

EDITORIAL

The point is a gaze

by Costantino Esposito

This year strange meeting is reserving surprises for us. I say “strange” because, when I got there, I immediately thought, asking a silent question to myself: “So what!? Where is the Meeting?”.

What was missing was a piece so far absolutely necessary or, rather, the main protagonist, that is the people, the faces, the bodies themselves, the movement of people, at times uncertain, at times resolute, but always *moved* by something that was always worth discovering, following, sharing. People in flesh and blood: that is what I could not find, an absence that made the spaces a little senseless, almost useless. Empty. But even absence - as I would soon discover - can bring with it a promise of fullness.

With some friends that I had fortunately found “in presence”, and with whom we looked at each other - at the beginning, as if we were survivors -, something absolutely interesting immediately took off. We were looking, around us and on our own faces, for what we had come to Rimini for (leaving at home family, friends, colleagues, people we would have invited to come with us, etc.). We were looking for, we were going on a hunt for what, in theory, we had always known, and now, when the grandiose and well-tested machine of the successive editions for forty years was not waiting for us ... well, now it was not more difficult, but it was paradoxically easier, less obvious, less “known”, to seek the presence that had attracted us again this year. Although with the mask and physical spacing and temperature measurement. It was like a new thing, and the challenge and the pleasure of intercepting it was reborn.

It was necessary to look, to gaze carefully at what happened in the studios equipped for live television, the screens with the large faces of the guests connected at a distance, the way of being there of the guests who came in person that, even if they did not have in front of them the thousands of spectators of the public, were aware that through the camera they were talking to people all over the world, in their homes and in the many connected squares. The absence was turning out to be an even more widespread, extended, shared presence. And it is at this point that I understood the decisive point or, rather, I understood it again, like all the other times I had come to the Meeting, but this time in an unprecedented, strange way, even more acute than when I thought I knew it out of habit, and I expected it a priori. *The point is a gaze*, someone’s gaze on

reality, on the world and on oneself. Because the human is played out in one gaze, which is not just a visual ability, but a position, a “posture” of the “I”. So much so that many times we look at things, but we don’t see them, we don’t notice them. The decisive point, the reason why we had come, was an invitation to look, following and identifying oneself with the gaze of someone who sees more than us, farther, or closer, or deeper.

And it was the same invitation addressed to the many (most of them) who had not come, but who were with us, following the trail of the same gazes in different parts of the world, at different time zones, in the most varied conditions.

I would like to say something only about some of these gazes in which “the human awakened”, as the title of the book by Julián Carrón says and which, for me, has marked the horizon of the entire Meeting this year. The first gaze has been the one of Mario Draghi, on the first day. I do not return to the specific contents of his speech, bearer of a broad, critical and aware vision of the dramatic moment that Italy and the world are experiencing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, I focus on an apparently secondary point but which, in reality, constitutes the secret key to Draghi’s intervention. What I have seen and heard is the gaze and tone of a man for whom the precise analysis of the factors technically at play in the current socio-economic condition was accompanied and supported by a sort of yearning for the life and destiny of young people. That not a single life is lost: is it not this the aim of all banking, financial and political strategies in the world?

And it was a surprise to see again the Basque Mikel Azurmendi interviewed by Fernando De Haro, about his book *The Embrace* (Rizzoli). I had already heard him criticize with passion and ferocity the prejudices of modern sociology and anthropology, which never involve themselves with their true object, that is, human experience. But this time the criticism had become a freedom of proposal, a new gaze at people’s experience, a new culture born from the encounter with a living Christian community that had radically changed Mikel’s life. The cultural newness to be proposed to everyone coincided with his particular historical experience.

And when Eugenio Borgna, the very icon of phenomenological psychiatry, talked about his work with madmen and the adventure of research over a lifetime, he quoted his old professor who told him: “Even if you save only one from madness, your life will have had a meaning”. It was always that irreducible presence that returned, the presence of an “I”, the gaze of a man, the possibility of being ripped out of nothingness.

Umberto Galimberti re-launched it in his own way, even risking to contradict himself. At first he said that, in the face of nihilism that empties the lives of young people of meaning and in the face of the technique that reduces people to supine executors of the economic mechanism of consumption, he had appealed, as a way of salvation, to the recovery of the Greek sense of measure, that is, to limit their desires so as not to risk getting burned. But then, immediately afterwards, with a look of touching sincerity at himself, in front of all of us, he affirmed that from nihilism only an experience of love can snatch us, a love that is the only one that makes us truly know ourselves and the world. And he did it firsthand, by remembering the figure of his missing wife.

This is why I came to the Meeting, this is why so many *connect* with the Meeting: to discover the origin of this gaze. A human gaze that man could not give himself with his abilities alone. Because only when you are loved you can look at everything like this.

One needs a father, one who generates the gaze and reopens hope. As he said - I would like to say how he “saw” and showed us Carrón in his dialogue with President Scholz - it takes a point of certainty now, in the present, a gratitude for the fact that reality is there and I am there and you are there, to keep hoping. Not out of illusion, but out of surprise, out of wonder. That wonder without which we would not be able to listen to the sublime that speaks to us in everyday things.

(translator: Cecilia Sironi)