

il principio *era* la mèraviglia

primum vivere,
deinde docere?

Color che ragionando
andaro al fondo, s'accorser
d'esta innata libertate.

Dante Alighieri, Divina Commedia, Purgatorio, canto XVIII, vv. 66-67

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INTERNATIONAL SUMMER UNIVERSITY

DAL 7 AL 9 AGOSTO 2023

PASSO DEL TONALE (BS-TN) PONTE DI LEGNO (BS) VERMIGLIO (TN)



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At which point are we in the path of knowledge of the universe, of the world in which we live and of the mystery of that “jumble of the human heart” as Manzoni calls it in his *The Betrothed*? This is the question that Tonalestate poses as theme of its convention and, to introduce everyone to this reflection it inserts, in its poster, important nouns and verbs: beginning, wonderful, is, was, live, teach, freedom.

Let's start from the title: “The beginning was the wonderful”. The term “wonderful” (in Italian: *meraviglia*), derives from the medieval Latin “*mirabilia*”, a genre of travel literature that was used to indicate “wonderful things” that those who travelled wished to know. The experience of the wonderful is well described by Bernardo Strozzi's painting: the elderly Eratosthenes and his young pupil are captured in a moment of authentic stupor and illuminated discovery. They have found something! This discovery edges them in a moment of pure and full happiness and we deduce that they will continue to search, discover and rediscover together. Has it ever happened to us to feel a wonderful thing such as this, not offuscated by haste, by the obsession of passing an exam, by the need to make money or to impose our personality?

The title of the poster as well, with the two verbs “was” and “is” (in Italian: *Il principio era la meraviglia; where era means was and è means is*) in a different graphic style, opens the discussion on the relationship between past and present: what has justly changed in time and what has instead not changed as it is a wonderful ontological principle of the existing?

A second point of work is highlighted by the subtitle: “*primum vivere, deinde docere?*” (first living, then teaching?). What does “living” mean? It is probable that we find it difficult to answer this question, so much so that, even if we try to describe our life, we always feel as if something is incomplete. Etymology does not help us in this case, as *vivere* (live) “doesn't have a root”: it is, simply, living. What is that quid that brings us to say: “this is what life is!”, or instead: “this is not what life is!”? Here is, then, the *docere* (teach). This quid, is in fact, transmitted to us by others. From which facts and elements do we then distinguish when we receive a benign *docere* and when, instead, the *docere* comes to us as an arrogant exercise of power or a vain self-affirmation? We cannot deny that our society seems to want us to be all “autodidacts”, and that it has been promoting a deep separation from what “is known”, what “is said” and what “is lived” and “is taught”, and this opens us to another ques-

tion: is it still possible to teach something to someone or to learn something from someone?

In the poster there's also the quote “this innate liberty”, that is to say, a liberty not created by society nor by our own lucubration or fantasy, but something that is at the origin of our being. How can we recognise this type of liberty and let it act? Dante tells us: we need to go to the bottom. Let's try and verify if this affirmation is true or not: the reality in which we live requires it, as it is a reality full of pain. We find ourselves in a world in which it is easy to pretend to be happy, but many would truly want to recite, understandably, the words of the Psalm 55: «Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm.».

Let's ask ourselves: do studying and knowing help us keep alive a desire of good and do they help it be so deeply-rooted that, as much as it is tested by events, it is never broken? This is why it is worth it to ask: the studying to which we dedicate ourselves, is it really useful? Is it freeing or is it slavery? With which method do we study? Do we have to do it on our own, or with others? And by which standard do we decide to go against, or give reason to, conclusions, either our own ones or others'? Does that which we believe we know cause a true passion for the human and for that which objectively surpasses the human? What is the relationship that exists between the quest for the mystery of every man and astronomy, physics, philosophy, mathematics, history, art and all sciences? And why do governments want to have the monopoly over instruction? And why has the big industry been appropriating it for some time? And why are so many people, in all actuality, excluded from the possibility of studying?

The work could precisely start by facing and then expanding these questions that are here as an opening, but that can maybe help give dignity to the art of studying in function of a personal and communal good. And the invitation is to do it at the light of your own ability of observation, of your own experience, of the context in which you are, of the history that precedes us, of your own knowing or not knowing, so that you can be ready, by participating in Tonalestate, to meet and share experiences, knowledge and reflections with young people, with lecturers and with personalities coming from the world of culture, of art, of science and of information coming from many parts of the world.