

tonalestate

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER UNIVERSITY

de RE chi li ha le cti chiavi del regno?

Nulla c'è che non pianga.

La vista delle miserie
umane si fa pensiero.

Virgilio, Eneide, Libro I, 462



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The theme that the Tonalestate - International Summer University proposes to us this year is that of misery, and it introduces us to such a theme with a title that does not present any ambiguity: "deRElict" (Latin for derelicts, with the highlighted "RE" as in kings, the crimes of kings), that is to say the discarded, the abandoned, with nothing to lose and needing everything. In the poster, this heartfelt adjective-noun is accompanied by, and if possible, even comforted, a Virgil verse. In Book I of the Aeneid, with the enigmatic conciseness of the Latin language— meaning that there could be an infinite number of translations, the Poet, for whom a "sharp sting is trivial fault", declares: "sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt". The central focus of his affirmation stands in that "lacrimae rerum", that is to say the weeping of things on things, a weeping that is born from a merciful pietas that takes seriously the matter of misery and renders it the reason for indulgent and brave stances, ready to be compassionate and daring.

Facing the theme of misery – let's also think about its etymology: "mis" as in "afar from/ enemy of" and "eros", as in "fertile love" – demands concreteness and realism, because taking by the hand a person in misery isn't easy by any means: it is a matter of having to deal with the most extreme of poverties. And the Latin term "derelicti", on which its uncertain root "liek" are present a lot of contrasting opinions, refers to those who don't have anything and, as relicts in the sea of life, are beaten every which way by waves against which they can't fight. "Derelicti" are our brothers that are left at the mercy of a loneliness which deserves our crying, reduced to "things" ready to be sold and haggled over: they are the slaves of this XXI century often celebrated as bringer of a new era of peace, but that still shows a disfigured face of cruelty. And we also have to say this: if in front of this tragedies "weep'st thou not, what art thou wont to weep at?". Crying should only be the first step, we will then have to commit to a diligent, honest, and loyal work, until we are ready to give our own life.

The pain of those who are in misery also tells us of the still present cruelty in the history of humanity. While the Greek root for the word pain is "deléomai", as in "destroy", the root for cruelty has taken the meaning from "cruor", of the taste of "clotted blood", and from "crudus", of the rigidity of an ice that no sun seems able to melt. In front of all of this, we have to confront our sufferings – at times so petty and small – with the kind of suffering that is described to us with realism and superb poetic skill, as symbol of all the "derelicti" in history, in the Book of Job: he was a just man who, without fault, bowed down in utter misery, and dared to speak with God. And we will have to reflect on the cruelty (we recognise it in whoever has a "soul willing to proud and dreadful feelings and actions, and it shows in their deeds") with which those that – enemies of love – guide and govern cities, countries, nations and continents, causing wounds that will take centuries to heal. That cruelty, sadly and in various measure, is

absorbed by all of us and we tend to reproduce it in our daily relationships, at home, at work, at school, in the places of leisure and holiday, through our deceits, our lies, slanders, gossips, and the small or big revenges we take – often in subtle and hidden ways, but always hurting to who is subjected to them. There is, in fact, the evident and indignant cruelty of who orders wars, of who imposes to treat migrants as delinquents and invaders, of who makes a clean sweep of a whole people in the name of shameful and inexistent racial superiorities or reduces to nothingness other peoples to enrich their own, and then there is a more "private" cruelty, the one that every woman and man is aware of committing, and of which often they don't even have the decency to feel shame or ask for forgiveness.

Tonalestate proposes, then, to look in the face these derelicts for whom the crying of history doesn't seem to stop, without taking backwards ways that leave our conscience clean because unused. How can we accept that innocents are still massacred – as the beautiful painting by Guido Reni reminds us without half-measures – and that they pay with their lives the greed, cheapness and ambition of those who have the power? And how do we evaluate the revolutions that took place in history: what have they achieved and what have they destroyed? And what kind of revolutions, in this turbulent 2025, are necessary, better yet, mandatory, to take action against the extreme poverty in which entire peoples are left? What are the needs that, if not met, transform existence into hell? When a person is left with no home and sustenance, without friends, maybe even without an ideal that gives comfort, where and in who will they find a real – and thus effective – help? In whose name will we be able to say, again with the Aeneid's Virgil, solve metus, "don't be afraid"? It is worth it, then, to ask ourselves "who holds the keys to the kingdom?". Are they, perhaps, in the hands of who forcefully takes power, or is there a further away, a further up that is closer and on which we can found our hope and with which we can collaborate to create a far more just and human world?

These are some of the questions on which Tonalestate wishes to dialogue in its Summer University, to which will participate, as every year, young people and adults, students and retirees, factory workers and scientists, literary experts along with musicians, painters, architects, artisans, journalists and intellectuals, people deeply and concretely involved in the tragedies and hopes of our time.