

MANIFESTO OF A CONCRETE MISSION

Translation by Achille Cattaneo

**I can help but answer all my questions, except
the one question: what questions should we ask
ourselves in a world that is burning?** ⁽¹⁾

1. The spirit of the time

The theme of the XXXVI National Congress of Psychosynthesis, “The mission of our time”, offers an important opening for listening and speaking of Being. The former concept of “mission” presupposes the more general notion of a “Spirit of the Time” (Zeitgeist). This spirit is always, for us human beings, destined to remain partly indeterminate. In fact, it is not possible to fully understand it, because it is we who *live* in it. We are already-always-immersed in it: like air for birds and water for fish. Furthermore, the Spirit of Time does not consist - it is never reducible - to one of the objects of natural science. If we look for it outside, in the reality, in fact, we do not *find* it. Having a different nature from an object that can be ‘taken’, ‘moved’, it is an elusive, *transparent* phenomenon.

The Spirit of Time is intimate to the domain of human *experience* (erlebnis). It *is*, but it is in what it is-for-each of us. It *is*, but it is for the one who feels it and who lives it, and as long as he lives it. With the consequence that, in order to touch it and be touched by it, it is required to be able to *meet* it from a deeper point of view than the ordinary one; a point of view that starts from *us*, that looks at things from the beating and vital heart of man’s *being*: that gaze capable of reconnecting ‘being’ and ‘existence’. It is no coincidence that Spirit of Time is a radical distinction of Romanticism, that movement of sensitivity and thought that tried to re-establish the *link* between the soul of the individual and the soul of the world. A philosophy that radically problematized issues such as Destiny, Nothingness, Freedom for death,

Ultimate Value, Risk, Action, as well as Transformation - proclaiming every thought and speech incapable of changing from the depths until our existential experience - that is, every thought which, to use Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, *is not written in one’s own blood*. In fact, here is what Goethe wrote about it:

There are significant times of which very little is known to us, but that little is extremely notable. In them extraordinary individuals emerge. Singular facts occur. These eras leave a decisive imprint, they arouse great images that attract us for their simplicity. ⁽²⁾

Our thesis is that we are in the heart of one of these significant epochs and that, at the dawn of the new millennium, we are immersed in the opportunity - unprecedented in history - to transform ourselves and emerge as extraordinary individuals, helping to realize a future that otherwise could not have happened. And it was Goethe who insisted - considering it a central principle for the possibility of human transformation - on the relationship between the history of an individual and the history of his time. It was Goethe, the Olympian Goethe, who supported the idea that we have the task of getting to the bottom of the pain and the maximum contradiction of our time (in the place of what is most *lacking* and which *would make the most difference*), but with the strength to go back. Here is what crucible can melt the ordinary way of being of a man, giving us back a *transformed human being* - and therefore an agent of the possibility of the *transformation of the world*: the availability and the will to immerse oneself in the maximum negative, to say it with Hegel, thus becoming *large* enough to accept this pain but not to sink into it: rather, with the strength to come out of it enlarged, *made aware*.

In more rigorous terms: to understand *who we really are*, that is, to be ‘authentic’ (another great theme of Romanticism), we are called to confront us with the Spirit of Time. In fact, authenticity is a distinction that extends beyond the individual, to embrace his entire social and historical sphere, and therefore a man who relates inauthentically to his own time, cannot but relate inauthentically to himself. To authentically encounter one’s own epoch means above all to encounter it *as this epoch itself*. It is something analogous to the ‘respect’ we

can give to an individual: we must be able to take it as it is, that is, *without adding or taking anything away* from the way it is - meeting it as much as possible according to the principle of identity (Ego = Ego). To wish that this age of ours is like another is therefore to invite it to falsify - and therefore to falsify ourselves as its inhabitants. Touching our epoch begins with accepting it radically, and then descending to the bottom of its abyss and universally shared pain. Goethe therefore taught us that touching (not understanding) the Spirit of Time is entering into the most intimate relationship with oneself, and that in that abyss we can find a whole new possibility of life.

2. What is possible from this our abyss

If I can transform myself, align myself with my authentic myth, respond correspondingly to my call and meet the possibility of being myself *resonating* with the Spirit of Time, and if the spirit of every time has infinite aspects, dimensions, connotations or characteristics (*qualia*), what are those of *ours*? What is the ultimate connotation of the mission of Being, in this epoch in which I exist? Here is a huge question in which, to this day, the concrete future of all of us is imprisoned. And we need a *path*, a way of thinking that allows us - as Assagioli says - to *bring the multiple back to one*. We need a radical synthetic category, which coordinates all the unique characteristics of the spirit of our time, and takes us to the heart of its mission. This is how the concept of "mission of our time" presupposes and reveals a second category, which is added to that of the "Spirit of Time".

This category is that of the *historical crisis*. The crisis, in fact, is not only a category of individual life, but also a profound code for reading history.

Like individual life, history also has various forms of crisis, of which one in particular, precisely the "historical crisis", is the one to which all our interest must be directed. The historical crisis is not in fact a historical change like any other: it is a form of change that is distinguished from a *normal crisis*. The historical crisis is the situation that occurs when, following a multiplicity of conditions, conjunctures and changes,

a "world" (an entire system of beliefs, which formed the *current paradigm*) is questioned in such a way as to allow the man to be found 'without a world'. "The man of the crisis", said the philosopher Ortega y Gasset, has been "an orphan of the world": he does not know what to do and what to think of the world, since he does not know who he really is, nor does he know anything precisely⁽³⁾. Having understood this, the next question is what is the *significance* of the historical crisis. Thomas Kuhn taught us that every historical crisis opens up the possibility of a 'turning point', that is, of an entire paradigm shift:

The failure of existing rules is the prelude to the search for new rules [...]. The meaning of the crises is the indication they provide relating to the fact that the time has come for a *reconversion*.⁽⁴⁾

We are precisely in the midst of a general transformation of the world without precedent in human history, in the midst of an entire paradigm shift in which we are altering our relationship with ourselves, with others and with reality itself. Whether the final result will be a function or against the human is all to be established, but in the meantime we must focus on what is the specific *object* of the paradigm change of *this* our age. In the essay *The horizon of a new world*, written together with Alberto Alberti, I support the thesis that it concerns precisely the question of what it means *to be* human beings⁽⁵⁾. One of the ways to get evidence of the break-through to which we are called in our time is to look at its deepest crisis (breakdown). But with Goethe, it is a descent into the heart of the abyss to look at *what is possible* from the place of the abyss. And if the specificity of the current crisis is that all our crises are particular, whatever scope (education, politics, psychology, philosophy, medicine, etc.) refer to a question about the *nature* or *fundamental essence* of man - as indeed deep and radical thinkers have shown us, by F.W. Nietzsche to J. Ortega y Gasset, from W. Reich to R.D. Laing, by C.G. Jung to R. Assagioli - it is precisely from the 'crisis scheme' that this emerges: *the fundamental mission of our time is to realize a whole new possibility in our way of human beings.*

The loss of what it means *to be* a human being is the ultimate core of our crisis, and at the same time this

core contains the possibility of generating a whole new *paradigm* on man and the world. A paradigm is a model or a vision of the world composed of a set of ideas and assumptions from which we observe reality, and which informs how we navigate the real. When the historical understanding of who we are, of our relationship with others and with life itself is *insufficient*, we become called to generate a new paradigm. Now, while humanity has already gone through paradigm shifts previously, the character of this shift relative to our *self-understanding* has completely new characteristics. This is why it is very useful to conceive the epoch in which we find ourselves as a moment of limbo, a sort of space or middle earth in which we are all called to create the new horizon of the world, the future philosophy, a new whole meaning for what it means to be human beings - and, from the answers we will choose to give to all these questions, to create the institutions of the new civilization⁽⁶⁾. All this makes our age an age full of *consequences*. A decisive era for the future of the world. Perhaps, the era in which the future of the future will be written. Let us meditate again on what Goethe says:

There are significant times of which we know little, circumstances whose importance is revealed to us only by their *consequences*. The time the seed spends underground is an important part of a plant's life.

3. Phenomenology of human generations

The seed analogy is even more profound, since it touches the specific character of the crisis in which *we* find ourselves in the middle. The seed of the future plant indicates the dawn of a possible Renaissance⁽²⁾, focused precisely on a whole new possibility in what it means *to be* human beings⁽³⁾. A transformation that is not limited to altering one's individual or collective *way of being*, but which naturally extends to the possibility of *making history*. A transformation of the world that unfolds as a natural expression of a transformation of man. But who will be the protagonist, the agent, the subject who can be the cause-in-matter of this possible turning point or transformation? Simply, a new *generation*. "Generation" is much more than a word: it is a phenomenological distinction, which offers us a new 'opening for being'

and an unprecedented 'opening for action'. Like any new distinction, when it is *grasped* it is able to reveal new possibilities to see, relate and therefore intervene in the radicalism of what Sergio Bartoli (psychotherapist student of Assagioli) called the 'world of causes'.

The method of generations in fact allows us to look at history *from the inside* (so to speak 'on the pitch' of the game in which the story is played), and to show with vibrant immediacy that living subject that *can make a new story* - which has the power to effectively transform it into a future that 'would not have happened anyway'. And insofar as it indicates that living subject which, by transforming itself, can trigger and guiding a transformation of the whole, "*generation*" remains the *most important distinction for the transformation of the world*. It is therefore a distinction to be understood and mastered again, to be encountered from scratch through a certain renewed set of ideas, which has the power to alter our *relationship* with this category to which we belong anyway. Here is a first and more general definition of generation: 'generation' always incorporates a certain set of people who, within the same *time*, share the same *space* (horizon of expectations, difficulties, problems, aspirations, etc.). In the broadest and most general possible sense, the category of generation refers to individuals characterized by a "common space or foundation".

However, this space, as this first definition already seems to indicate, is not necessarily the one restricted to the *biological age*. And this, in turn, illuminates the following realization: for the *human being*, generation is not a phenomenon of 'nature' or 'biology', but a phenomenon of 'lived' and 'history'. In the order of the human world, that is, the generations are not characterized by *quantitative* connotations, but predominantly *qualitative*. And in his essay "*The theme of our time*", Ortega y Gasset offers us the face of the highest qualitative trait of human generation, the organizing principle of all others. He tells us that *the face* that a generation assumes (its identity, and its destiny) is the result of the relationship between two factors: 1) the way in which a generation *listens* to or *relates* to the world that is it been handed over or inherited; 2) the way it listens to or relates to its own particular sensitivity and mission:

For each generation, living is a two-dimensional occupation: one consists in receiving the experience (ideas, evaluations, institutions, etc.) from the previous one; the other, in letting one's spontaneity flow. [...] The *spirit* of each generation depends on the equation made up of these two ingredients, on the attitude that the majority of its individuals adopt towards each of them. Will it abandon itself to what it receives by not listening to the intimate voices of its spontaneity? Will it be faithful to these, and indocile to the authority of the past? ⁽⁷⁾

But it is in his "Dawn of the historical reason" that Ortega offers us an extraordinary qualitative distinction, differentiating three types of generations:

1. *Cumulative generations*. They are those generations (groups of individuals) substantially in line - or at least who believe they have sufficient *homogeneity* - between what they have received from the past and their own peculiar sensitivity.
2. *Controversial or fighting generations*. They are those generations that feel a radical heterogeneity between the two elements, or who are even *opposed* to the legacy they inherited from the generations that preceded them. They therefore oppose it and fight it, despite the fact that in most cases it is a more apparent than real rupture.
3. *Decisive or resolute generations*. Rarely (under certain peculiar conditions) a controversial generation can become a decisive generation. These are generations which bring about real revolutions, which concretize a new configuration of the world. But unlike the controversial generations, they are always made up of 'chosen minorities' endowed - at the same time - with *imagination and courage*.

We therefore understand that the "common space" that we have established to be the foundation of the 'generation' implies something much more *human* than simple chronological age. Generation, rather, refers to the *intentionality* of group of human beings, which thus come to be configured as 'realms of intentionality'. This implies that individuals of very different ages can

unite in the same 'common intentionality'. And on this different premise, the relationship between generations appears as something to be completely reexamined. In fact, what is the *relationship-already-present* between the different generations - determined directly by the *prevailing horizon* from which we think of them today, namely that of mere chronological age? This looks more or less like this: today, in our today, different generations (chronological data) coexist in an articulated and dialectical way, each with its own specific issues of interest or importance fundamental (concerns). The relationships that are established between them give life to a dynamic system of attractions and repulsions, of friendship and enmity, which in every moment writes and in-forms the historical reality of the whole.

Seeing themselves as *separate* from something irreducible, the chronological age with their specific issues, 'the future in which the generations are currently living' is not big enough to include all the issues of interest or fundamental importance of the various actors. Thus, the generations, identified at the *time* that most seems to them to be their own, simply find themselves talking against each other. Situation represented by Plutarch who, speaking of the life of Lysurgus, expresses, in three recited verses, what we have called the relationship-already-present between the generations:

The old men: We have been very strong warriors.

Adults: We are: look us in the face if you dare.

Young people: We will be much stronger, however.

However, now we can ask ourselves, in light of these different considerations: what is the unprecedented *possible - relationship* between them? And even more: what is that relationship in principle *indispensable* for the fulfillment of the mission of our time? Well, being the specific of the mission of our time the genesis of a new paradigm for being human, all generations - in principle and as far as possible - should cooperate in this *entire* redefinition of 'human. In fact, since each generation represents a specific *vital altitude* from which one looks at the world - and therefore a unique and peculiar way of the totality of *humanitas* - all generations possess

an essential message, and it is precisely in the context of this mission that they can find a deeper “common space”⁽⁴⁾ Precisely the simultaneous commonality of an origin (human nature) and a fundamental task (mission). Thus, another central aspect of the mission of our time is that - in order to achieve this turning point or reinvention of the human - it is necessary to favor a principle of *union between generations*. While in other times this union was not required, the specificity of our mission makes it the most desirable.

However, while this future is the most desirable peak, what we absolutely need now, what is absolutely *indispensable*, is of a decisive first generation⁽⁵⁾ (a first generation which, through continuous transformation of itself, can transform the institutions of the future). And this is because generations - like individuals - can freely accept or betray their appeal. This desirable *union* could only partially happen and even not happen, since it depends on a set of unpredictable conjunctures and relative to the situation, which ultimately relate to arbitrariness and free choice. On the other hand, it is essential to work with the utmost seriousness in *preparing* a first decisive generation. And *to begin with, what do we need to know about the latter?*

4. Prepare a decisive generation

First of all, if we start from the category of the Spirit of Time, *the decisive generation is nothing more than the providential moment of the Spirit of the World, the place in which the future can take place*. However, it is composed of nothing but ordinary individuals, who have nothing special beyond the fact that they are singularly committed *to* the future ⁽⁶⁾, that is, human beings who freely take each day a ‘resolution’ so that an aspect, a value or a possibility of the greater common future can take place. On no other foundation than their word, they decide to defend and represent this value with ‘the possibility of their own existence’ ⁽⁸⁾. From the moment these individuals constitute themselves as a ‘clearing’ or a ‘context’ that allows that future, their way of being and acting becomes as *given* by that future, and they begin to access to what is required to mediate it in history.

We absolutely need a decisive generation (inter-

generational from an age point of view), which includes human beings who, however unique and different, are simply united by that foundation which consists in being really committed to creating a “turning point “or a” transformation “in our way of *being*, and from this to *represent* an aspect of the future they have at heart, and which contributes to the realization of the greater future that unites us in our destiny. In fact, let us remember that a generation is nothing more than a series of individuals united by a “common space”, which is always made up of nothing more than a set of more or less explicit “common commitments”, which go to generate a certain “shared future”. These common commitments can concern both material, objective, registry issues and concerns, but also - *together with* these - the same mission of our time as we have articulated it.

All this opens up the great problem of *how* to form a decisive first generation today. We recall Ortega’s idea that, within the various generations, are always chosen minorities - a few individuals with imagination and courage - who impose their innovative proposals on passive multitudes (mimetic masses)⁽⁷⁾. For Ortega it is not even realistic that *everyone* can become thinkers, leaders or avant-gardes of the human. Rethinking the *worldviews* of the specific areas of humanity (economics, law, education, psychology, philosophy, etc.) is a domain that belongs to a few, indeed to those few who are *willing* to establish one’s existence as ‘the clearing for a specific future’ - while the mass or multitude can make their own *the passions, experiences and feelings* that these worldviews bring with them. Ortega says:

Anything big and smart belongs to a minority. There were ministers who had against them people and kings and they carried out their great projects in solitude. We must not think that reason can become popular. If anything, passions and feelings can become.

History therefore moves, but is renewed thanks to the chosen minorities, to a small group of sensitive, trained and - above all - committed women and men. This also reminds us of much of what Assagioli wrote about the importance of preparing the “gifted” ⁽⁹⁾. We find this

position well expressed in the famous statement by anthro

Never doubt that a small group of responsible citizens can change the world. Instead, it is the only way this has always happened.

The problem is how to *educate* this small group of responsible men and women, that is, committed to constituting their existence as a clearing for a certain “future” (eg the future of education, the future of politics, the future of philosophy, the future of medicine, etc.), which in turn is an indispensable aspect of the one Great Common Future. Where to start? *To educate what we might call the spirit of a decisive generation, nothing less than an education, a knowledge, a frontier training is needed.* This in turn must concern two dimensions:

1. *An education to transform the world-of-life.* The first knowledge must give access to the ‘personal transformation’ as a way of life. It must be such as to fulfill the Augustinian promise “to return to being”. That is, it must support this generation in the arduous and infinite work of realizing the continuous coincidence between existence (Ego) and being (Self). [the promise of BEING YOURSELF]
2. *An education to transform the world-of-history.* The second knowledge must give access to the possibility of ‘making history happen’ in a voluntary and conscious way. As a self-conscious being, man has the power and the pro-creative responsibility of evolution. He realizes it through *acts of will*, each of which has the power to bring a further specification to the evolution of that emerging whole that we call *the future*. This knowledge must allow the generation to express and specify the being in the existing history, in order to evolve the whole. [the promise of the EXPRESSION OF BEING IN THE STO-RIA]

In the next article we will deal with analyzing these two knowledge in detail.

Notes

1. Turning point must be distinguished from improvement. The latter is a change of an object in the same vision of the world, while the turning point indicates an alteration of the world itself.
2. “Renaissance” (begun approximately in the fourteenth century) is the name given to the period that preceded the actual appearance of a new form of human being: the modern man. Today we are faced with the opportunity of a new Renaissance, since we are faced with the possibility of a new turning point relating to the human ‘form of life’, as well as the unprecedented possibilities that are revealed by this.
3. A “whole new possibility”, since the human being has already transformed into his own way of being before now. In fact, around 1600 a new form of humanity arose, the “modern man”, as a consequence of a serious and profound historical crisis that lasted over two centuries and by means of the elaboration of a new “horizon” for what it means to be human - by Galileo, Descartes, Bacon, etc. But today that - as Ortega showed us - that form of humanity, the modern man, has exhausted all its possibilities and has reached its maximum point of extremity, we are faced with the unprecedented opportunity of a new turning point, all to be designed.
4. If each generation represents an essential, peculiar and irreducible part of life and history, that is, of the general ‘life trajectory’ of humanity, that one song of the ‘new possibility of being human’, as in new verses of Plutarch, should in principle be played with the contribution of each generation - in the direction of this same shared space.
5. That is, it is neither possible nor wise to wait for all generations, in concert, to change into a single decisive generation.
6. Existentialism taught us that the idea according to which “we can commit ourselves” makes no sense: I commit, you commit and therefore we align our commitments in a common cause.

That is, commitment is a singular phenomenon, it cannot be a mass phenomenon, a collective and depersonalized act. In these it is analogous to faith. In fact, “our faith” does not exist. The choice of faith can exist only one by one, or it does not exist. As Kierkegaard taught us, “salvation” (as well as “transformation”) is an individual, solitary, singular act.

7. One reason why this happens is, according to Ortega, that not all human beings are willing to problematize the different aspects of their existence. Even if faced with the possibility of doing so, most of them agree to have already created ideas: “The already created idea, on the other hand, facilitates - for the man who does not create, but receives an idea - his relationship with the things and people he comes across is like a recipe. He will therefore tend not to worry about things, not to feel genuine needs, since he comes across a repertoire of solutions, even before having felt the needs that caused them “.



Dr. Roberto Assagioli with his pupils

THE WATERFALL OF REPETITIONS

Translation by Achille Cattaneo / Gordon Leonard Symons

Why did I spot this name?

Because under the house there is a small waterfall on the Mugnone, and I always looked at it fixedly to make unpleasant thoughts go away, it gave me Energy, one day more powerful, another less, but it gave me an extraordinary feeling, but with time I have felt that inside me there are mechanisms that keep repeating themselves.

I look at the waterfall in San Nicolò and what I deeply feel is an immense force that comes up with such ardor.

It is Palm Sunday, I tour Florence.

From Galluzzo I stop under Piazzale Michelangelo, I look at the Wonder, the wonder of a beautiful Florence, and I think: “Spring in Florence”, from the Piazzetta under the Piazzale I walk through all the moments I spent there, of which many do not. they will never be again.

As there will never be many other things in our life, after the Pandemic will be over.

Walking through the Piazzale and taking pictures, I think of My Mother, is it possible that I have lived here for 37 years and the Piazzale reminds me of my Mom or my sister?

Because every time they came we did tourism properly and also with my brother and his family.

Today, however, I decided to stay in solitude regretting the fact of being alone on Palm Sunday and therefore of being a tourist.

I identified “The Waterfall of Repetitions” in the tour I did and I thought of my dear niece Gabriela who is no