

## Contemporary crisis

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Material needs can be easily recognized, whereas the need of value is immaterial, invisible, and more difficult to be recognized. People are generally not aware of the need of value, but they use a great part of their time, energy and money, in order to answer it. They become obsessed with the way they are judged, their popularity; they strive for power, success; they become addicted to religion, ideologies and groups. But, these behaviours do not answer the need of value which can only be met through love. Therefore depression spreads and grows in intensity and people continue spending more time, energy and money in ways which do not answer this basic need. It is interesting to note that economy is based on the assumption that people will be always unsatisfied and that they will always want more.

Working on the needs of value and love, it becomes clear that crises and suffering are only moments of the process towards a permanent state of satisfaction. One of the steps is to learn how these needs communicate, the language of depression and anxiety.

### Some common answers to the need of value

#### *Being judged by others*

As soon as we start interacting with others we discover that when we are judged positively depression and frustration diminish. Being judged positively is usually the first technique we use in order to give a value to our life. We feel the need to be judged positively and we do not stand being criticized or judged negatively. Positive judgment is soon transformed into a

need. But, in order to be judged positively, we have to meet the expectations of others; expectations which in time grow and become more challenging. We start playing parts, we use masks which we know are appreciated. The distance between our inner reality and our outward behaviour increases; other people see the masks we use, but they are not able to establish a contact with us, we feel isolated and lonely, distant, always more alien in this world. This isolation increases the identity conflict and, as a consequence, also our need of being judged positively.

We enter a loop:

- the more we seek positive judgments, the more we use masks;
- the more we use masks, the more we feel isolated;
- the more we feel isolated, the more we feel meaningless;
- the more we feel meaningless, the more we need to be judged positively.

This loop increases the need and the fear of judgment.

In order to receive positive judgments it is necessary to be part of a group; without a group, without other people, it would not be possible to receive any judgment. Others are the source of our value, and this generates a deep fear of being refused, fear which leads to accept any condition the group requires.

### *Expanding our ego*

Typical examples are: money, popularity, power. We can expand our ego in many different ways, but the equation is always the same: "I mean more because I am worth more". This equation does not solve the identity conflict; whichever importance we reach we are always nothing when compared to the universe. We can be emperors of the planet, but we continue to feel depressed and worthless. We can reach the highest forms of power, where life or death can be decided, but we continue to feel equal to nothing.

It is interesting to note that whenever we find a source of value we fall into a loop: if we seek our value through money we will always want more money, if we seek it through power we will always want more power.

Extending our ego leads to a permanent state of fear. We become afraid of loosing our money, our popularity, our power.

Many psychologists and sociologists have suggested a specific need for power and domination. Here power and domination are seen as secondary needs which originate from the unsatisfied need of value.

### *Ideologies and religions*

Religions answer questions about the value of life; this is probably the main reason why they have always been so important. But, when we look at religions from the outside, for example when we examine religions which are different from our own, we often ask: "how on Earth can someone believe things like these!".

Because religions answer questions about the value of life, the need for religion can become so strong that people accept even the most fantastic and dogmatic explanations and become afraid of whoever could doubt them. We avoid people who belong to different religions and become intolerant. History provides an incredible number of examples on how the message of love, which is shared by all the religions of the world, when transformed in dogmas, in a religion, becomes the reason for intolerance, hatred, killing, wars, crimes, and devastations.

When our need of value leads us to accept dogmas we stop growing spiritually and our inner life comes to a halt; we develop contradictions and we degenerate to the point that, even professing the love of God, we support persecution, torture and killing of whoever believes in a different religion. The Inquisition and Nazism are just two examples, but things have not

changed much and, now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we still witness people who give support to conflicts among religions.

### *Control*

In order to receive positive judgment and to be part of the group, we often submit ourselves to others, allowing them to control us, through their judgment. This process can lead to a way without exit: we need the judgment and the group, but we feel totally blocked, suffocated and controlled. When the need to escape reaches a point which we can no longer tolerate, we start breaking the laws. This situation is common among many families, couples, groups and organizations and can lead to violent conflicts.

It is interesting to note that also physical and mental illnesses can be an outcome of the need to transgress laws; but, they can also become tools which permit the control of others. Mental illnesses, alcoholism, drug-addiction and diseases in general can have this double function: escape from control and control of others.

### *Feeling necessary*

When we are necessary we feel less depressed; this mechanism gratifies parents who help their children, or volunteer workers who help people in need. But when we start answering our need of value through activities which make us feel necessary, we end in a dangerous loop: the person in need finds that his need is necessary to the person who provides help. In the end, the more we help, the more we reinforce and expand the need of the person we are helping.

### Some common answers to the need of love

When we ask "Do you know what love is?", "Where do you feel love?" people usually do not answer or, after a small pause, often they say: "Well, I feel love in my head!". This answer does not sound right! Have you ever seen some one take his hands to the head while exclaiming: "I love you?". When we declare our love we naturally take our hands to the breast, to the heart. No one points to his head when declaring his love. Whenever we express a feeling, which is truly important for us, we spontaneously take our hands to the heart.

But, nowadays, love is rare: it dissolves immediately, it disappears, it is abstract, we are not able to recognize it; whereas emptiness, anxiety, fear, are strong, real, and painful and people's attention and energy are therefore all oriented on ways to avoid or reduce inner suffering. In order to escape emptiness, anguish, and anxiety we try to suffocate our inner voice, for example:

- *we use **substances*** which produce sensations of inner heat (similar to love) such as alcohol, drugs, tobacco. But when we use a substance to answer the need of love, we are replacing the need with the substance, and we start experiencing the need for the substance. Any substance which produces feelings of warmth, similar to love, can lead to addiction. A typical example is heroin which causes inner feelings which are described to be identical to love: this might be the reason why this substance leads to one of the strongest forms of craving. Also alcohol produces feelings of heat, similar to love, even if addiction starts when they are used to cover emptiness, anxiety and fear. Few people know that when addiction develops, the craving for alcohol degenerates in physical damages and in death when the substance is not available.
- *we get involved in **activities*** which fill every empty moment. When inner suffering becomes unbearable we want to escape any moment of silence in which we might feel our inner state: we become addicted to TV, football, soccer, wars and violence; we start working in a compulsory way, not leaving any free moment to ourselves.

Even love relations can become ways through which we escape inner suffering. Couples often base their relationship on the need to escape loneliness and silence. Fear of silence and loneliness can be so strong that others become tools, used to escape inner suffering. We do not feel love, but we act as lovers, without realizing that love is not a behaviour but a state. People start feeling the emptiness of their relations, and their fear of being abandoned grows.