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The Commons. What are poets good for nowadays ?

It seems that poets, and artists in general, remain strange creatures which can not be easily classified according to the usual criteria. Their place remains special, even if we no longer understand why. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 21st century, when we believe that we have already understood almost everything about social machinery, their pre-eminence proves to be tenacious, in spite of the enormous pressure exerted on each individual by mass civilization which requires “mass creativity” in artistic work, that is to say, work that is fast, cheap, industrial and more or less anonymous.

Where does this strangeness and its corollary, the widespread worship that poets, writers, and artists enjoy, come from? Perhaps this category of human being represents in a way the psychic and emotional cells in humanity's vast biological and social body. That is, an increasingly unified humanity, almost levelled nowadays to a rather low common denominator of its possible global and planetary functioning; a humanity subject to tensions, contradictions and pressures to an extent never known before; a humanity forced to go in search of a new civilizational and cultural synthesis, and, therefore, obliged to aim at a new asymptotic universal harmony. Scattered, distributed all over the world, poets and artists secrete and weave together a kind of sensitive network of nerves through which the planet nourishes itself emotionally, dreams of other dimensions of the human being, imagines other worlds and tries out a possible evolution of the human psyche. In my view, poets and artists represent a kind of visionary organ of terrestrial existence, through which life - this thin, narrow, but intelligent film that covers the earth - is experimenting with new, apparently

improbable methods of survival, evolution, and accomplishment. They take care of our ineffable commons, relaying the “inner man” with the “outer man” and the cosmos.

But what do the poets, the artists, feel? What are they dreaming of – this category of individual, apparently useless and bizarre, representing the creative, innovative, and independent elements of a society, and thus constituting a small "occult" minority, “transgressive” of all the fields of activity? As Caragiale, a famous Romanian playwright, said at the beginning of the XXth century, they are those who "feel enormously and see monstrously." They are those who can detect, beneath the already known, named, labelled surface of things, beings and processes, something that is still invisible, the unexpected possibilities, the unsuspected developments, the germs of a possible evolution, the buds of a freedom still unrevealed. Something like one or several dimensions of reality which still remain outside our conformist perception, trivialized by the collective use and the mass consumption, one or several still resonant valences of things and of the universe that escape the general mental tyranny which the great majority of people obey like consenting or unconscious slaves.

Let's say that poets and artists are those who capture - through their sensibility, their way of thinking, their artistic techniques - certain states, certain experiences related to our common terrestrial existence. They would be the living and delicate instruments for special states of mind fluctuating between dream and awakening, for the various intensive degrees of diurnal consciousness, for a certain natural “visionary-ism”

common to us all, and even for spontaneous eruptions of supra-consciousness.

They would be capable of foreseeing, of feeling, of anticipating for example, that colours are moods of the entire universe and not only wavelengths of light; that sounds and all kinds of music produced by man employ numeric and vibratory connections which reflect the harmony or the disharmony of planets and galactic systems; that the gestures of ballet or of ritual dances in different cultures reiterate, on our minuscule human scale, the dance of the complex laws which govern the universe and the phases of the whole creation process; that drawing, painting or sculpture does not imitate but recreates and completes nature, and functions in a way analogical that is to material updating of the universal consciousness.

They are those who perceive in a psychic, intuitive way that the reality which surround us is only one of the multiple potential realities which - above and below, before and behind - exist on superposed or intersected planes, as possible alternatives among which our present existence updates only one. Poets are those who, in a sensory or emotional way, feel more deeply than others the moments when these virtual existences – like waves of invisible radiation, like higher frequencies surpassing our sensory organs, or like visions of an overflowing cosmic imagination - manage to interfere with our current existence, usually confined within very narrow limits.

Of these unexpected eruptions, these surprising contacts between levels of reality still relatively unknown, and between states of conscience still relatively accepted, some apparently bizarre phenomena might emerge - coincidences between thoughts and events, between abstract symbols and concrete objects, dazzling and luminous premonitions, the perception of the multiple and contradictory personalities that inhabit our unique being, and so on. Sometimes, for short instants, even something like global or

cosmic states of consciousness can appear, whose mysterious nature is incomprehensible for the time being, and therefore unacceptable, but not less real for that, states that we get used to call demonstrations of the divine, or the " sacred " dimension of reality.

In brief, using the terms of the transdisciplinary approach of things, poets and artists represent individuals who are naturally sensitive to the different levels of perception of the different levels of the reality that make up our world and universe. But these levels are a less obvious commons, still to be developed and still to be accepted and acknowledged by the great majority of individuals.

In fact, this less common kind of perception is rooted in the depths of human nature. From time to time it happens to all of us briefly to experience these states, as they are entirely natural. These eruptions represent perhaps transient, uncontrolled moments of the manifestation of a vast universal conscience that circulates within us and among us, that integrates us and unites us with the whole world, and that is still awaiting to be entirely developed and fully assumed. But we do not pay attention to this fleeting sort of moment of cosmic consciousness, or we don't feel up to do it, as we are not yet prepared for it and our way of life – diverted, deformed, artificial - makes it almost impossible. Therefore, we deprive ourselves, unconsciously or not, of these fabulous possibilities inscribed in our cells and brains, possibilities that are, so to speak, an "innate right" of our total human condition in its future accomplished form. Man is still an unfinished creature, in a continuous process of biological, psychical and spiritual evolution.

Therefore, poets, and artists in general, belong to the category of extremely sensitive persons who pay attention and offer their entire being to this big "ongoing revelation" of a universe much more extraordinary than we can imagine, of a miraculous reality hidden in the folds of the apparently

ordinary and opaque structures of the common world that we share. In this kind of “third kind meeting”, between our limited, fearful and lazy individual being on one hand, and its unlimited potentialities on the other hand, artists and poets are those who grope, who investigate the discreet, subtle knots, where the potential for evolution builds up and maybe gets decided. In this sense, poets and artists may not represent special, abnormal individuals but, on the contrary, the future, really normal individuals of a humanity that undergoes at present a process of transformation.

Or maybe artists and poets are those who still retain some recollection, through a process of dazzling anamnesis, of a capacity that we all – as species – used to know, but that we had forgot: something like a gift, a possibility, a right that survives in a profound and indestructible way within us, a sort of genetic code of cosmic nature opening towards the universe, which should be now reactivated again. Traditional cultures remember it better and preserved it better than modern cultures, therefore an intercultural synergy and emulation of visions of man’s possible evolution is capital nowadays.

But why would art be a privileged means to draw up and to attempt a more accomplished formula of the human being? Why is the “secular worship” of aesthetic experience, ignited at the beginning of the modernity, about to recover an essential place within the new existential formula of the planetary man, after its nihilist, commercial, and populist abuse during the 20th century? What are the reasons for which the creation and the contemplation of art came to replace, to a large extent, the religious experience of the past? Just because aesthetic experience allows a simultaneous and spontaneous access to several essential aspects and levels of the human nature. Aesthetic experience roots itself in the bodily senses, nourishes itself with the emotional energy, goes through the power of reason and aspires to the height of spirit.

Aesthetic experience goes through the biological, physical and mental strata of our being and opens itself to the spiritual. It satisfies simultaneously several necessities and “availabilities” of our human constitution, harmonizes and reconciles them, unifying in an apparently simple manner the functioning of our incomplete being, reconciling it with our own self, with our fellow human beings and with the rest of the world. Aesthetic experience therefore offers the taste of an immediate and concrete experience of a spiritual commons at hand, a kind of “mild transcendence”, the allusion to a possible completeness of our human being within its sensitive connections to the Whole, to the universe. Sort of an “experimental metaphysics” at hand, aesthetic experience may prepare the way towards an evolution beyond the current state of our being.

This is the reason why poetic and artistic experience constitutes the « trans-» experience par excellence: because it is « in, between, through, over and beyond » the functions and behaviour of our being in its incarnate and earthly existence. Authentic aesthetic experience is a form of soft, immediate and temporary transgression of the limitations that block the way to ourselves. So that we may assume and accept everything from ourselves, so that we may softly become prepared for more than ourselves, in total harmony with the rest of the creation. As philosopher Martin Heidegger once said, « Man dwells in this world poetically». Therefore, from a psychological point of view, creating and consuming art can be considered a mode of initiation - aesthetic initiation – as a way of personal realisation and transpersonal integration. Creating and contemplating art – the true art, fruit of an authentic existential experience – can thus receive a psychical regenerative and healing dimension, for the full integration of the human person, and a wider ethical dimension, as well as a spiritual opening. This is in fact the role of poets and artists: to launch themselves in exploration of this kind of regenerative transgression of

our unknown capacities and of our infinite potentialities. Their role is to be the « catalysts of complex emotions », explorers of the secret enlarged psychology of our time. They are the instigators of a visionary self-surpassing. Art provokes, encourages and facilitates the creativity not only of artists, but also of all individuals, and this is the reason why art can be considered as a personalized form of ecology of the spirit – a vital commons.

Moreover, the territory of aesthetic experience, because of its more neutral, more flexible and tolerant features, is the place where not only different forms of knowledge dwelling in our individual being can find an enriching harmonization, but also forms of knowledge elaborated by different cultural traditions for the common being of the humanity. Due to its « trans » properties, that is, its nature open to the visible and to the invisible, to the real and to the imaginative world, artistic/poetic thinking can operate as a sort of “solvent” for opposing formulas of existence, for divergent cultural codes. Artistic/poetic thinking can act as a benign, gradual solvent for different conflicting cultural areas or historical epochs. At the same time, and again due to its embarrassing capacity for circulating freely between levels of experience and knowledge, artistic/poetic thinking can also operate as a “coagulant”, a binder between divergent imaginary universes.

This is what is happening nowadays, to a certain extent.

The so-far prevalent world of our common modern imagination – focused on the strong values of the West - is about to dissolve its worn-out myths, its eroded prejudices, into the “soft” digestive acid of an enlarged aesthetic imagination, abruptly opened to the scale of the entire Earth and enriched by the alluvia of the other important cultural traditions. It is on the « proving ground » of the poetic and artistic creative imagination that myths and vital values of a new and

young common imaginary universe can spring up: at first as simple fictions and wild artistic imaginings. Gradually accepted by the majority, these new “emotional matrixes” will retroactively demonstrate their psychical functionality, their social usefulness, their spiritual necessity, not very obvious from the beginning.

We are experimenting today, we are testing through fiction and aesthetic imagination, what tomorrow will be the outcome of an objectified dimension of our spirit, a widely accepted collective cultural good – a commons. And, as Carl Gustav Jung observed, when one has to relinquish his or her small “me”, limited but known, to welcome a “self” enlarged but unknown, or when one has to replace former mental conditionings, outmoded but widely accepted, by new mental frameworks probably more efficient but still unapproved, one might experience the terrible but illusory anguish of the end of our “me” and of our world. This is the reason why the worlds and the realities tested through fiction can appear random and monstrous, or even apocalyptic, whereas they are only pictures, metaphors, and systems of symbols for genuine psychical and spiritual truths that are on the point of springing up, in the constant movement and change process of our individual and collective evolution.

In any case, it is rather obvious that today we are witnessing a new expansion of our current conscience, due to efforts made in different domains: particle physics and cosmology, biological engineering, the rediscovery of the great non European spiritual traditions, new forms of cognitive psychology, brain discoveries, different attempts at a synthesis of science, religion, art, psychology, and education, are some examples of these efforts. Globalisation is putting together a huge amount of knowledges from different cultures, from the most diverse times and places. We are witnessing an expansion of conscience to which poets and artists should persistently and bravely testify through their lives, their

stands and their works, if they want to preserve their role of emotional and visionary cells within the widened metabolism of humanity.

We are living in a pivotal era with several revolutions in progress: a techno-scientific revolution, a social, economic, and spiritual revolution through global integration: in a word, a big *civilizational revolution*. The mixture of races, cultures and people has probably given the expected bit of boost, the proportional impulsion necessary to the passing beyond of big natural barriers, helpful for the transgression of many artificial mental barriers, and vital for overstepping certain quantitative and qualitative thresholds of the human. We are living at the end of an era dominated by the strong rationalist legitimacy, by the linear and pragmatic logic of the hard-line mindset, obstinately refusing any other complementary methods of approaching nature, man, society and the cosmos. The strictly instrumental thinking, whose forward-looking, totalizing and holistic capacities are drastically limited, is about to give pre-eminence, slowly but let's hope irrevocably, to a way of thinking expanded by other dimensions of the human, the psychological and emotional ones in the first place.

In this regard, poets and artists can probably be considered "guinea pigs", pioneers or maybe heralds for the larger acceptance of the « third matter », as the French-Romanian philosopher Stephan Lupasco named the psyche and its possible science. A subtle "matter" situated between body and spirit, between the visible and the invisible, as well as between-microcosm and macrocosm, the psyche constitutes a sort of bridge between the actualization and the potentialisation of the different levels of reality and its perception, as for example between the biological and the spiritual. A new science of this "third matter" of the still mysterious psyche inhabiting our being can conclude a future marriage with the preceding rationality, in view of an extended

rationality, a potential supra-rationality still to be discovered.

By undertaking the role of « promoters of an unlimited conscience », as Charles Duits said, within a spiritual ecology understood nowadays by the whole of humanity and broadened to a planetary scale, poets and artists will respect in fact their genuine role. Theirs remains the "visionary responsibility" to diminish the quantity of the already known and to explore possibilities of evolution within the more and more unified body of our present-day humanity. This is one of the most precious commons as it bears on our future.

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