

Reflecting on our Personal Progress this Year



Human beings naturally need more or less contained spaces to live in; this is their living space... the “territory” that animals mark out for themselves. We all need to set ourselves certain goals, pass tests, suffer failures, celebrate successes and thousands of other things that show us the horror of emptiness we subconsciously feel.

That psychological need is reflected in the fact that we give great importance to time as measured in years, according to the accepted chronology, and also to our own years which we celebrate on our birthdays, at first very hopefully and triumphantly, as we leave behind the limitations of childhood; later with a certain indifference, and finally with a strange “inner urgency” to do things, because we are well aware that, beyond the kind greetings and the light of the many candles, the oil of our life’s lamp is running out and no one likes to leave their life without having given expression to some things that were well done, projects well on their way to accomplishment, books or works, or poems, or... so many things!

And, as we face each new year, many of us ask ourselves the question of how to approach the new cycle in an also new way, how to make real progress and accomplish the things we were not able to bring to fruition in the previous year.

But you are a philosopher... never forget that... ever!

About a thousand years ago, other philosophers, who were also Cabbalists, compared the growth of a man to that of a tree. I don’t remember the parable exactly... but it referred to the fact that, if we are to help a tree to grow, we must look after it carefully from when it is very young, water it, prune it and keep it free from weeds; little by little, imperceptibly, it will gradually grow and become stronger, thanks to the good gardener who never forgets that the best gardener is God. The new mechanistic techniques in psychology which advise you to observe yourself carefully every day in order to see how much you are growing are very harmful, because they create a sense of anguish, since no one can see their growth on a daily basis. In this way, the foolish man would watch the tree, hoping to see it grow from one instant to the next. The wise man simply looks after it and knows that it is growing, as he discovers from time to time, without surprise and without anguish.



That is what you should do with yourself. Don't give yourself too much importance. Be humble and hard-working. Water and look after your inner tree (your "column of stability") at all times and every day, but don't be always thinking about how much progress you are making. You should have the inner certainty that you are progressing, but not the psychopathic anguish of constantly monitoring yourself, which ends in self-hypnosis and the dull madness of feeling a failure. Have faith, joy and hope. Have inner pride as well... You are a philosopher! Don't be dependent on the fruit of the action and don't fall prey to the enchantments of the games of illusion. In short, face this year with simplicity, almost as if it didn't exist, with wisdom and serenity.