

WE ARE PANDORA

Hope is a word that we hear everyday and everywhere: it doesn't matter what day it is, if things are going well or not, humans always hope. It's a mother hoping his son will get the job, it's a girl hoping her confession will be heard, it's a kid hoping his dad will take him to the park, and now, it's humanity hoping this horrible period will pass soon: as the Greek myth of Pandora explains to us, for thousands of years now, even if the world seems to end, deep inside of us the feeling that everything will be okay remains.

It's what has allowed humanity to be so special, the irrationality of it in contrast with our morbid rational mind: it goes against our survival instincts, our tendencies of analyzing the world, driving us to deny them and go forward. In fact, even if it keeps us going a lot of the time, hope most importantly gives us the possibility of true freedom. As a matter of fact, it's hope that gave us the strength to achieve a lot of institutions and laws that guarantee freedom today: liberty of speech, of learning, of writing, of every aspect of our daily life that nowadays we take for granted.

Even so, hope is not always perceived as useful or positive: it keeps us out of our comfortable and cozy rationality, where everything is calculated and sure, and forces us out against our meticulous and, in our opinion, obviously correct judgement.

As a result, sadly, we are scared of it, we push it in a corner, knowing that it's going to make us suffer. In that little corner, though, it's still there. Even if we ignore it, even if we know it doesn't make sense, it doesn't abandon us, sitting in our personal Pandora vase, because, when difficulties arrive, we always find it again, hiding in that cranny we pushed it in, and we latch on to it in despair.

The understanding of this strange human behaviour is at the base of history and its apparently strange and irrational movements: if we observe it, rather than a constant flow, we have high peaks and deep valleys of its manifestation, given that it's our last reserve for emergencies. In fact, we always hope for something better, but, since we think it's still not that bad, since we can live just fine for the moment, we don't act on it. It just seems foolish, or downright crazy: compromising our logically crafted path sounds impossible, so we choose to become blind, to not see the possibility of changing things, for our sanity's sake.

This forcefully kept state, thought, hurts us too, because we are repressing our nature: hope keeps us human, it makes it possible for us to dream, to feel, gives us the breath of the irrational which, ultimately, prevents us from becoming machines, with a compute in place of our hearts. A lot of times however, during our staying on earth, we got awfully close to this reality: since we didn't have the courage for hoping, we slowly got comfortable with growing evils, to the point of committing atrocities in the name of duty or even survival; it was too difficult to live with the thought that in some way we could have rebelled, so we ignored it.

Because of this it becomes so difficult, sometimes, to remember it's there: we get ourselves so tangled up inside our rational mind that there seems to be no place for another road, another point of view on the life we so carefully analyzed and planned out; the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, founder of Existentialism, explains this phenomenon with the theory of "bad faith" : since the human mind can't bear to live with the knowledge of our total freedom, giving us the possibility of choosing every aspect of our life, we close ourselves into thinking that these thoughts are just impossible hopes, too far out of our reach, and deliberately settle in our daily lives dictated by social norms we can't live without.

In George Orwell's novel "1984" we can clearly see where this tendency takes us: we slowly but surely become accustomed to living in horrible conditions, saying to ourselves it's necessary, or, even worse, right, but there's always a breaking point.

In that instant, thankfully, humanity regains its senses: evil becomes too much to ignore, closing eyes and ears doesn't allow us to live with ourselves anymore; in that moment, we remember hope. when the rational isn't enough anymore, it takes over and drives us to change the world. Hope is what got us to stop wars, help others, chase our dreams and ultimately keep living.

This habit of ours explains the cycle of history and its repetitive patterns: we live peacefully repressing our hopes long enough to wake ourselves up from our daily lives when it becomes too much for us to ignore and we take action, but when the emergency passed, we fall again in the comfort of our rationality: this has allowed the rise of totalitarian regimes that tried to take away the right of being human to its people, it caused genocides, crimes against humanity to happen, but, since hope never fades away completely, we also managed to overcome them and tried to make amends to our atrocious mistakes.

I don't think this mechanism is irrational, as Maria Zambrano says: on the contrary it seems even too rational, too logical to be natural, proof of our incredible capacity of getting used to evils just so that we don't have to change them.

The irrational part, in my opinion, is only hope: thanks to its resilience, remaining in our closed off hearts, we can call ourselves humans, not robots.