

Beppe Carrella

PROVOCATIVE THOUGHTS FOR MANAGERS



Unconventional ideas
to unleash talent in organizations

APGEO

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Writings by Beppe Carrella
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Unconventional ideas
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Some characters
in this book



The Beatles, Woody Allen, Stromboli the puppeteer, Gianni Agnelli, Mina, Linus, Friedrich Nietzsche, Diego Velasquez, Rocinante, Beppe Carrella.

Some characters
in this book







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Preface

Why provoke managers when they have enough problems as it is?

This is worth thinking about: do managers solve problems or do they provoke them? The question may divide managers into different categories. There are managers who bravely face problems every day and work hard to solve them, independently if it regards concluding a contract, handling a difficult collaborator, identifying technical solutions or define development strategies, these managers have the common aim to work in a constructive way for the good of everybody. Their philosophy is that to contribute to improving the company, both as regards results and the working environment, which does not mean that they do not spend their energy. Then there is the other category, that of managers who face problems but with the main aim of “not exposing themselves”, which means that they provoke problems: decisions that are not made, vague responsibilities, unclear competences, contrasting messages leading to frustration.

Avoiding to be exposed is one of the crucial nodes in contemporary management: a completely legitimate behaviour that is considered to be right, facilitated and hidden behind the inevitable value of the superior entity “The Company”. And if the personality of the company who has undergone psychological tests did not appear to be entirely schizophrenic (as in the documentary “The Corporation”) we would all be happy and at ease.

Thence this is an issue of responsibility, or rather, lack of responsibility. Connected issues may be endless: from the theme of company ethic, which has been an object for conversation for ages, to the irresponsible exploitation of resources (natural, economic) to the waste of human capital, to urban waste: “there are many responsibilities but it is uncertain whose they are!”

However, responsibility should not evoke tiresomeness and morality: we only wish to take up “responsibility intended as the capacity of responding in a free and creative way ... with the soul, not with an egocentric and narcissistic superficial identity” according to the beautiful definition made by the philosopher Roberto Mancini (“Etica e Impresa: binomio impossibile?” “Ethic and Companies: an impossible combination?”, a convention that took place in Rimini on 13 March 2008).

To require this freedom is the key. It is not easy, but the journey towards this



goal must be nice. There are no rules or manuals, but first of all a wish to take an active part in the process and operate without the certainty to obtain results, with the sole awareness of being faithful to oneself.

This is not a comfortable way and it is certainly not easy; it may be funnier, but it is much more risky. It has numerous collateral effects that are not written anywhere in course rooms, not even with the smallest font used in insurance clauses. “Come on, dare, fly high! You will solve all your problems; you will obtain success and be happy!” It would be more correct to say “Com on, dare, fly high [...] and prepare to accept and overcome the errors you will make with faith, humility and perseverance, to rise again and start anew each time a little more torn and a little stronger...”

Being sincere is important but it is not easy to add oneself, one’s own ideas, emotions and own face... this is not easy at all. It requires so much energy. It is doubtlessly quicker to “treat” everybody in the same way, without creating relations to people: in certain cases it may even be more efficient. To listen requires a voluntary act, an opening, time which we often do not have. Decisions may be unpopular and we may end up very lonely.

All this is good to know, since fairy tales are fine for children and although we live in a world of Peter Pans in their forties, there is still reality among delusions and illusions.

The theme is not that of abstract goodness: the ever smiling leader with the team that follows him efficiently, with motivation and with the same smile on their faces. We are talking about bad tempers to handle, continuous compromises, second thoughts, victories to celebrate all together and failures to digest alone. So what changes then? What is it that makes this course better or even special? Maybe our presence, for better or for worse, as a necessary and sufficient condition for responsibility. A detail that is as simple as it is rare.

How to be present is often difficult to express. Yet again there are no regulations, rules and instructions. Hence the usage of metaphors arouses emotions and stimulates imagery.

Apart from being an engineer and CEO of a company with more than a thousand employees, Beppe Carrella is also a great lover of music and cinema. Lyrics from songs and pieces of film have become the company language and are the means through which people can express their mood, provoke reactions and inspire ideas, dreams and actions.

The result is a “vital” company, an organization in which the “lives” of the people substitute human resources. A place where company values are not



abstract concepts collected in an ethic code, but real values, people, relations, environment, society and products. Other practical examples are people who work in the company and their family members, creative talents stimulated at work and in parties, cultural events and musicals, relations built up inside and outside the company, bottled red tomatoes prepared together in the countryside (earth), the added value of technological projects they realize. These are true values.

A company that courageously manages to interpret the models for emerging with its own unique style, substituting traditional communication, which is a direct communication from the top downwards, trying to entice people to express a shared company culture. This inversion of the propulsive thrust that from above moves laterally and stimulates, provokes, creates an appropriate habitat so that the person who is involved may find the space necessary to grow and develop. This approach is difficult to use. It may cause greater risks connected to the need to control people and processes. And not only for this reason.

Innovation inspires managers to search for new models, but they are always preset models; boxes of different forms, structures and alternative codes to redesign the company machine according to new tendencies, working in offices and according to the chosen functions. There is a natural need for safety, the need to make use of a theory set up by experts, to choose the most convincing definition and therefore delegate somebody to implement the new map (somebody responsible for quality, ethic issues, creative aspects?) suitable and forced on existing realities. The results are often a new dress, new codes for the same aim and no real change.

On the other hand, any actions made in the absence of coded and tested models create discomfort and insecurity. To build a proper and unique tailored company model and do so together with colleagues requires a completely different kind of energy. And one returns to direct involvement, to questioning oneself and to be the object of discussions (style of leadership, relation dynamics, decisive processes etc.), to be generous with oneself, to assume responsibilities in the activated process and its possible consequences and failures. This requires a good self-esteem and faith in people; it requires an open attitude and a desire to share. It requires especially the conviction to have values, projects and meanings that are interesting to share and the capacity of accepting and promoting other people's ideas.

The doubt that should rise is: can all companies really allow themselves to do this? Or rather, do all companies have dreams, challenges and projects to believe in and to share? No, this is not true for all of them. In any case, all



companies can build them up (even in a team, in a division). The circle is virtuous and the course is traced.

True innovation or the capacity of giving a meaning and a soul to new projects and new products arises from talents that are shared on a fertile field. And the fertile field requires the capacity of building and sharing visions and passion and to feed and cultivate talents.

The latter implies the former; the former implies the latter and both require a new way of approaching the company: a continuous revision, a route to correct every day on the basis of new events, a wider and comprehensive outlook and a rapid and decisive convergence.

An approach that regards the capacity of remaining in a “dynamic balance at the edge of chaos in a creative disorganization” to use the words expressed by Professor De Toni (“Prede o ragni. Uomini e organizzazioni nella ragnatela della complessità” “Preys or spiders. Men and organizations in the spiderweb of complexity”). A step backwards, the “involution” a step too many “destructive disorder”. In the middle we have “development”.

Carrella’s managerial provocations evoke the spirit of a balancing manager who is aware that he may fall and has no vocation towards martyrdom.

A journey among metaphors, known or less known, that are fascinating and surprising since they are written as a direct testimonial of companies, not with the theoretical reality which is depicted as an ideal scenery by philosophers and researchers.

This is even more surprising for the sector, the context and the dimension of the organization. To prove that technology and soul are not distant and opposite languages and that the creative epidemic can spread in a hurry and at depth in the forced discomfort which clumsily tries to close, control and flatten the most beautiful thing we own: our humanity.

Federica Ghetti
Managerzen, President



Introduction

A manager of our time, one who is deeply involved, is asked to realize an important turnaround in the company he is running.

In order to increase the efficiency and the speed of change and in order to promote energy, dialogues and constructive conversations, he takes a pen and a piece of paper and writes (probably he is using his laptop, but the effect is the same).

He who marks a piece of paper with his thoughts, wants to mark reality.

He writes with constancy and enthusiasm, with the desire to influence, in order to solicit, admonish, alert, accompany and reveal things.

He strongly believes in company communication and also thinks that, also in a highly technological company, you cannot mobilize vivacity, participation and commitment without an open and continuous dialogue with the people that make up the company. He considers communication central in organizational life in order to visualize events, understand concepts and capture your heart and brain at the same time.

Furthermore, he is convinced about the deep transformative capacity that stories reveal when dealing with key issues the managerial action is faced with. He understands the role of narration in contemporary society and realizes how it is possible to increase the efficiency of communicating and sharing behaviours, attitudes and languages, by emphasizing stories, images, cultural references of all kinds.

Maybe despite his far too many appointments, he also has had a chance to hear about "Storytelling in Organizations" and its famous gurus (from J. Seely Brown in the USA and G. Fairtlough and B. Heinzen as regards the British approach). However, he volunteers to stand up and be a forerunner.

He wants to be both a promoter and a guinea pig of an unconventional and open way of communicating in a company which is doubtlessly traditional. Being a manager and a storyteller of the 21st century, he enters the difficult territory of communication, which is full of traps, in order to stimulate the company transformation, with all the inherent risks. He has the advantage of loving film, music, comics and literature and has also worked in the mass media business.



During the years he is managing the company, he elaborates (and stimulates the collegial construction of) a style made of metaphors, personification, small/great myths, that supply an imaginary comment of the events: an important admonishment, a reflection on the way to take, an interpretation of the reasons for certain facts. Everything is done with provocative, innovative and sometimes amazing style.

The value of the company experience, the ancient respect for people's work and for daily toil, the adhesion to important and serious values of freedom of thought and respect for everybody are the parts that are required to bring forth a company in good times and in bad times, through unusual paths and with a strong identity connotation.

To recreate the atmosphere and the key issues of a wide range changing process is the challenge of this volume, in which the cultural development of the company is read directly and without filters through the narration given by its chairperson. A collection of interventions and texts selected in the House Organ, since they have the impact of a real experience and at the same time represent a "case" we can refer to and make use of as a platform.

It is also a narration, definitely not a history in the strict sense of the word, but in any case it is a testimony in which the way of telling a story is absolutely substantial in relation to that which is said. Furthermore, leadership is also a narration, like Pier Luigi Celli says: "I believe that a good story is worth more than a hundred theories, on condition that the story is credible".

In fact, a very particular language is developed, a language that is recognizable for the people who participate in the adventure. It is a language in which the words often show the effort to capture metaphors that are suitable for interpreting the moment and give it a meaning, without worrying too much about the source, but rather using (or robbing) freely the patrimony of references that is spread out in contemporary imagination.

A famous phrase or a blasphemous quotation season everything with a juxtaposition the meaning of which originates from a free interpretation of the reader. The style is always creative, provocative, strong and "heretic" if necessary.

A modern language is created, in which the combination of concepts and the synchronous presentation of heterogeneous reasons and arguments may be catalysers of individual intuition. It is an expressive level which is very attentive towards the spirit of time, without being academic at all, truly close to practice and how people talk and "feel".



Managerial problems and difficulties in managing the company are represented through the help of ... microbes, children, fragments of films, songs, anecdotes regarding historical characters or comic book heroes. The rhythm is that of web surfing with the speed of multiple references that form a net which appears to be discontinuous but aimed at sustaining the creation of a particular story and its narration.

Why not document these conversations and analyse them afterwards to collect implications, reading all interconnections, putting them under the looking-glass of practical management experience, maybe with a critical and irreverent spirit, based upon action and on the wish to give room to intelligent thinking and accomplishment, rather than settling with managerial obligations?

The ideas in this volume are concentrated on various themes that are definitely key issues for companies today:

- how an organization should keep fit,
- how to make things happen,
- how to make talent flourish and develop,
- how to generate innovation at all time,
- how to create good and productive situations,
- how to develop and show character,
- how to develop a recognizable and attractive identity,
- how to centralize people in our daily actions,
- how to motivate individuals apart from using economic incentives,
- how to make the team work.

Combining in an original and post-modern way elements from different worlds and experiences, texts are exposed in the natural evolution of time. The contributions are articulated, not without a sense of humour, in chapters that have headlines dealing with the Great Themes of humanity. They contain allusions, shivers, emphasized facts, both individual and universal, that we have to deal with a thousand times but which we seldom stop to reflect on:

Key Issues

We are dealing with Great Issues that companies struggle with constantly in order to keep up with the competition on the market and with innovation. Questions like: Do we have ideas for the future? What can make us do even more? What face do we show our clients? Do we really need



talents in our organizations?

Issues with which intelligent minds within international management work constantly, filling our bookshelves with books. But they are dealt with from the viewpoint of people living out in the field, attacking (and sometimes being attacked) with the issues every day, with the awareness that they must continue to steer the company without getting lost in the multiplicity of solicitations, in order to guarantee results and focused action.

Objects for reflection

Objects are those of symbolic tools, products that we use daily or elements of the past that still today are an interesting mental basis for our ideas: a bunch of keys (that open numerous possibilities), the pillars of Hercules (that imponderable border that is do difficult to pass), etc.

Objects and symbols that force us to do something about the problem, to collect implicit connections that our productive imagination establishes between something external and a conceptual representation, in a creative way.

Personification of ideas

This part includes a great number of characters, some mythological, some not, the action of which short-circuit company matters and allow the exploration of some contradictions that the company has to face: characters that we may meet in corridors, in our colleagues, or even in ourselves.

How many times do we feel like Sisyphus, forced to organizational absurdities with apparent fatigue (or actually incongruous), how many times have we criticized the present Superman, who excluded us from participation with all his good intentions.

Words to reflect on

It is important to stop at certain words that are no crumbs, but that constitute the material of which the bread that feed us every day is made: Alibi, Ambition, Change, ... A personal glossary that is barely outlined. This is only the beginning of the company vocabulary. On the way, other terms may be added.

What do these words mean to us as we decline them in the collective



action of the organization? When is it that we use them erroneously or manipulate them in order to be right with all means? This is just a starting point, an idea to make people explain the meaning they attribute to things.

Man who walks

It is a dead end but we go forth, we continue to walk ...

So many important issues, an explicit, transparent and involving way of generating an interest and keeping the dialogue with people vivid, activating talent, keeping in mind the fact that being an entrepreneur basically involves a continuous conversation, and communicating means an exchange of ideas to reach a shared meaning.

In the technical era in which reflecting on “people” issues is looked upon with diffidence, it appears not only necessary but even inevitable for organizations to try and give a “meaning” to their activities (as Andrea Vitullo recently stated following his master Umberto Galimberti). Do we yet again want to prove through this experimental text that companies have a soul in the organizational adventure that so many of us are involved in? Do we wish to invite our souls to the conversation table?

Beppe Carrella keeps the book “The Heart Aroused : Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America” by David Whyte on his bookshelf, but has he read it? Or, as often happens, maybe he bought it hoping to have time to take a glance at it between meetings, but then forgetting to consult it? However, the mere fact that he keeps the book there also means something.

“Organizations have a desperate need of powers that historically speaking were associated to poetic imagination, not only to find their way through the present turbulence of change, but also since poetry requires that you report something to human society, that is, it requires responsibility and roots also in changes”.

(D. Whyte)

Barbara Parmeggiani

Anthropologist, Executive Consultant and Coach



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Key issues



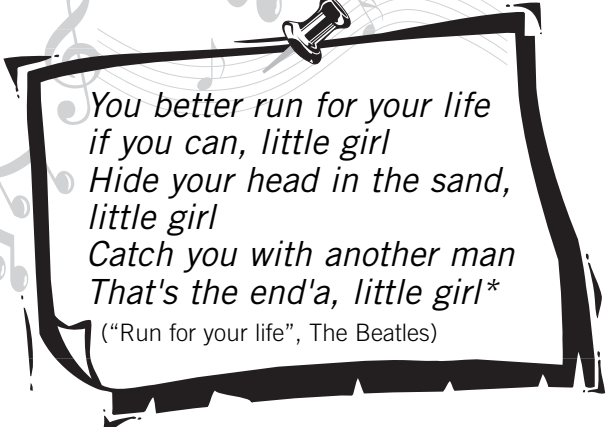
Do we have an idea about the future?

THE AIM THAT GIVES THE INPUT TO ACTION



We all know that in order to "function" and "have resistance" we need to keep fit. But do we really know what "keeping fit" means for a Company or a Group?

In this web era, keeping fit for a company means being open to news, being willing to question oneself continuously, creating connections from a practical point of view. We need connections to all those that surround us



*You better run for your life
if you can, little girl
Hide your head in the sand,
little girl
Catch you with another man
That's the end'a, little girl**

(* "Run for your life", The Beatles)



(clients/suppliers/partners/friends and enemies...) in order to have a vivid participation in the activities that involve us. In short, we need to connect our brain to all those that are willing to become a new added value together with us. And a brain in shape is what makes the difference between being considered a "comfort" or a "value".

I remember a photo, not its name or place, but I remember the photo exactly: it represents a group of people that is observing an image on the floor. The captions explain that the group is looking at pictures of the sky captured by lenses aimed upwards and then projected onto the pavement through a strange telescope. Succeeding in seeing what is above us by looking downwards...

When asked how he managed to become the richest man in the world, he replied with a disarming simplicity: "There are men who spend 90% of their time thinking, using only the remainder for doing. I think only for about 30% of the time and I accomplish my objectives during the rest of the time".

(From an interview with John D. Rockefeller)

So what? We aim upwards, we take a good look, then we take back everything to Earth and with the patience of an artisan who, with his talent enriched by emotions, sees to it that the thoughts are transformed into artefacts, we concentrate our efforts and operate to be... connected. Why? Because we are convinced that organizations live through communication, consolidate through "conversations": board meetings, sales meetings, projecting processes, focus groups, task forces, staff meetings, conventions, product descriptions, auditing interventions, meetings with the client.

We live in a world in which the perspective is to have a global interconnection, in which the importance of weak bonds increases, in which everything lives in networks. Conversations generate interaction, exchange, proposals, new ideas and innovations. A Company's success depends upon the typology and quality of these conversations and interactions, by the capacity of making them real and share them with the public inside and outside of the Company. In short, to be connected with all possible means to our world of clients, supplies, employees, shareholders etc.

It is vital that these conversations are transparent and "open to the public". Martin Luther had to affix his 95 theses (conversations) upon the portal to the Church of Wittenberg. Now we publish our conversation in a more



modest way and with a completely different aim. This is yet another challenge...

Getting connected is the glove of challenge we wish to launch to create an organization of true value. Getting connected is not and does not have to be a mere slogan for us, but a cultural fact and one of survival; we are not talking about commodity here, but of value. We can all take part and create, remaining in our roles as clients, supplies, partners, friends and others...

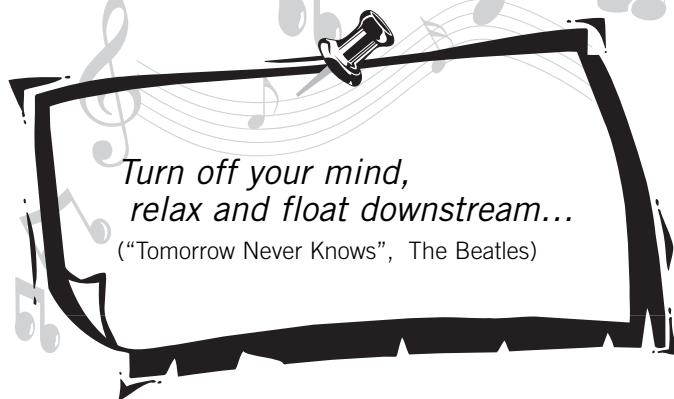
"When I took office, only high energy physicists had ever heard of what is called the World Wide Web.... Now even my cat has its own page."

(Bill Clinton)



What makes us try and reach further?

CREATE BY BREAKING HABITS

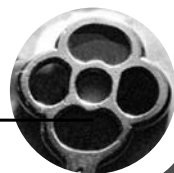


During the past few years, we have learned to swim differently. Period. Then let us swim!

«EMI (record company EMI Music) had very firm rules that we always had to break ... only because we felt that we knew better than them. They said: “Our regulations establish that ...”. And we replied, “That is an old regulation, get going”. We always wanted to change things, since we knew that people want to change and unless we urged them, they would still be sticking to their regulations».

(Paul McCartney)

Practically, one must always try to reach further, longer and more, always in a different way. We must have the courage to destroy and reconstruct, to forget bureaucracy and recreate it in a different way, to abandon certain paths and choose new ones, to face risk. A risk taken in the name of innovation. This word is abused and people often mix it up with the idea



that it is enough to have the last technological or methodological innovation to affirm that they have, project or distribute innovative products.

Balls!!

Just like many other activities, innovation is a continuous and constant commitment (also for the same issues) but from different angles, with an alternative approach. Often also with the same instruments, but used in a completely new way.

Innovation as a continuous improvement process, as an obsessive strain to find solutions where others see problems, to put into practise that which to others is pure theory. That which we must change is the static model that is conservatory and renouncing and travels in our minds. Together with our products, our articles, our enthusiasm, and our delusions, together with all this: we deliver our dreams to our clients and collaborators. We hand them over through our solitary conversations (generating), through our personal spaces (models for representation and changing culture), through our common spaces, such as work, bars, streets, coffee machine, (confrontation) in order to trust our collective talent with them (do!); practically speaking, we trust them with our capacity of sharing our dreams in a team and to participate in the dream of one of us.



Innovation as a dream!

Innovation as the realization of a dream that has the aim of showing a different way, an opportunity of showing our talent and activities. These activities that then return as the quality of the work performed, as the dignity of a profession do not mean that the work is performed according to the habitual schemes, but that we bestow a value upon our own abilities and creativity. Innovation as a characteristic trait that emerges through a tiresome intellectual work of some of us, as a continuous daily application, which allows us to create different things. Being able of letting solutions that definitely are present in our daily work appear since they are waiting to pop up and be rendered available. It takes courage.

Courage as a force to abandon old ideas or strange ideas which we continuously repress deep down in our minds but which may allow us to take action. Courage as a force to give in to curiosity. Let go and let the desire to explore the world with different eyes emerge in order to take action! The force to face an adventure that cannot be exposed to instruments and methodologies nor to magical activities (impostors), but which must take place before any other action in our mind. An adventure of ideas, a journey through activities!

A winner is a dreamer that has not given up.

(Bill Clinton)



What is your face like today?

WE ARE MILLIONS OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE
FROM ONE DAY TO THE NEXT

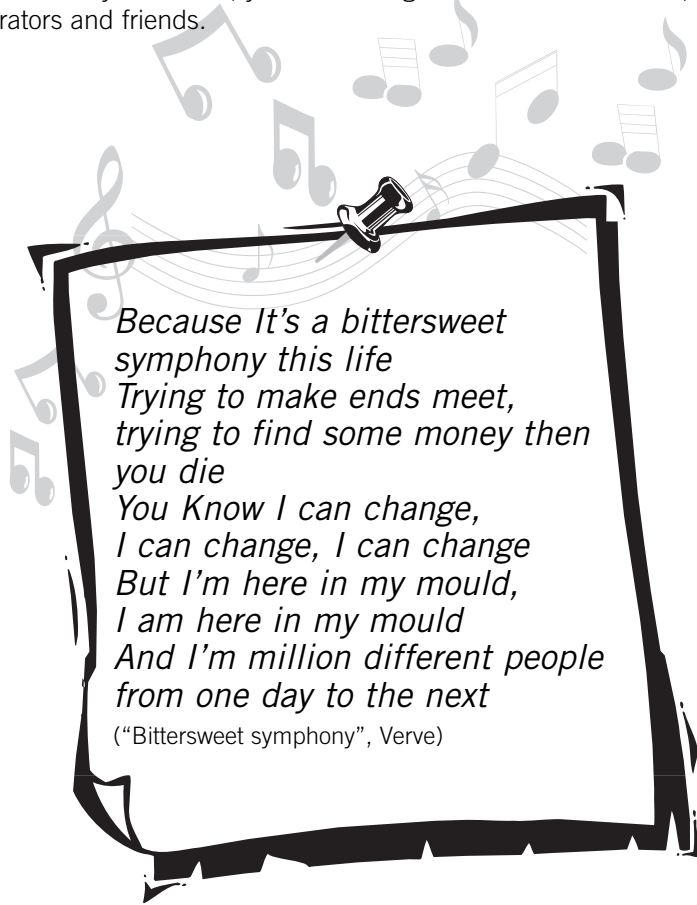


The importance of corporate spirit as opposed to individualism when the Company success is at stake.

You often try to find a significant thread, a framework to adequately express the thoughts that superimpose themselves in your mind and then, suddenly, a song you have heard a million times, a song that is part of the background noise of your day, makes you discover a different concept. This is the power of art, the power of artists.



Then you think you have found the right thread and look upon this text that you had missed with completely different eyes. And that which was background noise, finds a different location, a different space. Music, words, states of mind, new acquaintances influence you. It does not matter, you have learned and put together pieces of your life, culture and thoughts in a different way. Above all, you feel an urge to share it with others, collaborators and friends.



*Because It's a bittersweet
symphony this life
Trying to make ends meet,
trying to find some money then
you die
You Know I can change,
I can change, I can change
But I'm here in my mould,
I am here in my mould
And I'm million different people
from one day to the next*

("Bittersweet symphony", Verve)

People and organizations cannot expect to have progress unless they imagine creative solutions during moments of change, otherwise they will naturally be tense and anxious. And when we are anxious, our creativity level may drop to zero. Discourses, provocations, reassurances and threats may be useful if there is no faith inside the group. In difficult times like these, where there is a lot of anxiety, people want to see honest faces in all fields. Even, or especially, in companies. We feel reassured only by competence, commitment and seriousness.



From one day to the next, we are million different people, although we continue to maintain the integrity as single individuals and take out one of the “million” characters in anxious situations (but I am a million different people from one day to the next) choosing it, not for the interest of the group, but for the interest of the individual (trying to make ends meet).

In practise, we present the “face” which is easier if we cover it up with a paste of thoughts (but I’m here in my mould..) and not the face which allows us all to proceed. It is better to mould all together than trying to identify and share a dream; we are, in fact, affirming the logic of our survival (to find some money). Fortunately, nobody can really remain himself without changing, nobody can preserve knowledge without learning continuously, nobody can repeat without inventing. Nobody has learned something once and for all. Not even his native language, let alone the rest.

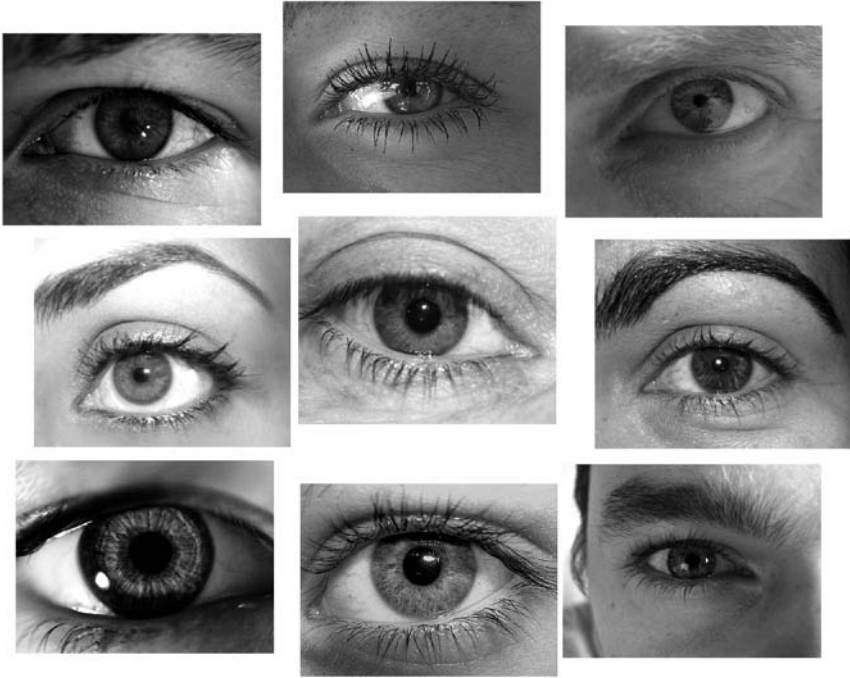
Surely, ferocious competition exposes many of us to an anxiety that is similar to that which we find in comic strips about cannibals that put their prey to boil. This happens mainly because the quickest and most efficient methods used by companies to improve profitability is almost always that of reducing staff. What is our credibility when we have said to our workers for years: “Our Company value is made up by our staff”?

Anxiety becomes overwhelming, we do not see a way out, a miraculous way to follow in order to be safe, especially if we do not have faith any longer. We become pessimists and pessimists are fundamentally lazy. A lazy bum waiting (...then you die). He does not want to force himself to adapt to new situations, he does not want to participate with a personal contribution, experiences, and his repressed talent to contribute and reduce collective anxiety. Rather, he becomes a companion in misfortune. He pretends value from others, but does not give value to himself, thus loosing the esteem of others and the necessary faith to be part of a team. Talking is of little use unless we are able of guiding without imposing, of creating situations that are “good” for you and for others. Successful companies are such only if there is a great spirit of cooperation, in which everybody works to affirm the capacities, make them grow and last. This means above all to perfect the capacity of suspending personal interests in view of more ample and lasting advantages for everybody.

To think a while and realize; to realize and have new objectives and new dreams and from time to time searching for the best way and the best person (of the million people that live inside us - but I’m million different people from one day to the next) to put at other people’s disposal, both to reach common objectives and to affirm our talent and dignity. Because I can change, I can change, I can change.



It depends on us. Only by having the force to run alone and contemporarily with others against daily realities, really accepting its very hard tests, can we aim to reducing the risk of the future and win (because it's a bittersweet symphony this life).



What is longevity?

IT TAKES CHARACTER TO CHALLENGE THE MARKET

There is no place on the market that makes me rich, but my opinions; I can take them with me (...).

This is all I own and they cannot take them away from me.

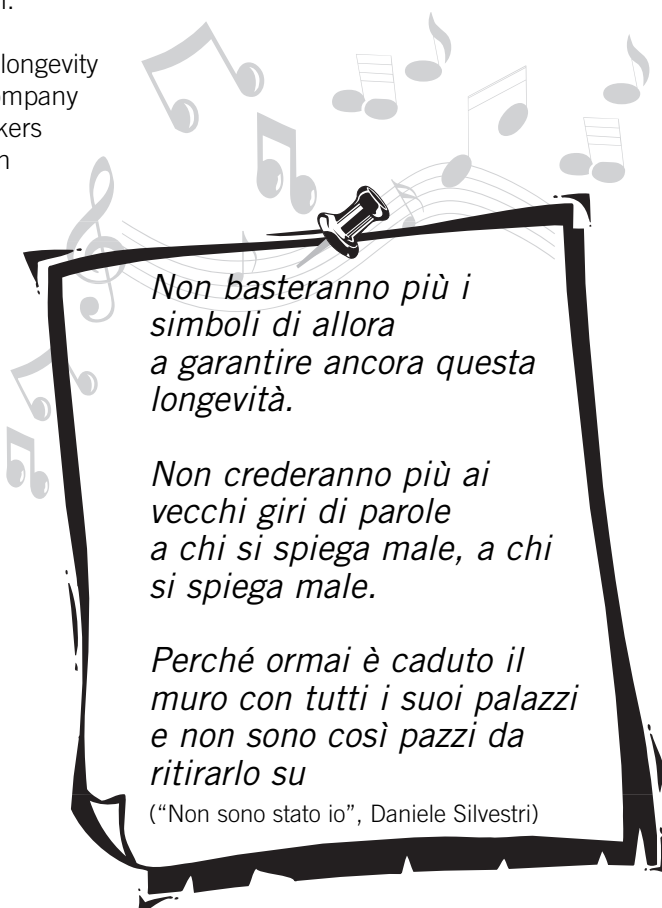
Epictetus (Discourses)

We live in a convulsive period in which Companies have become a sort of “hazard gambler” that is not allowed to withdraw prudently after a lucky hand: it must risk its fortunes and future continuously in a few deals or, even, in only one deal. By accumulating great riches or failures, this can lead companies to destruction.

We were used to considering longevity of products launched by a Company as a reassuring factor for workers and artisans that participate in the production process.

This longevity gave reassurance particularly on the future of their profession. “I have learnt something and for a long time this will feed my family and satisfy my needs.” Today, longevity of products and knowledge are a distant and pale memory. Everything has a very near expiry date, including knowledge.

Only one thing does not expire: the force of our work,



*Non basteranno più i
simboli di allora
a garantire ancora questa
longevità.*

*Non crederanno più ai
vecchi giri di parole
a chi si spiega male, a chi
si spiega male.*

*Perché ormai è caduto il
muro con tutti i suoi palazzi
e non sono così pazzi da
ritirarlo su*

(“Non sono stato io”, Daniele Silvestri)



the daily application of our own capacities, the constant increase. In our society with its increased orientation towards services, this means making the only true tool that can make us give birth to differences and which nature has given us: our brain. The only tool that if constantly trained, allows us not to concentrate all efforts on the retirement home what we will find forty years from now. The only tool that can take into consideration the main resource of every Company: the client.

Companies at the standard of a biological cycle are generated, grow and fortunately often get old. They get old as years go by, but they have the same need to remain updated if they are to win the challenge of the market. They must prove their character. Character influences our way of giving and receiving, our dreams and it leaves behind signs in our face.

Character is the result of the sum of values and objectives of a Company, but particularly by the capacity of attracting talents and consensus and to perform continuous renewals, generating the freshness that allows you to disorient competitors and catch adversaries unprepared. Freshness that passes from the brain of women and men that are part of the Company and that have a wish to feed it, through their availability of letting their own face serve the Company. Character and face to show, unique ingredients that can make a difference?

Let's not worry about things, let's take care of them.

One must really believe it and conquer credibility every day, every single moment of the day. And then it becomes easy: one does not have to prove anything, like a true champion who does not always prove to be so, but only to confirm it. You recognize it in his light movements, in the simplicity and coordinate way in which he performs complex activities, you see it in his face, in his expressions. And suddenly, everybody knows, without anybody saying so, you see it in his gestures and everyone around him has faith in him, they rely on him and are ready to bet on him. Can we then manage to show our clients our face, our lightness, our wish to make them part of this virtuous circle? We do not have to scream it, we only have to show our face, our character which is the result of a constant application through our "brain".



How about a laugh?

THOSE WHO SAY THINGS FOR FUN ARE OFTEN GOOD PROPHETS

We should ask ourselves why the industry of comedy has flourished in such an eloquent way during the past few years. Many comics (maybe all of them) use humour to talk about matters such as sex, race, ethnic belonging, religion, politics, discrimination, that is all themes that people do not feel comfortable to discuss in public, at universities and, above all, at work. Therefore it is necessary for us to use comics so that they can exercise our freedom of expression, to say things in our place in an irreverent manner, to emphasize our unexpressed feelings, thus expressing a wish for changes kept back only by fear for retaliation.

And what about Companies? To tell the truth can be a really dangerous thing and you can receive a quick exile for having dared to express one's own opinion; this is one of the reason why managers are seldom told what things are like, their power intimidates those who should like to express themselves openly. We need comics. Voices outside the chorus that express our thoughts and actions. As a matter of fact, we need the voice of a person who is capable of moving inside a system, often full of ambiguities, without being involved, to look upon phenomena with detachment and being irreverent. A sort of pragmatic desecrator. In every Company there is a need for somebody who continuously reminds the boss that he is naked. A job which, honestly speaking, can be dangerous.

Serious things can also be treated as amusing.

Too many managers are convinced that their only task is to defend the status quo and behave like simple resource managers. The excuse is that when opposing changes, they are trying to protect their own organization; in fact they are only trying to protect themselves. Unfortunately, history teaches us (if history really teaches anybody anything?) that the more you protect yourself and your organization against changes, the more you will fail miserably.



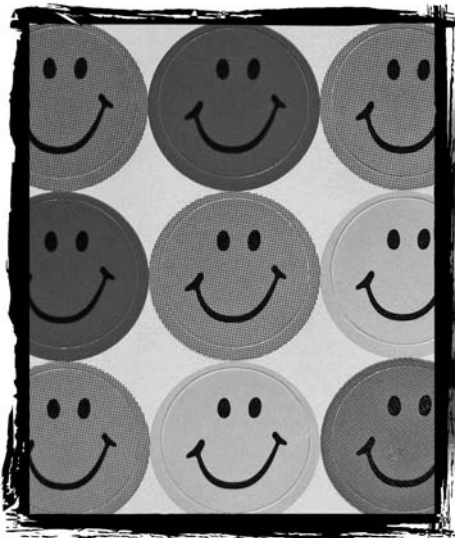
Therefore you pass from a history of learning to a history of forgetting. We forget that the manager acquires his powers through a constant relation with his interlocutors and in relation to this dynamic, quick and changeable relationship, he must continuously adapt his attitude. When circumstances and relations vary it is necessary and vital to be able of moving towards different development models, which makes it superfluous to continue and insist on preceding behaviour.

To stay in turrets in order to resist change reminds me a little of old soldiers that do nothing but fight before their victorious battles (often only one). One faces life (working life in this case) using only repetitions and returning to the usual obsessions and, in particular, to the desire to make things last for as long as possible. In order not to behave like "old soldiers", it is not enough to listen to people who work inside the organization; one must be certain that one understands both the language and the culture of the organization. But in order to listen, there must be somebody talking.

And who is it that has courage enough to talk on all occasions if not the fool, the comic, the court yester who says what he thinks, even if nobody asks him? How many times would we not have given ourselves a big kick in the backside? That which seems unpopular has become the current jargon! We

could have taken the merit for it but we were afraid to talk outside the chorus. "Silence is gold", but this is not always true.

All organizations have ambiguous and contradictory situations on the inside, and it is vital to identify and comprehend their messages. It is not possible to handle a Company without understanding and analysing this ambiguity: it is not enough to accept its stimuli, but one must act according to it and make it emerge.

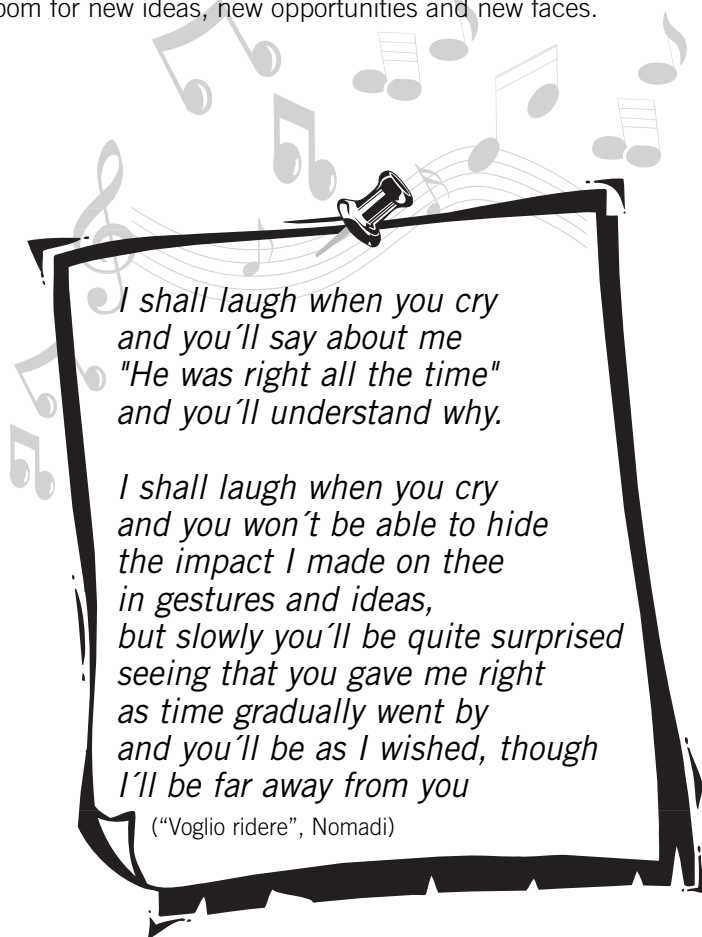


The courage to be curious. In order to create something new, one must be unsatisfied with the old, with status quo. In order to shake things up, it takes an agile and curious mind! It is true that even at the top of success, you risk falling and be forced to recommence, i.e. to "last" for a short time. The



wisdom of ancient Greeks reminds us that only Gods are granted ruling without obstacles and impediments (forgetting this leads us to commit the sin of Hybris).

One must learn to pass from the logic of “duration” to that of “leaving”. Leaving may seem like defeat, abandonment, withdrawal or decline. It is much more than that: leaving means creating values. In particular durable values. The more we strain to “last”, the more our fear increases; the more stupid and slow-reacting we become, the more we become like old soldiers, embracing the past, whereas the present only give us continuous defeats. The more space we dedicate to “leaving”, the more we are forced to listening; the more we listen, the more we discover durable values and the more we spread them. And, finally, we also learn to discover our limits in order to “leave” room for new ideas, new opportunities and new faces.



*I shall laugh when you cry
and you'll say about me
"He was right all the time"
and you'll understand why.*

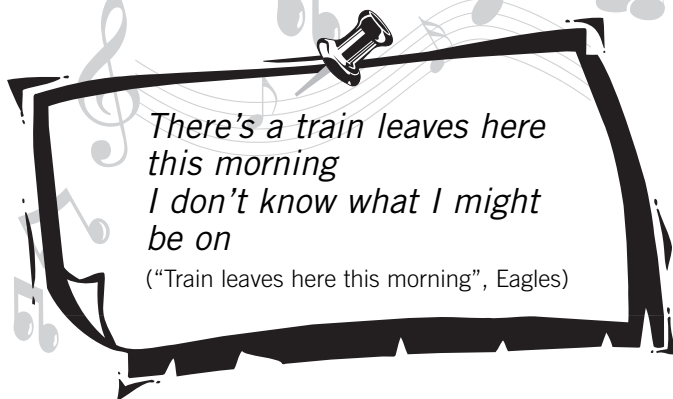
*I shall laugh when you cry
and you won't be able to hide
the impact I made on thee
in gestures and ideas,
but slowly you'll be quite surprised
seeing that you gave me right
as time gradually went by
and you'll be as I wished, though
I'll be far away from you*

(“Voglio ridere”, Nomadi)



Are we really on the wrong train?

THE TRAIN OF SUCCESS IS STARTING
FROM PLATFORM 3



The first few minutes of “Stardust Memories” by Woody Allen condensate the sense of our waiting, our hope, our desires but above all our sense of being or not being at the right place in the right moment.

Sandy Bates (Woody Allen) is sitting in a train compartment among people that are the most lugubrious and inhospitable people that one can imagine: he is surrounded by old, sick people with melancholic faces that are branded with dark circles around their eyes, hollow, deformed, horrifying; there is a man that sobs incessantly (without any obvious reason!).

This is not the worst. The worst is that in another train that has stopped on the next platform, Sandy Bates observes a completely different situation:

laughter, happiness, champagne, beautiful girls etc. One of them (Sharon Stone!) throws him a kiss. Returning to the train of Sandy Bates, we see him discuss with an austere and bureaucratic controller: he shows him his ticket, tries to explain that he, in fact, should be on the other train according to his ticket, and not on the present one. All in vain! The controller leaves without dedicating himself to him, whereas the happy and lucky train departs and leaves for ever. Sandy then tries to escape through the back door, then through the windows (everything is barred), he pulls the alarm lever (which

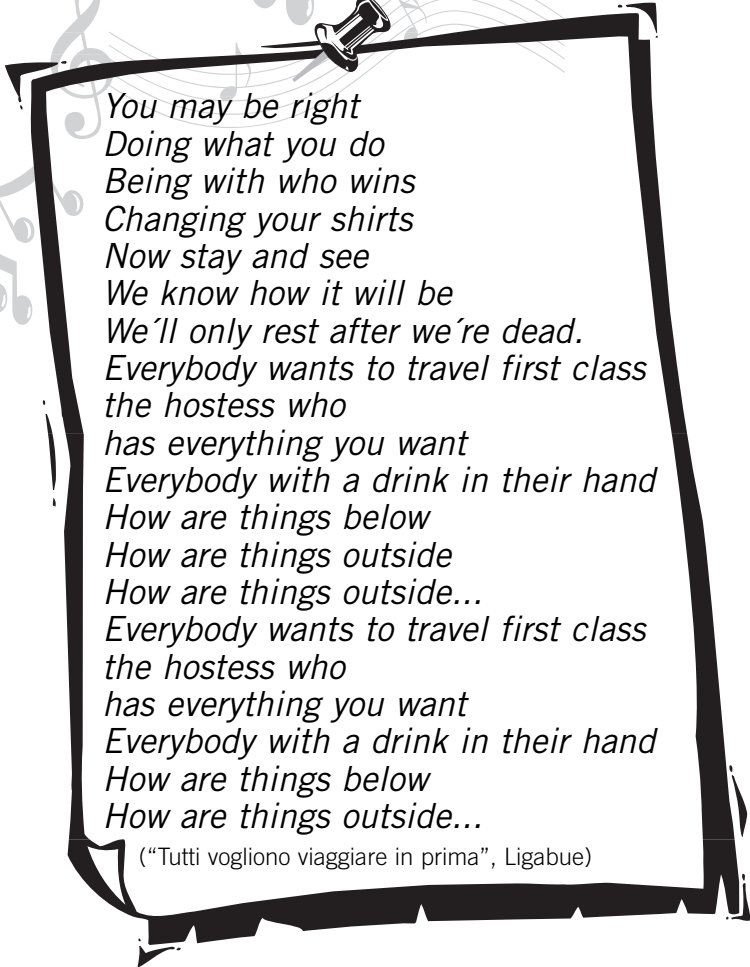
does not work). But there is no remedy... also his own train leaves and Sandy cannot get off any more. Never again.

Many of us think we were born on the wrong train that is in a time, society, and family, company that makes our right life departure delayed, blocked or hindered. Therefore they have started their journey with a drawback, a delay, a disadvantage/delay caused by destiny which during all their lives risk making them take the wrong train, thus not giving them the possibility/opportunity to catch the “right” train.

Intelligence is not sticky, but idiocy is so.

Furthermore, “I am late” is the most used expression in our society; maybe it equals the phrase “I am tired” which it often is associated with. In short, independently how much we try, running and setting clocks of all types, we





*You may be right
Doing what you do
Being with who wins
Changing your shirts
Now stay and see
We know how it will be
We'll only rest after we're dead.
Everybody wants to travel first class
the hostess who
has everything you want
Everybody with a drink in their hand
How are things below
How are things outside
How are things outside...
Everybody wants to travel first class
the hostess who
has everything you want
Everybody with a drink in their hand
How are things below
How are things outside...*

(“Tutti vogliono viaggiare in prima”, Ligabue)

are always late. We are obsessed with delays, trains, airplanes, but above all by being late for meetings with our life span, which always seems to have started one minute previously on the platform beside the one we are. We speed up, do more things, but inexorably we continue to accumulate delays. But are we really late? Are we really on the wrong train? Is really that which happens beside us more beautiful and inviting than our daily life? This speed, or rather, this haste has dramatic consequences everywhere, but especially in our companies. Reason, meditation and reflection have disappeared. We have all become assemblers, practical workers, and replicas.



We do not think about what to do, but limit ourselves to doing it, evaluating considerations and consequences during the process. We observe strange behaviour, people that never finish their phrases (speed makes them jump from one concept to another continuously) and that initiate a great many activities that they never conclude (too much time is required to finish them). They prepare the preliminary activities very carefully, then they turn to something else (not enough time).

On the other hand, since they never finish what they do, nobody can tell them they are making mistakes. Speed prevents a careful examination of the world we live in, things and people and all those incredible events that take place around us. We live immersed in a city, a Company which without doubt is interesting (beyond appearances), but due to haste and speed, we know nothing about that which surrounds us, the beauty in opportunities proposed, that externally and due to a superficial reasoning have the air of something unattractive. The way of thinking has become just like the platforms, straight, without curves, without bends, without alternatives, which means that there is no room for "leaving" signs behind. There is no space for growth or thoughts. On the contrary, there is only space for an obsessive thought: "I am on the wrong train". Who will survive this illness? Who will be able of handling the energy (dosing it in time and not burning it quickly), professionalism (to be consolidated through slow learning) and concentration (stopping to think).



Have we identified our true objectives?

"THE STONE, WHICH BUILDERS HAVE DISCARDED, HAS BECOME OUR CORNERSTONE"

Objectives are commonplace ideas we wish to direct our lives towards and which we should keep in mind in order to avoid both the dangerous daily inertia (standstill) and the equally dangerous improvisation due to small continuous deviations (gliding along with the waves). One must be careful to maintain the balance on the very narrow path that runs along the cliff, one false step into one direction and you will slip on the ink of approximation, one false step into the other direction and you will fall into perfectionism for its own sake. Our objectives should be able of illuminating us in dark times and be headlights to open a spiral of light in the mist that surrounds us, instead of being hinders to our freedom of movement which they often are.



Maybe we have too many objectives, too many headlights which end up blinding us in order to disorient us and at the end we think we are on the wrong way, having entered a dead end or having lost the direction towards our destination. It is also true that there are many objectives in our life that we do not succeed in realizing, though we desire them intensely and invest supernatural forces on them. As if there were a mocking devil to make fun of us continuously. A mocking devil capable of transforming an impossible impediment due to tenacity and that supernatural force we use to realize our objectives. An impossible impediment which remains between ourselves and that which we desire with ardour. Often we try to reach those objectives that we cannot have and it almost seems that, only in the moment in which we give up, we are able of capturing the importance of having and pursue those objectives. We often are faced with objectives that definitely collide with decisions at crossroads and alternative ways.

In the film “Sliding Doors”, young Helen finds herself before the doors of the underground carriage: if she succeeds in taking the underground, her life will take one direction; but if the doors close without her onboard, her life will take a completely different turn.

And this is one of the numerous films that is about occasions that are due to the unpredictable, to fate and coincidence, to the fortuity of events. “What would have happened to me if I had taken that train?” Hence all claims and recriminations of “self”. “If I had done that, if the other thing happened to me, if I had accepted that proposal, if I had talked less (or more)”, etc, etc. This film helps us understand that each claim regarding a better direction, in which our destiny could have turned, is fruitless. “Better” as compared to what objective? In virtue of what expectations?

What if we are dealing with reasoning due to the fact that our objectives are fading away and if they are considered to be born on the verge of failure? Is a vain attempt to change the rules, to adapt them in an “unconventional” way to our rules to be desired? If yes, then our task as actors would be to represent the best interpretation of “if I had taken the other way” or rather “if I had not taken that way”. Or even better “ Why me?” (generally speaking it becomes an interpretation worthy of an Oscar. No rivals, since the Jury would vote our interpretation unanimously).

Who knows why this question has never been made to a person who has won the lottery. If our children are on the right way, we congratulate ourselves since we are good parents. If they are on the wrong way, if they slip or act as rebels, we blame them and the way they have chosen. That is, we take responsibility for good things, but we are ready to dissociate if the wrong way is chosen at the crossroads.



“Objectives are not fate; they are direction. They are not commands; they are commitments. They do not determine the future; they are means to mobilize the resources and energies of the business for the making of the future”.

(Peter Drucker)

It is difficult for us to understand and rationalize that every road may represent positivity and negativity: life is worth to be lived just like it is, as a part of the Great Game, fully accepting its rules, without trying to live its course in a proactive way.

We can choose any road. The important thing is not to behave as an eternal student. Because if you consider yourself to be a student, you will always have time to make errors: “I am not ready, next time I shall do better”, “I shall try another course”, “I need a different method”. To recite the mantra of “I must do, I must do” with the sole objective of showing one’s own predisposition of doing, one’s good will is a terrible thing in these cases. It is deleterious since it puts you in the conditions to evaluate the efforts and not the result after the exaggerated delay. You take even more time and end up not being completely responsible for your own work.

Often the goals we cannot achieve are the things that we pursue with anxiety, being more important than many other things in our lives; or rather, the more rational and deliberate the quest is, the more itself becomes an active obstacle to its realization. Being too occupied with the concept, we cannot see the plot, the development which is starting to spread. We do not see the series of secondary products that form and themselves constitute an integral part of it all. The secondary product is the hidden part of the profession. It indicates the way and gives essence to the qualities of the profession. That path allows us not to behave like eternal students.

To face the chosen way with the continuous ability of betting on oneself, on one’s own capacities and wishes to modify status quo in order to make every way become “the way” to follow: it is made up by our style, the challenge to mortgage a piece of the future, of our capacity of innovating daily life. It is made up by our wish to draw and be drawn, of our awareness that life is not a film, or that it is much better than one. In a film, it is the final that creates the story and afterwards colours the contents and the contours; in our lives there are continuous comparisons with the course that characterizes its development.



No way is better than another, there is only a capacity of continuously inventing a life path characterized by a wish of continuously changing the way in which you consider the way and try to look upon it with a different gaze rather than trying to feel remorse for the roads that we have not trodden on.

Maybe during the construction of a piece of furniture, we discover that “sawdust” and not the construction of the piece of furniture is the most important thing. The secondary product sawdust would then be the important part. Maybe the most important secondary products are the errors we commit. Errors that, when analysed, allow us to take into account small resources that otherwise would be ignored.



Secondary products come alive. This not to feel eternally late, waiting for the next train, the next crossroads. Every one of us has his own “Sliding Door”.

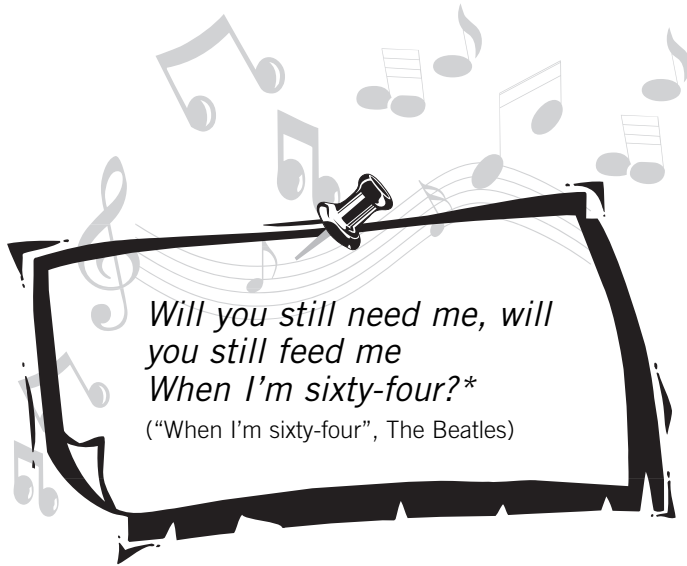
Without any risks in his life Michelangelo would have painted the floor of the Sixtine Chapel.

(Neil Simon)



Individual or teams?

SEARCHING FOR A COMPATIBLE MOTIVATION



Time, Heraclitus said, is a boy playing. He finds it amusing to torture us with deadlines and bore us with empty hours and to make us anxious when waiting and sad in detachments. We live twice as long as our ancestors and yet many of us are obsessed by time that is never enough. Then, suddenly, generally at the end of one's career, at the time of retirement, we discover that there is quite a lot of time left.

In a fairy tale by the Grimm brothers, "The Musicians of Bremen" there are four animals, aspiring musicians of the band of Bremen, a city that they will never reach. Summary: after a long life working at the mill, a donkey is too old to continue working and therefore his master plans to kill him and at least get his skin. A dog, which no longer can chase, is about to suffer the same destiny through his master, despite his fidelity. A cat, which also has become too old to chase mice, is destined to become food and also a cock, soon will become the guest of honour at a feast organized by his master, obviously to be strangled and become the main course. The donkey





proposes the other three animals that they unit an form a band: he plays the flute, the dog plays the drums, the cat takes care of the serenades and the cock, obviously, becomes the singer. The team is complete. The band is ready and the tour may start.

During their walk, the fairy tale tells us, the cock sees a small house in the distance and normally some bandits seek shelter there. Without going into details (not even the fairy tale does so), the four animals manage to chase away the bandits with a very reactive stratagem: a concert. After having succeeded, the musicians take possession of the house, the food and the riches that are kept in it and live the rest of their lives with all comforts and in peace.

The question is then: why wait all this time for a pension, living a life full of sacrifices with the nightmare of an unworthy ending, due to a physical exhaustion that inevitably would exclude us from the productive context? When the protagonists of the fairy tale decide to leave the game and propose to use they capacities for an artistic aim, since they so far have been exploited in a very bad way, the obtain a maximum satisfaction and personal success. Is it then really necessary to wait for pension, to accumulate one's own capacities to use them only after having arrived to the moment of "rest" or – and this it at least better – to use our creative capacities during our free time? And what is free time? Is there really a free time? Free of what, of which occupations?

One of the most interesting superimpositions produced by new media is that due to a borderline which is increasingly weak between working time and free



time; with evident reflexes on our style of living, our way of relating, our way of interpreting our own role and life. A borderline which, instead of blocking, invites us to enter, to mix activities, courses, places. In this way, we discover that also free time becomes working time and that work surprisingly can reserve us freedom, initiative and fun.

When we work, we must work. When we play, we must play. It is no good trying to mix the two things. The only aim must be that to perform the job and be paid for having done so. When work is over, then we can dedicate us to games, but not before that.

(Henry Ford)

What different outlook as compared by that auspicated by Henry Ford at the beginning of last century and how distant from Aris Accornero!

It is good not to separate work and life ... Work and life have different logics and cultures and the richness of existence lies in the combination of time and their ambits. Their juxtaposition is a myth: a myth to exorcise.

(Aris Accornero)

We must ask ourselves if this paradox between free time and working time cannot be configured as a true and proper illness. In that case, is there a possible remedy?

We save ourselves when we become aware that there is not only physical energy and determination to reserve for "free" activities and full time rage and eternal grunts for the "occupied" time (or vice versa!). We save ourselves when we, by using our experience and professionalism, manage to find the right rhythm between energy and rage, the right harmony between the distribution of free an occupied time. All this indicates the path to follow, a sole path that makes us find that which each of one of us singularly can discover, since it arrives from the depth of our capacities, from our wish to participate, our wish to let others, that we encounter along our path, benefit from our experience.



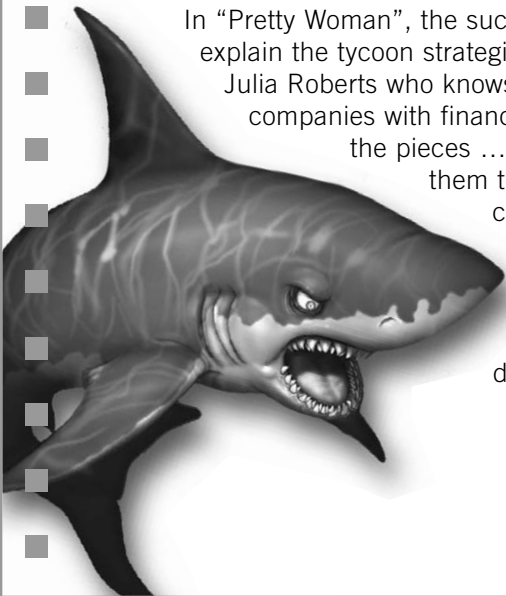
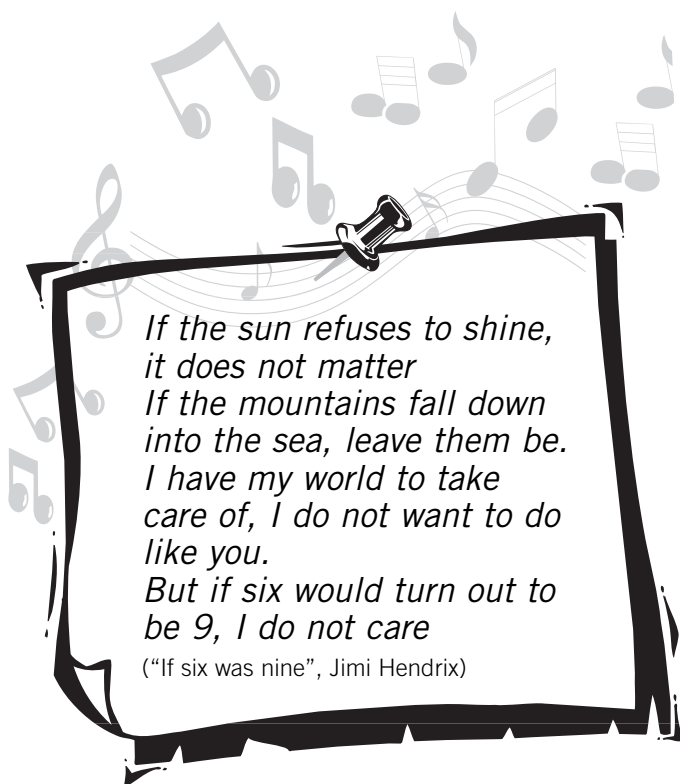
Therefore even the cohesion of the team, the wish to belong and the driving force of a group pass through a great paradox: the group exists only if there is a wish and recognition of individuality, the group exists as a sole unity, if, and only if, each one relies upon the specificity of each one of its members, who participate as individuals with the objective of making the group grow as an entity. Otherwise there will be waste, an enormous waste. Waste of personal time and waste of group time: we only have to continue and wait for retirement. To conclude, this is a brutal and crude waste of our single lives.

Doing things right or wrong requires the same amount of time.



Predators or producers?

EASIER TO DESTROY THAN TO BUILD



In “Pretty Woman”, the successful entrepreneur (Richard Gere) tries to explain the tycoon strategies he uses to consolidate his own empire to a Julia Roberts who knows absolutely nothing about High Finance: buy companies with financial difficulties, cut them into pieces and sell the pieces ... Vivianne who is appalled asks him: “Why cut them to pieces, instead of trying to make the companies you buy work?” and Edward replies: “Because it is easier to sell them in pieces, you work less and make money easily...”. But the cunning businessman is shaken by the affirmation the girl makes: “You do not do anything of your own, you just exploit



labour, other people's sweat, you cut work to pieces, people's dreams, to do what? Money! You make money by destroying other people's dreams, but don't you have any dreams of your own?" Despite the fact that he is instigated by his avid attorney, friend and business partner, Edward discovers that he had dreams as a boy... "I always liked Lego, I always liked constructions... You are right... we do not construct anything..."

For all times, men have distinguished themselves with their actions in two major categories: constructors and destructors, i.e. people who work and people who exploit other people's work (predators). In the film *Pretty Woman*, we have yet another very clear example of the predator, who takes pleasure in destroying and cutting industrial enterprises into pieces, stabbing them and eating them up to ruin their owners. Destroy is the motto of the predator: destroy not to create other companies or other relations, not to construct new challenges, not to give new opportunities, but simply to get his hands on the economic value.

That which is offered at the beginning to each man is never equal. There are rich men and poor men, great men and small men, handsome and ugly men. In the card game it is fate to distribute the cards to each player for the game. Therefore it is up to the player to use his intelligence and his technique to obtain the maximum gain from it. The truth is that the most of what we do, give marginal results. That which really counts is the small part of our activities and if we concentrate on it, we can control events instead of being controlled, and thus obtain results that may be much higher. There are "data": proper hereditary genes, one's body, inclinations, but also the environment in which you are born or grow up



in, which you do not choose, just like the colour of your eyes. Using these data, one must build one's own life, culture, job – since, basically, one must live and do something in life. One must choose if it is better to desire something intensely, dream, make projects and try to realize them by taking the risk of failure or, instead, choosing to settle, to renounce, often even without having tried to play.

If there are two of us, this doesn't mean that one is clever and the other one is stupid. We can both BE clever together.

Who would not like to be good enough to manage difficult situations in life in a winning manner? Who would not like to be a protagonist and not just an extra? Who does not dream not to be treated with indifference, not to be mixed with marmalade? It is not a question about being superheroes or leaders for enormous crowds, but simply to wish to fight tenaciously to be evaluated for our professionalism, for our commitment to be able to occupy the right place. Those that are built slowly, starting from initial "data", from the biological imprint to the environment, built with daily application. It seems easy, but there is only one little, very small complication, it is almost insignificant: we must learn to recognize publicly the merits of others and praise them. There is no kind of balance for which there is a total sum of merits: if one takes a part, the other takes the difference. It is not so, in fact it is the exact contrary.

To learn and recognize the merits of others, gives us the instruments to demand the recognition of our value. It is the only condition that allows us to construct, to grow with others to see a centimetre beyond others, to run first and leave the others behind to follow us. And this is the only way in which we can activate the positive cycle of our dreams: dreams as sharing and acceptance of the value of the individual, in order to make him become a collective game, the objective of which is to let things leave a sign. This is the dream that is constructive, that is capable of giving each one of us the destructive force of creation.

Therefore we are ready to recommence continuously in an eternal rollercoaster, in which the value increases for each turn for all participants. An ancient tale of native mestizo says: "One must never preoccupy oneself with occasions that pass before us, since there is time to do everything". This is probably true if we manage to capture the few decisive powers that work within us and only in this way can we dose our efforts to multiply its efficiency. The idea that we have little time and the need to reach results within short leads to a doubt: is it not easier to



destroy than to build? Of course it is! It is easy to destroy only if we are not capable of giving our dreams a chance.

“The game was ending, since the dreams were about to come true”.

(I read it somewhere, or maybe I said it sometime ...)



Do we manage to share a story?

FINIS ORIGIN PENDIT*

A journey always needs continuous care. Maintenance made through adjustment, change of direction, bonds to create and nourish and guidance capable of interpreting the needs of people and the necessity of the surrounding environment. All this allows us to consolidate bonds and sustain each other reciprocally in the group (a kind of bidirectional maintenance) in order to avoid that the travelling companions become former companions at the first crossroads or at the first difficulty ...

*How many squallide figures
that cross the country,
com' the life in the power
abuses is poor.*

*On the bridge it waves flag
white woman,
on the bridge it waves flag
white woman,*

(“Bandiera Bianca”, Franco Battiato)

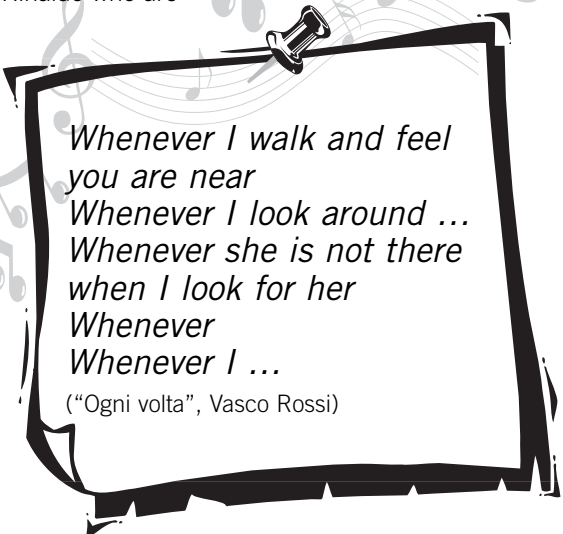


* *The end depends on the origin.*



Without doubt, the end of a journey, to which the beginning is connected temporally, is a magic moment. It allows us to be reborn with a new light, after having accumulated a series of new experiences, during our journey. These experiences are added to our own consolidated daily reality, transforming it, and it allows us to face future journeys with a different viewpoint, to restart and depart anew.

In the free Jerusalem, Tasso tells the story about Rinaldo, a Christian hero who must free the city of Jerusalem from the pagans. One day, after having left his camp, he entered a marvellous garden where he meets the enchantress Armida. The beauty and the freshness of this woman enchants the beautiful Rinaldo, and makes him forget his mission. The two lovers live a very strong and exclusive love story. Two friends of Rinaldo who are looking for him, finally find him when he admires his image in a mirror that Armida holds up to him and who lets him see the reflected image of his beloved; Armida herself looks into the mirror in which she sees the reflected image of her beloved Rinaldo. Suddenly a ray of light from the distance distracts Rinaldo from his mirror: it is a sunray reflected from the shield of one of his army friends. Rinaldo approaches his companion and looks at his image in the war shield: to his despair he sees an effeminate and kind man with flowers braided into his hair and a rosy loving face. His companions hand his armour over to him, he puts it on quickly while he feels the fury of war growing inside himself and the sanctity of his mission.



*Whenever I walk and feel
you are near
Whenever I look around ...
Whenever she is not there
when I look for her
Whenever
Whenever I ...*

("Ogni volta", Vasco Rossi)

In the film "The Fabulous World of Amélie", the conviction that it is possible to transform the present situation without simply accept and interpret it is very much alive. Amélie has decided to intervene in the world that surrounds her, modifying it deeply, on the basis of a schematic and elementary morale, initially inspired by the principle to attribute that which is due to everyone or that which she considers to be best for an individual. Amélie takes over the lives of those whom she comes into contact with and decides their destiny: this happens to her father, the concierge, the "glass man" and a series of minor characters on which she applies her own extraordinary fantasy (a former tenant, a failed writer, a hypochondriac female "tobacconist" the greengrocer who kills a young man). Only for herself, for her own love life, Amélie hesitates to apply the



principles that have upset and oriented the lives of many people. The "glass man" must therefore intervene so that she can let go and accept her destiny.

Travels! Life!

This is not a journey constructed with rationalism, not a step at the time in the sign of fatigue, prudence and harshness that pay the price for certainties and offers a shoulder to boredom and habits. Journeys made with temporary companions (each one in his own journey), on the same road but with a proper destiny as individual (each one is different), but with a common destination. Journeys made of meetings, moments, fleeting moments in which we "touch", in which everybody "touches" the people he meets, leaving a sign behind. Sharing a story, leaving one's journey to the hands of somebody who may take control of it and give us a task he thinks is ours or who substitutes us with himself (as in Amélie), in which the emotion leads us to a final objective that gives a meaning to being on the road and to the fatigue of the course. All these moments give Life a consistency. During the journey we may distract (everybody is lost in his own affairs). Somebody detaches casually, others voluntarily, deciding to follow other itineraries, somebody decides not to share the common destination any longer and, then, the Armida witches (or the enchantress Circe, if you prefer) take over. Everybody follows his own path, everybody thinks he can do it alone, to be able to find only the right direction and the right place and not need to be pushed towards changes on the part of the group, or the travel companion (only we do not respect anything anymore, not even the mind!)

“Tell me who you travel with and I’ll tell you where you will arrive”.

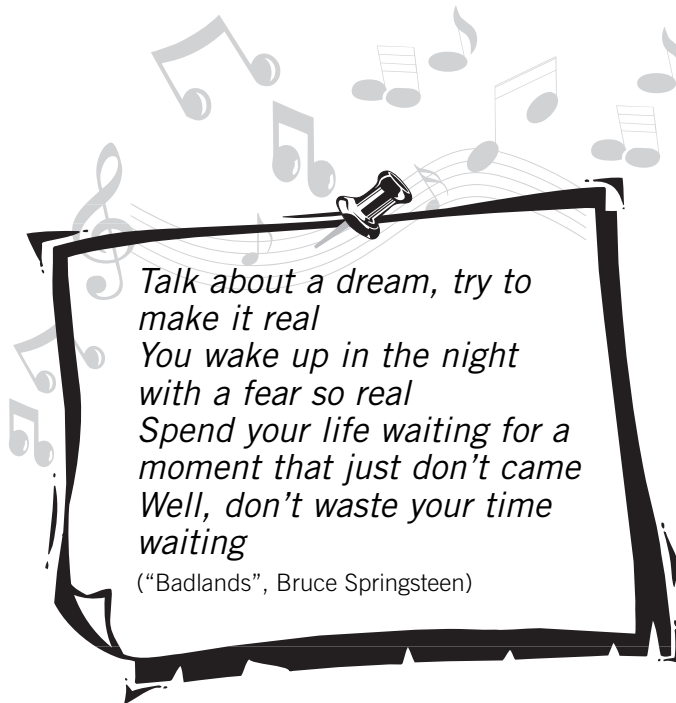
Then: to wait for the reflected ray on a shield to understand the true course (what if the companions that support you in difficult times do not arrive?) or wait for the event that you cannot manipulate, that you have not foreseen and that was unforeseen (glass man/lucky star) to decide the end of your journey? In both cases, the sole hope is that that it really is worth starting the journey, that the ticket should not be thrown away and that you must not sing: “How many vicious characters that travel through our country, how miserable life is when abusing powers. On the bridge the white flag flutters, on the bridge the white flag flutters like in the song of E. Bennato”.

This is a little the story of Charlie Brown: when trying to kick the ball at the beginning of the competition season, he always falls to the ground. Every year, this event repeats, every year the procedure is identical, with the only difference that there is always a rational motivation to justify failure.



Do we really need talents?

IS OUR COMPANY'S VALUE CONNECTED TO PEOPLE!?!



*Talk about a dream, try to
make it real
You wake up in the night
with a fear so real
Spend your life waiting for a
moment that just don't come
Well, don't waste your time
waiting*

(“Badlands”, Bruce Springsteen)

Apart from using elevators in which we look steadily downwards out of fear of meeting the gaze of other people, we spend a great part of our lives at work, often inserted in an organization that should allow us to work and live in a collaborative environment, in which the value is collective and is related to the sum of individualities, single professionalisms and capacities of all of us.

But is it so? Are organizations so attentive towards people's needs and conditions?

My impression is that organizations often are veritable jungles, a “tough” place to live; a place in which you are chewed, torn to pieces and expelled in a fraction of a second together with everything that you in time have been



able to build as regards conscience, career and relations; a place in which you often spend the most of your time trying to avoid the worst and to figure out the right line of action; a place in which maybe work, ability and capacity are important, but often not essential.

A place where many people travel eternally trying to drive past others with the blinkers on, ready to surpass anybody who tries to remain ahead of them. And, as Bruce Springsteen sings: "The highway's jammed with broken heroes on a last chance power drive" in his album "Born to Run".

A kind of smart folly of rational fools ready to run in any direction, since the important thing for them is the race and they do not ask themselves why they are racing. And when you ask why, the reply is always "for the career, knowledge, relations", the same motives for which you may be dismissed from the race. Often during conventions and seminars you hear phrases like: "The value of our company lies in people", "We take care of our resources", "Without our talents, our company would not exist", "Our company is very attentive to the needs of our collaborators", "Our company is based on values and to us people are always a top priority", "We are continuously looking for the best, those who make a difference".

This is what they say: stories, or rather, fairy tales?



In fact, one says (or speculates) that the value of companies is represented by human resources (human “resources” is a synonym of basic hypocrisy), repository in which knowledge, competence, professionalism and meritocracy constitute the true credo. This is what they tell us.

That which people experience and feel personally may be represented through an image, an analogy which is different from these stories: the Roman ships in which many slaves were gathered and forced to row (it was thanks to the slaves that the ships would travel across the seas and reach the ports) and a figure (a figure such as a modern administrator of human resources) drumming on an enormous drum to indicate (impose) the rhythm, his rhythm. Talking about slaves... Often companies fill their mission, their ethic codes, their communications with the expression “human resources” and these human resources increasingly show that they are getting farther and farther away from human beings made of flesh and bone.

Can we move to Ireland or India without changing the company value in any way? Can people be considered to be so neutral?

If this is the case, why then waste time, resources, ink, paper trying to value/publicize the “company culture”?

How is it possible that organizational structures are represented as neutral boxes characterized only by a title, whereas it is known to everybody that the true contents of the boxes and the work performed are so closely connected to the names and surnames of those who they wish to insert or who already are inside one box or another? How is it possible that the company has not been able to represent the fundamental and obvious difference between the work performed by/together with one employee and the work performed by/together with somebody else?

Can we talk about individualism or are we dealing with valuing ingenuous people? What can we say about talents? We search for them, show them off, tear them away from our competitors with ferocious selections; the “talents make the difference”, “our talents”?

So many evaluation procedures to find them and then what? So many words to convince them that they are in the right company for them (but then you do not understand why others in the same company or others in other companies that are less right for the job are not dismissed).

Often, talents in the company are considered as different and it is troublesome to assume the risks involved with having relations to a different person, a talented child in pre-school often causes reactions in the teachers who contact



the parents to protest against the vivacity of the child, against his scarce attention and maybe his exuberance hinders the correct performance of the activities. Just like pre-schools, companies and schools do not give much space, accept or value diversity: they often search for it, invoke it even, but then, at the end, they fear not being able to handle diversity and not being able to satisfy the requirements necessarily made by a different person.

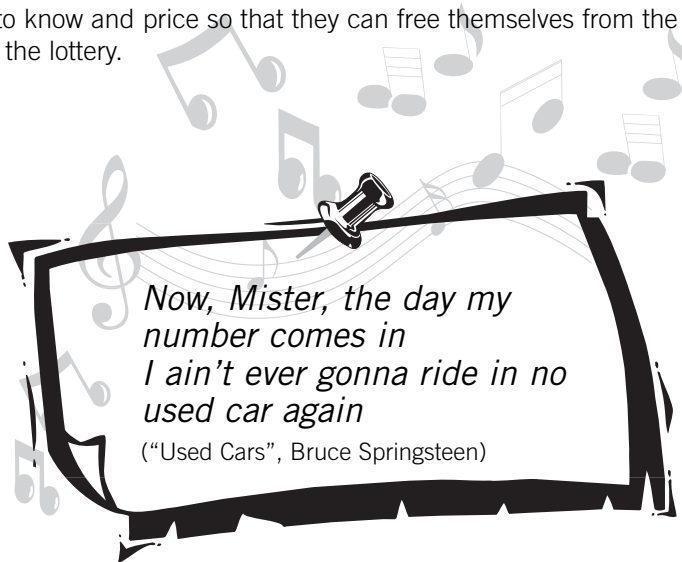
What if it were devious to talk about “talents” and “difference”? Maybe the true challenge for organizations does not lie in handling professionalism outside the norms as exceptions?

Maybe the true difficulty for the company, in which the organization and the business fall dramatically, lies in creating thoughts and an awareness, especially in the ordinary individualities: the smile in the voice of the switchboard operator, the precision of the reply from an accountant, the ability of listening to suggestions, the necessary space to express disagreement, the respect for other people's time.

I am increasingly and deeply convinced that many companies that think they have a need for people with great talents really need small human individualities, not abstract “human resources”, but only people.

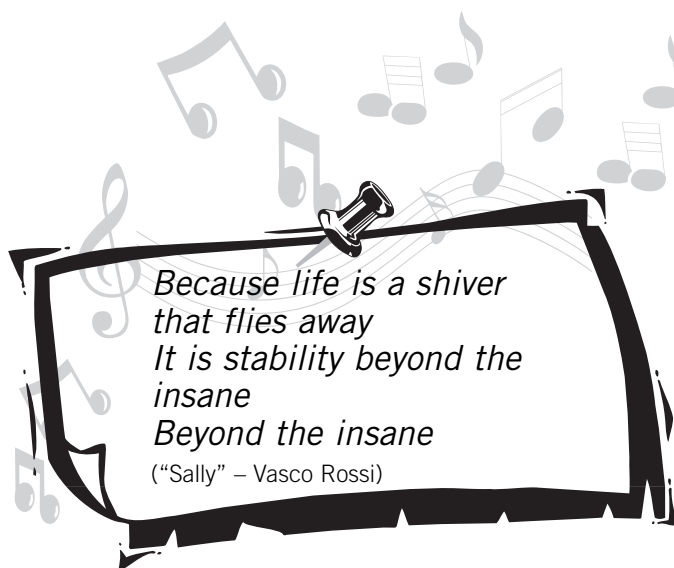
There is an increasing need to price small and great individualities that are present, rather than trying to identify what is missing (which instead ought to be carefully analyzed and planned, without trying to manage it in a hurry only to try and recover lost time).

People to know and price so that they can free themselves from the dream of winning the lottery.



Can you reach the sun in fifty steps?

READ TO BELIEVE!



In the film "1492: Conquest of Paradise" by Ridley Scott, Christopher Columbus, old and defeated, encounters the Treasurer of Spain which blames him for being a dreamer, an idealist. Then Columbus shows him the cities, the palaces, the great and small works of art and asks him what he sees. "Civilisation", the Treasurer replies. "Well", Columbus concludes, "all this was created by idealists like myself". We need to imagine a new world to transform reality. To work with fantasy, make projects, invent things in your mind, have ideals. Dreams as a premise for reality, as an invention of the future. Dreams that occupy our daily spaces and encounters that which is the worst form of ostracism against change: bureaucracy. You can use bureaucracy to everything, even to the future. The bureaucrat is an able worker expert on useless things that unfortunately are necessary; he is capable of working showing everybody that he is as busy as can be.

He has only few, but very firm principles from which he never makes derogations: not decide and move sheets of paper (never writing anything).



This is to simulate solving a problem and using experience and knowledge accumulated as a barrier towards action. Unless it is attached to true emotions, knowledge is purely decorative, bureaucratic, does not lead to marvel, but becomes pure ornaments of our lack of action. Maybe he is useful to identify somebody who makes an errors sometimes, in order to have a provisory saving and be able to say that it was evident things would end up that way.

Bureaucrats love immobility. To appear very little is another main characteristic: he never uses his face directly, but lets others use theirs for him. This is a kind of closure in himself in order to avoid desires, dreams, making projects and trying to realize them, since he is terrorized by the risk of failure. Unfortunately for others (companies, colleagues, society), the cost of the useless is very high and the only thing we should hate is this immobility, Since it represents death for your companies, for our team, for our dreams and desires. Immobility has the same function as the Pause key (standby): it leaves everybody standing by and then continues exactly from the same point without taking small changes, small daily variations that at length can make a difference, into consideration. These small differences, these small dreams that often are generated through a solitary rite and that you try to transform into a collective rite, using your face. These minor differences, these small dreams that cannot lead to a revolution or realize eloquent gestures, but only make sure that the patient and engaging work to take care of others by taking care of oneself emerges, committing oneself to let things last and letting them emerge from the torpor of laziness and the stagnation of immobility. In short, the patient work of letting things happen, to let dreams come true. Dreams that you obstinately try to share with others and make grow and to which you can give space inside a world of sceptic wise men.



Our life is made of bricks of daily events full of gestures, desires, dreams, intentions, voluntary acts, revelations, prejudices, reasoning and a quest for travelling companions. By using this mixture and continuing our wish to create rather than stopping it (as opposed to bureaucrats) and become messengers, divulgators ... Practically speaking we get a sane epidemic disease, we become agents capable of “infecting” and expand the wish to do, to aggregate. A sort of organizational epidemic disease made of messages and behaviour that spread thanks to people that are messengers and who with the example and their desires are capable of involving others. The immune system (bureaucrats) can definitely block this contagious epidemic disease, but cannot do anything against novelty, change, rapid execution and information passed by word of mouth. All this is possible if the context allows the epidemic disease to spread, to find space and grow. The context is the fruit of our efforts, of our wish to break rules letting the virus spread with a recognition of its creative force.

We can see all this as a desire to “go beyond” data, information, the well-known and the acquisition, to return to feelings of marvel and astonishment which are present at the beginning of the search of a sense for all aspects, both banal ones and not, of our life. This desire spreads through the usage and the contamination of different courses: literature, cinema, music, art. Parallel roads that recycle its own specific nature in the same theme. Often, these courses are no longer parallel, but cross each other to create bridges, the one can invade the other, thus creating confusion, equivocation, paradox, funny and dramatic situations. Then it is necessary to free all accumulated energy through these bridges, letting contamination spread and having a continuous energy flow from one activity to another, which is the sol condition to transform change into a new development model that everybody wants to affirm, make grow and develop.

In order to capture a dream it is not sufficient to visualize it, take it by its contours: you must live it, feel it onto your skin, suffer with it, stand it and feel threatened; feel that that our usual strongholds vibrate dangerously. Otherwise, even in case we would fully hold on to the validity and the realization of the Company, we will not have made it our own, we would not have understood it fully.

The future is not a measurement unit of time, but of imagination and dreams.

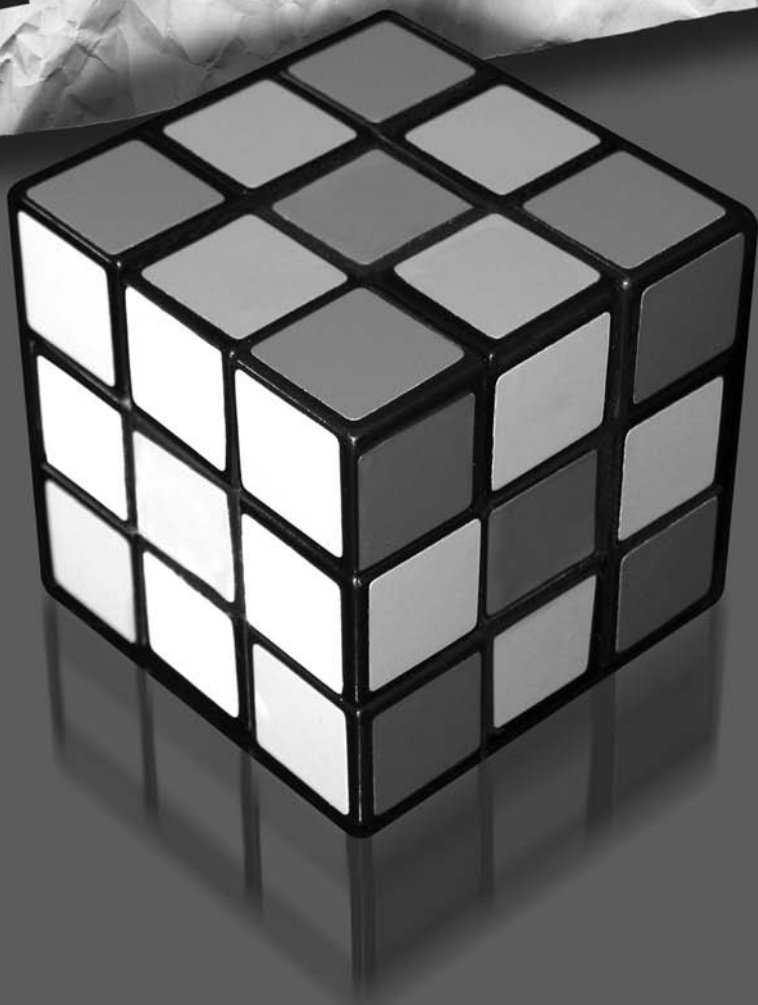


Imagine that you have a piece of paper and someone asks you to fold it once and then again and so on for fifty times. What thickness do you think you would obtain? That of a telephone book? Or maybe that of a refrigerator?

The truth is that you reach about the distance between the Earth and the Sun and if you fold it yet again, you also reach the return voyage. You reach the Sun through fifty simple steps.



OBJECTS FOR REFLECTION



DUKE BOX

DISTORTED LOGIC OF INCENTIVES AND FALSE NOTES

Many authors and, especially academics, think that economy and administrating people is nothing but incentive science. This means that incentives constitute an instrument created to push the individual to do what is considered to be correct (and is good), pushing him away from what is considered to be detrimental (and which is bad). The question that emerges out of this affirmation is: for whom? Considering the fact that incentives do not pour down from the sky and that somebody has to invent them, a question immediately appears: for what reason? We are all educated according to the logic of incentives and its opposite, from a very early age. That is, awards and punishments.

If you got a good grade, fine! The red flaming bike is yours. If you are silent during an interrogation, that is bad! You appear to be an idiot. If you are part of the football team of your institute, fine! You are tough. At the end of the year, if you manage to reach the objectives for sales and returns, great! You are in the career. Too many contributors do not pay income tax? Withhold money at the source for everybody. And so on ...

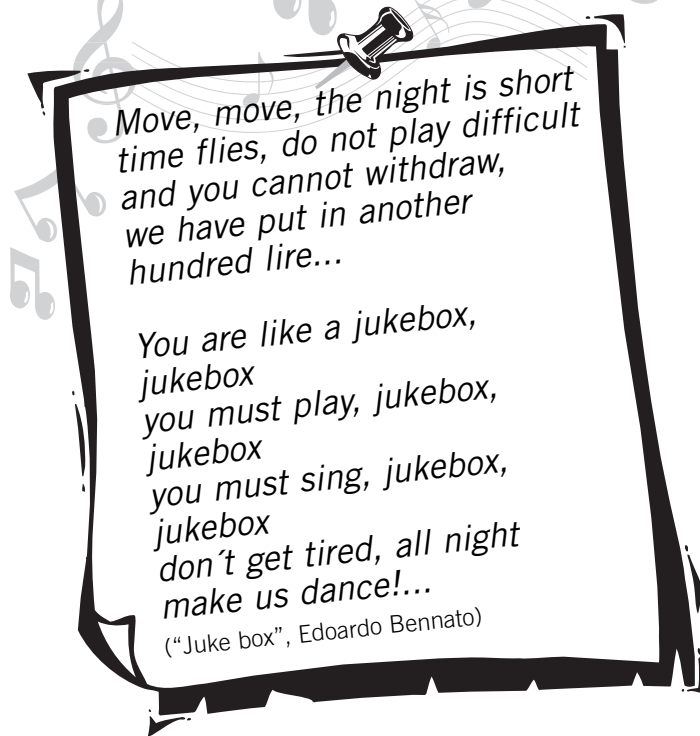


It would seem to be a perfect mechanism, but strange things happen. If the problem is about incentives, then how can you avoid that somebody behaves shrewdly? After all, we are all continuously in situations where we feel like changing things, “push” data or behave shrewdly. Our culture often seems to award those who behave shrewdly. Like “if something is tempting, imagine the feeling

obtaining it through shrewdness”. Therefore we have football players simulating, waitresses that withhold tips and do not share them with their



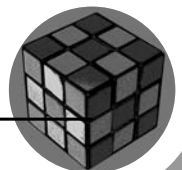
colleagues, managers that manipulate data (for their personal good or for their image sake). And an athlete who cheats to lose is exposed to insults (cheating to lose is a mortal sin within the world of sports), whereas a person who cheats to win is only a shrewd person and he finds a great number of people who are ready to defend him (cheating to win is a venial sin in the world of sports) .



Which is the spring that allows somebody or renders somebody available to actions that are not correct? Plato thought over this problem in "Republic". The position is very simple: if the only reason to be just (and get the award) is given by social conventions (rules under the form of incentives), then it is sensible to behave justly in public only, when we cannot do otherwise, that is only when we are visible.

“Is it possible to resist evil temptations if you are certain that you will not be discovered?”

(Plato)



Here we shall discuss the concept of invisibility. If you manage to be invisible, then you can allow anything. Then you assist the deliberate “thefts” in your company, towards the collaborators, towards anybody between the “employee” and the obtainment of the objectives. The bigger the company, the easier it is to be invisible. And every year, these companies resemble jukeboxes more and more: the more incentives, the more money, the more “songs” will be played at a high volume level. Pity that they often and

suddenly are false. The cycle becomes perverse and in short you must reset everything and recommence with new awarding systems, new modalities for distributing the incentives. A continuous merry-go-round based on mechanisms that are unique for economic recognition. Incentives as opposed to economic value. And then the jukebox starts to play, more money and more songs.



How do we get out of it? Easy. We bet on people! We bet on their value, we bet on

creating environments where we substitute the chorus in songs that are out of tune.

And then we can convince them that it is possible to pursue that which Adam

Smith wrote on the innate honesty of individuals in his book “Theory of moral feelings”.

We only need a small effort. We create satisfaction and environment to promote recognition. For example, when “Somebody” makes a good job, we say so sincerely, publicly.

“No matter how egoistic the human being may seem, there are obvious innate principles in human nature that make man take an interest in the destiny of the next man, the good of which becomes a necessity, even if he cannot obtain anything but a detached feeling of satisfaction”.

(Adam Smith)



PINBALL LESSON

PLAYING IN THE SPIDER-WEB OF RULES

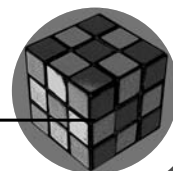
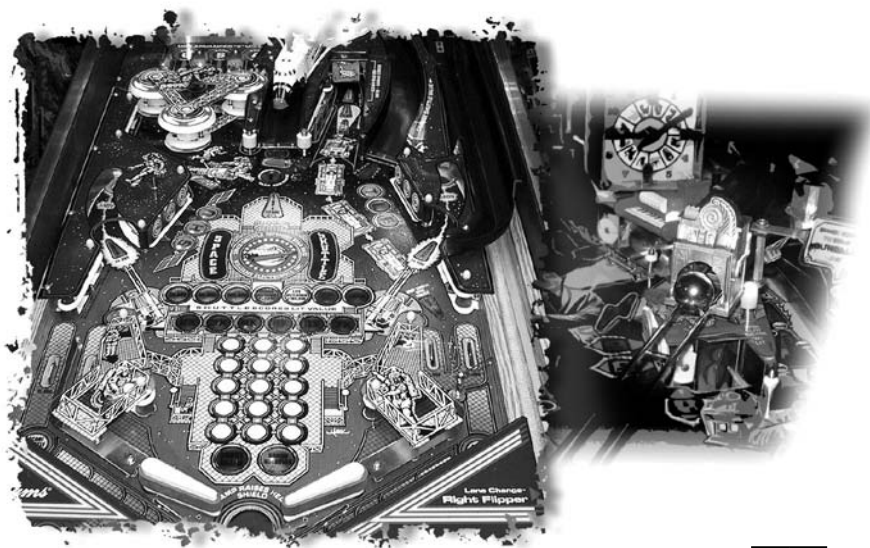
“Every face is the basis for expression just as it was intelligently moulded onto the inner soul, since the rest is heredity, mystery or fate”.

(Joseph Conrad)

Face, face! It is a simple refrain by now. Even though our face is the thing we deal with every day, it is definitely “that” of which we speak less and expose directly as little as possible. The way we use it, how much we can control it, how we distribute it, how often we use it by ourselves, how often we “delegate”..., so many questions, so many doubts, so many hopes!

Our face is like a flipper? Does it assume a different appearance according to the coins we insert?

Our face should be preserved from emotions? Maybe somebody will use it for their benefit, against ourselves. A face for all occasions? Strong with the weak and weak with the strong?
Well!!!



Pinball was a real game, a unique experience. Not at all connected to time, but to pure ability. Few rules, schemes that differed all the time, no game like the other. The ability was to adapt the way of playing to the evolution of the game and respond quickly to input, continuously changing strategy if necessary. Difficult if not impossible to cheat. There was a variation which was a group game. Tournaments and competitions of all kinds took place in bars. The spectators took an active part in the competitions.

Today pinball is an incomprehensible game. It is full of options and unclear rules; it is difficult to see any strategy, if not that to play for as long as possible, hoping to receive a tip, an alternative to allow us to continue the game, although we have no idea about what happens exactly. The spectators (few to tell the truth) try to understand and extract some rules to allow them to use it subsequently.

The evident analogies with the market in general are too easy and so are the analogies with which that happens inside organizations. Too easy. The operation of organizations is more and more approaching that of modern pinball. A heap of rules that are unclear, little known and not even disclosed with precision, or even when they are disclosed, they appear incomprehensible. This is the essence of bureaucracy. Rules to use at the moment and according to the situation, for one's own benefit, especially in moments of crisis, exploiting also the scarce knowledge that people have in general. All this to consolidate a kind of micro-power and construct a territory to defend by using the same rules that were used to construct it. In the meanwhile, we proceed gropingly in the organizational magma among committees and meetings and extra hours, hoping to have time enough (trusting in our big start) to pin the right move, to look for the rule that allows us to "take off", to perpetuate the status quo. More rules, more opportunities.

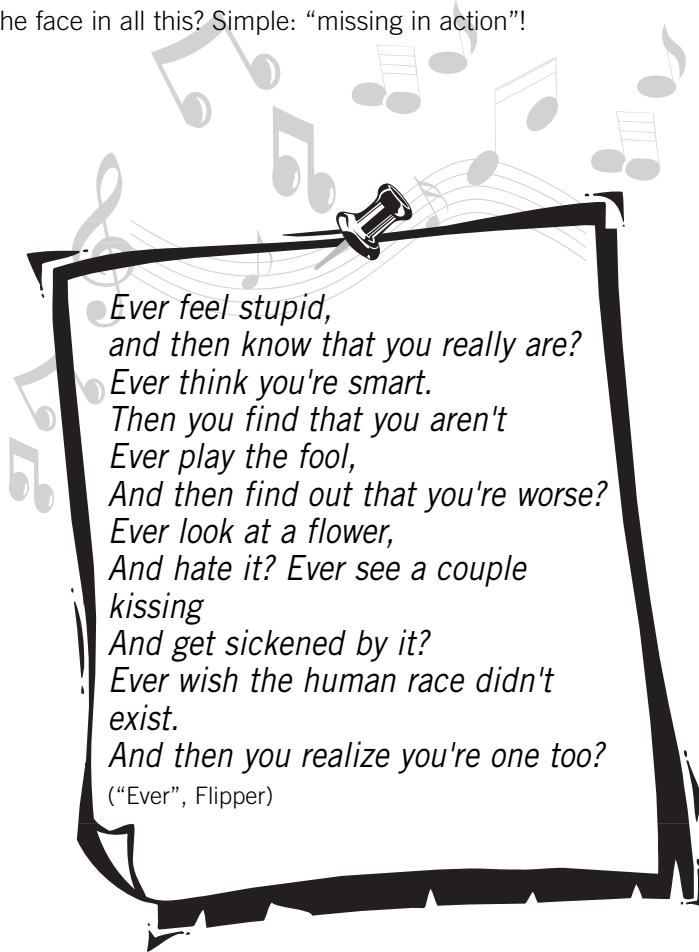
Rules as Saints we can lean onto in case of need and it is obviously so that there the more Saints there are That which should be a set of rules to allow us to manage our organizational lives efficiently (and make it into a kind of court where we play in teams, with loyalty, against an adversary), instead becomes a non-homogeneous set of conditions that only allow us to perform a donkey race. And a donkey with thirty years of experience remains a donkey (though a little older).

This strange race exasperates the tendency of each one of us to live in his own world, different and separate from that of our peers, nurturing our dreams but also our nightmares. The inclination of living in a reality that is mainly nourished by our particular elaboration increases, rather than an authentic relationship to others. The result is that we are each prisoners of the spider-web that we ourselves weave to become its only true victim.



That is: many and ambiguous rules; a chaotic spider-web to use only when you want to or when you sense a result that is coherent with your own interest. As a screen or a convenience and often only to avoid expressing an opinion. Rules that isolate also groups of people, not only individuals. Rules that end up determining the identity of a group defining its characteristics. "We members of the administrative management..." "You members of the commercial sector..." Each little group sets up its own rules (and spider-web) and it is this complex web that hinders the group to have authentic relations.

And the face in all this? Simple: "missing in action"!



Alas, after a certain age, each one is responsible for his own face.

(Albert Camus)



BROKEN WINDOWS

ABSURD, THINGS FOR ... DWARFS!

Asinus asinum fricat (The donkey rubs the donkey).
(Latin proverb)

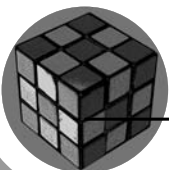
In a famous page in Gulliver's travels, there is a narration about a long war that was fought with great ruthlessness and enormous losses for both sides – the small inhabitants of Lilliput and the rival empire of Blefuscu. In a world that is so crazy and fantastic at the same time, in which two realities live side by side, Lilliput and Blefuscu, so different and yet so similar due to the problems that they have to solve every day, although in different ways. Equally crazy (and maybe a little less fantastic) are the motivations for such a strong rivalry.



Gulliver himself is astonished to learn the reason for the war between the two worlds: it is connected to different ideas about how to break eggs before using them: one part says that they must be broken from the pointed side, whereas the other part claims they should be broken from the rounded part. <Absurd! - thinks Gulliver – Anybody with a brain must exclaim "Absurd! Totally crazy!

What sad times await us!"> And who would not say he was right? In any case he shrugs his shoulders (intellectuals) and he goes beyond, ready to meet someone else that does "crazy" things so as to be able to exclaim again ...

Are we really sure that our discussions, our "wars", our meetings, our kick-offs, our commitments seem much more intelligent than the war about breaking



eggs to those who look at our actions from the outside? An extraterrestrial looking at our daily problems, would almost certainly exclaim: "Absurd! Totally crazy! What dark times await us! Things for (intellectual) dwarfs!"

If a hooligan breaks windows of the flats in a block and they are not repaired immediately, all windows of the block will be devastated within short (this is a phenomenon that the American George Kelling defines as the "broken window effect"). In areas where nobody intervenes, in which one does nothing to restore the environment, you think that everything is possible. Therefore, when seeing a broken window, it would be natural to exclaim: "Absurd! Totally crazy! Everything is going to pieces, what bad times awaits us!" But then, inevitably, they shrug their shoulders (intellectuals) and go beyond to search a new block with broken windows to be able to say again ... : Well... these are things for dwarfs (intellectuals)!

Nietzsche claimed that everybody has the duty to evolve, to elevate and become a "superman", for example by letting his better side prevail to rise above the norm ...

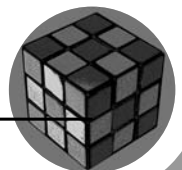
If it is true that as dwarfs, our desire would be that to climb up onto the shoulders of the giants and not of other dwarfs, maybe even more dangerous, and find dwarfs that think they are giants, only because they have stilts. In fact, too often we settle for the mediocre and do not care about what we can (and would/could) become.

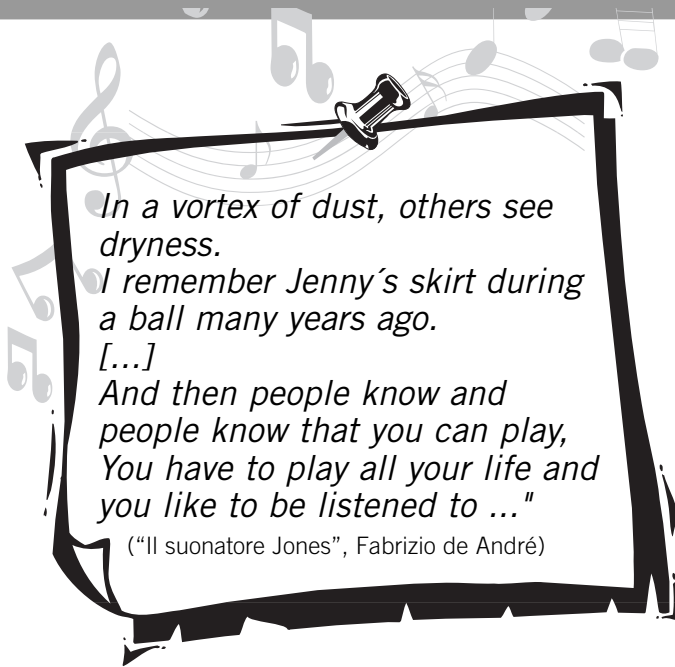
Too often ours is a "Grand Hotel" approach: many images, enormous titles, but no substance. Everything is done with a profound superficiality: we do not make in-depth studies, we look at the surface, to establish that there is nothing there, it is not worth investing time and intellectual resources. It is easier to say: Totally crazy...

But to speak/gossip/shrug one's shoulders is often a behaviour of people that have positions that are not adequate for their organizational/cultural/project height; it is the behaviour of people on stilts and with a visibility given only through their own living ability and to walk on stilts. How tiresome to live a life on false legs, that make walking difficult, but offer only an illusion of living a life with a different visual effect, but which is not necessarily better because it comes from above!

It is no use trusting these giants, therefore; one cannot lean on these fictitious giants to see better, to dream, to realize/be realized since they are nothing but dwarfs with stilts, dwarfs dressed up as giants... We do not need them, they are not different from us, but they pretend, and they let us believe they are giants!

Let's climb up onto the shoulders of a true giant thinking of Fabrizio De André in his "Il suonatore Jones": "In a vortex of dust, others see dryness.





*In a vortex of dust, others see
dryness.
I remember Jenny's skirt during
a ball many years ago.
[...]
And then people know and
people know that you can play,
You have to play all your life and
you like to be listened to ..."*
(“Il suonatore Jones”, Fabrizio de André)

I remember Jenny's skirt during a ball many years ago.”; “Where you see dryness and dust, I see a dream and it is no use that you hide, since”...

And people know how much you are worth, so: play, make, give your contribution. Let us stop laughing at the errors of others, at the efforts to create, to scorn attempts at searching other opportunities with sarcasm, to wait for them to fail and instead help others to grow and make their efforts less heavy. When we see one, ten or a hundred broken windows, let us fix them or teach somebody fix them. Otherwise, we shall have the courtesy to be silent for ever, without expressing judgement as pseudo-intellectuals and continue to live amongst dwarfs that shrug their shoulders! Let us do all that while we wait to reach our Samarcand. Since, at the end, the donkeys recognize each other and stroke one another, feeling good about the mere contact.

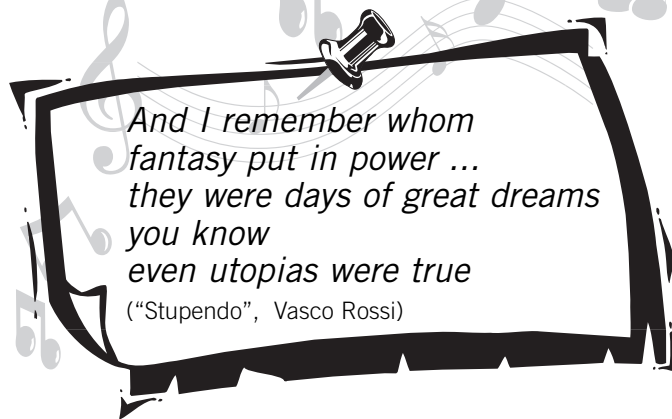
And if we think that everything is going bad, let us then do the right thing, let us stop and rebuild the situation, let us not criticize the work of others, of our male or female colleagues, but let us help them to change the window. Only in this way, as dwarfs – or as dwarfs on the shoulders of a giant – will we become protagonists without risking to climb up to the trampoline and pretend we are giants... people know.

Absurd! Really crazy! What sad times await us! Hey look: somebody is fixing a window.



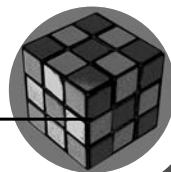
ONE-WAY, THERE IS NO GOING BACK

THE WAY OF PROGRESS AND VICIOUS CIRCLES



One obligatory direction... The idea of progress could give us the feeling of a one-way direction: you go from the spade to the plough, but you do not go back. That is it, you do not go back. This is different from the one-way direction: it is not the same thing, it is not the same phenomenon, even if linguistically speaking they are “almost” similar. And it is this almost that changes history. There is no going back and progress leaves its signs on the way, transforms things, allows us to have alternative views and opportunities, but there is no going back. Not going back means that there has been a change, that thoughts and people are no longer the same.

We obtain a transformation, since exchange and change are continuous, since there are no one-way streets in which you do not encounter anybody, since there are no conversations in which the interlocutors do not listen to each other: we meet, we listen, since we all firmly believe that only by moving forward will we have a possibility of feeling better, so the street is obligatory ... But it is not one-way. It is rather a street without return, a street that disappears or changes when you arrive to the end if you turn around after having completed a course, you will no longer see that which you just saw, the course, the experience.



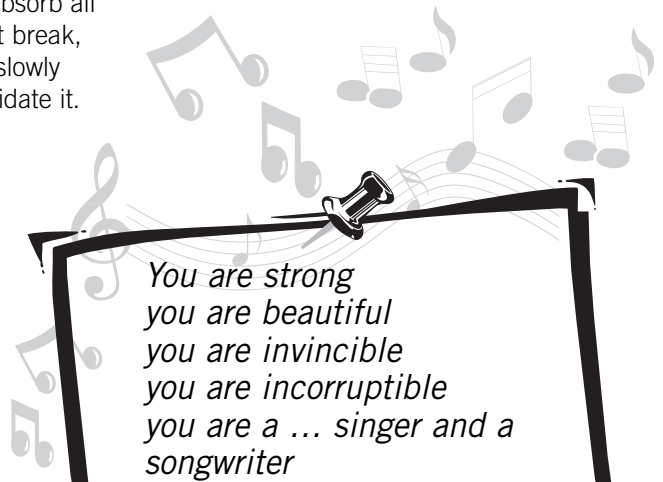


In these moments our "gurus", those people we ask to indicate the street to follow and to interpret the courses commenced, continue to claim that we must slow down, that we cannot absorb all these changes, that we must break, that it is necessary to travel slowly along the course and consolidate it.

Practically, they say that it is better to concentrate on our own navel (which is another form of one-way activity).

This leads to fear, a wish to stop, a wish to think, to believe that "... well maybe, things were better when they were worse".

Maybe things were better when somebody told you what to do, without focusing so much on groups, on cohesion, on the importance of creativity, on smiling, on investing every day on ourselves, on recognizing the value of others, ... independently of the nature of



*You are strong
you are beautiful
you are invincible
you are incorruptible
you are a ... singer and a
songwriter*

*you are wise
you bring trough
you are not a common mortal
you are not allowed to cheat
you are a ... singer and a
songwriter*

(“Cantautore”, Edoardo Bennato)



this “maybe”, the issue is how we choose to walk along our course, since it is our course anyway.

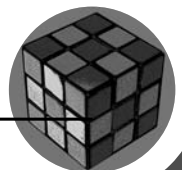
All right ... enough, this is only work: we welcome anybody who wants to tell us what to do, leaving the rest be; participating for what, if there are always the same people that ...?

Well, to recollect Calvino (“Invisible Cities”) in the dilemma of the living hell, between “accepting hell and becoming part of it to the point when you do not see it any more” and “search for that which is not hell ” “... make it last, give it space”, to go back then means to choose to roll in cold hell.

It is really true: there is no definition of stupidity, but a great many examples of it.

“A stupid person is a person that damages another person or a group of people without obtaining any advantage for himself or even suffering damage”.

(Third law of stupidity, Carlo Cipolla)



A MICROSCOPE GLASS

TO IDENTIFY THE MICROBE OF VICE ...

If it were possible to use a particular microscope, capable of focusing all microbes that make our life an extremely complicated and absurd matter, both tragic and ridiculous, then it would be possible to recognize and identify the microbe of envy, that of presumptuous imbecility, that of rage, of vanity, of gluttony and of cruelty. Each one of us has all possible varieties in our own character - the full package, to use a common expression – of microbes that influence our behaviour, making us ambivalent and unpredictable. In their immense variations, microbes are often also used as a defence, the classical excuse not to do something, to postpone, to declare war and fights to defend one's territory. The territory, defended by the physical and mental space, of one's own cultural habits.

On the basis of this force, a struggle is activated between the numerous microbes for the assertion of one or the other; a circuit is activated to let the strongest of these microorganisms survive (in a certain moment). What are the conditions that allow one microbe to survive rather than another? And what if fear is the true bond of everything? The true driving force of one behaviour or another?





At a certain point of “The Philosopher’s Stone”, the first film of the well-known saga of Harry Potter, when he walks around the school corridors, hidden by an invisible mantle that belonged to his father, in one room Harry Potter finds a big mirror which reaches up to the ceiling and has a golden frame. The mirror has an inscription engraved backwards “Erised”, i.e. “Desire”. The young wizard cannot move away from the image projected by the mirror and only in that particular mirror, he sees his heart and his most secret desires. Hypnotized and unable to move away from its fascination, he remains looking at the images in the mirror, which becomes a mania. Fortunately, the wise Albus Dumbledore warns Harry about this enchantment: the mirror of Desires does not grant knowledge nor truth; it is only a means to

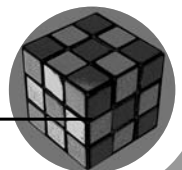
hide in dreams, letting you forget to act and live true life.

And for our story we always expect a happy ending, just as happens in the tale of “Squary” drawn by Antonio Rubino: a boy with a perfectly square face is forced to lose his geometric identity due to an incident. In fact, as in all his tales, there is a happy ending in “Squary” which is to be found in the final line:

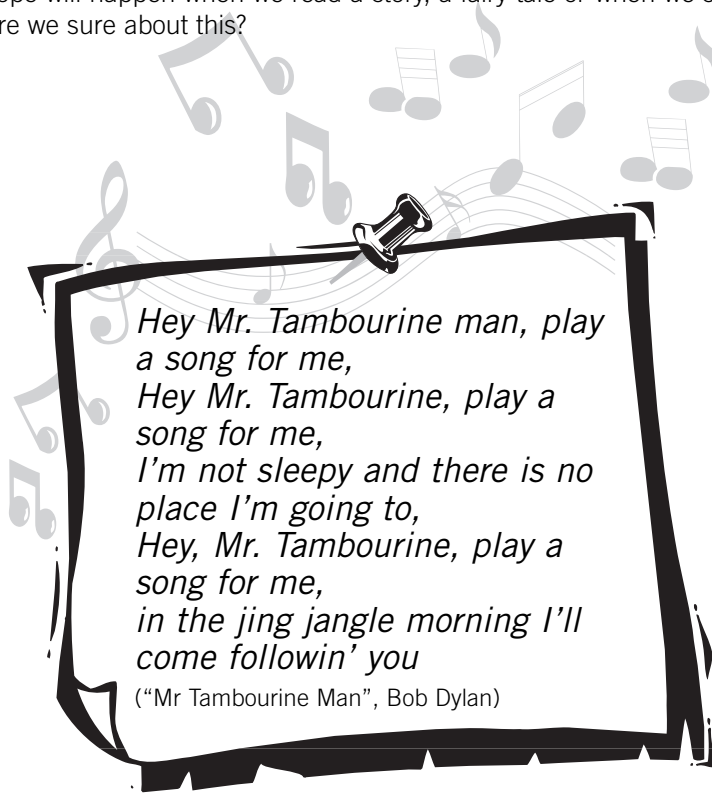
“But his mother comes quite soon
And with great care she is there
To make his face real square”

The happy ending is guaranteed by an external intervention, in this case, his mother appears and makes things right again (but Harry’s mother is no longer there): very similar to the important character that solves (often only on paper) situations, very similar to the theatrical turning-point which magically solves everything (but only on pages and in fairy tales). Magic! That is the solution, maybe... And if we would prefer human qualities instead?

Personal tests, market challenges, the realization of objectives are overcome thanks to courage, force, friendship, loyalty: human qualities that are more



important than magic or trusting a big star or a powerful friend. But a happy ending is something we all expect, to which we all relate; and it is what we hope will happen when we read a story, a fairy tale or when we see a film. Are we sure about this?



*Hey Mr. Tambourine man, play
a song for me,
Hey Mr. Tambourine, play a
song for me,
I'm not sleepy and there is no
place I'm going to,
Hey, Mr. Tambourine, play a
song for me,
in the jing jangle morning I'll
come followin' you*

("Mr Tambourine Man", Bob Dylan)

Are we sure that we always wish for a happy ending? Even when "our" happy ending is not there for one reason or the other? Even when there is a different happy ending in an organization, due to reasons connected to living together? And in this case, when are we willing to give up our aims for those of a group and not individually? When is it that the development and the future of an organization passes from renouncement to a "happy ending" to the development of the "end" of a group even if it is in contrast with ours? How willing are we to participate in the scheme of a leader that identifies a happy ending for the group, even if it remains obscure to many of the individuals (and one takes upon him full responsibility for it for any failure and also for any consequences)? Which is the place to share emotions; where are our thoughts? And fantasy that helps us to build another reality and shape a critical conscience that is useful for us when we have to face problems?



We have said that tests, challenges are exceeded, that objectives are reached thanks to courage, force, friendship and loyalty. We have said that these are human qualities that may be more efficient than the magic or trusting a big star or a powerful friend. I repeat this: qualities that are emphasized in a true relation to the group or groups we belong to. But if this was not so, then we would have to look into a mirror with a golden frame that reaches up to the ceiling: another fine hiding-place to say “what bad luck I have had, look how nice things were before...”. If this is the solution or the only way (or the most comfortable way) to choose, then it is not necessary to have a guide, to have somebody who represents/defends and emphasizes the quality of single persons, you just need an anthropologist that studies the modalities for disappearance, extinction of the group. Are we sure that we have identified the right happy ending?

“When I want to knock off a story off the front page, I just change my hairstyle”.

(Hillary Clinton)



THE PILLARS OF HERCULES OF MODERN TIMES

“I TOLD YOU SO ...”

To conclude, it is obvious that the future offers great opportunities. It is also full of traps. The trick is to avoid traps, embrace opportunities and be back home in time for dinner.

(Woody Allen)



The crisis of our way of acting, our way of behaving when changes take place, our way of living our organized lives (and not only!) is identifiable both with the barbaric state in which our ideas are right now, and with the “prehistoric level” of our attitudes that are still bound by thoughts, values and theories that do not differ very much from the myths and the magical rites that guided our ancestors. The limit in all this is to believe firmly that there is a point in which everything stops, or rather in which it is better to stop, in which it is wiser and more comfortable to stop; a point not to pass, since beyond it you risk the peril of novelty, you risk ending up in the territory of comparison and rethinking, in the territory of challenge: the land of “questioning oneself” and having to rethink one’s own heroes, beliefs and above all the necessity to create new values.



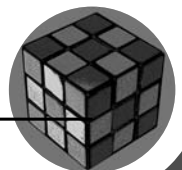
Like the pillars of Hercules, the mythical point for the ancient Greeks that was not to be passed, in order not to be exposed to the rage of the Gods. On this part of the pillars, life proceeds absorbed by navigation in silent seas of gains that (with fatigue) have been acquired during years; beyond it lies the need to recommence. And even farther beyond it, the usual routine (still tiresome), based on knowledge acquired; beyond it the need for new and more tiresome knowledge. A kind of waked sleep: on the one part the need to be awake, on the other part the need to be ready.

On the other hand, sleeping is considered a value in our occidental culture, whereas waking up is considered tiresome. We, in fact, say continuously “I have slept like a stone” to assert a positive condition, but then we say “I suddenly woke up” and here the phrase has a maybe negative ring to it. Sweet dreaming, a long and deep sleep and so on. Shortly, we like to “sleep” and even more to think that things will settle between dusk and dawn and that sleep brings solutions and advice. But a company cannot live by sleeping, it cannot hope that its problem will be solved suddenly in the morning, or rather have been solved, nor can it trust a long and regenerating drowsiness: that would mean certain death. When facing a crossroad, the company cannot pretend it is not there.

If leaving mythology and metaphors, we all are near a crossroads and near this crossroads our survival is defined.



Nobody likes living in conditions of this kind, even if it is limited to the moment of transition. And the attempts at removing the precariousness, the ambiguity of a situation or a condition or even a choice to make or to be the object of, lead to nothing. All attempts to ignore these situations and conditions or to convince oneself that a transitory phase always leads to the return to “old and consolidated” habits are worth nothing. Everything would be reduced to the relation between two opposite poles: unity and variety, order and disorder, fullness and emptiness, passive and active, more and less, high and low and, naturally, inside and outside. Especially inside and outside: to be part of a changing process or nourish persistence, immobile at the foot of the virtual pillars of Hercules, waiting for failure in order to be able of saying triumphantly and with great and necessary security: “I told you so”. In short, to be present without getting dirty and to continue to behave exactly in the





same way, waiting to “be home in time for dinner”. In the vicinity of crossroads, in that strange land in the middle, we establish the course of the future; if we pretend otherwise, we do not bring value to our group. In the vicinity of crossroads there is an anarchic disorder and chaos and the death of the company or creative chaos: that which allow companies to survive, to create new opportunities, to put down the basis for a new period of expansion.

Upon the arrival of the city which is now Veracruz, Cortez burnt his ships, thus eliminating the possibility of returning to Spain. In this way he avoided to give in to the requests from his soldiers and urged them towards the conquest. The ships themselves are then contemporarily a symbol of a journey home, a symbol of safety, a symbol of rooted conviction, of stability and at the same time a metaphor of the abandonment of certain habits for

the uncertain, capable of transforming sailors to explorers by offering them a different and new course to follow.

In the vicinity of each crossroads there is a space (philosophers call it free arbitration) inside which each one of us has the possibility of choosing his way, of determining his destiny in full freedom according to his wish to change. Each one of us, before “returning home in time for dinner”.

Face the future... you have eyes under your forehead and not at your nape.

(Anonymous)



THE ELECTRIC CITRUS-FRUIT SQUEEZER

INNOVATING TOWARDS HAPPINESS

The peril of the past was that man became slaves.
The peril of the present is that they become robots.
(Erich Fromm)

In June 1959, the American Vice President Richard Nixon went to Moscow to inaugurate an exhibition dedicated to technological innovations and materials of his country. The main attraction was a natural copy of the home of the average American worker with moquette, TV in the living-room, two bathrooms, a centralized heating plant and a kitchen with washing machine, dry tumbler and refrigerator. The Soviet press dismissed the exhibition as being “propagandistic and useless” and Khrushchev indicated an electric citrus-fruit squeezer and said that nobody sane would ever purchase certain “stupid objects”.



Some years before, F. D. Roosevelt was asked which book he would have given to the Soviet to explain the advantages of American society and the President replied: "The Sears catalogue".

In 1960, during the car exhibition in Turin, the vehicles shown had a series of incredible innovations: air condition, electric windows, system for braking regulations and other "diabolic innovations" of that kind. None of them became standard until the beginning of the 80s (air condition only at the beginning of the 90s), whereas that which seemed to be a superfluous innovation, immediately came to constitute the difference in the purchase decision of the consumer: the reclining seat.

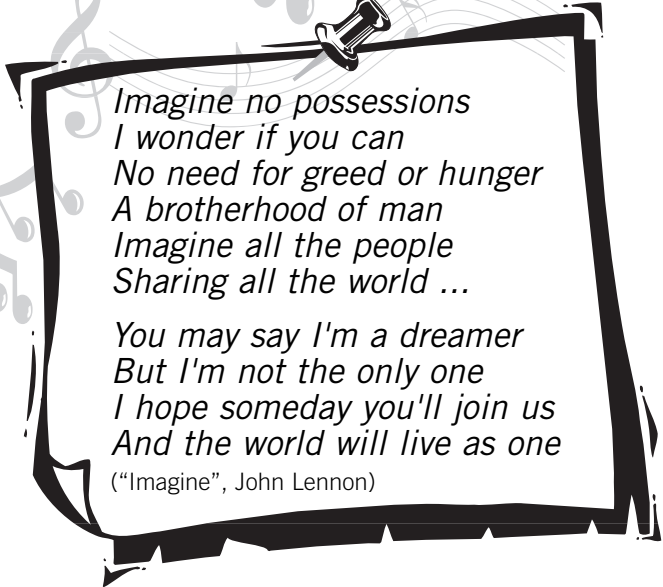
An imaginary traveller in time who arrived from the 50s would not have too many difficulties, but rather a few problems to overcome easily. Even if we like to think that our era is characterized by unlimited technological marvels, the traveller would find himself in a world which is very much like the one he left at the beginning of the 50s with some exceptions (cashomats, mobile phones, CD and DVD players, Internet, etc.). We would find himself at ease with almost all modern technology and maybe he would wonder: "Why have we not yet conquered space? Where are the robots?" What is happening? Where do all innovations, studies and applications end up? Is there a Hyperuranium in which these innovations live (and the famous platonian demiurge that is to bring them and hand them over to men, hinders this with evil intentions to make them into a showcase in eternal construction)? Do we need a condition of faith to convince people that innovations will allow us to live better in the future? Why are these innovations that will change the world and help people always in the future, and even if they seem to overwhelm and help us all, they do not take off (or rather end up on a dead-end track)?

Sociologists, technocrats, marketing strategists give us very odd answers and (afterwards) try to identify the correct reasons for the lack of success of a product, of a market strategy, a social approach that does not correspond to the true desires of people. To our desires, our expectations, our idea of innovation. Well ... Maybe the reason is simpler, less complicated to explain, less problematic for everybody: we are talking about everyday reality. It is nice to wait for something to do, the result will change my life, but at this moment? The electric citrus-fruit squeezer - good; the reclining seat - even better, the Sears catalogue - incredible! All things I can have immediately and of which I understand the usefulness, the innovation, and the advantages I can have.

Living projected into the future and in what we shall do, is a nice way of hiding. And then maybe Lennon is right: life is what happens to you while



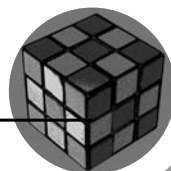
you are busy planning other things. Sure, there must be people who plan the future, people who imagine what will happen, in order to build ideas and applications upon this. Maybe the error is not in rendering the innovations available, but in finding the way of making them seem really useful. The only way is to listen, to try and do and adapt things to new requests. Humility really creates innovations.



*Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world ...*

*You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one*

("Imagine", John Lennon)



A BUNCH OF KEYS

IT OPENS UP A NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES

Our conjectures are used to forge keys to open door locks that lead us to our objectives. When we find one of these keys, we commit a fundamental error: we think we have found the main solution. From professional safe-breakers we know very well that there are a number of keys that, although they have different shapes from our keys, they still open doors.

Generalization and the certainty to have found the key is only a pious illusion, since we are convinced that following certain known rules and giving space to a rational model leads to the keys inevitably, blindly trusting our own talents, our own intelligence, but above all our past successes. And there is only anxiety that is the true master.

The risk is that an error, even a very small one, can have very serious consequences. The incapacity of understanding the effects of our actions (especially when you experiment with new ones), blocks the mind and the behaviour, ruled by fear of failure. We are obsessed with the fear of failure, since (we think that) success represents the only way of obtaining other people's approval. Unfortunately everything is timed!

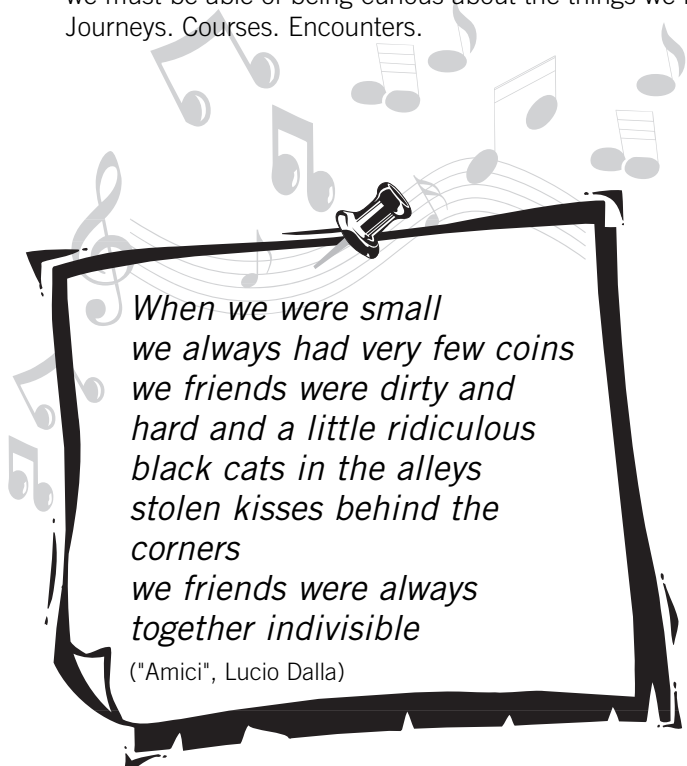


“Even intelligence and creativity are loans – sometimes temporary, sometimes longer, according to each case – just like beauty and physical performances, health, happiness, wellbeing, life itself and sooner or later comes the moment to return them or lose them, maybe to find them again later and then lose them again”.

(M. Proust)

Every individual has his talents. That which distinguishes us from others is the way of exploiting occasions: give an opportunity to a guy and he will develop it in a way, give the same opportunity to another man and he will develop it in another way; the important thing is to be ready when the moment arrives. But it is not only a problem of occasions, but also a question of cultivating one's talents, to take care of them, give them space, waiting to capture “occasions” that appear.

We talk about individual talent, but what happens for the group? How can the individual's talent make the group live? Simple. A person can have a deep impact on another person, but together the two can do miracles. A person that remains alone cannot play in a team, since life is especially a game of exchange and passages together with others. Our existence in the group shall be seen with a travelling spirit. Every day. The spirit of daily life: we must be able of being curious about the things we have around us. Journeys. Courses. Encounters.



*When we were small
we always had very few coins
we friends were dirty and
hard and a little ridiculous
black cats in the alleys
stolen kisses behind the
corners
we friends were always
together indivisible*

("Amici", Lucio Dalla)



Too often we are taken by the realization of our objectives and do not notice. Being projected towards the objective, the course becomes almost insignificant. Since we are focused on reaching our aims, all encounters and relations are used only to this end. We do not create connections, we do not build and do not make experiences, since we are used to a television with a speed that increases all the time, looking at our goals. A world made of cut & paste, made of repetitions and gestures that are increasingly rapid; speed for distracted people. Then talent has no sense, just stick to the rules: it is a loan we have never used, you do not even have to return it. Anyone who sets up an aim, must not let anybody come between him and the aim. And he must not be afraid to make mistakes: each happy experience is the result of a big share of delusions.



In his praise of the "player", the great Dostoevskij gives his benediction to those who, despite their having no talent, have courage and therefore try and accept running the risk of failing.

As soon as I entered the gambling house (it was the first time in my life), I remained a while without deciding to play. And the crowd pushed me also. But if I had been alone, then, I think, I should have left immediately and I would not have started to play. I confess that my heart beat hard and that I had lost all my cold blood; I knew for sure, and had decided so since quite time, that I would not have left Roulettenburg like that, simply; something radical and definitive would happen to my fate. So it must be and so it shall be. [...]

It is true that only one out of one hundred wins, but what do I care?

(F. Dostoevskij)



WESTERN DUEL

WHEN ONE DEAD MAN LEADS TO ANOTHER...

He who has done four, can easy fix five.

("Once upon a time in the West")



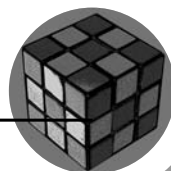
The screenplays of the first western films required only a few dead men during the progress of the plot. Often the only man to die was the evil man in the plot; he had challenged the law or, using his own ability in handling the gun, held the entire town as hostage. One dead, maybe two.

I go, I kill and then I return.

("Once upon a time in the West")

The more film they produced, the higher number of dead men was necessary. It was also necessary to fill the screenplays with corpses, creating a sort of limitation to the imagination of screenwriters: duels and ambushes are all alike after a while! Faces changed (not always), there were a few variations of bangs or sbonks, but things were more or less the same.

Films were based on bangs and sbonks that were present throughout the film (apart from some sporadic smack) and it was important to find something to



make the sounds be different. Quite soon, screenplays were filled with special effects: people could not just die, you had to tickle people's fantasy with something different, something to give the scenes a special touch – special effects, obviously.

Was this slaughter really necessary? I only told you to scare them. He who dies is very scared.

("Once upon a time in the West")

In new productions based on special effects, the classical final duel was outdated and they tried to find and exploit ways in which to kill people. Therefore, immersed in a continuous search for "more and more", the screenwriters did not notice that these film did not have any more oxygen: the authors had more or less forgotten that the films needed an audience who perceived and experienced the films as a spectator and not according to the refined taste of people who aseptically studied and conceived death sitting in a completely equipped office, surrounded by a crowd of compliant collaborators.

The phenomenon is not limited to cinema production: one encounters it all the time when dealing with somebody who, from the height of his experience (and therefore acclaimed and recognized as an Expert), substitutes the client with himself with enormous arrogance, thinking that he can decide taste and preferences, making his own evaluations on his own idea about what is good and what is not.

It takes more than a rope to make a hanged man.

("Once upon a time in the West")

It is a small step: you start from the availability of a technique or a product and by common and shared conventions, one establishes that it has a high quality and, independently from the evaluation of how it might be experienced by real clients, a decision is taken that they be administered. They often reason like those: "In the end, the better product will emerge on the market and be part of the client's needs". In cases like this, one usually talks about innovation, a very comfortable expression: in the case of failure (which often happens), the responsibility can in fact be blamed on the fact that the "innovation was too innovative" and that "the clients were not ready and prepared to understand..". What do you know?!

You see, the world is divided into two categories: people with a loaded gun and people who dig. You dig.

("Once upon a time in the West")



We try to understand the phenomenon well: innovation on the one hand suggests a new, updated navigation chart that can help us to orient ourselves in the difficult journey towards the future, on the other hand it recalls that, since it is such – that is, an innovation – it implies the risk of failure although it incites and spurs the continuation of the journey. A sort of endemic microbe to spread and transmit which often, before forming, has antibiotics (the market/clients) ready to bury it. The history of progress is full of negative events due to this

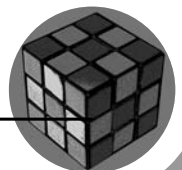


autoreferential approach of experts that erroneously are identified as better interpreters of the clients' needs; the shelves are full of products that once were considered to be necessary and revolutionary, but then they were never sold and did not even pass the market test.

Some practical example for sceptical people: we all know VHS (which by now is almost prehistory for many who embrace the new technology) and we have used and "praised" it (previously), whereas other said (rightly) that the best product was Betamax; today we all use the TCP/IP protocol, despite the billion dollars spent to affirm ISO/OSI (doubtlessly better); since a long time we use and continue using the keyboard QWERT (born to delay and make the digitations phase more difficult), rather than an ergonomic version which is closer to a system that makes digitations easier and quicker. In the case of alternatives that have not been successful (Betamax, ISO/OSI, etc.), we are talking about exceptional technologies that, although they are the best, did not pass the market test and did not reach success with the final client.

Every time that we talk about a new innovation, we make bets on the future and every time we risk mortgaging it when trying to decide for others, but the future is no longer a space that can be conquered and colonized. Renaissance is born in the moment when the ruins of ancient Roman monuments stop being ruins and become history and art; their description supplies us with the presuppositions to bestow them with a new significance, make them alive and part of the present.

Innovation is born in the moment when we are willing to sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of the collective we are part of; it is generated in the moment when daily life has a value of continuous and constant search to do one's job better using that



which our clients suggest; it is generated in the moment when we take the requirements of various actors into consideration so that they perceive this "innovation" as a step forward to facilitate movements around the world.

And organizations? When are they innovative?

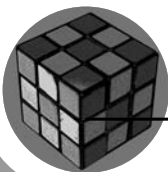
Revolution? Revolution? Please do not talk to me about revolution. I know very well what it is and how they start: somebody knows who to read books and goes to people who do not know how to read books since they are poor and tell them: "Oh, oh, the moment to change everything has arrived" [...] I know what I talk of, I grew up among revolutions. Those who read books go to people who do not know how to read books since they are poor and they tell them: "A change is necessary!" and poor people change. And then the shrewdest of the book readers sit around a table and talk, talk and eat. They talk and eat! And what happens to the poor people at the end? They all die! That is your revolution! So please, do not talk to me about revolution... And holy shit, do you know what happens afterwards? Nothing... everything returns as before!

("Once upon a time in the West")



Once I thought I could stop sucking my thumb.
Now I doubt I will be able to. I am trapped!

(Linus)



PAPER PERSONIFICATION
OF IDEAS



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THE LITTLENESS OF SISYPHOS

OR THE THEME OF VAIN INDUSTRIOUSNESS

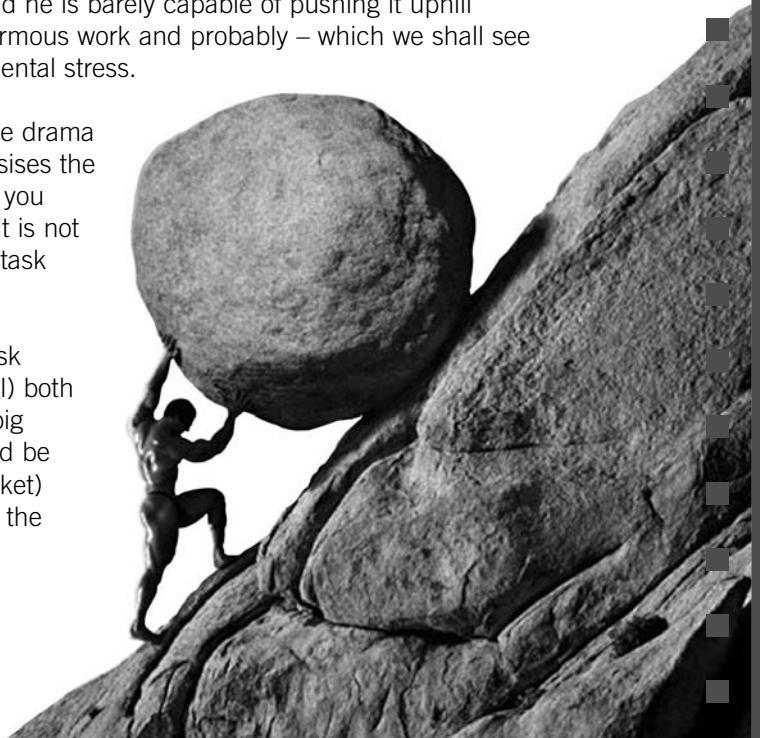
As a punishment for the shrewdness of the man who dared challenge the Gods, Zeus condemned Sisyphus to push a giant stone from the foot of a mountain to its peak. Every time that Sisyphus was about to reach the peak, the stone rolled back downhill to the foot of the mountain and so Sisyphus was forced to restart his task over and over again for as long as he lived (eternally).

The myth of Sisyphus has given birth to the expression “Sisyphean work”, which indicates vain work, i.e. all work that imply a great fatigue but with scarce results, practically no results.

Let us try to reason around this myth: the way which it is normally told emphasizes the difficulty and the toil of Sisyphus work. The stone is described as enormous and he is barely capable of pushing it uphill subjecting his body to enormous work and probably – which we shall see later – to an even worse mental stress.

The first time one reads the drama of poor Sisyphus it emphasises the difficulty of the task, but if you examine the true tragedy, it is not about the hardness of the task itself.

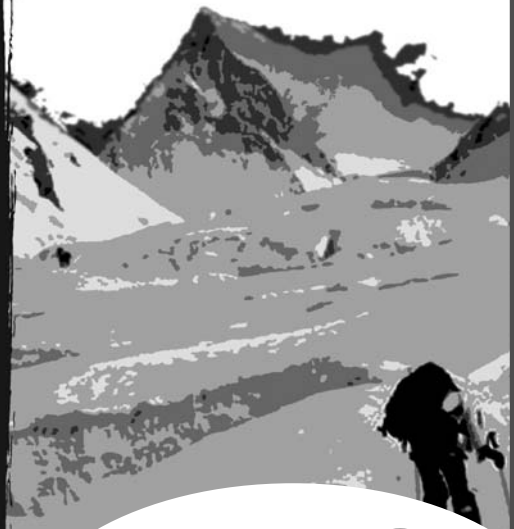
Let us suppose that the task assigned by Zeus (merciful) both to transport an optionally big stone (so small that it could be easily transported in a pocket) and arrive with it on top of the



mountain, to see it calmly roll downhill and then walk down and repeat the operation. In this case, the difficulty of the assigned task is definitely inferior as compared to that which Sisyphus was condemned to previously; so what do we say about the horror of the task itself? At these conditions, which are less difficult, maybe the task seems less horrible? The horror of the task is not mainly hidden in the more or less demanding strain, but in its absolute and supreme uselessness. And not only since the task does not produce anything. Each one of us confronts himself daily with tasks that may be unsuccessful, making all our efforts to reach the goal vain: despite the engagement... no results!

In this failure there are melancholy, regrets, remorse and the collapse of one's self-esteem. The true defeat ...

Hence the double horror of Sisyphus' task. Whether it be simple or difficult, the point is not only the condition of a defeated Sisyphus, but in the peremptory impossibility of succeeding: there is nothing to give Sisyphus hope for success. His task has neither meaning nor objective. His work is futile and useless. His efforts, independently if they are great or minor, do not have any sense. Maybe we are tempted to think that Sisyphus is simply fulfilling his destiny. This destiny has been imposed upon him as a punishment by Zeus. Let us then suppose that Zeus in a moment of goodness (mercifulness) decides to be less violent and make Sisyphus feel an irresistible and irrational pleasure when moving stones of any type and dimension (a chemical substance, an elixir etc.). Let us suppose that



Sisyphus is happy to move the stone every time; his sole desire would then be to push stones uphill.

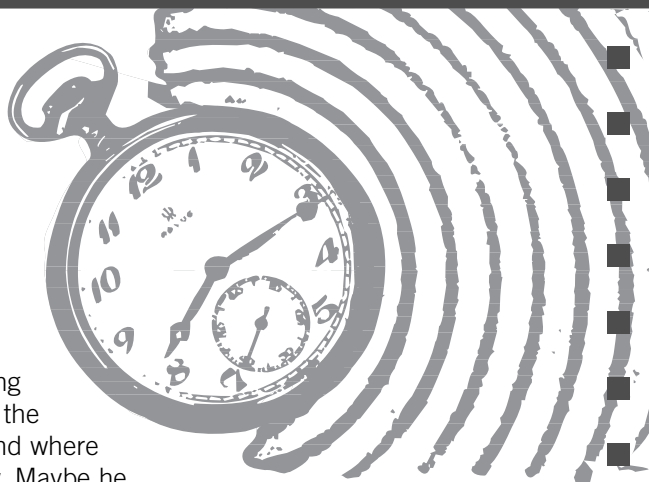
It is early in the morning and we are going to work, mixing with many other people that are going somewhere. We notice a person among the crowd: maybe he is going to the office, where he will perform the same activities as the day before and where he will repeat them again tomorrow. Maybe he likes the things he does and maybe not. From the outside, it seems to be a typical Sisyphonian day: he will perform his tasks and why? Probably he has a mortgage to pay. The mortgage represents a sort of modern punishment that substitutes that of Zeus.

Do we recognize ourselves in any of these situations and are we part of the “rolling stones” group like Sisyphus? Do some of our tasks resemble the punishment of Sisyphus? Do we receive tasks without sense or – even worse – do we assign them to our collaborators? Is it useful to be happy with a job that has no sense? What does Sisyphus transmit to us then? Absurdness!

Everything seems absurd and “Absurdness” is a characteristic that defines human existence. Often our lives are absurd.

This absurdity circles around the conflict between two different perspectives that we have of ourselves. The conflict regards the meaning our actions have for us and that which they have (or seem to have, in good or bad faith) in the eyes of others. Practically speaking: on the one hand there is that which we think we are realizing, on the other that which we actually realize. For example, the task and the quality of the work we perform and the judgement that others make upon it or even an action as a whole and the interpretations (good or bad) that individuals make. Another example: if I decide to enter a market and select people to do so.

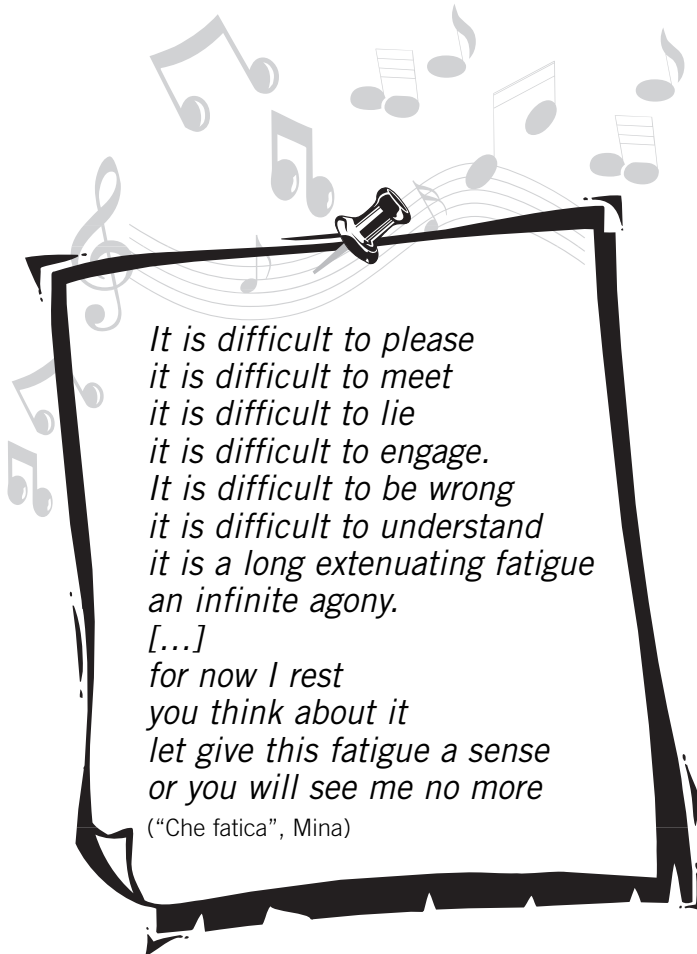
Conflict between presumption and reality. For the individual it is a matter of experiencing two stories at the same time: the first regards the way in which we present ourselves to others; the other regards the story that others can tell us. And as regards the group decisions, there is a difference between the group’s interest and the motivations of the individual.



The things that guide our lives, the things we desire, our plans, projects and objectives (that we call "motivations") are the result of the action of forces that we cannot control. Work, our ideas, thoughts and actions - everything that we do is characterized by this duality: there is something that turns inside us and we exercise a certain control of it, whereas we in other situations are quite simply "one" among others; a character whose presence on the stage of life (or of the company) is determined by others.

Fight for its' own sake, is enough to fill man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus as happy.

(Albert Camus)



*It is difficult to please
it is difficult to meet
it is difficult to lie
it is difficult to engage.
It is difficult to be wrong
it is difficult to understand
it is a long extenuating fatigue
an infinite agony.*

[...]

*for now I rest
you think about it
let give this fatigue a sense
or you will see me no more*

(“Che fatica”, Mina)



FRANKENSTEIN

THERE'S A MONSTER IN OUR COMPANY

"...Others do not encounter our body, but its image, and we do not encounter bodies, but their images. And we are slaves of this image."

(Aldo Carotenuto)

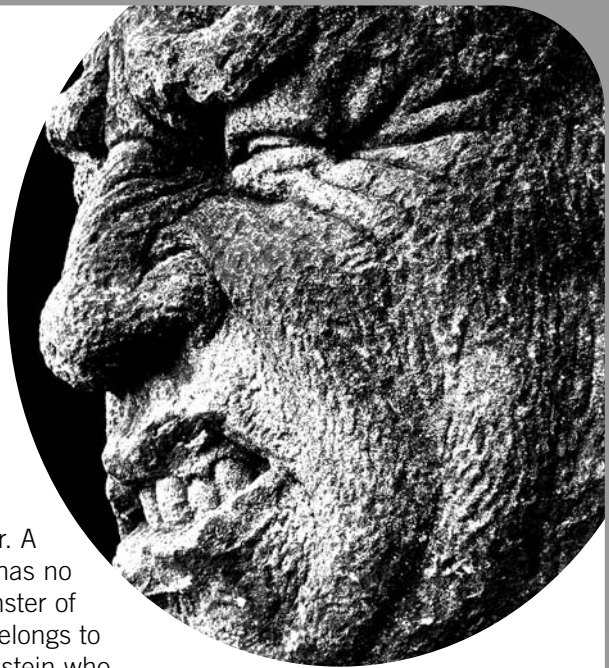
In Frankenstein we have a deep analysis of the conflict between interior and exterior life. Imagine yourself in the place of the monster: you are born and immediately you start to drown due to the fact that you are enclosed in a metal cage filled with placenta.

When you finally manage to get out of this death chamber, in a weak and confused state, some women try to kill you with an axe. Then you are hit and suspended, hanged on a rock, left there to die. It is not an easy birth/life/existence.

You manage to flee, escaping along the road, but the people you meet try to kill you. At the end you reach the countryside, where you try to help a farming family (including the blind grandfather and an insolent child), but also here your intentions are interpreted in the wrong way and you are forced to escape again. Being a sensitive monster, you are upset. Being an intelligent monster, you try to give everything sense. You cannot write and therefore not read, but you learn quickly.



The monster is called “monster” without any particular coherence and without any reason except the fact that being a “monster” arouses the hatred of Baron Frankenstein (and that of the reader!). The first instinct of the creature is that to learn and to be loved, but since it only receives hatred from everybody, in particular from his father (creator), he learns and (practises) the meaning of the word "hate". Therefore it is the audience that creates the Monster. A monster which strangely enough has no name; in fact it is called the “Monster of Frankenstein”, meaning that it “belongs to Frankenstein”, i.e. Baron Frankenstein who generated it. Why does it not have a proper name?



Every effort made by the Monster to be accepted is destined to fail, since everything is related to his physical appearance, to his somatic characteristics and to the inability (on the part of the external world) to recognize the beauty that resides even in an abnormal body. Nobody stops to understand, nobody wants to go deeper, nobody wishes to play a game, the game of getting to know others and realising their qualities. Their only interest is the goal and the person that manages to make a goal, but the goal is only a moment of the game, it does not constitute the game itself.

How many Monsters do we create through our indifference, how many Monsters do we force to go uphill with small or bigger stones, how many Monsters do we create only because we do not succeed in understanding and capturing the value of their inner qualities, the value of the work they do, of their different way of being.

Then we also push a stone uphill, maybe because we think that others do not understand the value of what we do and therefore it is better to push a stone (evening will arrive eventually...) and feel sorry for oneself at the thought that the others see us pushing a stone, thinking that is the only thing we can do, the only thing we are capable of doing! Since basically we feel as beings that were born to push machines forward.

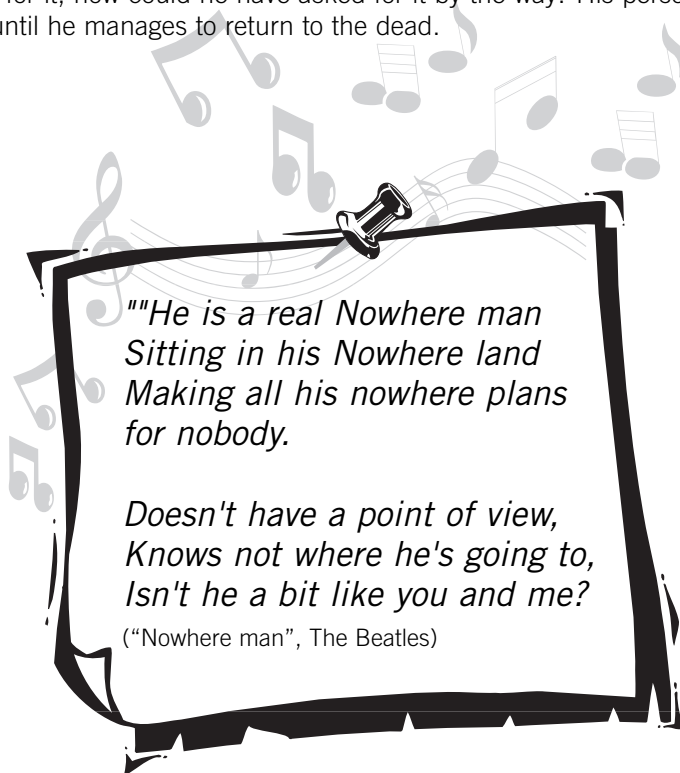


But why do I have to push a stone? Because Sisyphus does? Why do not people ask themselves why they are pushing the stone instead of concentrating merely on the "strain" and "uselessness" of the task?

Or...

Sisyphus betrays a pact. With a stratagem, he has managed to convince Zeus to let him return to the world of the living with the pact that he would return to the world of the dead as soon as he completed the task for which he asked and obtained permission to return to earth. He does not respect the pact and therefore he is punished.

Frankenstein, instead, is catapulted among the living, without even having asked for it; how could he have asked for it by the way? His personal agony lasts until he manages to return to the dead.



THE PARABOLE OF DON QUIXOTE

DREAMS, WINDMILLS AND PARTICIPATION

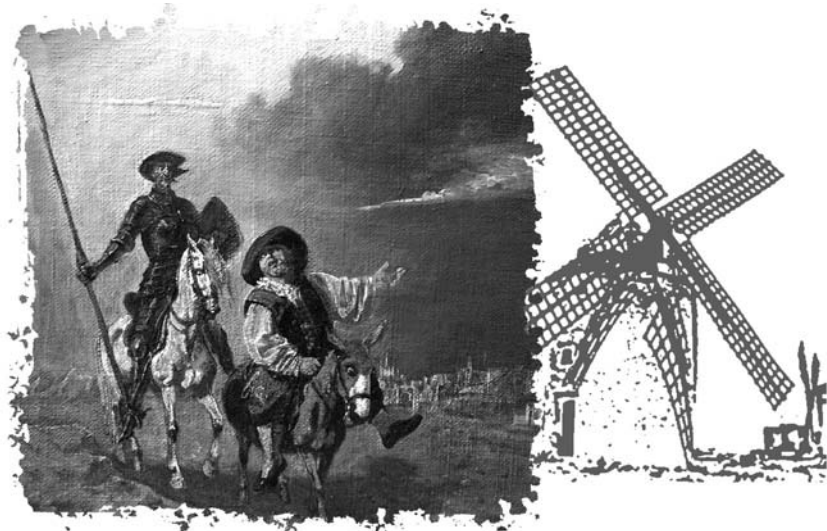
Quixote. Don Quixote. Strange character. Strange kind of hero.

“The knight of eternal youth
at the age of fifty, followed
the rhythm of his heart.
He set off on a fine summer day
To conquer beauty, truth, fairness.
Before him lay the world
With its absurd and degraded giants
below him Ronzinante
sad and heroic”.

(Nazim Hikmet)

He is a strange kind of hero, Don Quixote: after an intense and violent reading of adventure books full of fighters, he catapults himself in the world of the living (the real world?). Thereafter the heroes of the books: kings, knights, princes and kings disappear and are obscured with all their powers and only he, the king of impotency, only he and two characters that are even more miserable than him: Sancho and Ronzinante, continue the quest. Invincible Don Quixote, though he has won very little: he reminds me both of Dylan Dog (the mystery investigator who almost never solves cases, although his fame does not decrease due to that), and also of the artist Diego Velasquez, who was summoned and received generous amounts to render princes and kings immortal in painting, but who instead absorbed the immortality that were destined to his clients by each portrait he painted, thus becoming increasingly immortal.





Will anyone of us ever come close to the greatness of Don Quixote? More likely, as Erri De Luca underlines, “Sometimes we manage to identify with the Quixote’s horse, Ronzinante. Because we, just like the horse, have been ridden by some Quixote towards a good cause, mounting us and using us, inept for his needs, in order to make us run towards a goal urgent to him, towards his aims. Often, good causes are pursued by using inept people ...”. What forces does Don Quixote have? Why does a character like him, who has difficulty in separating reality from imagination, continue to fascinate us so much? Is it his colander-shaped helmet? His rusty armour? What has he to teach us after 400 years? What does this odd character transmit to us?

Let us try and understand by starting from one of his most famous adventures. Don Quixote assists during a marionette performance: at a certain point he feels an irresistible urge to help the two escaping lovers, protagonists of the pantomime. He takes the sword and slaughters the marionette characters that chase the two lovers. Don Quixote confuses the performance with the objective world, fiction with reality. Practically speaking, our hero does not limit himself to being a spectator. He becomes ridiculous.

Maybe. And we instead? How many times do we witness situations, participate in discussions, tell - emphasizing facts, performing or assisting obviously fictitious scenes - and yet, we remain there firm, immobile to assist? Even words: all too often we interpret performances and shows on TV as real, although they have very little to do with reality. As opposed to the marionette theatre of Cervantes ...

“I saw it in TV”: is an undeniable criterion to establish that which is real. There is no day when it does not happen, there is no day when we do not



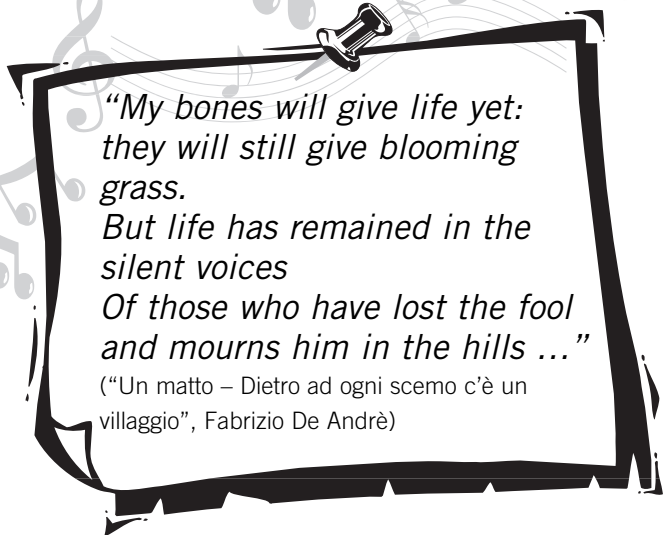
And thirty or forty windmills appeared at a distance, since they were present on the countryside; and when Don Quixote saw them, he said to his equerry: «Fortune guides our destiny better than we dare desire. Can you see, my friend Sancho, that thirty or more enormous giants are approaching? I intend to fight with them and after having killed them, bestow upon myself the booty I take from them; this is an honourable war and it pleases God if I extirpate such a bad seed from the face of the earth.

(Miguel De Cervantes)

turn our eyes away: “The problem belongs to somebody else; it is not my problem, somebody will think about it, somebody will decide what to do.” Having seen something in TV means that somebody takes care of it or will do so. Somebody intended as somebody else. In short somebody: NOT ME.

This is the lesson we learn from Don Quixote. Not to be spectators.

We have not yet seen a TV spectator get up on stage and take part in the action, but there are so many real life characters (so many of us, to put it plainly) that we gradually become spectators of our own life, rooted in the idea of passiveness, and of our own missed opportunities. I prefer the craziness of daily life to the vision of performances of others, punctually and irrevocably in order to criticize: the plot, the interpretation, the characters.



*“My bones will give life yet:
they will still give blooming
grass.
But life has remained in the
silent voices
Of those who have lost the fool
and mourns him in the hills ...”*

(“Un matto – Dietro ad ogni scemo c'è un
villaggio”, Fabrizio De Andrè)



BATMAN OR FRAIL MOTIVATION

YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO, NOT WHAT YOU SAY

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way”.

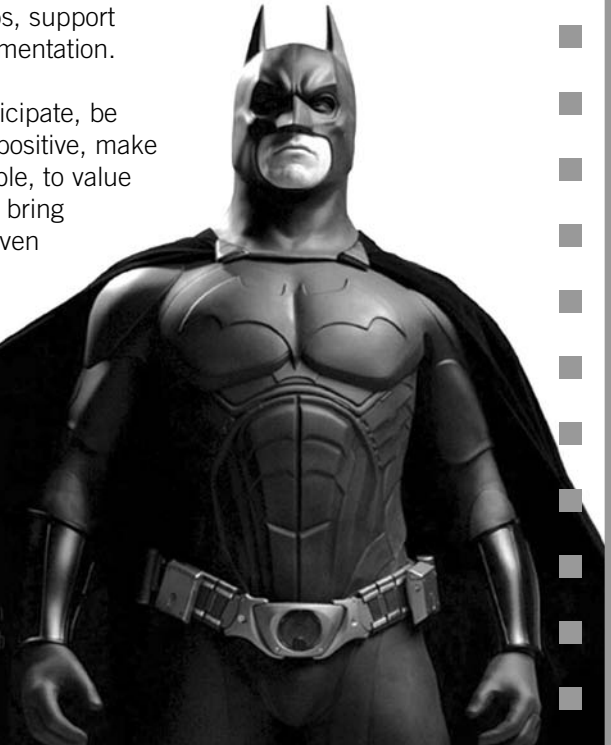
(Charles Dickens, Tale of Two Cities)

Change, transformation, synergy, task forces, quality teams and all the rest. Organizations inside organizations. Activities inside other activities. Horizontal visions, vertical approaches, multifunctional teams, motivating groups, support groups; in short a great quantity of fragmentation.

We try to motivate, to make people participate, be involved, turn the work into something positive, make the working place as heavenly as possible, to value professionalism through meritocracy, to bring out talents, to make use of our brains even at work (but we have already talked about this) and this not only during our free time. Does it work? I don't know, maybe sometimes.



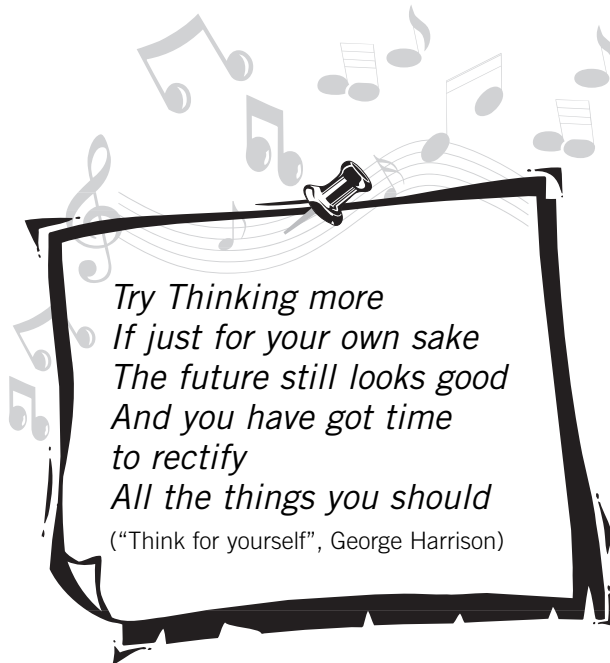
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This seems to work when companies are growing or after a restructuring period when they have a future before them (for what the word “future” is worth as a time unit), which means that there is a wish to be involved, to participate and to build up something. In this case, the above listed items work. You can invent any motivating tool (and especially believe in it and input energy) and things will take form and be activated. The things that do make a difference.

In the film “Batman Begins”, in a scene where Bruce Wayne encounters Rachel (his friend from childhood) who blames him for not having changed, for being the same, dedicated to fun and with no wish to work (obviously she does not know that he in fact is Batman), Bruce replies: “Hey, Rachel, this is not me”, and then Rachel answers: “The things you do matter, Bruce, not the things you say”. In short, the difference lies in action, in all activities connected to what we do, rather than what we say.

What happens in moments of crisis? Easy, nothing of the above works. The working place is hell and who cares! My colleague with less talent than me manages to emerge and who cares! The company organizes a seminar on team building and who cares! So many sacrifices and so much money that has been thrown away! If we had considered saving before, maybe we would not be in this situation now.



The same company, the same people, the same environment. So what? You feel an urge to explain that in moments of crisis, great opportunities arise and one characteristic of a crisis lies in its generating opportunities. You say so, but what do you do? You ask yourself if there is something to do. The answer is simply: nothing or almost. Bureaucracy takes over and spreads like mud around everything, covering all initiatives and wishes to act. Wait is the keyword! And there is always a part of bureaucracy to support this attitude. "Think for yourself" George Harrison sings!

What has then caused this change (because we are really talking about changes) and which is the element that produced the transformation? That is, you ask yourself what things have become.

If one has a camera and adds a microprocessor, is the result still a camera? And if you, apart from the digital components, were to include a network connection, what does it then become? If you insert a microprocessor in a refrigerator, does it remain a refrigerator? And if you add a network connection, do we still have a refrigerator? The true issue here is when a thing becomes something else? Where goes the subtle boundary?



What are the energies to introduce in the company system so that it becomes ANOTHER company? What are the technologies to make pervasive so that a company may become another company? What do we have to add to a company in order to make it become something else? What makes companies change?

Companies, awareness (the things I do are useful!) and optimism due to unawareness. And then the company becomes to transform, just as a refrigerator.

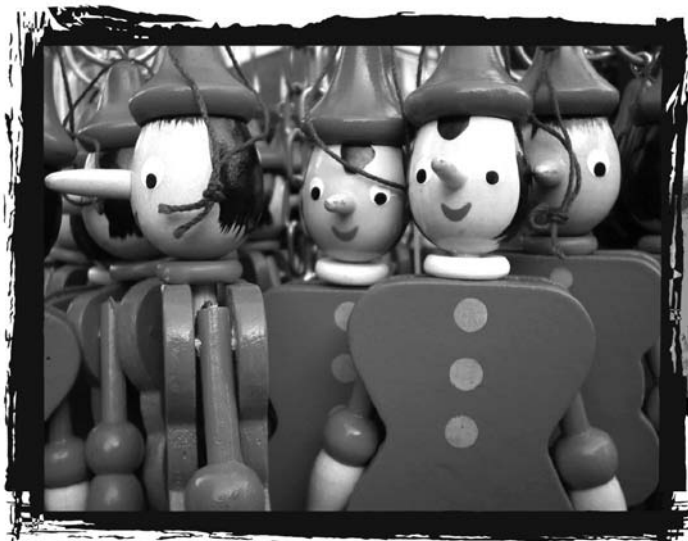


PINOCCHIO, BETWEEN MARIONETTES AND PUPPETEERS

... CAN I HAVE ANOTHER POSSIBILITY?

Another marionette performance, other motivations, other approaches that are almost opposed to that of Don Quixote! But let us proceed in an orderly way.

Pinocchio goes to school full of good intentions: "Today in school I want to learn to read immediately: tomorrow I shall learn to write and the day after tomorrow I shall learn to count. Then with my ability, I shall make a lot of money, and with the first money I earn, I want to buy my father a coat of fabric". He is attracted by the puppet theatre and in order to get the money for the ticket, he decides to sell his spelling-book. Right on his first day of school, Pinocchio cannot resist the temptation to enter a theatre to watch a



marionette play that fascinates him. Postponing and trying to combine duty with pleasure lets Pinocchio feel less guilty ("There is always time to go to school"). The postponement is very short anyway. This situation repeats itself several times during history. The tendency to escape one's responsibilities to give in to the allure of playing and having fun (first the Great Puppet Theatre, then Toyland) constitutes a distinctive attribute of the character together with the tendency to conceive projects that cannot be realized.

We annul our fears in nothing
We let faces appear from the dark
We fill instants with little absurd
Fragments that we call memories in life
In the eyes, we look for new colours that we know can
give us the motivations
To see roses wither and with them our good intentions.

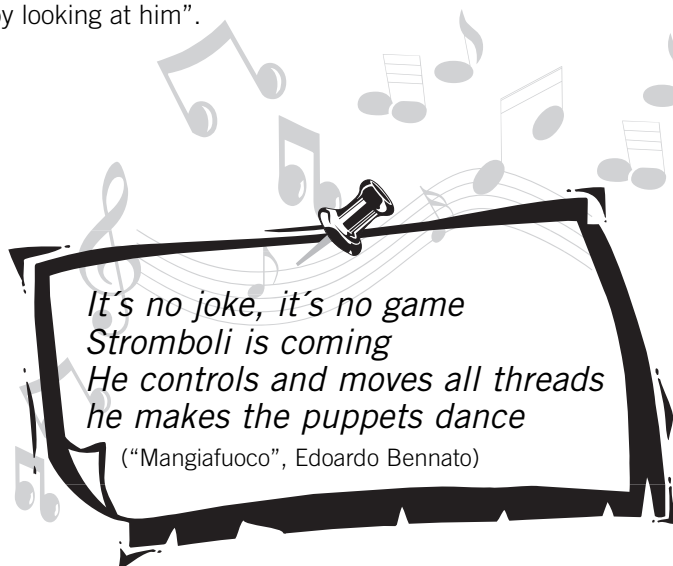
("Le Nostre Buone Intenzioni", Otto Ohm)

The two attitudes are closely connected: just because they think that they can obtain everything easily and it is enough to dream about things to conquer them, the puppet very easily postpones his first commitment and does not hesitate to sell the precious spelling-book to enter the Great Theatre – allured, or rather attracted by the acute intelligence of temptation. On the one hand there is a continuous postponement of our commitments or our decisions to make (they will settle automatically, time will make everything right) on the other hand there is the dreaming (dreaming, not activating) about change (you shall see that things will change). That kind of change is only thought, drawn up in thoughts, but maybe never really wished for. Maybe the "game" of let us see what you can do, I shall wait for you to fail, I told you so, I knew things would end up like this: grunts interpreted in a continuous manner and with the same script and screenplay. Marionettes among marionettes: they act under a dictatorship with phrases that are always the same according to the plot made up by somebody else.

Pinocchio enters as a spectator, but he himself is only a puppet watching a puppet show. And in fact Harlequin finds himself in a dramatic scene on stage and exclaims: "Come and embrace your wooden brothers!". And Pinocchio, who does so and finds himself among brothers, is received with a frenetic joy: the puppets recognize one another and feast; they are all happy except for the audience which complains about the interruption of the show. Puppets are in fact there to amuse the audience and the spectators; so what



about the feasting then? Why are they present in the script? What does this insurrection, this joyful moment mean? Who dare they disobey the rules? “Then the puppeteer came out, such an ugly man, who made you fear him only by looking at him”.



Stromboli the puppeteer is a metaphor of power that controls everything and knows everything: it is there to remind everybody that he is in command and that anyone who does not obey the rules, ends up badly or is labeled a lunatic. This is the fate of those who live inside and only inside the Great Theatre.

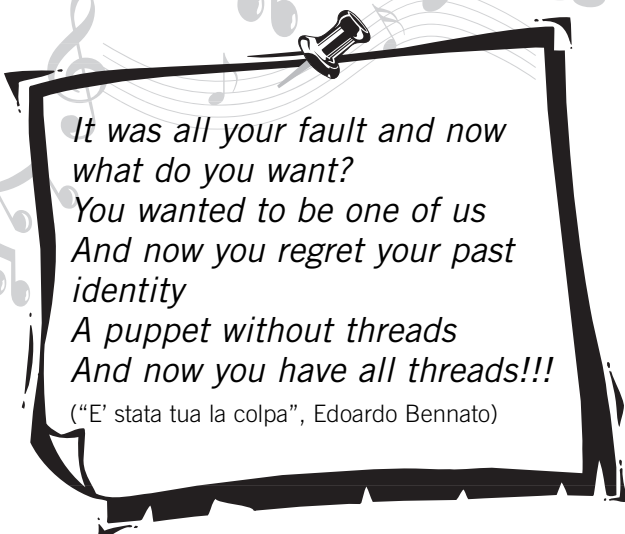
And where are we? Are we trying to hide? For how long? In time, our peers will recognize us, in one way or the other we will return to stay with our likes. And if the force, courage and minimum appearance (often unexpected) of the current puppeteer is not sufficient to control our minds, there is nothing left to do for the spectators, but to act before a public just like actors do. Only one hinder lies in the way: memories and regrets...

Not being spectators (nor puppets) does not mean to be on one or the other side of the stage; it means attributing a sense to the world around us and cultivate this world, this inhabited earth, with interest, enthusiasm and wisdom, but above all with engagement and fatigue to protect the collection. The collection of our experiences, our values: protect them



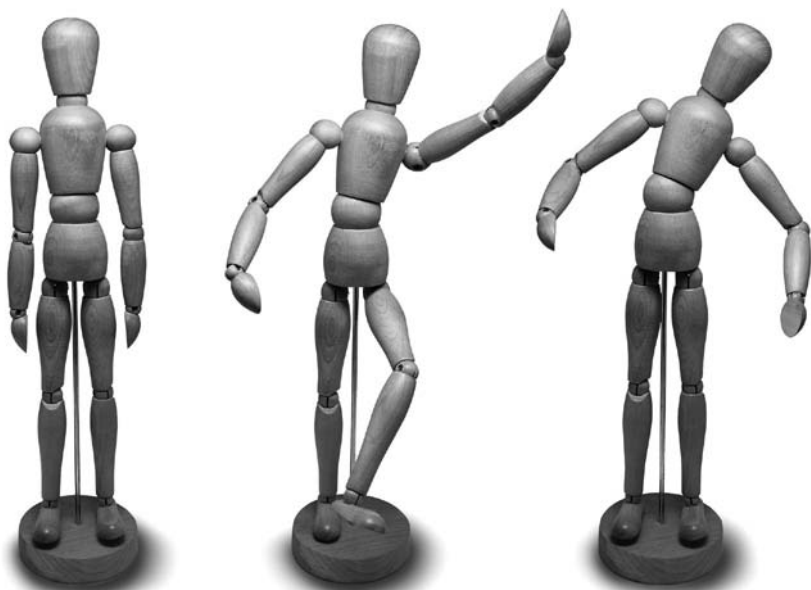
with the commitment to make them available and useful, independently of the current Stromboli.

We are spectators and our only aim is to look for our equals, with the sole intention to join the puppeteer (stronger) who is in charge. For as long as it lasts... Then we continue searching, not for a meaning, but of the new fastener to attach our threads. A continuous accumulation of masks, identities and lies!



*It was all your fault and now
what do you want?
You wanted to be one of us
And now you regret your past
identity
A puppet without threads
And now you have all threads!!!*

("E' stata tua la colpa", Edoardo Bennato)



THE DIFFICULTY OF BEING SUPERMAN

AND LIVING A CLANDESTINE HEROISM

We live in an organised world which is like a great building site (but not only) which, in moments that also may be contemporary seems to be in a demolition phase and in other moments seems to be a building site in the building phase.

As regards the interior of the buildings, it is not possible to understand if they are about to collapse or being built. A situation of ultimate danger. Being aware of it, means to have a possibility of letting a new or at least renewed entity be created. And it is in dangerous situations, that we are capable of rethinking events in a different way: accepting the challenge to reopen, continue the work on the site with courageous choices, participations, enthusiasm and the wish to be surprised.

This is a diabolic approach, in the sense of the Greek word "diaballo". We throw ourselves in the midst of uncertainty, we enter the fray and



participate, not as spectators, we take our distance to intellectual fast food of culture in pills, of the vision of mere sternness in order to arrive to participation, to the public square, to the wish to be present with body and the contents of our minds, values, culture and our ethnic identity. All this must be used for the good of society, the group and the organization. In order to do so, we must rave, that is move away from the furrow of common opinions that lack energy. Or, as we say today from the sowing, from the way of reason (only!) and from a language that is impoverished by clichés full of technological narcissism.

Organizations that repeat themselves, that declare ethic and professionalism but in the end do not entirely accept the challenge of knowledge and change, do not accept the idea of a group, even if they survive thanks to groups and society. Organizations in which often the least equipped “wait for the next ride” the next superior, the next General Manager, the next shareholder etc.) in order to seek revenge for presumed injustices. Injustices that often are only imaginary and the fruit of a personal incapacity (lack of professional and communication capacities), seasoned with the desire (barely hidden) to obtain more power.

Order is what they believe in! But as a matter of fact, in all card games we know, very few people ask for an orderly deck of cards that has been ordered according to a particular sequence. Power that lets us control people. People? What do we need people for in this context? They are not necessary in this logic; it is enough to surround oneself by the usual “well-known” collaborators: always the same people, a nice group, a good circle of great individuals, there is nothing to be said against that. And what about the interest of the company and the value of people? Bad luck: Leadership is something else.

Let us move one step forward and take a look at Superman!

Superman sacrifices a lot to be a hero. He abandons his calm life, he leaves home, his small town, the caring members of his adoptive family, his first love, his aspirations to become an athlete. Solitary, he fights an endless battle for justice, truth and eventually for what is identified as “America’s way”. Every time and upon every occasion, Superman inevitably places the interest of others before his own; he does this to his own body, using it as a shield and letting society benefit from his superpowers and talent.

Why should we always take care of others? For what reason? Why must we have this role as defenders? Why does Superman always try to do the right thing? And what is his compensation if he remains anonymous and unidentifiable? Even when he is on a magnificent tropical beach in complete



relaxation, a lament from the other part of the world is sufficient to make him hurry to re-establish order.

Is he definitely a defender of the status quo? Or simply trying to be one of us? Technically he is not one of us. He is the only survivor of his race (an alien) and probably alone, more than anybody in this world that is not his. Then maybe he does this for the desire to belong, to feel part of something that is not naturally his (since he is not part of it by birth), but that he feels as his own and to which he wants to belong. By doing this and helping this world that has received and adopted him, he helps them to help himself, to participate in the social life of society...

A virtuous circle: he helps others to help himself and when he helps himself, he helps society. He takes an active part (without limiting himself to observing, to being a spectator – this is the leitmotiv), despite the fact that he is not personally involved, he takes up the defence and does not remain to watch, even though he belongs to another race; he takes part to have his own part in social life.

Aristotle knew it: we are all creatures that are fundamentally social. We need others and others need us.

We manage to obtain maximum results and to feel a maximum feeling of satisfaction in everything we obtain when we are surrounded by a network of people that sustain us and help us and to whom we also lend a hand, when they need our help. Practically speaking, true success is something more than the progress of the individual and the pursue of personal objectives.

The aim of individual power is aimed only at having power in relation to other people. Unfortunately for those who believe in individual power, it is good to

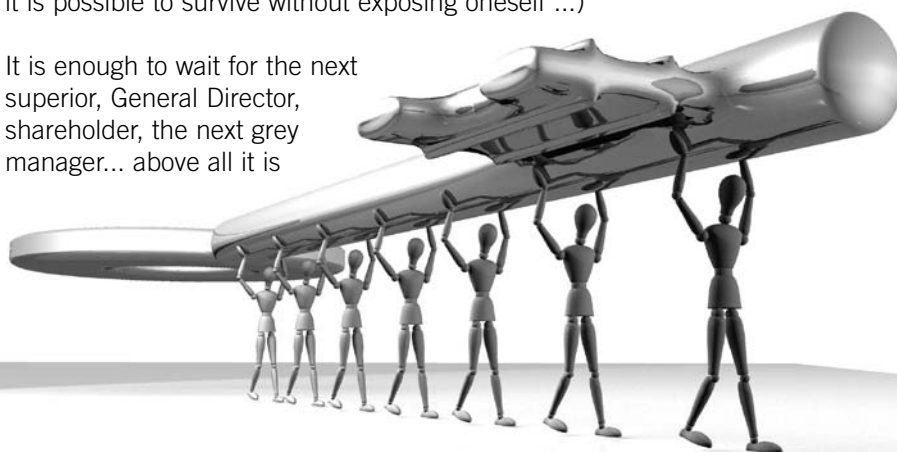


know that this is a transitory power, reflective powers based on the force of somebody else; the new manager, the new General Manager, the new superior ... Practically speaking it is the temporary power of spies. A brief power, since sooner or later there will be a new manager, a new General Manager, a new... and then “stop the movement” hoping that the next manager (General Manager or other) or the one after him will put back the “well-known” group back into the game.

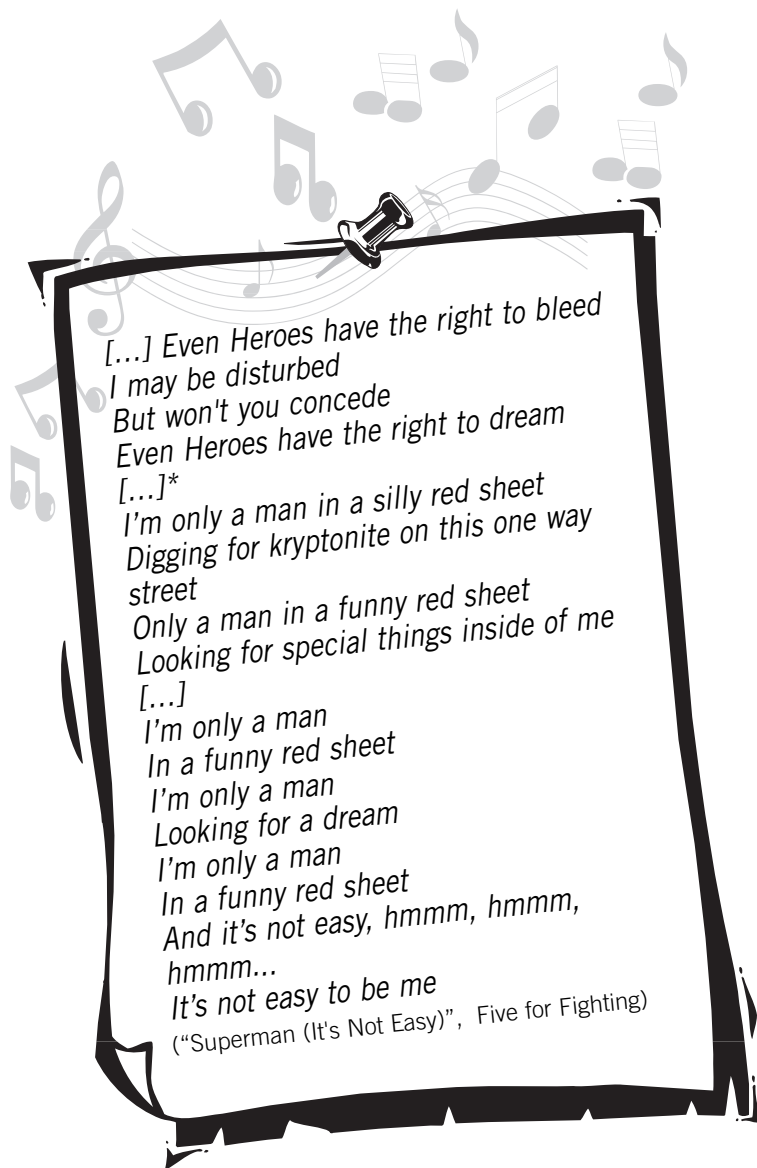
However it is a pity that leadership is something else and that life is made up of other things and both have a minimum common denominator: dignity of the individual. This is an individual value, univocally for each one of us, of our history. It is a value that is “non adhesive”. Nobody can transmit it by contact, it belongs to each one of us! Each one of use must nourish it and let it grow by our own actions. This virtue cannot be “stolen” in any way, unless you possess it, nor can you only be spectators. Often it is not even convenient to be a spectator in case of a repentance or a pang of conscience. It is useless to think in great lines or for great enterprises. What we really need is the daily example, even a small one, in all small things, by performing actions, and not meditating great sceneries, epic events and vengeance at your wish.

To conclude: what can we say to those who continuously ask themselves (but who in the mean time continue to work and supply their own contribution): “Why do I try to work hard when everything around me is desolation and the only maniacal intention is not letting yourself be involved or at least let yourself be involved without true participation?” To become involved and take an active part means risking an unsuccessful result. And neither we nor our lives foresee the word defeat (and as it were, it is possible to survive without exposing oneself ...)

It is enough to wait for the next superior, General Director, shareholder, the next grey manager... above all it is



necessary to bow in reverence until the next time and send dignity to hell, since it has an unfamiliar ring and its value has vanished by now.



[...] Even Heroes have the right to bleed
I may be disturbed
But won't you concede
Even Heroes have the right to dream
[...]*

I'm only a man in a silly red sheet
Digging for kryptonite on this one way
street
Only a man in a funny red sheet
Looking for special things inside of me
[...]

I'm only a man
In a funny red sheet
I'm only a man
Looking for a dream
I'm only a man
In a funny red sheet
And it's not easy, hmmm, hmmm,
hmmm...

It's not easy to be me
("Superman (It's Not Easy)", Five for Fighting)



The background of the image is a dense, embossed pattern of Spanish text, likely from the Bible, in a serif font. The text is raised and has a metallic, reflective appearance. In the center, there is a white speech bubble with a black outline. Inside the speech bubble, the text "WORDS TO REFLECT UPON" is written in a bold, black, serif font.

WORDS TO
REFLECT UPON

If we are not happy
with crumbles



*Eleanor Rigby, picks up the rice
in the church where a wedding
has been
Lives in a dream
Waits at the window, wearing the
face
that she keeps in a jar by the door
Who is it for*

(“Eleanor Rigby”, The Beatles)



Alibi

The ideas, activities and people are too many; the directions into which to turn and the alternatives to choose from are too many, just as the advice to listen to. There are too many recommendations, too many parties. In short, there are too many dimensions for us, too many dimensions to look at. But at the end, is it a matter of too much intended as a “number” or as a “dimension”?

Yet again a first surprising answer is given by the Beatles (It's All Too Much by G. Harrison): All the word is a birthday cake/So take a piece but not too much.



All this excess to handle often offers us the possibility of creating great alibis, that give us the possibility of releasing failure, lack of decisions, non-appearances. There is always an alibi ready: distance, misfortune, excess – as it were.

Also passing time hiding rather than facing reality is an alibi which afterwards lets you celebrate the peril you escaped, that which Dante in the first part of Hell describes with the subsequent words: It is like



those who on the dangerous waves/Have saved themselves from the pelago
to the shore/ Only to turn to dangerous waters again.

Therefore it is not always possible to face everything and everybody, just as
it is practically impossible and useless to aspire to satisfy everybody in every
way - you cannot always do so, with everybody. How feasible is it to try and
hide? To what extent can we blame uncertainty on the future?
Whatever measuring unit we use, it cannot be done!

So there is no way out?

Yes there is, if we start thinking that the true reason for which it is important
to have enthusiasm, is to have a passion for something. This is the same
reason that reduces the world to a dimension that is easier to handle: a
dimension in which it is not important to please everybody or to collect rice
grains and leftovers, but rather a dimension in which the right ambition
makes the difference.

They often ask me: where were you when Kennedy was
murdered?

Well, to tell the truth I have no alibi!

(Emo Philips)



Ambition

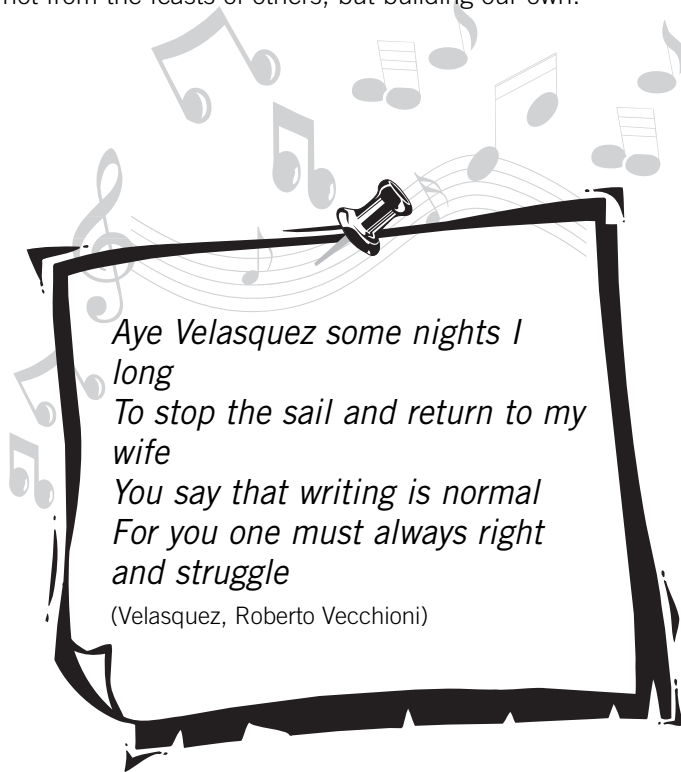
Ambition (from àmbito, the Greek root of which means “wing span”) is nothing but the maximum distance between the wings; in other words, ambition is the opening between one’s wings. If you never open your wings, you cannot learn how to fly, but if you open them too much, you risk to crash onto the ground, which often happens to those who fly too high up.



Ambition also evokes another meaning that is tied to the past: the journey that kings made each year to delimit the perimeter of their own territory (“not everything is mine, but that which is mine I cultivate and feed”).

In order to have Ambition, cultivate it and put it into practise, means to be able of asking oneself two questions constantly: is the goal within reach with my wing span? Do I have the right to claim this territory? A chain that is composed by many links that start from knowledge and awareness: exactly in this order. You acquire knowledge and that gives awareness of your possibility in relation to that which you do or want to start doing. In this way, our possibilities become a territory to cultivate, our force to free ourselves by flying.

Only in this way can we refrain from being satisfied with the leftovers of somebody else (who feeds us and gives us a minimum security, an alibi) and live not from the feasts of others, but building our own.



*Aye Velasquez some nights I
long
To stop the sail and return to my
wife
You say that writing is normal
For you one must always right
and struggle*

(Velasquez, Roberto Vecchioni)



Change

"This is not the right moment", "Let us wait", "There are too many changes going on", "Within short" ...

No, it is not a great performance we see in the streets, in companies and wherever we look or whatever we listen to.

To handle a change is like dancing the samba.
Two steps forward, one step to the side and one step backward!!!

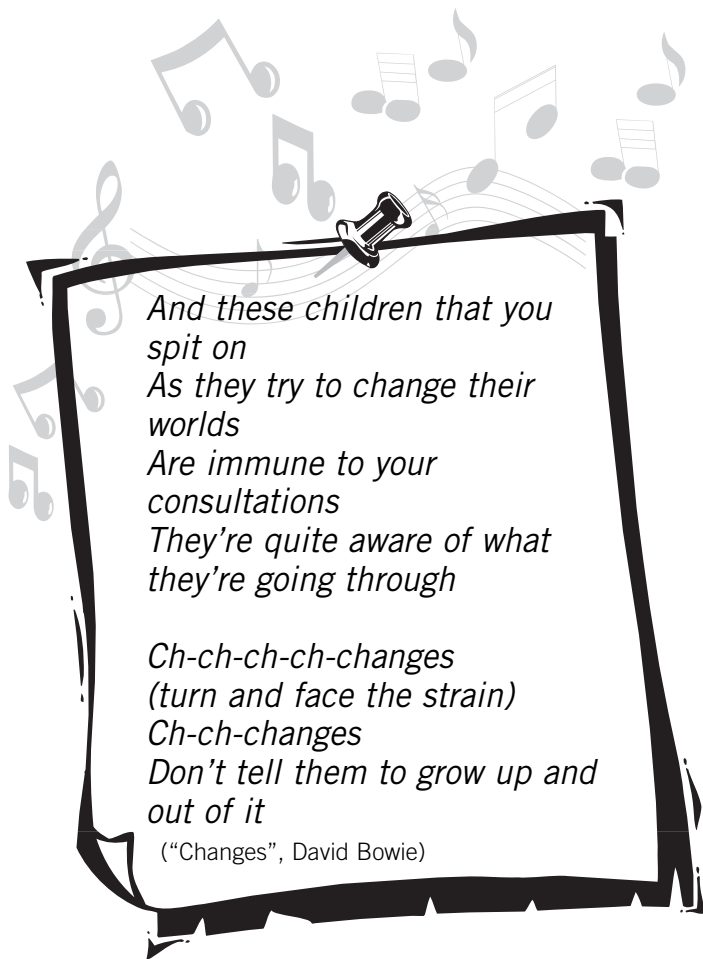
(S. Salvemini)



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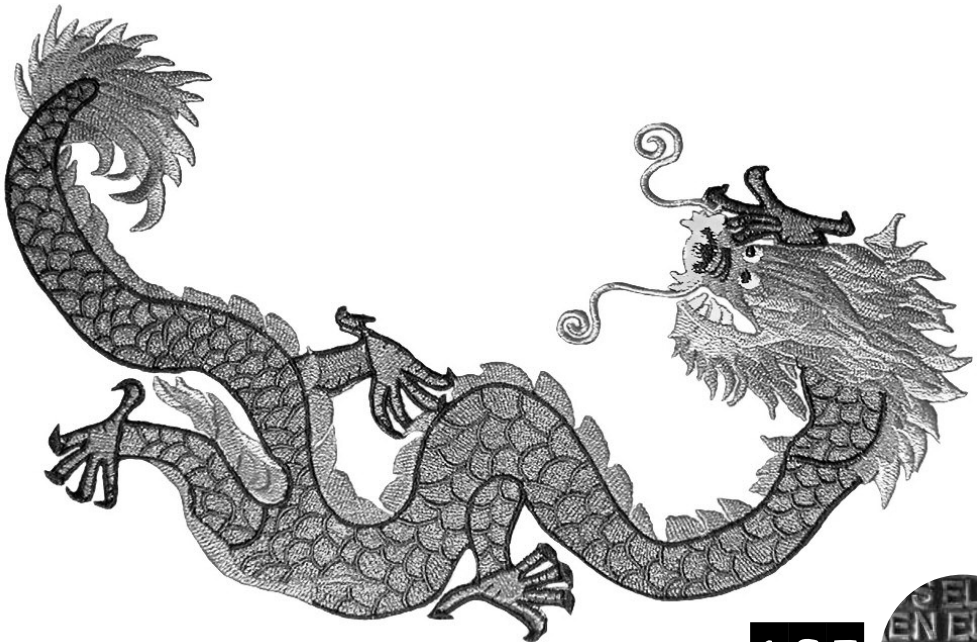
An atmosphere and mood of intolerable laments, the progress of the lamenting party, a daily carol of judgements, faults, laments, bad feelings, a list of catastrophes or an exposure of scenes that are becoming increasingly dismal. The mood is that of: seen all, planned all, nothing surprises me, which then ends in a final explosion "I told you so!". Nothing new. Well-known situations. Is this a sane scepticism?



Knowledge

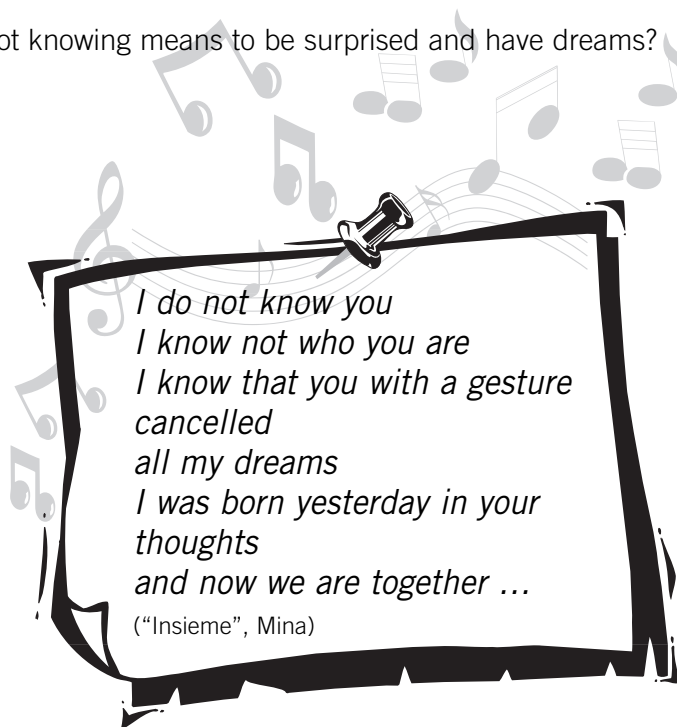
Knowledge maybe means not to have need or time to be surprised? Is that really true?

Today the entire world is mapped and explored. In ancient times, things were different. The maps contained phrases like “HIC SVNT DRACONES” – here there are dragons - put there by cartographers to signal dangerous unexplored territories imitating the medieval practise of drawing dragons and sea snakes and other mythological animals in the empty areas of the maps, where knowledge ended and legend started.



Sometimes maps would depict imaginary lands, as a result of unreliable stories. It happened that unknown territories were left empty on maps. In "Heart of Darkness" (by Joseph Conrad), Marlow recalls the fascination he felt as a boy when looking at those areas; the greatest of all was in the middle of Africa and to him it was: "An empty space of enchanting mystery – a white stain for children to make fantastic dreams about".

Does not knowing means to be surprised and have dreams?



Excitement

It is very hazardous to call that which we do without excitement life.

Those who keep distances, search for a consensus through politically correct attitude and invoke respect for "good manners" as an ultimate weapon to disarm and destroy a colleague or adversary often experience excitement through the reassuring construction of standardized situations. Situations like a town festivity, the holiday ritual, common holidays, immersed in the comforting repetitiveness of common places, of dinners with the usual friends at the usual restaurants where they recognize you and you feel "at home". In

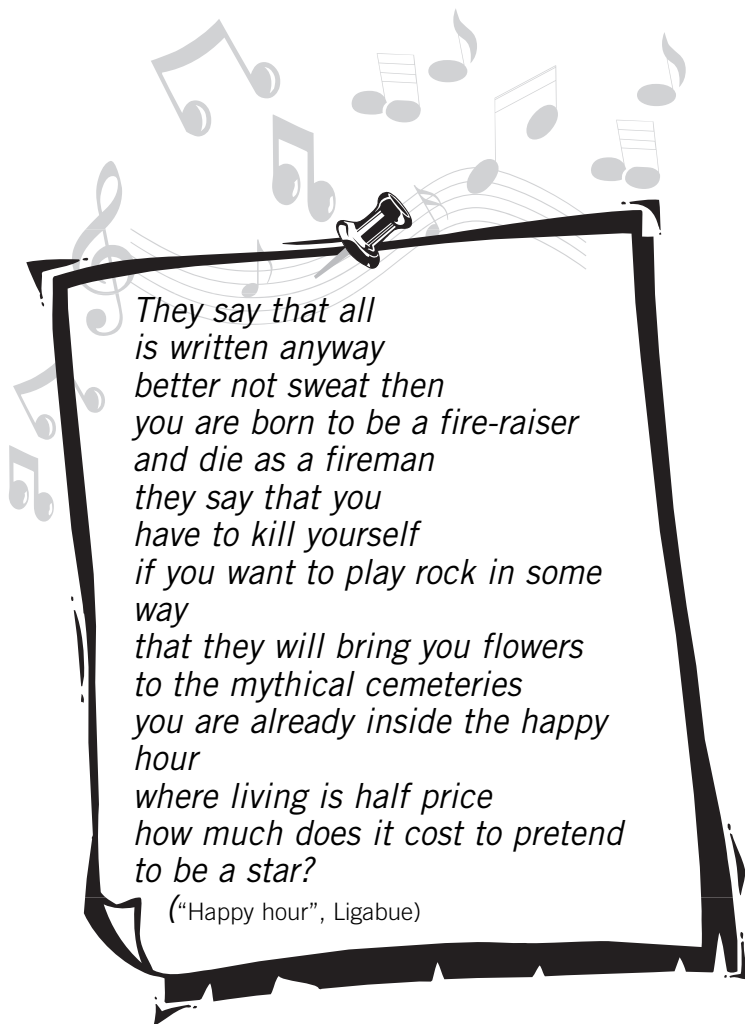
the repetitiveness of work, of contacts with the usual colleagues commenting time or lamenting about the lack of news. Tranquil

Sundays watching football games, sad Mondays back at work and then finally, Friday!

Not to talk about fashions.

Brunch, happy hour, coffee-breaks, that is continuous visits to fast food temples of banal hedonism with the sole aim to fence in one's own territory and protect it from "others" (people, news, places, acquaintances).





*They say that all
is written anyway
better not sweat then
you are born to be a fire-raiser
and die as a fireman
they say that you
have to kill yourself
if you want to play rock in some
way
that they will bring you flowers
to the mythical cemeteries
you are already inside the happy
hour
where living is half price
how much does it cost to pretend
to be a star?*

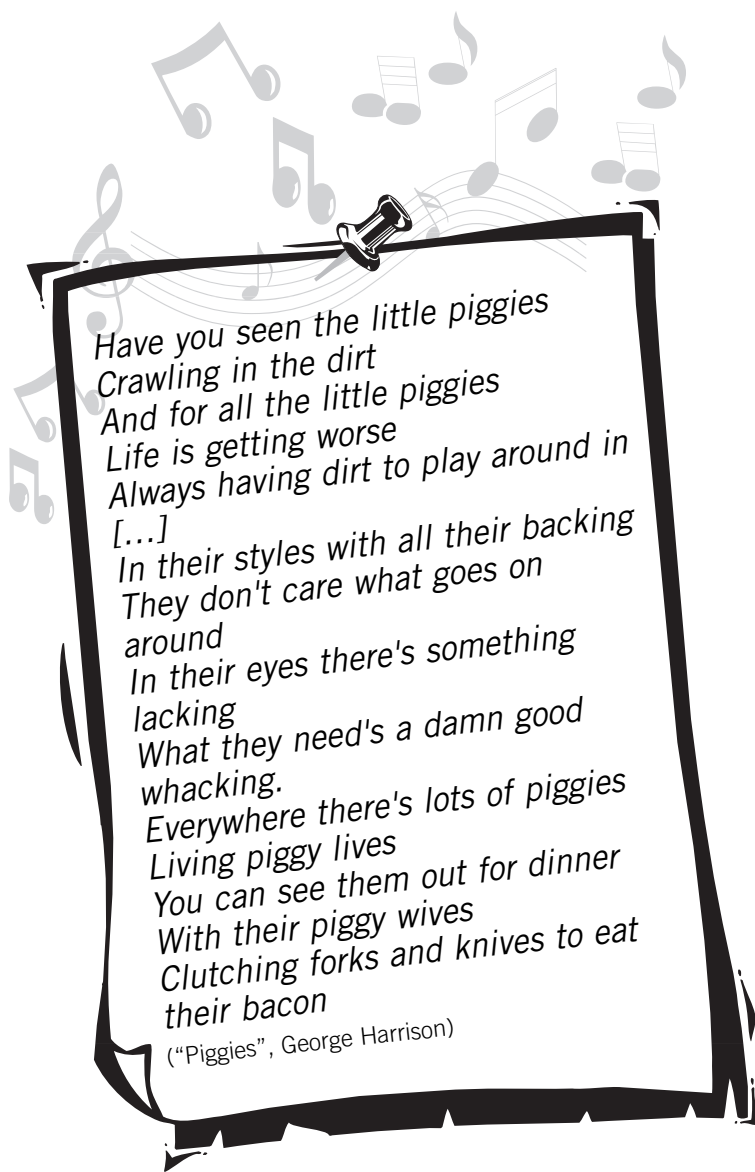
(“Happy hour”, Ligabue)

It is not a fine show to see! Something is missing!

As George Harrison describes it magically in the song “Piggies”: “They don’t care what goes on around/In their eyes there’s something lacking”. Again George Harrison (Within you, Without you): “And the people/who hide themselves behind a wall of illusion never glimpse the truth then it’s far too late”.

Yes, it is late! But for what?





Have you seen the little piggies
Crawling in the dirt
And for all the little piggies
Life is getting worse
Always having dirt to play around in
[...]
In their styles with all their backing
They don't care what goes on
around
In their eyes there's something
lacking
What they need's a damn good
whacking.
Everywhere there's lots of piggies
Living piggy lives
You can see them out for dinner
With their piggy wives
Clutching forks and knives to eat
their bacon
("Piggies", George Harrison)

Exterior beauty, style, messages, ethic are all beautiful concepts, great things: but all this does not move anything, not even a grain of dust, unless there is energy, impulse and enthusiasm to animate it.



Excitement is like a warm and creative attitude towards life. An attitude that cannot be detached, at peace (or rather that cannot always be so) and with a reassuring tone, but is a source of irony, indignation and rage.

Is picking up the rice after somebody else's party all that is left for us?

Get excited and enthusiastic about you own dream. This excitement is like a forest fire - you can smell it, taste it, and see it from a mile away.

(Denis Waitley)



MAN WHO WALKS



What about silent work, obscure work, broken dreams?

We need only listen to the words of Vecchioni in “Malinconia Leggera” (light melancholy) when he sings: “It is easy to fly/it takes fantasy to walk”.



Right: man who walks, who gives his own territory a meaning and tries to make it grow with a constant rigorous application, searching satisfaction in that which he does and not in what he gives; man who silently uses his knowledge, his awareness. This is quite different from what is described by the Beatles in “Maxwell’s Silver Hammer”: “Joan was quizzical studied pataphysical science in the home”. Pataphysics: the science of imaginary solutions. Empty and destructive knowledge.



RIIING. The doorbell sounds.

Dylan Dog: “Open the door but I am not here for anybody, not even for him”.

Groucho: ”You know, I thought I would change the bell, to install something more practical and modern. First of all one must buy a multimedial computer equipped with a scanner and a modem. I read in a magazine that you only have to connect the doorbell to the computer: if somebody rings the doorbell, the impulse arrives to the scanner that digitalizes the signal and transfers it to the computer where it is converted into an image file. The image is then animated, compressed and sent through the modem to an automatic telephone service that resents an e-mail message through the Internet to inform you that someone is ringing the doorbell. All this in merely forty minutes”.

(The conclusion of the dialogue is to be found at the end of the chapter).

It seems like a commonplace comic punchline. And yet, how many times do we try to solve a simple, banal problem with a complicated approach? How many times do we sacrifice processes and procedures that are considered to be too simple, too cheap, too non-invasive and too “unfashionable” upon the altar of technology and innovation?

The more intrinsic the approach to face a problem, the higher its complexity and we feel we show our greatness in a better way with unlimited competences. We are so convinced that it is not true that the shortest way between two points is a straight line.

And in all this man walks?

Enthusiasm sinks and is substituted by a sort of cultural snobbism that is translated into a voluntary detachment from activities and a desire to let go, to leave room for the usual known people. A sort of abandonment without comparison.

And in all this man walks?



Well the discomfort, the failure in making one's own capacities emerge, not succeeding in letting one's talent emerge, makes the man who walks fall in the same situation as Velasquez: on the one part man is ready to challenge all and everybody to reach Cape Horn, to risk and go anywhere if there are people to save there, on the other part a man who wants to return home, who is tired of risking and looks for life without sensations.

But, due to the love for the things he does, for the world that he perceives around him, he must pronounce the fatal phrase that makes everything turn, that does his competences honour and also his being a man who walks...

Dylan Dog: "... I understand, I go!"



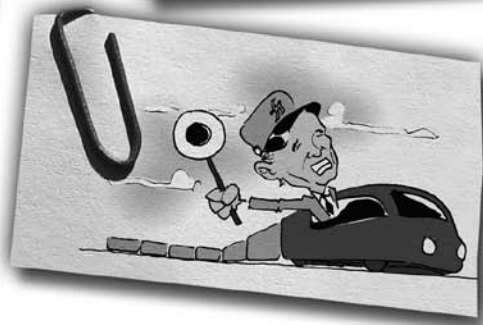


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AD di TSF, Ingegnere. La sua carriera si snoda in Italia e all'estero da Price Waterhouse, al Gruppo Fininvest, alla direzione IT di EMI Music/Virgin, poi nel Gruppo eBiscom. Autore di libri e relatore in numerosi convegni, è stato docente di Informatica e Tecnologie Multimediali presso varie Università.

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