

CHARM AND CHANCE

EDITORIAL

Grace implies everything and beyond. It is what surprises us, yet it is not the uncanny. It happens in its own time – the favorable time – and manifests itself suddenly. It astonishes, yet it does not frighten us because the consequences of its happening are always an addition of good, an increase in what is positive; feelings of pleasure and joy correspond to this. When it occurs, grace does not take anything away; grace adds, donates, gives¹. Grace surprises us because it surpasses our desires by giving us what was unexpected; thus, grace realizes a possible happiness in occurrences that are revealed as greater than the hopes one had for them. In these instances, an excedence is released that generates the fulfilled joy of gratitude.

Chance occurrences, which twist the trajectory of events and lead to discovering what one was not even looking for, at times combine with a surplus understood as a mark of favor. When coincidences turn from chance to luck, then they assume the traits of grace. Grace reveals itself insofar as it is operative; grace works operatively, it makes beings be. This is true literally; that is, grace makes being be. Grace acts in advance, it truly creates or –which is no less work – transforms. The transfiguration that grace effects concerns the transformation and the most authentic retrieval of the same, and not its change into what is other than itself.

Operating according to this style, that is, with grace, in relations and productions, reveals what is essential. What is essential is usually disclosed as what is missing. At least among philosophers, one might conclude that this is obviously the case because what is missing is the origin. Within the given present, grace is however capable of letting that which apparently was not even missing unexpectedly emerge; for this reason, grace is followed by a form of joy that goes beyond all expectations. By donating that which is essential, grace at once surpasses both what is necessary and what is superfluous. For this reason, grace is neither lack nor ornament. By grace, what is possible becomes real while remaining independent from both what is useful and what is irrelevant.

What is thus established is a disquieting yet immediately persuasive logic – the logic of the gift (which is grace *par excellence*). Within the economy of the gift, munificence rules and the excess of the inexhaustible holds sway whereas calculations and accounting are banned. This extraordinary economy affects also the realm of the law. Under the sway of grace, the two disciplines, economics and law, reason in terms of generosity and equity in accordance with the exceptionality of singularities beyond the limits of mere justice. With grace, aesthetics too moves beyond the measure of beauty.

¹ When thinking about grace, the use of the notion of addition is inevitable; on this concept, see E. GUGLIELMINETTI, *Troppo: Saggio filosofico, teologico, politico*, Mursia, Milano 2015 and ID., *La commozione del Bene: Una teoria dell'aggiungere*, Jaca Book, Milano 2011.

The shining of a subject (or an event) full of grace fascinates, is *charming*. A graceful action has its own time, the *chance* of its success. Charm and chance happen through the intertwining of enchantment and opportunity. Their irruption is non-deducible, imponderable, and yet it needs preparation if one is to grasp and not to miss it. Self-preparation toward grace excludes asceticism understood as sacrificial renunciation and instead configures it differently as humanizing formation that alleviates and adds rather than subtracts.

The dimension that grace inaugurates opens up a space of invention where passivity and activity interact. Actions belonging to the subject are inflected in the passivity of grace – the subject is disclosed as responsible, as free actor, and yet as vehicle. Nature is sufficient so that a subject soaring in the dynamism of grace may be for itself, without relapses in Narcissism, first observer of the magnificence with which such a subject is invested. It is not by accident that, in antiquity as well as in modernity, grace expresses the best human condition, a state of serene beatitude, and an ever perfectible balance between sensibility and reason; grace signifies an open path among the senses, the idea of a form of humanity to be reached or a humanization proceeding *ad infinitum* until it becomes divine image.

Thought of in terms of mobile image of necessity and freedom, grace finds in the body the instrument for the display of its charming and donating abilities. According to myths, Grace is the girdle of Venus that is capable of attaining anything. “Belt of Venus” is also the astronomical name for the pinkish glow at sunrise or sunset, an irradiation process usually associated with good presages. The polysemy of grace shines everywhere – as vernal aura, as chance not to be missed, as that which counts the most.

This way of thinking calls into question the education of our whole sensibility and is a channel for strong political and transformative claims. The notion of grace has been the theme of an international conference recently held at the University of Trieste (Department of Humanities, Oct. 15-16, 2015) with the title *Charis Kairós: Grace and Occasion*. The current issue of “Spazio Filosofico” graciously presents the contributions made at the abovementioned conference and adds some more essays on the topic. The accelerated and open format of the online publication gives ample resonance to a *prima facie* outdated notion, yet a notion that has an impressive and pervasive history at all levels of language and knowledge.

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(translated from Italian by Silvia Benso)