminar, he volunteers to clarify his own type and work on his two preferred functions Ne and Fi. The facilitator asks him what motivated him to volunteer. Paul answers that he likes to try out new experiences, and that experiencing everything that comes on his way is a spontaneous reflex, even if he sometimes wonders in what kind of a pain he has put himself. The facilitator then invites him to let his “experimentator” speak, visibly corresponding to his extrovert Intuition. In an extremely quick move, Paul turns his chair to face the audience; his “experimentator” explains brilliantly how much pleasure he feels trying out new experiences, speaking out in public, expressing ideas. To the facilitator who asks him how long he has been in Paul’s life, he answers that he has been in activity ever since Paul became a University teacher, around the age of 35.

Having returned to his original position, Paul says that he recognizes this part of himself well, a part that works fast, well and frequently and which provides him great pleasure. It enters into contradiction with a more secret, more intimate aspect of his personality that puts him into trouble, as it is doing now for example, as he is feeling that he is speaking about himself more than he had thought would at first be necessary. The facilitator then invites him to let this intimate part speak out—corresponding quite clearly to the Introvert Feeling. Paul then turns his back to the audience, lowers his head, holding it between his hands. A long silence settles in. Then he starts crying, long silent tears that seem to be pouring out from an overflowing reservoir. After a while he explains how he has just gotten in touch with a very secret and powerful energy, an energy that has been there as long as he can remember (it began when he was 15 months old) and which represents the deep-seated pattern of his life, related to his most essential convictions and spiritual life.

We’ll stop relating this session at this point. What comes out of it ?

- The existence in Paul of an extraverted Intuition function and of an introverted Feeling function. The difference of energy between the two was so striking and so characteristic that for the eyes and ears of the audience it then became useless to define either one. They manifested with complete clarity, like two incredibly different people, each of which had its own consistency.
- A question about Paul’s true type: Is Paul an ENFP as he thought he was or rather an INFP, the Feeling function seeming to manifest a clear anteriority and even predominance, not in terms of action, but through the person’s very essence. Additional work would be necessary to answer such a question.

4. THE PERSONAL UNCONSCIOUS

The personal unconscious is made up of the polarities that are opposed to the Operating Ego. It includes:

- The shadow: tertiary and inferior functions
- The “disowned Selves”. For each primary Self corresponds a disowned

Self—its opposite polarity. The active self is matched by a contemplative self; the warrior by a pacifist, and so on. The disowned Selves are neither better nor worse than the Primary Selves. They have simply been pushed back down into the unconscious, because during the process when the personality was being formed, they were not appreciated. They are more than necessary to re-establish balance. As soon as the Aware Ego dis-identifies itself from the Primary Selves, the disowned Selves ipso facto begin to emerge, bringing out the missing pieces necessary for the overall balance of the system.

There again, MBTI and Voice Dialogue demonstrate how beautifully complementary they are to each other. After having drawn a map of the psychic territory, the MBTI provides a compass to find one's way. The dynamics of functions help us to specify what is the "type" of path for a person's development. It also enables one to shed light on a certain number of projection mechanisms, notably when the same function exists in an inferior position within one person, and in a dominant position in another. Voice Dialogue on the other hand is an effective way to experience the opposite polarities, not only to say what they are but to get in touch with their energy, to let them speak out, to hear what they have to say. The result is a development of the Aware Ego and a greater range of possible choices.

5. THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

"Whereas the contents of the personal unconscious are acquired during the adult's lifetime, the contents of the collective unconscious are invariably archetypes that have been present ever since the beginning" (Gesammelte Werke 9/2 par. 13). These archetypes are a common heritage to humanity, even if their manifestations take on various forms depending on the culture. Olympus is a good example of this in our Western world. But in every civilization one may find the "eternal" characters, the Great Mother, the Warrior, the Orphan, the Trickster (who takes for example the form of Mercury for the Greeks, of the Fox in Western civilization, of the Coyote among American Indians) and many others.

At this level, the MBTI, which covers mainly the conscious mind, has little to contribute. One could simply emphasize the fact that the collective unconscious manifests itself preferably through the Shadow functions; the Animus (the masculine part of a woman) and the Anima (feminine part of a man) have, notably in their manifestations, close connections with the inferior function.

Voice Dialogue is a better suited tool to bring the archetypes out in the open. A number of Selves are the embodiments of archetypes or, it could be said conversely, a number of Selves, after having been submitted to amplifications may be connected back to archetypes. What is interesting to bring out, and what can help the person, is the dynamics existing between the archetype and its actualization in the person's experience. To speak of the "inner warrior" does not contribute anything very useful as long as one has not yet identified who is one's own inner warrior, what form it takes, what gave rise to it. Worshipping Joan of Arc, Turenne or Rackham the Red is not any more useful as long as, beyond the

character, one has not recognized the archetype of the Warrior, thus relating an individual's life-story to collective history. As in any good novel, it is the extreme particularity of a story that makes it universal.

For instance, Sylvie mentioned during a session the stress brought about by her triple status of spouse, mother and professional worker. She then let the voice in herself speak, the one constantly saying what she had to do. The woman of duty rose, went halfway up the stairs and from there delivered an admonishment about everything which she of course was never doing well enough. It sounded like the last Chapter of the "Proverbs" in the Bible: "The virtuous woman rises while it is still night, to cook food for her household, and to give orders to her servants... her lamp never goes out at night ...she puts her hand to the distaff and her fingers get active with the spindle ...etc...". To the incredible list of tasks which are incumbent upon Sylvie, the voice adds on the obligation, to be pretty, available and ... relaxed. The participants in this group seminar listened dumbfounded to this authoritarian character which had nothing in common with the Sylvie that the group knew. Having returned to her seat, she expressed how literally exhausted she felt, and overwhelmed by what has just happened, and of which she was practically unconscious up to then. The Inner Patriarch, the woman's tyrant, came and showed itself with all of its vigor.

CONCLUSION

The model we are offering here is not intended to give an all-inclusive vision of the way in which the psyche functions, which would be quite utopic, nor even a synthesis of previous theories, which would be almost as pretentious. More modestly and quite concretely, its intention is to propose a reference framework, enabling the practitioner to understand the resistances and difficulties of a client, and thus to choose accordingly the most adequate process.

This seems to be a promising axis of development for the MBTI from our point of view, because it provides a certain extent of rigor and clarity to an essentially qualitative approach. We wish for this combination of MBTI and Voice Dialogue, to be both an opportunity of exchange between practitioners, and a way to help each person travel along their own path of individuation.

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