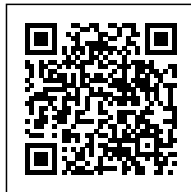


MISERICORDES SICUT PATER

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IDENTIFICATION

The ability to identify with the other is a natural phenomenon that distinguishes the most evolved species.

Identification in the other is one of the most important characteristics in the development of the individual and is a natural phenomenon that is not only human, but also belongs to other species. In psychology, at the level of behavior and the way of feeling, the ability to identify with the other had already been understood and studied, but now, after the discovery of mirror neurons, there is also anatomical evidence of it.

Mirror neurons are a population of visual-motor neurons identified in primates, some birds and humans. These neurons are activated both at the moment the individual performs an action and while observing an action performed by others. That is, both performing and seeing another perform an action equally activates a certain area of the brain.

In humans, mirror neurons are also found at Broca's area, which is the seat of language, a function, therefore, that is even higher and in connection with our most emotional and deepest part.

By activating these neurons at the moment when the individual sees the action being performed by another, and this action being felt, experienced as one's own, (since the area corresponding to that action in one's brain is activated), here one is able to take in, to understand perfectly what the other is doing and to identify fully with it.

One can feel what the other feels, but also what the other **suffers**.

We know, through the research of a great psychoanalyst: Melania Klein, that the child, during its development, goes through a phase that is called 'reparative.' Its name derives from the fact that as young children become aware of their impulses and feelings, they realize that they have felt and expressed experiences of aggression, envy, and anger, toward their mother, the moment they have not always, immediately and fully obtained the satisfaction of their needs. They thus project onto her

their resentment, which they believe can almightily and magically destroy everything in a real way, their mother in particular. Believing, however, that he has destroyed his mother, the child feels guilty and impoverished. He believes he has also lost the perfection of the original love and omnipotence that initially existed in the mother-child pair. The moment, however, when he tries and, all the more so, realizes that he can restore what he had destroyed and succeeds, he feels in turn stronger, more powerful, more creative, richer.

And it is only at the moment when he can feel, understand that he has destroyed, when he then has an identification with the feeling of the other, when he enters the reparative phase, that his real path of relationship and growth begins.

It is from this perception of the other's feeling that the sense of sin, the possibility of feeling guilt, also arises: only by identifying with the other, by understanding what the other is feeling, can one understand what one has done, assess the extent of the harm done. But it is, likewise, only in the moment of repair that one can feel whole again, complete, powerful, non-destructive, good, fulfilled.

In a specular way it is also possible to understand the possibility of forgiveness. If one understands why the other has hurt us and the reasons behind it, identifying with his or her feelings, one is not so far from understanding, sharing and being able to 'get over it,' that is, to forgive.

All these experiences are part of the history of each of us, but also of all humanity.

Moral of obedience and perfection

Indeed, to arrive at an understanding of the morality of obedience and perfection that has marked so many centuries of our history, let us take the evolutionary path again, considering the progression of man's thinking. We can see that this same envious, destructive, and voracious phase is carried over into all mythologies and that, upon closer inspection, it is part of a common path, thought, feeling, and memory that we find in all parts of the earth.

In all of them they speak of a universal flood, which came as divine punishment for the disobedience and voracity of humans, both of death being the punishment for desecrating either the tree of life, or certain rules that had been given by the gods to mortals. In many of these myths, especially where we find the tree and the serpent or, in place of the serpent, a dragon or demon, the original guilt is of the woman and often the most terrible punishment is precisely the loss of immortality.

We also know the reason for this. On the one hand, it stems from the loss of omnipotence associated with separation from the mother (assimilated in the primitive as in the child to their surroundings and divinity, since everything in their minds is and was conglomerated together); on the other hand, it stems from the advent of patriarchy. In fact, as Bachofen argues, later echoed by Fromm, while in matriarchy the governing law is that of love and acceptance, since all are mother's

children and brothers to each other, in patriarchy, on the other hand, as noted by Freud, the law becomes that of competitiveness, aggression, fear and betrayal. The savage horde, which he describes, is created, in which all the brothers by joining together manage to kill their father and seize his power.

Society becomes violent and follows the law of retaliation: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, all from a punitive and negative perspective. It is taught to always fight and to show no mercy. One loses that natural ethic to which every society and every individual should instead refer, which is: if I understand the evil I do, I am afraid it will return, and doing so depletes me of my wholeness and integrity, I am strongly motivated to refrain from committing it.

But today we know that the evil that is committed or the ability to identify evil that may be done or procured is received precisely through the mirror neuron system, through the ability to identify oneself, and that this is a common heritage of many species.

Throughout the patriarchal period, therefore, society is violent and punitive, and there is a constant attempt to overpower the other and keep him or her in one's own domain. It is from this time that the wars of conquest and the formation of social classes begin. One is taught never to identify with the other (think of the young Spartans who had to kill a man in order to be considered an adult), because using this ability, putting oneself in the other's shoes, would result in the loss of power, one would no longer command from above, one would no longer be an absolute master.

With these social rules, the possibility of identification or forgiveness that exists only in understanding the needs of the other cannot exist.

As mentioned, forgiveness comes precisely from understanding why the other person did that action, identifying with him or her.

In doing so, however, the power diminishes. In fact, at the moment when one individual has all the power and the other is completely subjugated and forced into submission, the power of the one in charge is strong, but if the 'master' puts himself on the level of the 'slave,' until a situation of brotherhood is reached, his power diminishes more and more. However, this behavior, this experience, also results in the loss of a sense of well-being and revives the fear of the magical return of evil done, which is always present in our unconscious (and which was real and powerful at the historical level in the late Roman era and the Middle Ages...) .

A similar still-magical and archaic way of reading reality is found in the Old Testament: everything that happens to us is because we behaved in a certain way, even illnesses stem from a fault, they are divine punishments.

Quite different and more modern is the message of the New Testament, are the words and parables of Jesus.

It must be considered, however, that the dichotomy between punishment and mercy that was

already found in the Bible, but which in the Gospel leans overwhelmingly toward mercy, depends on the twofold need: on the one hand to educate a people with rules that must be deeply assimilated and respected, and on the other hand the need to reintegrate and re-involve even those who have failed to implement them properly. It is essential to be able to re-accept even the weakest, even the most 'sinful,' to teach them to identify with each other and respect the 'identity, the dignity of each, but also to teach everyone the possibility of forgiveness.

Doing so opens up again the possibility of being reintegrated at the level of sons and brothers.

Here is agape and filia. This is what is announced in the beatitudes.

GROWTH

Ethics of responsible commitment and perfectibility

So the passage, then, that is made, the process that is gone through even in biblical teaching and in the gospel is this, and it depends on how we humans were able to interpret and understand what we saw and what was transmitted to us throughout our history.

We have moved from the image of an all-powerful and terrible God, whose omnipotence everyone tries to steal, as in the Lucifer episode, or for whose benevolence we are stained with the greatest crimes, as in the story of Cain, who is so envious of his brother's relationship with God that he eliminates him, to a God who also asks for our help, the harmonious cooperation of all humanity to build and have the world fulfilled, a God who must in turn be 'built'.

This is an evolutionary and revolutionary viewpoint, which is increasingly revealing itself to us, but it is also the viewpoint intuited by Teilhard and which is now, at all levels, becoming more and more evident.

As Teilhard says, in fact, *"The Body of Christ must be interpreted boldly, just as St. Paul and the Fathers sensed and loved it: it forms a natural and new world, an animate and mobile Body, in which we are all united, physically, biologically."* concept this increasingly shared and relevant.

Even in the encyclical 'Laudato sii,' Pope Bergoglio brings up the episode of the wolf found in the Little Flowers of St. Francis, and exhorts a new conversion in which nature and all its creatures are respected (starting with other human beings...) and in which we must all build, leaving no stone unturned with respect to the perfectibility of creation.

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This is the true constructionist and evolutionary perspective: only if we behave properly will we be

able to build the earth. Holiness, which is also our task, should always be sought, because God, who created us matter and spirit, wants to lead us to build an ever more perfect, more just, more honest and more true world. This must be done with our hands, materially, and with our personal growth, spiritually, to go on to create a global Work, a Unity, (psychological and physical), formed by *"monads united by intimate bonds that in mutual closeness refine and improve."* For we are made of matter and spirit, soul and body, but these two sides are part of a totality that is only completed in wholeness and synergy, just as the Body of Christ is only complete when each individual is integrated into it.

"More and more clearly, through all avenues of knowledge, we discover ourselves to be solidly involved in a process (Cosmogogenesis culminating in Anthropogenesis) on which mysteriously depends our fulfillment or, if you will, our beatification. The growing evidence that the purpose of each of us (one might say our personal ultra-ego) coincides with some common term of Evolution (with some common super-ego... But isn't this exactly the universal principle of attraction that we previously postulated and invoked to make the rebellious cores of our individualities coherent from within, to unify to the depths of the heart?"

I summarize and conclude

Essentially all around us, under the dual and irresistible grip of a Planet that is shrinking in size by the minute, is of a Thought that is wrapping more and more about itself, the dust of human units is being subjected to a formidable pressure of rapprochement, a power of an order far superior to the individual or nationalist repulsions that so frighten us."

P. Teilhard, Man the Universe and Christ, Jaka Book, pp. 30

P. Teilhard, The Coming of Man, Jaka Book, pp. 252 - 253

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