

MOSCHINI Marco

“PROXIMITY”: HUMAN VOCATION FOR HAPPINESS. DETERRENT AND RECOGNITION OF THOSE WHO UNDERMINE PEACE

In Proceedings of The Third International Scientific Conference “Happiness and Contemporary Society”, March, 20, 2022. Lviv: SPOLOM, 2022. P. 152-156. <https://doi.org/10.31108/7.2022.31>

ISBN 978-966-919-826-6

Marco MOSCHINI

*PhD, Professor of the Department of Philosophy, Social Science and Education,
University of Perugia (Italy)*

**“PROXIMITY”: HUMAN VOCATION FOR HAPPINESS. DETERRENT AND
RECOGNITION OF THOSE WHO UNDERMINE PEACE.⁷⁹**

Abstract. In this time of barbarism, we must be careful not to compromise but to reinforce the theme of proximity. The exercise of an ethic of the person that recognizes itself in helping others, in building a community, in thinking of happiness as a common basis and objective of peace. this is especially valuable today when violence seems to have overwhelmed security and stability. But the effort to build hope and happiness cannot be abandoned now. Indignation must lead us to generate a new culture of happiness and communion. A way to resist. Readings inspired by Gabriel Marcel's critics during World War II.

Key words: happiness, proximity, peace, metaphysics of hope

Live is the essential assumption of the other. The disposition towards the other is to care for all those who are my neighbors, my near ones. Our vocation is to be close to the other. And in proximity we can find the first great way to the consciousness of happiness. what does it mean to be happy if not to be close? This is proximity: being here for everyone. And this being all things to all people is happiness. And I say this at such a serious time for our era, which at this very moment is emerging from a pandemic to enter a terrible war of brutal invasion.

Proximity is not just a vague call for closeness. Understanding proximity demands that we be the protagonists of our lives from the point of view of the growth of the me, in caring for and helping the other. We cannot exclude ourselves from life, and if proximity is inclusion in life, it is also appreciation of life itself. So, it is happiness. Proximity means living my full being, here in the time I am living. Not estrangement from the world, or from time, but this faith asks you to incarnate yourself ever more deeply in this time.

Man, in his fullness, is devoted to happiness and therefore needs to pass through proximity. He must place himself in time with our personal history, which we can often neither choose nor determine totally, but which we must understand profoundly, and often turn it around and characterize it by continuous signs of conversion of our soul and

⁷⁹ I wrote this text before the brutal facts of war threw all of Europe and civilization into barbarism. My mind wanted me to refrain from presenting a text of this tone. But the closeness to those who suffer injustice, first and foremost the Ukrainian people (but with them also those who mourn on both sides for the devastation arrogantly caused) pushed me forward. Proposing now horizons of peace seems to me to keep hope alive, a possible way of rebirth and reconstruction. After the war, we will have the task of healing wounds, restoring hearts, and laying the foundations of a new civilization. In the meantime, let us resist barbarism with our thoughts and with all the forces of our spirit. At least we who look upon war with horror and who can only support our suffering brothers and sisters.

our deepest spirit. We must enter our own history, and we cannot enter it unless we also enter the spirit of the greater history we are living. On the one hand there is our life and on the other the great history of the world. We are placed in this history with our contribution in favor of the other.

It is precisely because of this that we are called to be in the world with a personal character. We must, however, cultivate a gaze open to the world to recognize all the others who are with me in this time; there is no proximity if there is no incarnation in time.

Proximity and incarnation in time require that we know how to discern in the folds of life and personal and general history. All of us are always in the time of discernment. And this is the time of discernment, of a critical look at the world and the community in which we are called to live. It is not just a matter of living the time, but of understanding it to discern my attitude, my resources, my coherence in terms of witness, my ability to be a neighbor. For this reason, discernment is never a single action but a complex, careful and shared analysis. Discernment requires that I recognize myself not in a solipsistic way but in sharing with those who look at me and the world with me. Happiness comes from sharing these fundamental resources of the person and harmonizing them.

It is more necessary today to become neighbors in these times, which are complex and complicated. Times of wounds of nightmares. The spectre of an arrogant and violent war has materialized in recent days. Violence and political selfishness have disfigured the face of fraternity. Concord and friendship seem compromised. Overwhelm and killing are present. And it is precisely in the darkness of these times that we should somehow seize opportunities to return to the fundamentals of a happy life connected to the happiness of others. In this excavation of the spirit, we find solutions to the needs we register and the aspirations and desires we manifest. After all, it is precisely in moments of greatest complexity that needs, and necessities are most sincerely expressed. Knowing how to grasp these needs is something for the wise and knowing how to respond to them is the best field for exercising a wisdom that can only be applied with goodwill and that ensures happiness. Enough of the sterile complaining and defensive feeling that expresses our unease today. Complaining today seems to come closer to blasphemy than to a holy attitude. Complaining has no legitimacy in thought. And each time brings with it its own specific complications. Reading the signs of the times is the imperative. Assume responsibility. Indignation must replace complaining. Even more so at a time when weapons are speaking.

Today is a time wounded and complex by war and injustice, by the wounds of a collective physical and metaphysical evil. but the needs expressed by all generations seem to be united in asking for care, attention, urgency to be considered and loved. We are all united in asking for happiness. All men and women have always had a need for a good life, for serenity and happiness and peace in their own existence, which is the right goal for every living person. Today this need for goodness and life takes the form of a stronger need for attention and proximity. This is not because the generations are disoriented or disarmed with respect to the challenges of the world. On the contrary, it is a time for advanced and shared skills and knowledge, especially among young people. What is needed seems to be the possibility of being accompanied to share these skills and competences, knowledge, and ideas. There is a demand to get out of solitude and to share

everything; there is a need for community. We need to share spiritual resources and thus happiness itself. We need education in affectivity because there is a need to learn to bring together that powerful feeling of self-love and recognition of others, which makes us all available to give and receive love. In short, willing to be happy. Therefore, the current conflict shows how little we have done to develop a culture of happiness.

Only with a love that is close to all can I easily offer a new form of sociality. I will be close to those who feel the sting of unspeakable loneliness. A new form of friendship that expresses "being with you to make a journey together". This is the solid basis for a meeting of individuals called to form a community; where no one is lost in indistinction, but where all are placed with their personal identities, in a communion of life that is made up of shared faces and gazes oriented towards the common good, happiness, solidarity.

Only a love that is close to all can drive us to the courageous assumption of responsibility, the only appropriate way for us to assume the right spirit. With this spirit we can happily face the future without running away from it for fear of who knows what it may hold in store for us. No fear for what is to come because our fate, placed in our own hands, is a matter for me and for others. With everyone I can plan, throw myself forward, in time to achieve things that are worthy of being accomplished for everyone. Project yourself to the good to build a better and happier future. That good that drives you to say "yes" to what deserves to be considered and accomplished and to say many "no" to what sounds like false moral currency.

Only love that makes itself close to everyone will definitively exonerate us from disengagement to give us renewed attitudes of care for every person, especially the last, the poor, the people who need us, the younger generations as well as the more advanced in age, the marginalized of existence, the sick, refugees, foreigners who will remain foreigners everywhere. All of them remind us that we too are basically marginal in existence, we are afflicted by many different types of poverty, which if they are not economic, are perhaps moral poverty; the last ones remind us that we are the last ones if we turn our gaze and our backs on suffering and discomfort; we are the ones subjected to the next disease that will come and always refugees and foreigners in life, unfortunately subjected to the violence of the state and nationalist egoism.

But how can we cope with this time? How can we learn to love our neighbor, to make ourselves our neighbor? How can we orient ourselves towards happiness? How can we say these things precisely when we live in the time of contempt for the other, of international legality, of mutual recognition, of reliance on arms? The answer was formulated by St. Augustine in a lapidary statement that I can repeat: "one learns to love by loving". Even when war resonates. Now is the time for rebellion and defense. But to ensure peace, we must also cultivate thoughts of possible happiness, of revolutionary love and the growth of a culture of peace during the storm.

You don't go to the school of love and happiness, but you go to the school of love and closeness. Love can become a teacher, it can educate. Love is a disposition that is realized by loving, and from that moment we become educators of ourselves and others.

If we want to discover the roots of happiness, we must discover the challenge of proximity, that is, of love, we will discover that we all began with ourselves. We have begun to love ourselves by continually weaving together the fractured threads of our

being a person, through the exercise of discernment, dialogue, temperance, and a will forged in the known and shared good.

My being a person, which is manifested in my openness to the other, in my assumption of the other's needs and in my placing myself in favor of the other, can only be exercised in a preliminary love of oneself which inevitably pushes us to live for others, to spend ourselves for others in confrontation with others. And in this going to the other find happiness. I am not called to life to be a man, but I am called to life to be a neighbor. In this proximity I discover that I can love myself. I am capable of loving, and from this capacity comes my lovability.

An important reading is that of *Homo viator* by Gabriel Marcel. He invited us in times of darkness and war to make ourselves capable of changing the world through an education in love. The right education is one that leads us to enter the path of life. To enter it with that open and conscious conscience that has been educated by love. Love is the preliminary moment that opens us to that "metaphysics of hope" that does not make you say, "I hope that" but instead makes you proclaim, "I am hope for you". This "being hope for you" is the same silent love of the mother, the father, the person who loves you, the friend, and to this "being hope" we are entrusted and we ourselves offer it as the best we can give. Hope turns from us to others and from others. And it turns to us who are equally in need of hope and tells us that in our lives we are saved by this proximity of hope that has faces and hands, feet and body, actions, and thoughts, to be shared always. We may always feel," says Gabriel Marcel, "like prisoners, exiles, incurables, but never excluded from the remedy of hope.

We are all of us, after all, prisoners of our living conditions. We are exiled from our homes because of our limited capacity to open to the other completely. We are incurable, because death stands before us not as a possibility, but as something that will surely come. But despite this, in this imprisonment, in this exile and illness, I know that I can experience hope. I know this because I know that I am watched over and looked after to the end by someone who loves me, and so I have discovered that this love is also mine. I know this because I know that I am watched over and looked after to the end by someone who loves me, and so I have discovered that this love is also mine. I know this because I know that I am watched over and looked after to the end by someone who loves me, and so I have discovered that this love is also mine. I know this because I can narrate myself, I know how to tell of my love, of the love I have received, and because of this I know how to share life. An experience we can only have if we deeply love ourselves; I can think this and experience happiness.

But do we really love this deep self? Do we lose ourselves in falsehoods and recitations of life? Do we really love the self?

I am not in a romantic universe of mushy love. Of its preciousness I must realize. This realization of love to the point of blood tells us of the totality of love to which we are driven by loving following the example of our educators who are the witnesses of this love. Therefore, entering into the mystery of love means entering into the offered and given life of those who precede me to teach me that I too have something to offer and give in my life.

A life offered, certainly. This ablative dimension within life is gathered in our existence. It is expressed where I am called to live in relationships with the world. I must know how to look after the relationships in which I am placed. Because that is where I

am. Being a person, in fact, is this being to life to become a gift of love, hope and happiness. Even in times of war.

REFERENCES

1. AGOSTINO D'IPPONA, *Confessiones*, in *Opera Omnia*, cur. C. Carena, Città Nuova, Roma 2000.
2. GÜNTHER ANDERS, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen Bd. I: Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, C.H. Beck, Münche 2018.
3. GÜNTHER ANDERS, *Pathologie de la liberté. Essai sur la non-identification*, Boivin & Cie, Paris 1937
4. MAURICE BELLET, *Notre foi en l'humaine*, Bayard, Montrouge 2014
5. MAURICE BELLET, *Un trajet vers l'essential*, Editions du Seuil, Paris 2004
6. MAURICE BELLET, *L'amour déchiré*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 2000
7. ROMANO GUARDINI, *Welt und Person. Versuche zur christliche Lehre von Menschen*, Grünewald-Schöning Verlag, Mainz Paderborn 1995.
8. GABRIEL MARCEL, *Essai de philosophie concrete*, Folio essai Galimard, Paris1998.
9. GABRIEL MARCEL, *Homo viator*, Aubier-Montaigne, Paris 1944.