

# THE AWARE EGO PROCESS: *Voice Dialogue and Personality Types* by Geneviève Cailloux and Pierre Cauvin

## THE ONE AND THE MANY

**T**First situation. You have to make a decision. The only thing is that there is a for and against on either side, your heart and head hesitate between the two, you don't know which one to choose, pulled as you are between two voices, one as strong the other.

Second situation. A new problem pops up: you can't figure out how to solve it. What you know how to do doesn't work: you're told to be creative. But how do you become creative? Where is creativity hiding in you?

Third situation. Your usual way of doing things no longer satisfies you: you feel that a good part of your potential is lying fallow. How can it be cultivated, developed?

These examples, which could easily be multiplied, shed light on a fact of experience: we are not monoliths, made of a single block. We have different facets, different strategies. We use them as best we can, depending on the circumstances. But some of them are better developed, better mastered and take front stage: others are more in the background, less natural and require more effort.

In this never-ending play of adaptation and interaction with the environment, two series of factors are at work:

- on one hand, spontaneous functioning modes, natural operational processes that are specific to each individual and different from one person to another. They concern the fundamental psychic processes at work in any action undertaken;
- on the other, acquired strategies, gradually developed during life to better reach the objectives, conscious or unconscious, that we have set for ourselves.

## THE LAWS OF PSYCHIC LIFE

These two series of factors, which will be described a little further on, follow three major laws of psychic life:

### 1. THE LAW OF THE SEESAW

Psychic life is a dynamic system consisting of opposite polarities whose very tension creates movement. More precisely, everything that we develop spontaneously creates the appearance of the opposite polarity in the unconscious. There are three ways of using the seesaw:

- you can suddenly change sides. This is a game that children play; it can be fun for a while but the sudden seesaw is difficult to live, as much for you as for the people around you
- you can block the seesaw to avoid the changes mentioned above. In this case, calm is ensured but the system is frozen
- lastly, you can place yourself in the middle of the seesaw and manage its oscillations with precision to make the required changes easier without being their plaything.

### 2. THE LAW OF INFLATION

Any effective strategy tends to become dominant, even exclusive. The better it works for the individual, the more it tends to push the opposite pole back

into the unconscious. All the functioning modes and usual strategies form the Operational Ego. In a certain way it is the default position or the automatic pilot. It is indispensable in daily life in order to not have to reinvent everything each morning; but if it takes up too much room, the seesaw gets blocked and the adaptation capacity disappears.

### 3. THE LAW OF PERMANENT EVOLUTION

The Aware Ego is what permits the seesaw to be managed, in other words, using the appropriate mode or strategy depending on needs without however loving what you have burned or burning what you have loved. It is the director and the conductor; it governs the interaction of the different facets of the individual. The Aware Ego is not a state you reach, but a constant process of stepping back and “unhooking” from the dominant aspects. The Aware Ego is not in a state of “is.” It is in a constant state of evolution. Like the ferret it slips in here and will slip back out there. This does not presuppose a development time frame, an objective to be reached; on the contrary, development is nothing other than the constant implementation of this process.

## DIFFERENT FACETS

### PSYCHIC FUNCTIONING

A first aspect of our multiplicity is shown in the way in which we function, in which we are “wired.” Among the tools we have available to us, some are privileged over others. Following Jung and those who developed his thinking, we can discern four fundamental dimensions, each of which is determined by two poles. These four dimensions are:

- the origin and orientation of our psychic energy: either it comes from outside us and invests itself in the outside as a preference, and we will speak of Extraversion; or it comes from inside us and invests itself in us as a preference and we will speak of Introversion
- the modes of perceiving and gathering information: either on a factual, pragmatic, sequential mode and we will talk of Sensing; or on a global, synthetic, immediate mode and we will talk of Intuiting
- decision-making criteria: Thinking makes the decision in a distanced way by applying a grid of logical criteria; Feeling involves itself in evaluating the coherence of the decision with the scale of personal values.
- how we handle space and time: space and time are managed either in a methodical and rigorous way, organization and planning predominating; or in a flexible and reactive way, spontaneity and adaptation prevailing.

Two poles exist on each dimension but one is preferred naturally and its use is immediate, easy, requiring little effort; the other demands a greater learning effort to access it. Specific characteristics, which enable psychological “types” to be identified, follow from this.

Each type has its own evolution dynamic. In fact, the different dimensions interact; the four main functions, notably, Sensing, Intuiting, Thinking and Feeling take different positions—dominant auxiliary, tertiary, inferior—in the psychic structure that make it possible to identify their order of appearance, their degree of accessibility and the development path to better manage polarities

that are not spontaneously preferred. This dynamic is easily represented on a simple graph whose axes are the perception and decision-making dimensions. The functions are then sited in their hierarchical order. This graph is called the “function cross.”

### THE STRATEGIES

A second aspect of our multiplicity is shown in the strategies we put to work to obtain our objectives, adapt ourselves to the environment. They may appear very early in life: a baby quickly learns the best way to get the attention of those around him. These early learnings give rise to behavior patterns that take on a relative autonomy in the psychic life: every one of us is quite aware of “donning” an outfit according to whether we are at the office, at home, with a group of friends or with our children.... These strategies are often so dense that the initiators of this approach, Hal and Sidra Stone, talk of “Selves.”

Certain of these strategies or Selves quickly take on a dominant role. They are the ones that make our adaptation easier, that are awarded by our parents during childhood, that permit us later on to reach our main objectives, whether they are explicit or mostly unconscious. The dominant strategies tend, according to the second law that we mentioned above, to take more and more room, even all the room. They then push back into the unconscious the opposite polarity, which is either unintegrated if it did not have the occasion to emerge, or denied if its timid expressions have been repressed.

The number of Selves varies and their form changes from one individual to another and over time. Particularly because of the similarity of cultural context, however, certain strategies are common to a number of us: the inner child, the critic, the perfectionist, the workaholic are some examples of them among others. The most interesting aspect is not the general and abstract nomenclature or the longest list possible of each individual’s Selves, but the comprehension of the characteristics of the main Selves and of the way they appear.

### THE INTERACTION BETWEEN FUNCTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Functioning modes and strategies interact and spotting these interactions permits our psychic dynamic to be better understood.

- There is often pairing between Selves and psychic functions. The “creative” easily links itself to the Intuiting function, the “pragmatic” finds a natural ally in the Sensing function. In this respect, the spontaneous functioning mode predisposes us to developing certain strategies in preference to others.
- There can also be variations of a self on different psychic modes. So the Feeling function predisposes us to developing a “Pleaser”. But an individual with a spontaneous preference for the Thinking function may also be led to develop a “pleaser” strategy. In this case, this Self will express itself differently than the preceding Self.
- It is also possible to draw a map of Selves on the diagram that usually represents the type development dynamic (function cross). The different interactions possible then appear very clearly.

### INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Aware Ego Process approach sheds new light on interactions between people. Exchanges between Peter and Paul don’t take place between two

individuals but between two sets of Selves using different psychic functions. So there is no single bonding pattern but a host of possible patterns depending on the strategies that come into play. Each pattern is based on a complementarity of strategies: one individual's position of strength weaves a link with the other's position of symmetric fragility and vice-versa. Here too, a simple method enables these patterns and the way in which they may turn around, for example, from positive to negative, to be represented.

## HOW CAN THE AWARE EGO PROCESS BE FAVORED IN PRACTICE?

How can we now go from theory to practice? How can we make sure that it is the Aware Ego that is most often at the controls, by using the most appropriate strategy rather than leaving a Self in the cockpit?

Several approaches are available.

### VOICE DIALOGUE

This method was developed by Hal and Sidra Stone; it forms the basis of coaching sessions. Its effectiveness is greatest when it is carried out with the help of an outside facilitator. Once a person gets used to it, it is not out of the question for him to use some of its elements alone.

The principal element is the differentiation between the Aware Ego and the Selves, during the session, facilitated by physical movement. Each time that you give the floor to a Self, you get out of your seat and place yourself in a spot that better suits this Self. This movement has two objectives:

- it facilitates the distinction between the person who is trying to look clearly into himself and who therefore is getting closer to his Aware Ego, and of a facet of himself that has a particular viewpoint on the question. If this facet occupies a large place, it will tend to resist the movement because it has a tendency to associate itself with the person, to be considered as itself and not as a part of the person
- it permits the Self to enter into contact with the deep energy that nourishes it, to go farther into what it is, what it thinks, what it wants for the person without encountering any contradiction. The experience is richer and deeper than if we talked about it from the outside, it integrates aspects that are not only rational but also affective and energizing.

### THE REVEALERS

Some of our behaviors, some of our reactions, are very reliable indicators of the absence or presence of the Aware Ego. Sharp vigilance then allows us to spot the moments when a Self takes power by evicting the Aware Ego.

### GENERALIZATIONS

Assertions of a universal nature generally express a partial and biased viewpoint. The Aware Ego knows how to weigh the subtleties in life, because it embraces the two polarities. A Self, on the other hand, often has the tendency to see only one side, its own. As soon as we hear ourselves utter sentences beginning with "All the...", "Only the...", "As for me, I am..." and others like them, it would be a good thing to stop and ask the question "Who in me is speaking?"

## JUDGMENTS

This is the step that logically follows generalization. A Self easily passes judgment on the opposite pole, it blames it. As for the Aware Ego, it does not judge; but it shows discernment and decides. What is the difference between judgment and discernment?

- the emotive load is considerably stronger in judgment than in discernment
- the ability to see two (or more) aspects of a question is low in judgment and high in discernment
- judgment is rapidly and peremptorily pronounced, discernment often takes more time, is more subtle
- a decision made under the influence of a judgment is susceptible to a brutal turnaround later on, by virtue of the universal law that says “for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction” or the saying “the pendulum swings both ways”; what we haven’t taken into account comes back sooner or later in one form or another.

## PROJECTIONS

This is the mechanism by which we attribute to others what we don’t see in ourselves. It may be positive through attribution of a quality, or negative through attribution of a shortcoming. As in judgment and discernment, projection is differentiated from the simple perception that we may have of someone through the emotive load that connotes it and by the disproportion between the feeling and the object to which it is directed, which is worth “Neither this excess of honor, nor this dignity.”

## BONDING PATTERNS

Judgments and projections are basically expressed in bonding patterns, i.e., in the relationships that our different Selves form with those of the people with whom we are in contact. When the patterns take up so much room that it becomes hard for us to get out of them, either because the satisfaction that we feel from them prevents any adaptation or evolution, or because the frustration that inhabits us shuts us up in a vicious circle, then there is a clear sign that relationships are no longer formed between Aware Ego and Aware Ego, but between the Selves, each of which takes itself for the essence of each of the protagonists.

In short, in each of these different cases, we should ask ourselves just one single question: “Who’s speaking?” and look for the Self that has slipped itself into the place of the Aware Ego.

## DREAMS

“The royal path of the unconscious,” dreams speak to us about ourselves. Each element of the dream is a part of the dreamer, one of his strategies or Selves, whether it is preferred and dominant, or inferior and unintegrated. The writing of the dream, its reading and rereading, the act of drawing it, playacting it, then helps shed light on the status of each part of us vis-à-vis the place each of our facets occupies in relation to the others, which will make the entire psychic structure evolve.

## THE AWARE EGO PROCESS APPROACH

The Aware Ego Process approach is directly inspired by the latest developments of Voice Dialogue, by Drs. Hal and Sidra Stone. It integrates the contributions of the theory of psychological types developed by C.G. Jung. In France, several dozen consultants have been trained in this process. Some reference works are listed below:

CAUVIN Pierre et CAILLOUX Geneviève - Le Soi aux mille visages, Éditions de l'Homme, Paris-Montréal 2001

CAUVIN Pierre et CAILLOUX Geneviève - Les types de personnalité, ESF, Paris, 4<sup>e</sup> édition 2003

CAUVIN Pierre et CAILLOUX Geneviève - Deviens qui tu es, Le Souffle d'Or, Barret le Bas, 2<sup>e</sup> édition 1998

STONE Hal et Sidra—Le dialogue intérieur, Souffle d'Or, Barret le Bas, 1991

STONE Hal et Sidra—Les relations source de croissance, Souffle d'Or, Barret le Bas, 1991

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