WHAT STILL LIVES IN YOU



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THE FED SAGA — 24

For many years I believed memory was a possession.

Something that belonged to me.

My memories.

My experiences.

My stories.

My decisions.

As if memory were a private archive kept inside the skull.

Then I began to look more closely.

And I discovered something unsettling.

Many of the things I remembered were not passive.

They acted.

They kept producing consequences.

They kept making decisions.

They kept interpreting the world.

They kept living.

Inside me.

At that point the question changed.

No longer:

"What do I remember?"

But:

"What keeps living through me?"

The difference is enormous.

Because a memory is an object.

A force is a process.

And much of our life is governed by processes we can no longer recognize.

A sentence heard at ten.

A criticism received at fifteen.

An encouragement received at twenty.

A disappointment lived through at thirty.

A failure.

A success.

A loss.

A victory.

The years go by.

People disappear.

Situations end.

And yet something keeps working.

Like invisible software.

The ironic part is that human beings talk constantly about freedom.

While many of their decisions are made by rooms built long ago.

An old voice.

A habit.

A model.

A reflex.

A conviction never examined.

Maybe that is why changing is so hard.

We are not fighting against the present.

We are negotiating with much older guests.

Some come from the family.

Some from the culture.

Some from schools.

Some from wounds.

Some from love.

Some from fear.

They all keep talking.

Even when we believe they have stopped.

The Federal Reserve watches the delayed effects of economic decisions.

A choice made today can produce consequences years from now.

The human mind works in a surprisingly similar way.

A sentence spoken decades ago can go on changing behavior in the present.

A forgotten experience can influence a future decision.

An abandoned conviction can go on guiding a life.

Nothing truly disappears.

It transforms.

It changes shape.

It changes language.

It changes context.

But it goes on existing.

Look at a very old person.

You will often discover something curious.

Inside the body of an old person many individuals still live.

The child.

The adolescent.

The young man.

The adult.

The parent.

The professional.

The dreamer.

The disillusioned one.

They have not disappeared.

They have layered over one another.

Like geological strata.

Human personality resembles less a construction and more a sedimentation.

Accumulations.

Deposits.

Traces.

Residues.

Every experience leaves something.

Not everything stays conscious.

But it keeps acting.

Maybe that is why some people spend a whole life trying to understand themselves.

They are not looking for new information.

They are looking for the old inhabitants.

The ones who go on living behind the scenes.

The ones who influence without showing themselves.

The ones who speak without introducing themselves.

Over time I began to suspect something even more radical.

Maybe we don't really own our identity.

Maybe we are the meeting place of many identities.

People received.

People inherited.

People built.

People abandoned.

People imagined.

A continuous conversation.

Not a structure.

A movement.

That is why the concept of control interests me less and less.

No one completely controls himself.

At most he learns to listen to himself better.

To recognize the voices.

To distinguish what is alive from what is merely habitual.

To understand what keeps generating meaning and what simply keeps repeating itself.

There a different form of freedom begins.

Not the freedom to be independent.

The freedom to be aware.

Because many people think they are living their own life.

Maybe, at times, they are living the life of ideas they never chose.

Of fears they never examined.

Of desires they never questioned.

Of inheritances they never challenged.

And yet all of this goes on living through them.

Silently.

Like a current below the surface.

Maybe memory is not a museum.

Maybe it is a living system.

Maybe the past is not behind us.

Maybe a part of the past keeps looking for the future through us.

And this is where the paradox is complete.

We spend our lives trying to leave something behind us.

While something that came before goes on living inside us.

As if every human being were at once author and inheritance.

Origin and consequence.

Presence and memory.

There is no conclusion to this discovery.

There is only an observation.

Very simple.

Very uncomfortable.

Very human.

Some things you love go on living you.

Some things you fear go on living you.

Some people you have lost go on living you.

Some versions of yourself you thought were finished go on living you.

And maybe the most interesting part of life consists precisely in discovering which ones.

Ferdinando
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Human Behavior as Story

We don't sell books. We build relationships.