

MAKE THE ORDINARY EXTRAORDINARY

Translation by Damiano Pagani

The title of this short piece, as often happens to me, captured my attention obviously because of one of my needs. Then I worked on that, drawing some considerations that now I will share with you.

First of all I thought that what makes our existence extraordinary is knowledge of ourselves, knowing what we're made of, what is the very essence that distinguishes us and makes us unique. It gives joy. Starting from the year 1900, following the development of psychology, the search for identity has become an object of desire on the part of those, many, looking for themselves and for a meaning to their existence. Before, a certain homogenisation and a default life course, marked by milestones that, despite their differences, were indicating common aims - marriage, children, job, maturity and old age lived in the name of principles and values that seemed immutable-, did not make it essential to individuate ourselves.

Nowadays each of us finds in ourselves a sense of deep identity, our originality, our talents, moving away from tradition and then asking, consciously or unconsciously, for continuous recognition. This is because a sense of our own identity produced internally cannot receive an a priori acknowledgment as it did in ancient society, when identity was based on social and moral categories that everyone took for granted. On the contrary nowadays we have to earn recognition to know and have confirmation that what we found within ourselves has a value.

Ultimately it can be said that to live and be one's self has become more difficult. Very little remains of the old way of being in the world and the human being of today shows signs of deep unease, often feebleness of the will, a basic unhappiness.

Identity, even barely glimpsed, is combined with the instance of self-assertion and self-realization which has found, for many years now, space and a symbolic order: "I was born to show the world who I am, to express my

talents, make room for my needs and my desires." With an emphasis on mine that sometimes leads on to extreme individualism, which has nothing to do with profound identity and healthy human growth.

We have relied a lot on a self-fulfilment made of reciprocal reflections between us and those around us and we have left aside everything that we consider banal, creating a dichotomy between the tasks of everyday life and the personal search for self-knowledge.

And so it happened that we have left behind the daily bustling about various tasks (we call them hassles: dusting, washing dishes, sewing curtains, looking after children and the elderly, ironing, organizing the house, managing to fit everything in, going and coming from the office, preparing scrambled eggs, listening to a friend, collaborating with colleagues, doing the shopping, going to the doctor), in a shadow cone wedged in the "other life, the one that now seems more important and true", like expressing our talents and self-assertion in the work, this is now placed into the full light and exposed to the opinions of others, waiting for recognition, spasmodically tensed against being challenged.. All this has not helped to free us from the everyday, actually, like all the things we would like to place on the back burner, it tends to take its revenge by tossing us about as if we were rags and establishing itself as the attention grabber. Having annulled the value of daily living and reduced it to the level of mere necessity, we still feel the urgency to do certain things on pain of loneliness, disorder, dirt, bad relationships, disharmony or even chaos.

What is the urgency about? What does to be pursued mean...? Who urges us? Is it actually only the model of those who have gone before us? Or is it something radically different, a soul requirement which aims at harmony, at beauty, and at order?

Behind the urgency may be the effect of conditioning, but when it occurs when there is no image to protect, no one to please or to obey, then it may mean that it is responding to a very deep imperative: care of ourselves, of what is precious to us, of others.

We act as if nothing has happened and we end up not

mentioning the daily tasks or evoking them only to disparage them, demeaning all that, in fact, adds life to life.

But we could make the ordinary extraordinary by talking, putting it back in the spotlight without fear of being outdated or trivial: "Today I changed the sheets and got an overwhelming desire to have new ones. How do you soften towels? Remove stains, cook a good Milanese risotto or pasta with Sicilian sardines? Do you clean the air conditioner filters yourself or call the technicians? How do you persuade your grandson to have a bath, how's your mother, is your son for Christmas? And that fellow you were talking about? The atmosphere in the office? Did you end making your room comfortable?"

And to keep the dust on the furniture, vilified and mistreated, from settling also on the consciousness and the latter, like the Veiled Christ, letting us glimpse its melancholy, attention must be paid to the many and varied aspects of our ordinary life to give it luster, respect and honor.

In the cone shadow of which I said at the beginning we did not put only housekeeping or a job that does not bring a narcissistic gratification, but also all subtle movements that in the wake of various emotions determine our mood, as well as our behaviors. It is the emotional ordinariness that escapes us and to which instead it would be good to direct our attention to beware of hidden messages in the emotions and even in the mechanisms that lead us to habitual actions that we are slaves to.

How is it that sometimes the armor that surrounds us hiding our souls and making our heart impermeable to every call coming from outside - being it the shriek of a child, a starry sky, a forest, the sea, a smile - how does it happen that the armoring opens and falls like a rag that, when no longer useful, falls to the ground and there it lies like a thing lost to the energy that first supported and directed it?

How is it that at a certain point, a certain afternoon I sulk, frown, become impatient and unapproachable?

Answering these questions and finding answers means accumulating existential competence. If I wake up

badly in the morning, my heart closed, no enthusiasm, a slight but persistent uneasiness, and then something happens during the morning and the heart beats again and I become a sentient, that is, a human being, what happened? What has allowed this? If I neglect to find answers and meaning, I have not learned anything.

A few days ago I was driving on the highway and my three grandchildren were sitting in the back, I was a little tense, I proceeded with the utmost attention and sometimes a quick glance in the rearview mirror to control them. Suddenly I saw the little 5 year old a bit pale, motionless and with a strange stillness of the face, I did not have time to ask for anything that the girl is taken by powerful retching that even poured on cousins that were trying to help her.

Between screams and clamour, I tried to stay calm and to enter into a service station which conveniently appeared to my eyes, I did not know where to start to clean them all three, I only had paper napkin but I realized that I needed much more, to get water, but how to get away? And here comes a beautiful lady, quiet, composed, holding cleaning napkins, two strips soaked in mineral water and a deodorant. "Thank you", I said to her, and I would have liked to go on, but she, with an empathetic and attentive look, made me realize that there was no need to lavish thanks on her, it was what had had to be done, quite simply. When I left I realized that I felt light and happy, a leap of consciousness brought me higher; anxiety and stress about the delicate and precious cargo disappeared, that meeting of soul nurtured by solidarity and empathy had an invigorating effect. Many times I thought the episode confirming for me that whenever we express soul quality, special meetings take place and consciousness moves towards its source.

Last summer, on the road to Norcia in Umbria, I went out from the hotel with my head a little confused, I had slept badly. In that path you cross the Val Nerina, large, green, it seems to have a particular predisposition, intentionality: that of orienting the soul to the divine. As I drove and watched the landscape, gradually I felt that muscle tension melted, shoulders had become soft, the

belly living and quiet and a sense of blissful peace had invaded me.

In the evening, reflecting on what had happened to me, I thought about how you could replicate an experience like that in everyday life when a captivating countryside is not within our reach. Rebuilding them inside us through the imagination? Contemplating the vision of a book? .. Or what else? The paths of consciousness too run away from us.

I believe it is very important to learn to follow the paths of consciousness, whether when it rises and goes towards other things, transcendence, or when it slides and goes down and gets stuck between trauma, suffering and hardship and so loses contact with the vitality that constitutes itself and leaves creativity, play, fun, joy, behind.

Rather than reading and reading and relying on others' various theories, insights or longings or illusions, I think it's better to try hard to experience of such paths, not of thought, but of consciousness. Cognitivists have taught us to put our attention on the mental chatter that is the basis of our convictions, of our pictures. We psychosynthesists put the accent on the path of consciousness in the course of a day, not only on the thought from which we will draw only partial information, sometimes even unreliable, but on the consciousness that contains all levels of our being: the mental, the emotional, the physical, the spiritual. So one wonders: what did I think and feel in the heart, feel in the body and in the Spirit today?

The daily exercise of reviewing the day is a good practice, a kind of reflective meditation, during which you feel the fluctuations of thought, emotions, memories, to consider them events that awareness records without getting lost in them.

Meditating we learn to experience the awareness, that "I know that I know" that constitutes us as living and interdependent entities with the rest of the universe to which, as we progress, we begin to give respectful and kind attention. The awareness is then spread into all our actions, from the humblest to the most heroic one. And here's the paradox: connecting with our everyday life in full consciousness leads to go beyond it, as if the attention granted to it takes us over, as if conscience

really needs that trampoline there - the presence - to go further.

While the meditative attitude is being built, you can live in another way: more centered, closer to the Self, more willing to meet the soul of the world.

And so it is possible that, in certain special moments, what is before us and maybe we had seen a thousand times takes on an intensity of presence that enchants and amazes us. It can be a tree along our morning walk, an apple among many, a vegetable that we have in our hands, and while we are cleaning it, "we realize" what it is there to establish a relationship with us, the gaze of a stranger, an unexpected smile. It is a meeting in essence, in spirit which reveals itself in a form that at that moment seems to us intact and is what it is, without intelligence interventions that might slip into getting us thinking: this or that is missing, it could have been so this and that, but things, those things are as they are. And the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

When this happens, it is said that the ordinary becomes epiphanic, it manifests what it has to offer.

This is not matter of hidden meanings, even of matches, this is presence revealed, essence in expression, dignified and strong.

It's not even the transfiguration of reality, one to which I thought one day by the sea as I watched my footprints on the sand, the shells, the children's sand castles and I decided to tell in verse so that the real may enter into me, may transfigure, becoming word, music, rhythm.

When an object or a landscape becomes epiphanic, we do nothing, it happens that the world is revealed to us, just us that allow the meeting being prepared on our own to "be there".

There is a Renaissance author, Walter Pater quoted by Umberto Eco in his book "History of Beauty" that processes precise aesthetics of epiphanic vision. He says: "There are moments in which by virtue of a particular emotional situation (time of day, a sudden occurrence suddenly fixing our attention on an object) things appear in a new light".

I remember one morning among the meadows with the dog, the usual jumble of thoughts, emotions twisted like shriveled leaves, only ghosts to keep me company. The wise dog had come close to plants, shrubs, weeds, it smelled damp smells, gradually also I began to feel green and penetrating languor, I felt to be body as well as being head, I started to feel whole, I trusted the wind and walked. At one point a Judas tree suddenly appeared all in pink, which I had glimpsed at other times along the way, but that morning there, at that moment, my attention did something strange, isolating it from the context to make it an object of admiration and wonder. Was my attention doing that or was it - the tree - imposing its presence on me?

I beheld, I suspended judgment, thoughts and "stood" and for a moment "I was."

And the day before yesterday, walking alone, tiny star-

like flowers, tender and green, were rooted to the earth, almost one with it, they adorned it with their elegance. Surprised, I approached: it was newly formed ivy in symbiosis with its mother.

I close this reflection with the words of Walter Pater taken from his Essay on the Renaissance:

“Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight is irresistibly real and attractive to us,—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end.

To burn always with this firm, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, that is success in life ... While all melts beneath our feet, we may well seek to grasp any exquisite passion, any contribution to the knowledge that with the clearing of a horizon seems to set the spirit free for a moment, or any arousal of the senses, strange dyes, strange colors, and odd odors, or the work of an artist’s hand, or the face of a friendly person”.

The author invites us in these words to the presence that alone can grasp what at any given time decides to come to us.

And the usual becomes revelation.

Maria Masuzzo

A CHIMERA CALLED FREEDOM

Translation by Achille Cattaneo

It was a summer evening, in the countryside, and I was thinking about freedom. Looking at the ever more and more starry, I felt that space and time could swell together with my conscienceness too limited by daily experience.

I was attracted by the idea of letting myself go into the eternal infinity, but at the same time I felt my body as an impediment.

It is too attached to its feelings and physical rhythms, I told myself, to be able to follow me in this adventure. Better to let it rest and come back to take it again when I will again need it.

But it was then that a flow of emotions squeezed me in a vice. What if it were not so easy to come back. And if I were forced to finally leave all that surrounds me and is my world.

I was reminded of the affections, desires, ideals that had inspired and guided me in my life, and a subtle sense of dismay came upon me. I tried to clear my mind, but this attempt triggered a multitude of images, thoughts, questions.

Filled with anxiety and worry then I desperately tried to make silence within me to exorcise all the ghosts, and inadvertently I found myself staring at one of the many stars that the limpending night made particularly brilliant.

Looking at it with insistence I discovered that its light seemed to me to be strange, deep and cold, different from the usual light, and I realized that even the surrounding sky took on a new dimension made of light-filled spaces rather than forms. Excited by this discovery, I continued to stare at the star and had the impression that a magnetic contact had become established between us, creating a corridor outside the conventional space and time.

I became calm and felt a strong energy flow into me. I decided to throw myself into that unknown universe with courage.

Maybe I finally had found absolute freedom through the symbol of that star.

I tuned in to a wonderful empathetic ecstasy for a moment with the experience of that star, and it was then that I realized how its fate in that infinite space was to shine, shine more and more like a still point in an All in an eternal present. In the meantime the night was ending and the light of a new day was beginning to filter through. And then my star disappeared.

I had discovered that true freedom is a conscious and responsible adherence to the cosmic Will to express the absolute Love that every universal manifestation embodies.