

My father was born in 1899 and was an old school authoritarian. My mother was a woman who fitted into the flow of history with ease. She was a very intelligent woman and, even though the First World War was raging in Veneto and she was not able to study, she was always good at interpreting the world, so much so that even when she was elderly she still understood the tastes and mentality of her grandchildren. This was a wonderful lesson for me. I have always felt a sense of freedom. I have always abhorred prejudices and conformism; they have always gotten under my skin. For a good forty-five years I wanted to teach young people everything I could and I continually kept myself up to date. To an extent, my students were my children and if, when I see my former students I find them disappointed, I feel deeply sorry.

We saw political life as an obligation; we were part of the union and we would go to conferences and conventions. But we belonged to a group. Some things are missing today and there is great complaint. Yet there is no indignation. There is widespread self-pity and little pro-activity. We were able to get excited, to debate with one another; today I see a lot of sadness, a lot of weariness. I am very happy to have lived during that time because we were enthusiastic, we had faith, we believed that the world could be better. Instead people today are stepping back, withdrawing. It's back to our own private lives. In Italy, it's back to familism, which is one of our major flaws. A historian once said that the family in Italy is a Mafia-like system and, in my opinion, this is correct. People's trust is being broken.

Emotional bonds are determined by society. Capitalism, which causes closure problems and a lack of enthusiasm and empathy in people, clearly impacts their ability to approach things. Emotionality should include my whole existence. I love the harbour and the sea: all this is part of emotionality.

Our country is beautiful but we have done everything to ruin it: we constructed hideous buildings in the post-war period and have overbuilt shores. We realised it late but the beauty and value of things should be taught at an early age, to children. We can work on it by giving up part of our well-being and enjoyment.

This is a time of crisis, yes. And the Twentieth Century was terrible. Yet we survived. We do not spend the whole time crying; we fight back a little bit! I would like to write a letter to each of Italy's daily newspapers asking them to speak about something positive once a week! No more talk shows; I am fed up of hearing bad news on the television. Let's change our lifestyle a little bit. We can. We humans can do anything. We just need to begin at the bottom, with the small things.

To me, this multiethnic world is a jewel and I wanted to become closer to "the others" by teaching them Italian. Through teaching I learnt that you need to get to know people in order to be able to say things. I do not tolerate integralism, especially religious integralism. But we can fight this with integration which, above all, is knowledge and willingness to learn. 'My father has found me a wife,' an Afghan boy once told me. 'At your age you can find yourself a wife without your father. Aren't you embarrassed?' If you establish a relationship with others, things seem less dramatic.