

The Texts of the Convivium

YES-MEN AND... THEIR EXACT OPPOSITE

There are those who always contradict you. Where you see white, they see black. As soon as you open your mouth to say something, they have already stretched out the convolutions of their brains in order to excogitate whether there are any arguments contrary to yours in order to prove the complete opposite.

I have studied one of these programmatic contradictors in depth, almost forcing myself to read his thoughts. It was like doing a sort of simultaneous translation on him. Whilst someone was speaking, he mentally translated the discourse not into German or into English, but into opposite concepts. “The oak *is* a tree” thus became, “The oak *is anything but* a tree”. And so on and so forth.

When he had no interlocutors to contest, our man made up the discourse entirely on his own, and he then drew his own conclusions that were the complete opposite to the original discourse.

Furthermore, there are those who never contradict you, those who always say you’re right, who comfort and reassure you.

A clever essayist and literary, culture page journalist calls them the “yes-men”. And he portrays them with traits that are so unfailingly contrasting to the above mentioned systematic contradictors, that, if one wishes to give them a short incisive antipodal name, one would feel driven to call the latter the “absolutely non yes-men”.

Imagine one night you can’t get to sleep, you almost feel the need to call the yes-men emergency assistance who will come and reassure you by giving you a good night’s sleep without the use of tranquillisers or sleeping pills that could otherwise be harmful to your health.

Whereas on the contrary the non yes-man doesn’t reassure you. He’ll give you nightmares by making you his accomplice in situations that go from bad to worse. He’s always dark, gloomy and dismal.

However in the long run the yes-man will make you regret him, with his nauseatingness, with his air of falseness, deceitfulness that permeates everything he says, with his fake benevolence that masks a substantial indifference and which is nothing more than a tactic to make himself accepted and be followed.

The religious man doesn’t practice evil or nastiness and doesn’t make an apologia out of it. But neither is he a yes-man at all costs. In the severity with himself he finds the right measure in which it is better to be a little demanding with others too, if it is true that ours is a journey to be carried out altogether.