

The Nobility of Sharing



The image above is a carving by a Rwandan artist from the workshop of Nyondo (<http://www.odn-solidarites.org/fr/la-noblesse-du-partage>).

The woman crouching on the left is holding up a bowl. The woman on the right extends her hand with a certain hesitation, a little discomfort. The one holding the bowl is the one who is giving, but she does not give in a haughty manner. She has made herself small. She does not give from above, with an air of superiority. It is more like this, *"Can I offer you something?"*. She looks at the other with a certain anxiety, *"Will she take it? Will she be content?"*

The woman on the right is not taking greedily. She is receiving with a certain discretion; humbly and with dignity.

Neither one nor the other is focused on the bowl. They are both looking at one another - in silence. What is important is what is happening above the bowl; the relationship, the friendship, the encounter. The gesture of sharing is more important than what is being shared. The one who is giving is not just giving what is in the bowl; she is giving of herself. The one who is receiving is not just receiving a gift; she is also receiving the other person.

In such a relationship, receiving is not humiliating because the one who receives gives pleasure to the one who is giving.

Now take a new look at the image. Are we certain that the person on the left is the one who is giving? Perhaps the bowl is empty and it is the person on the right who is discreetly making a contribution. She is giving with a certain reserve and respect. This possibility of reversing the roles illustrates the profound sense of sharing. Each of us can give, each of us can receive. Every encounter should consist of giving and receiving. Someone who only wants to take is selfish. Someone who always wants to give is not really sharing, he is trying to dominate. It is an art to be able to give without belittling the other. It is an art to be able to receive without being devalued.

Only those who are in touch with their own poverty, their own weaknesses can give without humiliating the one who receives; only those who are conscious of their own dignity can receive without being hurt.

When real sharing occurs, the one who gives, as well as the one who receives, grows in happiness and dignity. It is the nobility of sharing.