

FROM DIVERSITY TO UNIQUENESS...

Translation by Achille Cattaneo / Gordon Leonard Symons

An encounter is possible!

A short time ago, I published a post on Facebook about the *Day of Unmatched Socks...*

I did not know this *Day* until after receiving a message on Facebook inviting me to wear them to celebrate the importance and the beauty of diversity. So, I posted it on my Facebook page. Then I wondered how we would feel or feel doing this gesture on ourselves! Perhaps there was or will have been a bit of fear or uncertainty, even if it was a small thing, but the question of whether to do it or not, I think, has come to somebody's mind even after making that gesture, after having gone out and carried those two mismatched socks around ... I don't hide the fact that I felt it a little too! Only after this post I realized that other signs of *diversity* had already arrived and others would have arrived, without my going to look for them and at close range ... I report them below, in no particular order.

Some time ago I published, again on Facebook, for the *Day of Remembrance*, some of my reflections and feelings after reading a beautiful book on Etty Hillesum entitled "An extreme compassion" written by Nadia Neri. It described that sense of universal Love for the Other, whoever they may be, of the unconditional Love of a God for Man and how this profound and human *experience* was embodied by an extraordinary girl named Etty, who lived within of a camp. A person who, going against the tide, had *compassion* towards his executioners, reaching that *understanding* towards the other and who, with her way different from common thinking, made her free ...

One day, while I was listening to a piece of music on YouTube, the site featured an interview with Drusilla

Foer by conductor Red Ronnie. A few days earlier, as soon as the Sanremo Festival ended, there was much talk about her presence at the festival and her monologue on *diversity and uniqueness* and I saw and listened to this interview! Some of her words struck me in particular: "I had parents who taught me not to be prejudiced about what comes from the outside and that in order to have an opinion on what is presented to us, that which we witness, we need to open up".

I immediately thought about how prejudice, present today, is one of the causes that distances our encounter with people, with the other...

And yet another signal that arrived on WhatsApp, a text entitled "Respect" in which this beautiful phrase was reported: "I am a free man only inasmuch as I recognize the humanity and the freedom of all men around me. In respecting their freedom, I respect mine... "and then" I am a free person only when I recognize and respect the dignity and freedom of my neighbor" and again "It is only by respecting others that we can demand respect for ourselves".

As if that weren't enough, I listened to the interview with Pope Francis on Rai 3. He talked about aggression and how it starts from chattering, from talking about destroying the other, about how divisions then begin. He also said that God created man "good, but free" so that he may be capable of doing so much good but also so much evil ... leaving us the freedom of choice. While I was listening to him, another phrase of his came to my mind that I have often heard repeated on various occasions "who am I to judge?" and "who are we to judge the other?"

And again due to this strange coincidence, another text entitled "Two ears, one language" also arrived on WhatsApp. It said that "Knowing how to listen in our times of talk, that is, chat, is a rare exercise, so it seems that our ears are blocked by an uninterrupted flow of sounds emitted by many languages that argue with each other without rest ...". How can we not think of that "human chatter", mentioned above by Pope Francis!

And still continuing with another virtual meeting! I often read and then republish posts that reach me on Facebook from a talented writer, Elena Bernabè. The last one I posted said “We have to go back to listening to the other. With our soul” and then again “We must return to listening to the other.

Only with the soul. Dedicating all our attention to them, turning off the surrounding world with its distractions, silencing our inner world with all the chatter of the mind, opening up to them like a sunflower in search of the light... “, and concluded with this other beautiful image:”Being able to overcome the rocks of ideologies, beliefs, convictions and finally getting to admire this wonderful sea of other people “.

And finally, having listened to the singer Lorenzo Jovanotti on TV who thrilled everyone on the Sanremo stage by reciting “Bello mondo”, a poem by Mariangela Gualtieri. From her I quote only a few sentences: “I want to thank the divine for the diversity of creatures that make up this singular universe ...” and then “I want to give thanks for the love, which makes us see others as divinity sees them ...” and again “I wish to thank all those who are small, free and clear, for the varied faces of the world ... “

I am more and more convinced that it is no coincidence that these interventions have arrived regarding the word *diversity*, almost at the same time as I have been reading, listening to and then meditating on them! There are 8 hints for thought that even if some of them may not have a direct connection on the word *diversity*, they indirectly address the various causes that accentuate *diversity* by addressing negative but also positive aspects.

All these *virtual encounters* took me back in time, to the beginning of my personal experience, that I had as a thirteen year old and continued later, on what was about my encounter and knowledge of the world of physical and mental handicap even with conscientious people. It is certainly this experience that over time, in the following years, gradually opened the doors to me to know, to accept the other, to respect the diversity of

the other, to make normal what in our eyes can be or seem different. From here I also discovered how many diversities exist within me and how it is sometimes difficult to try to be able to accept and understand them but that, also because of this and despite all this, we are unique. But the concrete example so well embodied by children was decisive, and is, those special and unique people who taught me how an encounter with the other is always possible, without ever putting up barriers, without too many words, without prejudices! Observing them in their actions, in their simple and natural way of how they seek to meet the other through an embrace, taking their hand, talking to them as if they have always known them, without any obstacles of religion, party, nation, color, education, physicality or any other individual characteristic... it is encounter without big words, sometimes without words, but with small gestures.

If we think about it, we are flooded with diversity, even within ourselves, by our ways of seeing things, events and what happens. Having an eye on this already makes us all different, no one excluded. It is true, in life I can not share the thought of the other but, I listen to him, I meditate on him, I do not condemn him, I do not mortify him ... I thank him! Respecting thinking different from mine means not being afraid of diversity. Perhaps it is precisely in the fear of diversity that our frailties manifest themselves and translate themselves into aggression, at times excessive, on which to reflect and think. Listening needs to come before language ... that speaking that dominates and takes the place of listening!

Let's think of the beauty of a Rainbow that radiates into the sky, of how it is formed by the whole range of existing colors ... well, they are the elements that together form Light, the light that comes from the Sun, which warms us, which gives good humor, joy and well-being. Nature teaches, but even more is the teaching of those who are the smallest and most fragile on earth, those we consider the last ones, who with their often silent presence, mark and trace the way of how to be, how to live and how to act in unity, peace and harmony between men and creation.

To conclude, I, who love Music and Singing, will share an image that is very present in me! Feeling myself inside, inside a musical score where each instrument and voice has its part, its well-defined melody, which distinguishes them, but which together form a composition, in a concert of sounds and notes. Precisely because of what has been said above, we must not forget that at the same time, within the score, in every single part, there are also those notes that, unlike others, have *alterations* or *accidents*, which do not respect the general rule. That there are notes that together with others can create dissonances, beats that we are not used to hearing and that surprise us.

Finally, let's not forget that there are also *pauses*, those that are mistakenly thought to be worthless because they are silent, but which in particular moments are so present that they leave our breath suspended! Regarding silence, I recently went to listen to a beautiful concert by a famous Canadian pianist, Angela Hewitt. On her second encore, after the last note, so delicate and suffused, there was a sudden silence, from the grave, where she remained motionless for almost twenty seconds, interminable, very long as to remain with bated breath. It was as if everything floated, remaining suspended in the air ... like a still image, a beautiful feeling of energy that was released into the void. Someone in the room, on the other hand, was about to interrupt that magic ... so great was the discomfort and fear of that silence!

Throughout this score we must be aware that every note, every alteration, every rest has the same value and importance and from this whole a perfect musical work is created. Man, Humanity and all that the Earth contains, are nothing more than an incredible work of art of Creation, inscribed and included in the great Universe ... in this Unity there is the synthesis of the Whole!

February 14, 2022

INCLUSIVE SOCIAL ACTION

Written by a group of students, edited, adapted and translated by Mike Malagrecal⁽¹⁾

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This period of transition from the previous age (distinguished by its emphasis on materialism, paternalism and hierarchy, and growth through suffering) to a new age (as we learn to emphasize spiritual values, egalitarianism and collaboration, and joyous growth) brings with it conflict and deepening separatism. Assagioli writes that "The forthcoming age will be the age of synthesis. In the field of culture, it will bring forward an increasing integration and fusion between the sciences, philosophies, religions and arts; it will be the age of group collaboration based on deep friendship and spiritual cooperation."⁽²⁾ Any change of this magnitude always involves the breakdown of old forms in order to make way for new ways of being. Unfortunately, such upheaval precipitates backlash, accompanied by violence as people resist the changes.

In this growing instability and incivility, right action can be difficult to determine. Those of us committed to a spiritual path recognize that the work we do through what Assagioli and many other insightful writers have called "inner work" (e.g. self-discipline, meditation, contemplation) is essential in several ways. First, it helps us become centered and grounded so that we are able to hear the "still small voice" of the Higher Self. Second, it trains us to access and channel the energy of the One Life without distortion. Third, it provides us with a methodology for taking action on the inner planes to focus energy for the common good, to transmute negative thoughtforms and cleanse our shared energy field of glimmers and illusions. This action on the inner planes is absolutely critical, but is it enough?

Action on the inner planes needs to prepare us for, and motivate us toward, action in the outer world. Wisdom teachers around the world have been highly critical of