



To Feel Not To Know

Relationship Culture





TO FEEL NOT TO KNOW OR WHERE DOES SAFETY LIE?

We won't talk about knots, manouvres, techniques or rescue theory.

We will deal with a perspective on safety which has never occurred to those who usually deal with it.

No suggestions.

No experts.

No universal truths.

No technique or Knowledge, no discoveries or new ideas.

Just a clarification: understanding is not enough.

You need to recreate.

Let's say that "andersen¹" was the first man who put two pieces of woods under his feet so that he could move more easily on the snow. When he came across an extremely steep slope, he took off the woods and went on foot. The idea of breaking his thigh-bone never occurred to him.

He didn't need any technical knowledge to adapt his behaviour in order to feel safe. By watching that slope he had just "felt" its extremism. That "feeling" passes through the relationship with the environment, including ourselves.

It doesn't live on experience or science, because it's the relationship itself which creates and makes them live.

The behaviour of "old andersen" is not something we can copy, learn or examine. We can only be aware that it's already part of us. That kind of behaviour cannot even be suggested as an alternative to standard models, which prefer and promote the principle of techniques, rule books and professors. Bureaucrats of living, unable to see the human being out of rules, but ready to kill in order to respect them.

1. According to tradition and collective imagination, the first all-time skiers were Nordic, coming from the Scandinavian peninsula. "andersen" hints at a hypothetical first skier. It's written in lower case because it refers to a period rather than to a person.



The behaviour of “old andersen” is an attitude that should be taken every time we perceive we are walking on a ground, which doesn’t need any rule or technique to be understood. It’s a sort of metaphorical ground which satisfies the physical context as much as the conceptual one. It’s a sort of ground where our freedom of expression can’t be limited, where we can move safely and according to our measure, where we can create strategies and constant updating, in order to enhance our chances to be successful.

Learning to walk is maybe one of the most difficult experiences in life. How could we ALL manage to do it? Every attempt we make during that marvellous period is completely full of us and able to collect pieces of information, which every autonomous experience hands us on the silver platter of relationship.

After childhood² the rational dimension starts developing in our mind. But it’s only our culture’s fault if that rational space is going to prevail on our psychomotor condition. That condition which supports us when we try to stop crawling, when we jump on the chair because we can’t hold our emotion, when our football team scores, when a thriller movie freaks us out, when we laugh heartily.

Then why pointing out a ground which doesn’t need any rule, suggestion or knowledge? Because if we consider necessary for it to know techniques, rules or to have the specific equipment, then our creative potential can’t help being mortified.

The deterioration of creativity is something human, inescapable, recurrent: it’s a typical aspect of our condition. But it’s also possible to exercise creativity, even if our actual culture of technicality doesn’t help. On the contrary, it tends to obscure certain potentialities of our intelligence, the animal intelligence.

As a representation of the culture we are dipped in, we can see that most people consider “to understand” a synonym for “to feel”. For many of us, concentrating means thinking intensely about something. Often, we are ready to make a decision only after a lot of rational evaluations. Typically, we have a piece of paper with two columns, the *pros* and *cons*. Pros and cons would be appreciated if they weren’t the sole - and unconscious - background criteria, dogmatic and unquestioned. This is an unwise background, because it mortifies one of our most intimate and authentic human dimension, to such an extent that we deny our feelings, without conjugating them to our intentions. Therefore, at the time of decision our criterion consciously prevails on feelings. This leads to the origin of the hiccups (a contradiction between breathing/feeling and voluntary/”voluntary” intention); muscular, cervical, dorsal and lumbar contractures; accidental crashes against objects (doorframes, tables, etc.). Things that happen not only in a mountaineering context, but during our whole life.

2. For ages 6-10. First females, then males.



How many times, while skiing, do we bend out trying to remember or follow the hints of our Teacher or Guide? Thus without being able to make our emotional-physical feelings lead us, which we constantly have and stifle. Thus without being able to make use of that information. As a matter of fact, we are not inclined to observe the ground and collect information in order to update, adapt and improve the efficiency of our behaviour, practice and effectiveness. We are not inclined to observe our or someone else's motion in order to explore new combinations. On the contrary, we focus our attention only on the realisation of a good performance, trying to follow the analytic-technical-inhuman information that we collect. Such a level of concentration can oppose the muscle strength we are able to develop. At night we are done in.

The mere and blind respect for the rules, together with a theoretical codification taken on as an absolute value, even if with the best purposes, can be a source of deep alienation, hardly identifiable. Like the workman suffered from the alienation of his own work during the industrial production. The reason was the act of repetition deprived of any ultimate aim or satisfaction: the end product. Unlike the craft production, there is no true bound with the manufacturing process. In the same way, restricting ourselves to the mere respect for the rules without becoming emancipated, means risking the dehumanisation of the human being, his thoughts and actions. If we don't take the opportunity, by means of the mode of relationship, to re-create the rule itself and to go back over the process and history by which it was generated, we tend to repress our vital and humanitarian boosts. From this point of view, the most anti-social behaviours, as brutal as "manifestly" alienated from their context, can be observed as a result of this repression. Let's think about those well-off, polite and respectful boys who murder other boys of the same age group with rifle shots. Let's think about their statements and announcements, so much alien to the rationalistic culture which generated them. Let's just think about the murder of traditions in the name of science, future, technology, globalisation, of more important things. Too bad that all our identities were born from the womb of tradition. It's a pity we don't have a point of reference anymore, that is a place we want to go back to.

However, also in other contexts the issue remains the same. For example, there are some people who can't cook a good dish using their own creativity. Either they will give up or they blindly rely on their recipe book. "What?" - they say. "It's still raw!" "Yet I've cooked it as explained on the package". The information prevails on the feeling.

Different kind of people never follow a recipe book, open the fridge or go to the market, collect or buy some ingredients, put them together, control their cooking time, density, colour, the kind of pan, the fire level... they observe and relate themselves with empathy to "everything". There is a high probability that that dish will be slightly different at every turn, but "always" palatable. On the contrary, how is it possible to make it tasteless or overcooked? Often we have to blame distractions or concerns, which move us away from the relationship with what we are doing.

These two symbolic cooks represent the presence or absence of the mode of relationship. We are these two cooks, what is important is to be aware of it.



The mode of relationship doesn't just increase our chances to cook excellent dishes. It reveals another reality, wherever you are looking at, whatever context you are working in.

Through the mode of relationship we can learn to exist through our body. We could realise we have forgotten, and maybe wish to recover, the body as our own centre, as the centre of the aesthetic culture, as well as of the empathic sensibility. All these aspects however have been subordinated by the rational dimension, which has been legitimised by cases and history because of different needs. Such an abuse is now part of our common belief, that is to live mostly in the name of reason. A way of considering life, world and human beings which prefers the rational thought instead of the value, sense and meaning of the experienced feeling. This leads to the unaware arrogant conviction that it is possible to convey one's own experience. This leads to the "valley floor mastery"³.

The valley floor mastery constantly echoes among the falaises, mainly when crowded. Floods of tips come out during climbing courses. Especially if the climbers are kids, beginners or girlfriends. But how can they stretch an arm to reach that *reglette* if they can't feel that arm, if they are focusing on something else - for example the fear of falling - and nothing more?

How can't we - valley floor masters - realize how absurd and stubborn we are, when we try to modify a person's behaviour with a dull and inadequate hint? Is it worth reminding that we can't convey our experience? Would we teach a drawing lesson with the same mechanical criterion? "Now put your hand this way, then turn it there..."

The experience has to be experienced. The resulting feelings can be more (humans) or less (animals, plants, minerals) rationalised. Often we mix up communication with information. Communicating means transferring information (apart from misunderstandings), but not experience. We believe that we can communicate what is needed to modify our neighbour's behaviour. In fact this is impossible, since the story of the recipient doesn't meet the story of the sender. When this encounter happens, it means that a didactic moment has been accomplished. It means that the communication (verbal and non-verbal) has been realized in the right way and moment in order to be integrated in the recipient's biography.

If we insist in communicating our experience, we nourish that mechanical dimension, where our knowledge can be conveyed just because we claim it; since this can't happen, the blame is shifted to the recipient. Unfortunately, knowledge is the primary constituent of communication, while the recipient is just a secondary or even unimportant element.

We can use the mode of relationship not only in didactic contexts, but also in pedagogical ones. Our Mother is the living proof of this. Through the empathic relationship with her baby, she can stand how it feels, what it needs, how to care about it.

3. Personal idiom which refers to a common attitude: when you strive for teaching someone until you bawl in order to communicate or explain how to make a certain movement. An attitude which implies the possibility to convey one's experience, that is a hurdle about to be overcome by the mode of relationship.



Let's talk about the Munter method⁴, for example. Many people, including experts, consider it as a sort of doctrine: given certain elements and parameters, we can obtain a result which represents the risk level. From "X" and over, we can't take a trip, from "Y" and under, we can.

A whole method, as well as any other piece of information which can be directly collected on site at the time of departure, shouldn't be considered in a dogmatic way. On the contrary, it should be constantly integrated with the flow of external and physical-emotional information, together with the observation of the surrounding environment and the information which we already know, because of our studies or practice.

The Munter method can be suitable for our safety if we consider it as one of the proper means in order to evaluate the context we are about to explore.

Not only the Munter method is displayed as a repository of absolute truths, but also other patterns are displayed in the same way. The Caruso method has been considered for a long time the only one suitable for teaching rock-climbing. "If you don't follow it, you are wrong". "Just as if you don't know it". Often it has been part of the examination during the training course for mountain guides. Jargon, positions and standard procedures still have to be studied and practised, the evaluation of the aspiring guides are at stake. But it's not enough. The expression "*pacchetto sicurezza*"⁵ (shovel, arva/beeps, drill and *splint*), apparently a name just as any other, implies in fact a concept which focuses on the technical aspect. To the point that those who don't use this "box" or don't share its absolute necessity are accounted as heretical or incompetent. The mechanical conception of the human being represents the background for the technical and political minds which rule the training of "mountain professionals".

The expressions "*pacchetto sicurezza*" as well as "mountain with safety" (a long-lasting propaganda by the Italian mountain guides), which were adopted in due course, show perfectly how the concept of safety is considered today essentially in technical-material terms, as a false demonstration of professionalism and superiority⁶.

"Mountain with safety" hints at a zero-risk reduction. Another rape!

These are all examples and arguments which prove a cultural tendency born of the enlightenment which has forgotten the humanism of its parents.

On the contrary, these ancestors were never forgotten in other contexts. When a Tuareg starts crossing the desert with his caravan, he doesn't revise the user guide to the desert, the sand storm or the Saharian survival. The culture he grew up with, with which he identifies (without any rationa-

4. Werner Munter, a Swiss mountain guide, developed a method also called "3X3" in order to estimate the degree of feasibility of a trip in a snowy environment. His research is excellent. It's not so good the fact that it is often considered the method par excellence in order to decide whether to take a trip or not.

5. Pacchetto sicurezza: an expression, which could be translated as "safety box", that alludes, and deludes, to the possibility of being safe in a natural environment.

6. This critical remark is referred to the Italian situation.



lization process), is the centre of his safety. Such a culture had been originated and shaped by an unaware yet emphasized relationship with the environment.

For the same reason, a chamois feels whether it is possible to cross a glacier or not. If we move according to our feelings, we can give attention and room to the act of researching and exploring. The mode of the tuareg and the chamois represents the proper limit of our hedonistic and positivistic culture, which pursues the myth of the performance. This is why mountaineering is a natural/cultural expression, not a sport one. This is why mountains and nature are not separated from us. It's because of the lack of such a consciousness that any of us can make his own precious contribution.

With the same mode of the tuareg, we drive every day and lead our life. Facing a bend with ice, we adopt a behaviour which is determined by all the present elements we consciously or unconsciously gather, perceive, rationalize. If we calibrate our attitude with our feelings, the Technique, the Knowledge itself, becomes an element equal to the others and with them conjugated: therefore, it can be exploited at best. Certainly, we can't act safely if we just copy what the road sign says or doesn't say. How could we avoid skidding, if we don't refer to our feelings instead of the knowledge illustrated on the road sign? Otherwise, why are the mountain slopes not full of car wrecks, even if there are only few crash barriers on the side of the roads?

Any of us can agree that, when we cross the street, besides looking at the green ball, it's better to have also a look around, that is, to favour the information given by the relationship instead of the pre-packed one.

Only when the safety of that crossroads goes from the green ball to the environment - from the technique to the relationship -, we can cross the street with "zero risk". Differently, we tend to raise the risk because of an unforeseen event, that is the reduced creativity/energy we need to manage the unforeseen itself.

It's when we walk with bowed head, focusing only on one element among many others, that "the storm suddenly broke out", "we were caught from the darkness", "the wind suddenly picked up".

The relationship contains the greatest safety potential, regardless of our technical knowledge or motor ability.

Through this mode, some skiers - speaking of downhill skiing - worry about stopping to the side or at least not in the middle of a bottleneck or below a bump; someone else worries about starting again only after looking uphill to see if any reckless unstable skier is coming. Anybody could be enriched by such examples, instead of being mortified by a culture which still needs to be updated.

Like certain skiers, many mothers, aunts and grandmothers handle every day at lunchtime pots full of "dangerous" boiling water. The risk they run, that we run, is strictly connected with our skill. A



skill which consists also of a technical dimension, but it's not restricted to it. Otherwise, how could we have cooked pasta so many times coming out of it unhurt?

Walter Bonatti⁷ had already realized that it was not by means of a gun that you could feel safe in a wild environment. Reinhold Messner⁸ had already emphasized the meaning of re-walking our own historical path as the centre of our strength and richness. And safety. Alessandro Gogna⁹ had already adopted the concept of re-creation as the focus of his perspective, an individual matter which means authenticity, beauty and life, and can never be standardized. Ivan Guerini¹⁰ had already understood how to play on such difficult grounds. Yvon Chouinard¹¹ had already understood that only the human being has forgotten his animal intelligence. Rheinard Karl¹² had already noticed that "the difference between a sportsman and a mountaineer can't be deleted just pursuing competition". That "total freedom of choice makes mountaineering more a lifestyle than a <<mere>> sport". For the first Hielo Continental solo traverse Giuliano Giongo¹³ had already trained lying on his bed and picturing himself while facing situations he could come across. Rory Stewart¹⁴, a western "misbeliever", had

7. Although he became famous in the world of mountaineering thanks to the global and historical value of his climbs and battles, Bonatti is here mentioned because of his assertions regarding his travels through fully natural lands and territories, not only the mountain ones.

8. Messner has never missed the opportunity to give history part of the strength which drives us. Not only, his clarification is even more important: he thinks that we can develop a full-size biography - less vulnerable - just when we re-walk, according to our measure and individual attitude, the path which has already been accomplished by history.

9. He is well-known in the international world of mountaineering because of his classical solo climbing, in winter but not only. He was one of the first climbers to realize how strong and inescapable was the generational adjustment coming from the free climbing: it was no more interested to the myth of performance and ideal, but to the individual and ecological myth of re-creation. He was one of those who consecrated and emphasized the new perspectives which were starting to reveal themselves in the future (the "New Morning"), stressing their principles and energy. An outstanding behaviour, considering that those principles were completely irrelevant to the traditional and patriarchal model of classical mountaineering.

10. A famous Italian climber, often considered one of the emblematic characters of the "Nuovo mattino" ("New Morning"), a mountaineering-cultural movement which gathered the discomfort of young people and the environmental matter coming from the beat generation, the '68 revolution, the clean climbing.

11. Climber, surfer, angler, blacksmith and businessman. In every of his activities he managed to act according to a model which totally refused the mechanization of processes and relationships. Although he swam against the tide, also his successful business (he established *Patagonia TM* and *Black Diamond TM*) proved his faith right.

12. Many of us miss the energy of his voice and presence. He was able to pronounce and define human dimensions which were considered contradictory by a traditional historical position. His non-orthodox words were listened also by those who hadn't yet realized that our different expressions are just aspects of us which are shown by someone else.

13. His by-now unobtainable book *Tekenica* relates his 70 solo days canoeing Cape Horn, surviving only on what he would provide while on sea. He is a mountain climber and an explorer as well, but above all he is aware of a world mortified by consumerism, opulency and the blind faith in technology.

His action is a scream full of art, beauty and freedom almost nobody had good ear to love, catch its power and inner plan.

14. Imagination, determination and art in Stewart's crossing is worth the first ascent without oxygen on Everest. Unfortunately only those who have an idea of Afghanistan's dynamics in its ethnic religious tribal clan cultures may understand what an extraordinary feat performed the young English diplomat. We would nearly invite to study an entire people to appreciate one man's worth. The excursion sports value is remarkable, but it is the last among those of his Afghan trek.



already succeeded in west-east walk crossing the tribal and the Taliban Afghanistan, adopting as a unique safety equipment his intent of relationship with the environment, people, animals, customs and unwritten laws establishing all behaviour, logic and truth his crossing made him meet.

Therefore, the legendary Japanese tourist¹⁵ (unaware and blameless emblem of clumsiness) who comes out from the Rifugio Torino¹⁶ with a pair of sneakers, doesn't really behave in a dangerous way. We ourselves, as "expert mountaineers", could behave in the same way. The Japanese and the mountaineer tend to raise the risk if they act without considering all the elements and requests that the environment and our self constantly offer and change. Do you remember when you look up to look around while hiking? Do you remember that you immediately stumble?

If this is true when we consider few physical elements, such as having your head in the clouds while hiking, the matter has even greater value when we get closer to more metaphysical and ephemeral aspects of reality. Those which can't be measured. Those which haven't got any guideline. Those which, once they passed, can still occur again. Those which belong to an identity called Everything, move on a circular time line and change their shape and nature according to whom they are facing and when.

In which terms does safety diminish if we move with bowed head or close-minded? The more or less lack of relationship raises the risk of an unforeseen and surprising event and reduces the potential of creativity: namely the only energy able to re-invent an appropriate solution, choosing among specific techniques (if you know them) or combining them in an unusual or new, heuristic, "serendipitic" way.

Rationalism. Materialism. Positivism. It's a sort of summary of those narrow positions, we should start emancipating ourselves from.

It's because of our rationalism that we make the concept of safety depend on what we know and what we have. Very often, proficiencies and skills are considered as the only source of safety.

It's because of our materialism that we are not able to look beyond knowing (techniques) and having (materials), in order to get a glimpse of the universe, which our materialistic horizon denies us, where the act of understanding shouldn't prevail on the act of feeling.

It's because of our positivism that we give importance only to the performance: only in this way we improv"e our self-esteem, thus considering the opportunity to give up as a completely appalling event.

The cultural expressions of our time (journalism, communications media, school, institutions, legislation, science, advertising) induce to think/believe that safety is represented by materials and techniques. We commit it to these two external elements, which have to be acquired, because of the more common and convenient everybody-does-it attitude. Therefore, safety comes down to be a

15. An italian expression with a derisory purpose which hints at the image of a naive tourist.

16. Rifugio Torino: an emblematic and famous lodge situated on the top of Mont Blanc, which is very crowded because you can reach it by aerial tramway.



mere product, more or less related to our responsible attitude. Apparently, being aware of what the mode of the relationship is worth is irrelevant. It's this belief which originates the idea that bolting increases safety, that GPS is essential, or that regulating nature seems to be a necessity for every public administration. "Right!" Provided that climbers search for safety inside themselves instead of outside. "Wrong!" If it encourages people who are calibrated on the positivistic motto "where there's a will, there's a way", unable to exist without identifying themselves in some quantities, unaware subscribers of the absolut *cogito ergo sum*¹⁷.

Therefore, the relationship with the environment/self reveals a chance in our culture, which would be otherwise remote, latent and occasional. It gives us the opportunity to realize - in a more and more refined way - how much we live through the world of ideas (mechanism) and how much through the world of feelings (authenticity). How much the first ones can lead us to behave in a way which is not connected with the earth. How much the second ones can lead us to another dimension where there is no more "I", and life happens without even thinking it. Naming these two dimensions implies realizing that one is actually prevailing on the other. Therefore, the possibility to emancipate ourselves from the first one, in order to access and exploit the second one.

How to interpret differently some very common observations. The relatively recent and widespread roundabouts¹⁸ - a way to relieve traffic congestion - produce safety thanks to the individual responsibility which every driver takes on. It's a kind of safety that any of us produces through the relationship with the situation we are in. Using this same criterion, all road signs have been removed in Drachten (Netherlands), Bohmen (Germany), and in one area of London. An act which implicitly criticizes welfare state concepts and regulation. Strangely enough, this attitude is already available in less conventional cultural contexts. Istanbul, Naples and Bangkok can boast maybe a less amount of traffic offences than other western cities, in spite of a "total" disrespect of the rules of the road. But if talking about road traffic could be a well-known subject, maybe we should mention the Norwegian prison of Bastøy. Where prisoners achieve social reintegration through an autonomous and individual growth of their full responsibility.

Although since 1921 there has been a school in England, Leiston, where young people can learn according to their own motivations, feelings and rhythm... although in Italy doctor Franco Basaglia¹⁹ promoted the relationship with our neighbour... in spite of these examples, in February 2010 the Italian government suggested to punish with administrative and legal sanctions those who cause mountain accidents.

But regulation doesn't work.

17. An expression coined by Descartes, which hints at the rationalist and Enlightenment turn, meaning that the human being exists firstly because he thinks.

18. Road couplings which are now adopted as an alternative to the traditional crossroads with traffic lights.

19. 1924-1980. An Italian psychiatrist, who became famous to the academic and social world because he fought for the dignity of mental ill persons, which is due to every human being. He won his battle in spite of the backward context of that time. A national law, n. 180, ratified for good his medical and cultural contribution with the elimination of prison-mental homes.



We need to be against this kind of one-way regulation, which is not supported by any cultural action: it's an addictive abuse of the welfare state.

On the contrary, if it were supported by an adequate cultural communication campaign, in order to create emancipation and independence, it would be a satisfactory solution.

The policy of punishing those who cause accidents with a condemn and a fine is like the standard prison policy (at least in Italy): we wish that people could learn the rules of our civil society, but in fact we confine them in a ghetto where the criminal model keeps on developing.

Tourist consumerism, aimed at enriching GDP, has brought a lot of people to the mountains, who are completely unaware of what living in nature implies. They just worry about learning to ski. Those who have worked for this kind of consumerism should now take charge of it in order to educate these skiers also on other subjects, apart from stretching and squats. Mountain subjects to be discussed on the radio, on tv, during demonstrations, to make them understand that snow is not like grass in a stadium. Snow is a living thing, which constantly changes according to exposure, height, time of year or day, latitude, season. Only when you start listening to the snow, you can discover other dimensions in order to be initiated in re-interpreting the mountains, yourself, what you are doing and how you are doing it.

Unlike roundabouts, the results of a positivistic and rationalistic criterion, based on revenues, can be observed in other contexts. Although tradition had shown for centuries that building at the foot of a mountain gully or along a waterway was not advisable, our confidence in technology allowed us to build, embank and reclaim, convinced about the possibility to manage nature without breaching, or being, it.

So, the apparently contradictory belief that using techniques reduces the possibility to panic loses its significance if we realize that the safety-in-relationship logic can't be alternative to the safety-in-knowledge logic. It's just necessary to point out that, even if we all behave already according to some of the information we collect through our relationship with the environment, not only in a mountaineering context, when we talk about safety, including experts, we use a language which never includes, stresses or emphasizes the human dimension - actually the one of relationship -.

The abuse of the rational dimension and the intellectual culture doesn't encourage the recovery of our physical identity and listening value, as well as of the mode of relationship as a principle of things. Therefore, we are intoxicated by ideas. We are creatures who often breathe superficially. This school of thought has got the message across that all open-air activities can be labelled as sports. This apparently harmless extension of the concept, from a tennis court to a rock face, implies an inadequate and contradictory attitude in order to increase safety: the focus on the concepts of sport, performance, quantity, as well as on innovative materials, equipments as on advertising, competitive way of thinking "My sister did it, why can't I?". On the contrary, those techniques promoted as the basis of mountaineering, do nothing but push us away from the real centre: our



motivation, our dimension, our satisfied freedom.

When Messner climbed the first peak with a pair of sneakers on (which passed later to the legendary Japanese), we (all?) laughed. We scoffed at him, like we did outside that lodge on the top of Mont Blanc, because we thought that what we already knew equalled all what we had to know. We thought that tradition is the ultimate truth, and so are its cliché. What a fundamentalism!

If the Department for Education and Skills, as well as a single teacher, would like to work in order to spread the culture of relationship, which results should we aspire to? To one and only. If we could ask to a heterogeneous group of children what they mean by safety, if they could stress that much depends on our attitude and behaviour, other than technical-analytical aspects, we would have reached the starting point for a cultural updating. From this point, our body won't be compared to a machine anymore, people will be all different and so will be each teaching approach they need, nature won't be considered just as a playground anymore, reality won't be divided into pros and cons, dialectical method will become a value.

What's the moral then? Talking about safety in these terms is more effective than just mentioning the notorious "respect for the mountains" or its alter ego "friendly nature". Two expressions which can be maybe true for those who pronounce them, but not for those they are told to: as we said, experience can't be conveyed. Nature is nature, you have to ride it in order to feel it. By approaching our self sooner than techniques, we are able to recognize the real source of our problem, therefore we can choose the best method according to our growth, strength and beauty. In this way, we can identify our own preconceptions. We can update our language and recognize our true experiences, without trying to remember "what the instructor told me to do in such cases". We can also discover that the laceration between mind/body and nature/culture may be reduced. "Nobody" will slip into a crevasse anymore, not even voluntarily.

What can we do then? In a male society like ours it's not easy to recover the eternal feminine, but it's the first step. Investigating our feelings puts us in a very fertile condition in order to accomplish every kind of human activities. It's a common intelligence everyone can take advantage of, provided that any of us will promote the culture of relationship as best as we can.

The act of being by means of feeling, as well as realizing we have always existed through our thought, means that we can emancipate ourselves from a huge cultural yoke. It means the possibility to investigate the world and our neighbour empathically, with no more prejudices. The possibility to communicate like we never did before.

Becoming aware of something implies approaching new perspectives. Another way of explaining why we can improve only through the logic of listening, instead of through the dynamic between teacher/learner. When we become aware of this, we realize also how certain ideological prejudices often prevail on our feelings. It's such an abuse that it can obscure what we feel and live. The point is that our emotions and feelings should not be necessarily predominant, but at least recognized by ourselves. At least, we should consider the communication of our body equally reliable, in order to take part in the hotchpotch of ideas, from which we will finally take out the ladle of truth.



Victory Project ascent contr oscuola di alpinismo - ascent@victoryproject.net

Identifying our feelings, emotions and body is a way to know better ourselves and our neighbour, but it's also the antidote to our intellectual and materialistic culture. Not in opposition to it, but as an integration. An act which is named by pedagogues "maturity" or "autonomy". What kind of critical judgement can arise if we are unable to emphasize our feelings and emotions because our education denies our right to express them?