

## COOPERATION IN THE WORDS OF THE SAGES

*Translation by Achille Cattaneo / Gordon Leonard Symons*

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, working together is success.” (Henry Ford)

‘Cooperating’ comes from the late Latin *cooperari*, composed of *cum*, ‘with’ and *operari*, ‘to work’, indicating the action done together with others, the contribution with one’s work to the achievement of an end. Cooperation is more than just collaboration, as it implies entering into deep harmony with the other (*cum* is also the root of the Italian words *comprendere* - ‘understanding’ and *compassione* - compassion).

‘Collaborating’ comes from the Latin *co* and *laborare*: ‘to work with’, meaning to take an active part, to give your contribution to a company, to an activity, mostly limited to your own skills. Collaboration is active participation, variously determined and assessable, in the completion of a task or in the performance of an activity. Hence there are collaborators, individuals who carry out a certain task under the guidance of a boss or someone who decides what to do.

The difference is subtle, but it is there: you collaborate with others in the workplace, but what are the real motivations? The two terms express two equally noble possibilities for the human being to operate together with his fellows, but in profoundly different ways. It is the motive that makes the difference.

An African saying states that “alone we go fast, together we go far”. This is exactly the spirit of cooperation between people. We can see, from many signs, that the era of individualism is over, and in all fields human beings are collaborating to achieve goals. The more complex the world becomes, the more difficult it is to complete something without the collaboration of others. People work with others, sometimes out of need, sometimes out of choice. Groups and teams are born in all sectors of human life, and so the workload gets lighter.

Cooperation is the ultimate goal, it is a force that uses synergies and is the first step towards brotherhood. It is closely linked to goodwill: cooperation and goodwill constantly proceed together, supporting each other. In reality, cooperation between people is neither taken for granted nor given beforehand: it is the result of a long internal evolutionary process, first personal and then of the group.

One of the purposes of this article is to ask ourselves some questions about what is the quality of our work within the groups we belong to, a kind of CT scan to know what the reasons for our cooperation are.

In order to clarify the profound meaning of the term “cooperation”, a meaning that refers to a transpersonal level of the human being, I will use the “story of the stone-cutters”, enriched with some developments. It is a metaphor for the different levels of collaboration between people and it shows us the stages for reaching conscious cooperation.

Let’s imagine a huge construction site where many people are working to achieve a goal. The construction site is a symbol of all the activities of our life: the work we do, the organization of the day, of one’s time, the relationships, the activities we choose to do, our interests, etc.

Between the metaphor and the reality: in the construction site of a cathedral, the Master gave instructions to architects and engineers regarding the work to be done, which were then extended to the various degrees of unskilled workers. Who are the unskilled workers? The executors of the work, that is, our physical, emotional and mental bodies, or, if we want, the functions of the I. What is the cathedral/temple? Oneself. Who is the Master? The Self. Architects and engineers are the I that directs the work.

*One day a man was walking along a street and he saw a cathedral nearby with some people laboriously breaking large stones with clubs and hammers. He stops to enquire about their work. He asks the first one he comes across, who replies somewhat annoyed “don’t you see, I’m cutting and smoothing stones!”.*

At this level, collaboration is forced by the harsh needs of life. It is absolutely not a conscious act, on the contrary, it is suffered and colored with resentment and anger.

*The man goes on and asks the question to a second*

worker, who tells him “I haven’t found anything better to do!”.

Also at this level, we find human beings who live and endure the situations passively. They work because they have to and live a whole life of “quiet despair”, as the poet Walt Whitman would put it.

*A third, when questioned, says: “I am earning my bread for me and my family”.*

It is a further level, in which collaboration is for the good of a group and it goes beyond one’s own person. One works for the group to which he belongs, in this case the base group, the family. The perspective broadens and one collaborates with a higher motive.

*Then he asks a fourth individual, who says “I want to become master builder”.*

We have a legitimate desire to collaborate to express qualities that will hopefully be recognized and lead to an advancement in social position. It is also true, however, that “*While the ambitious one works for himself, he works for everyone.*

*We are so connected that no one can work for himself alone.*

*Each blow that he strikes on his own, helps to forge the Universe.*

*The current, while is barely opening its path, makes the mill wheel turn.*

*Coral, while manufacturing its infinitesimal cells, unites one continent to another.*

*Alexander and Caesar fought for their own ends, but in doing so, they tightened a belt of civilization around the Earth. “*

(Jerome K. Jerome)

*A fifth worker replies “I’m building a cathedral”.*

The awareness of collaborating in an important work and of occupying one’s place in an order that perhaps is not fully understood, but which is understood to be of greater scope, prefigures a beginning of conscious cooperation. It indicates the understanding of having a function to carry out and of carrying it out by putting your own abilities into it. From this answer, it is clear that cooperation needs a shared project around which to structure itself. The awareness of performing a function within that project activates strength and will. Quoting

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, each of us can do things that another cannot do. Together we can do great things.

*Finally, our man asks a sixth worker, who replies “I’m building the world”.*

At this level we discover the individual who has understood that he has a function that goes beyond his limited interests and actively and concretely cooperates with the other. He becomes part of a group, which becomes one’s own vital organism.

“All faiths agree in indicating unity as the only bulwark of success. If union is ensured between people who work together, the outcomes are better. We can mention many examples of mutual trust, which produced high resolutions. May people, from the family and the home to spatial pre-ordinations, remember the value of cooperation. The seed of work dries up if reciprocity does not water it. Let’s not look back. We, fellow travelers, would get tired if we bumped into each other. Beautiful is the meaning when introducing the great concept of friendship. A community can exist only among friends”. (New Era Community - New Era Publishing)

Each of us is included in a group that is within other groups that are within larger groups; from the family to the different groups to which we belong, to the community, to the nation, to the community of nations, to the planet and beyond.

To reflect on how and to what extent we cooperate in the groups we belong to, we can ask ourselves some questions:

- Do I feel that I am cooperating in some group? For what purpose?
- What are my motivations?  
And I do it because:
- Am I obliged, that is, I cannot do without it (by necessity or under the thrust of some subpersonality)?
- Is it a necessity to earn my living?
- Do I want to make a career of it?
- Am I aware of the function I perform?
- Am I aware of a greater Good?

All legitimate reasons, but we see that the motivation

becomes more and more general from the personal that it was at the beginning.

Another question we can ask ourselves is “who to cooperate with?”

- First of all with oneself, seeking the synthesis of the different tendencies of one’s own nature cooperating around a Purpose - Project.
- The second necessary step is to cooperate with the Transpersonal Self and its Goals.
- The cooperation with others within a Group necessarily follows.
- At the beginning, it is natural to cooperate with the Personalities, which are implementing an integration process.
- At the same time, we elevate ourselves and the cooperation moves to the level of the Self, between Soul and Soul and with the Group Soul.

After establishing the cooperation referent, we must question ourselves about how we operate, with what and for what. We therefore ask ourselves what is the current state of need of the Organism to which we belong, which includes our person. We might ask ourselves, for example, what is the next step to take for our growth

in consciousness. The importance of building a healthy Organism, which is more than just the sum of its parts, through Fair and Righteous Relationships, comes to the fore. The Organism recognizes itself in the shared Project.

We must absolutely avoid any inconvenience or unclear situations that could undermine the health of the entire Organism when perceived as suffering, improving internal communication with the correct use of goodwill. Conscious cooperation is possible only through a process that, starting from the joint and coordinated force in the Unity of motive, leads to awareness of one’s own function and responsibility for the common good.

It is fundamental the unconditional gift of one’s qualities to the Group, which is the only way to overcome the limits that do not make us free to cooperate.

Brotherly cooperation and the connection between mind and heart, through the creative application of the right rhythm in daily life, leads to the creation of Fair and Righteous Relationships, based on the Principle of Unity in Diversity and the Law of Good Will.

\_\_\_\_\_ Lina Malfiore

<b>COLLABORATION</b>	<b>COOPERATION</b>
Relationships of medium importance, trust based on work	Close, interdependent relationships, deep trust
Structured communication flows, formalized information sharing based on the project	Frequent (assiduous) communication
Common policies, programs and adequate resources	Sharing of information
Authority remains with the parent organization	Mixing of common (collective) resources (union, collection, reunion)
Commitment and responsibility to the parent organization and the project	Negotiation of shared objectives
Medium-term relationships based on project priorities	Long-term relationships Shared authority