

THE LESSON OF GARBAGE

It is a recurrent fact that either a people, or a part of the world, or even a single individual make themselves bearers, or manifesters, of an evil that concerns the whole of mankind.

It is as if by a mysterious sacrificial act somebody took on board a lack or a failure which gets magnified like under a lens so that through the shock that the event creates - particularly today thanks to the media exposure - it was possible to become aware of something we are all responsible of, though in various degrees.

16 And so we start questioning, looking for solutions, and maybe to learn a few lessons.

The Twin Towers collapse. Suicide bombers fire themselves. A child gets killed by a stray bullet. A young woman dies because the anesthetist was absent minded. A factory catches fire and five die. The flood sweeps away buildings and human lives.

At this point we start protesting and condemning, the media are flooded with coverage of the event and the usual enquiry is open.

Very rarely do we stop to reflect on ourselves, on what these events mirror of ourselves, as individuals and as humankind.

Let us take the "garbage emergency" as an example. What can the lesson of garbage be?

It seems to me that this garbage emergency, which recurrently surfaces and creates havoc, tells us about our incapacity to manage not only the material waste (about which everybody is speaking) but also psychic waste.

It tells, for instance, of our scarce familiarity with mental states which we consider negative and which we would like to get rid of as quickly as possible: like suffering, frustration, insecurity, sadness, boredom, fear and rage. Or with difficult situations like failures, errors and conflicts.

Of our inability to analyze these states and these events to see how much there is in them which can be utilized (to know ourselves better, for our inner growth, to produce thought, poetry, art, sharing...) and how much of

this raw material could be extracted and transformed. Have we built safe dumping grounds for disturbing emotions? Or do we unload them just out of the door, upon the first unfortunate passer-by? Do we have structures to transform them into fertilizers and into alternative energies? Or do we allow them to pile up at random, until we are overwhelmed, to the point of - at times - blowing up, with destructive effects upon ourselves and others?

Let us read, as an example, what Gandhi says, in his autobiography, about the energy of rage.

"I have learnt the supreme lesson of not suppressing my rage but of keeping it and, as heat preserved can be transmuted into energy, so rage preserved and controlled gets transmuted into a power which can change the world". It may be possible that in order to become skilled at transforming physical energies, we need to start by learning how to transform emotional and mental energies.

What about starting similar reflections on other mirror events like the ones listed above?

Of what could for instance the Twin Towers, "white deaths", suicide bombers, foot-bal fan riots, floods etc be the "objective correlative"?

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AN INDICATOR

When we feel that we are too close or too far from the other, something is happening and then we remember that:

On a cold winter day, a group of hedgehogs takes refuge in a cave and squeezes up to protect against the cold. However, soon they feel the mutual thorns and the pain forces them to move away from each other. Then, the need to warm up brings them back to get closer again, and again they prick themselves. They repeat several times these attempts, tossed back and forth between two pains, until they find the moderate distance which is the best position, that right distance that allows them to keep warm and at the same time not hurting each other.

A. Schopenhauer