

EDITORIAL

Memory becomes future

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Creative processes must be realized through events that steer the past and present towards the future.

Memory becomes the future when tradition is projected into the future or when, in the course of time, the past is constantly renewed. Is it just a grand Renaissance adventure that arose from a great love for tradition, for the past, for culture? Or is there instead, a nostalgic longing that pervades the present when remembering the past?

In truth, the history of a tradition represents a discriminating factor, an added value, and from this perspective, describes the spirit with which it contributes to the philosophy of development: hence, “the past is part of the future through the present”.

By not surrendering to the pleasure given by the magnificence of the past, and just the past, but inverting Eliot’s well-known words, it is essential to see the present and the actual as a reference point that links it to this past and this glorious antiquity.

How?

There are those who believe the digital world will make dwelling, living, activity and industriousness more empathetic. There are others, on the other hand, who believe in necessary integration between old and new. There are those who place confidence in the individual creative act, while sociology alerts us to a modernity of obligatory paths, respect for distances, for regulations.

In referring to the beginning of my education as a *chemist*, it is natural for me to think of alchemy or rather to the gradual decanting of the raw material into the still. And for me, as a *philosopher*, it is natural to think how the terms “preservation” and “promotion” are of special value in a theoretical context – at least in a philosophy inspired by Christianity – to express the relationship of complete dependence on the Creator that all creatures have, both at the beginning and in the continuation of their existence, in every moment of their life and for the duration of their being. And time, for the human being called to freedom, constitutes the possibility of dynamically constructing themselves and the reality that surrounds them.

Hence, the importance of resorting to such a process, to incorporate the contemporary and the future into antiquity: this is what is needed, using a mix of territorial forces and talents.

When we talk of territorial forces, what naturally follows is the importance memory has in enhancing the corresponding characteristics that come from the territory, whereas when we talk of talents, we are referring to another key aspect, namely, to a ‘person’ with their own creativity.

Let us consider these two aspects separately.

Nowadays, memory is frequently spoken of when referring to the past, recalling tragedies and important anniversaries, solemnifying historical occasions, such as the 150th anniversary of Italy's unification, the first centenary of the First World War and so on.

Nevertheless, memory also has its shortcomings: at the moment when 'pathos', seen as emotional participation in what is happening, is followed by 'ethos', seen as a rule of life and a lesson to be learnt from what has happened since it is temporally distant from the event, memory should find confirmation in history based on the 'asepticity' of the events and rigor of the corresponding sources.

But this history is missing and has, on the contrary, unfolded narcissistically by criticizing times, habits and aspects related to superficial intellectualisms. There may of course be better times, but *now* belongs to our time!

It is equally true there are other aspects opposing memory. There is oblivion, denial and propaganda, especially the monumental propaganda of those who caused the very damage that memory itself would like to tear from oblivion and denial.

This then is history's task: to defend memory from any shortcomings and anything that opposes it.

Creativity can contribute to this in a significant way, and is a fundamental prerogative in a person's development. From the sensory development of early childhood which gives a basic knowledge of reality and self, to primary and secondary education, where the foundations of logic and spirit of ethics must be imparted. The subjects taught accustom the individual to reason, express themselves and communicate.

A university education provides the individual with knowledge about how to behave, while the habit of associating different areas of knowledge gives freedom of thought and the impetus to move forward.

It is on the basis of this educational background that the characteristics to strive for, to build professionalism that involves creativity, have undergone a significant evolution by considering multimediality.

Creativity, on the other hand, generally refers to art or the cognitive ability of the mind to create and invent, thanks to imagination and innovativeness.

Henri Poincaré's definition: "Creativity is to combine existing elements with new connections so they are useful", introduces the categories of "new" and "useful" within the creative activity of society and history. "New" relates to the historical period in which it is conceived; "useful" is connected to understanding and social recognition. New and useful aptly represent the essence of the creative act: an overcoming of the existing rules (new) establishing an additional shared rule (because it has proven useful).

Moreover, the "White Paper on Creativity", issued under the Commission on Creativity and Production of Culture in Italy (Ministerial Decree 30th November 2007) by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, states: "Creativity and culture are an inseparable combination, a mechanism for success that can place the nation in a strategic position in the international process of globalization."

Hence, creativity can be seen as a profession in a sector that is today experiencing profound changes. This includes the protection of cultural heritage and naturally the organization of cultural and artistic events. Interested professionals are becoming increasingly qualified and wide-reaching, with skills in building strategies for conservation and promotion, as well as in operating on multiple media platforms, effectively using their languages and potential.

Creativity should also be considered concurrently with spirituality, the latter viewed however, in a broader conceptual context than that attached to spirit and faith. The concept, much wider and more fitting to a situation and condition that involves the individual, but necessarily influences and/or is influenced by the context in which they live and work, may involve explicit faith in a supernatural reality, as in religion, but may also be attributed to a “spiritual level of existence”, to “a way of being”, based on a personal value of experience which, starting from materiality, transcends it into a more complete and integral dimension, inclusive of the intrinsic multi-dimensionality of our existence.

It is a dimension that includes not only the need to change, improve, reassure its own existence and that of others, but also – and this is wherein its completeness lies – to foresee in the near future, certainty in a situation and condition which is no longer precarious but more secure and more stable for the individual and for others. Recent studies have shown that Italians have rediscovered spirituality, from which they claim to draw strength. Spirituality seems to go beyond religiousness.

Without examining in detail the evaluation of this phenomenon, in this connection between spirituality, art and culture, an element can undoubtedly be found which is of value not only to education, but also to the discovery of new openings for professionalism and specialization. This is why both the meaning of beauty, including artistic beauty, and the philosophical concept of preservation, can provide interesting input for those who work in the conservation sciences or in the planning and promotion of artistic and cultural events, especially if it relates to religious cultural heritage.

It is no coincidence then, that Joan Mirò declares: “Art is not the visible but makes visible the Invisible, overlooking the abyss of being and existence, crossing the boundaries of the immediately evident to penetrate the regions of the absolute and the transcendent”. The Catalan artist well knew that artistic creativity, with the variety of its languages and forms of expression, always refers to an allegorical, otherwise indescribable, “Other” reality, and therefore, to the countless suggestions that art emanates as a vehicle of spirituality. This too leads us to an irreducibly “Other” reality that cannot be analyzed or measured by any instruments, but can neither be eliminated from the horizon of the mind and human heart.

The above is an objective truth that takes into consideration the individual’s relationship with the “Everything” in which they live, and sustains their very existence, which does not stop within the confines of our body, our interests, our fears, but with profound spirit, elusively seeks the Absolute.

Spirituality consequently becomes a tool for reflecting on the value and role of cultural heritage in today’s society through a combination of different skills and sensitivity and, in conjunction with creativity contributes, as in a mosaic, to the final result relating to the promotion and preservation of cultural heritage. Thus art, which is also science, can be seen as having a fundamental and privileged position due to its relationship and inseparability with the environment. It is therefore an indispensable tool for environmental ecosustainability, ethics and aesthetics.

A particular echo can be found of what has been stated above, in several passages from Pope Francis’s Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si* (24th May 2015), dedicated to the “care of the common home”. It puts forward an “integral ecology”, describing (Nos. 137-155) environmental, economic, social, cultural and everyday life dimensions. An ecology that is entirely “human”. In speaking of cultural ecology, the Pope explains that: “Together with the patrimony of nature, there is also an historic, artistic and cultural patrimony which is likewise under threat. This patrimony is a part of the shared

identity of each place and a foundation upon which to build a habitable city. It is not a matter of tearing down and building new cities, supposedly more respectful of the environment yet not always more attractive to live in. Rather, there is a need to incorporate the history, culture and architecture of each place, thus preserving its original identity. Ecology, then, also involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense. More specifically, it calls for greater attention to local cultures when studying environmental problems, favouring a dialogue between scientific-technical language and the language of the people. Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also, and above all, a living, dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment” (No. 143).

By not experiencing this “dialogue” as protagonists, means missing an important date in history. We can no longer afford to do so.