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Review

Cain Susan, 2013, *Quiet. The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, Broadway Books, New York, 352 p. ISBN 978-0-307-35215-6

Polish edition: Cain Susan, 2017, *Cicha siła introwertyków. Jak dorastać w świecie, który nie przestaje gadać*, transl. by Korpanty J. et al., Wydawnictwo Laurum, Warszawa, 290 p. ISBN 978-8-382-31044-3

Sometime ago I witnessed a group of men who were standing in a circle. From a distance it seemed that they were having a friendly conversation while taking their morning cup of coffee in front of a village café shop. However, when I came closer I noticed, to my surprise, that all of them were vigorously speaking at the same time. It's difficult to guess if any of them was listening to others at all. I think that it is not an exceptional observation. How many times we find ourselves in the situation when someone dominates the conversation and all others are forced to listen. Unfortunately, it may be missed an opportunity to learn and grow in our humanity. Many times those who are not outspoken, are left aside and their contribution is ignored.

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I recollect that event with the circle of men talking simultaneously, which happened in 2010, as I go through the pages of the book of an unfamiliar author to me, but well known American psychologist and writer Susan Cain. The book takes the theme of role of introverts in the human society and the meaning of quiet, and silence in our life.

The ordinary life shows that often the upper hand belongs to those who talk louder or faster. Yet, S. Cain notices that the quiet can have a great fortitude and be exceptionally courageous. The society promotes the bold and sociable, but the shy can be also great people (p. 2-3). In our world the "sensitivity, seriousness, and shyness" are laughed at (p. 4). Indeed, there is great emphasis on the action and progress (p. 30). So often it is expected from us that we would perform well and thus we try to impress others, and we long to be successful (p. 25). We may use different terms but everything is about superiority (p. 40). In general, we can consider that those who talk more are smarter than quiet types and they attract more attention from others (p. 51). Some are also driven by the prospect of a reward but we should be careful about this because it can put us at risk and get into troubles (p. 157). "Our culture made a virtue of living only as extroverts. We discouraged the inner journey, the quest for a centre" (Anaïs Nin, p. 264). Yet, we need to strive and yearn for what is essential. Instead, if we rise above the attitude of emphasizing only external and searching for rewards, we can have a strength to go our own and unique way (p. 173). However, to lead and transform the human societies "we need leaders who build not their own egos but the institutions they run" (p. 55). It requires not much talking but consequent standing to the principles (p. 60). That is significant because "decisiveness inspires confidence" (p. 64). Such people can play important role because they show that there is also a quieter path towards another person, but also towards God (p. 67).

The author notices that not everybody aspires to be a leader in a conventional sense of the term; some people cherish much their freedom, yet they can be very creative and contribute significantly to their group (p. 78). Many times, we are assigned to different responsibilities at the same time. Nonetheless, this multitasking is rather a myth than a real human capacity and we cannot perform sufficiently in different things (p. 85). There are moments that not only our confidence plays role but also our conscience. The best would be if these two go in harmony (p. 133).

A few years ago a parish priest of the Church of the Mary Immaculate in Maglie in Puglia (southern Italy) took me with another

priest to greet the Archbishop of Otranto. That meeting, which I still hold as a memory and as an example, made a great impression on me. We met a person who listened to us. He inquired about our religious congregations, some brothers whom he had met before and wanted to know something new from us, young missionaries. Usually, people in position talk and instruct others, but he was different. It's something to work on by being "more interested in listening and gathering information than in asserting [one's] opinion or dominating a conversation" (p. 55).

The book by Cain is probably intended as a guide to educate children and young people and train them in healthy self-esteem. It is an advice to the parents not to allow themselves to be just motivated by the general tendency of valuing more the social, gregarious and expressive model of life than the quiet one. In fact those quiet types stick more to their enthusiasms and develop them profoundly; often their passions are full of originality (p. 259 and p. 265). However the content of the book can also be useful for adults. It can help us rediscover the value of stillness and depth of life. The book is not envisioned for religious as such but it can help redefine our attitude towards life and towards exercising our offices. Without a doubt we are children of our time and perhaps too often we follow the same behavioural model of the society around us. We want to be pleased, admired and praised. In our meetings we follow those of our confreres who seem the strongest and the most insistent. However, we must not forget those who are shy and silent; their opinion may be of no less value. Our life is certainly not about outshining others but about sharing our gifts for the growth not only of us but also of others. If we truly meet with one another then both sides are enriched and both experience inner transformation (p. 224).

The lecture of the book can be a good lesson for all those who are uncomfortable in the spotlight and seemingly live an unpretentious life. This can be an encouragement to them that they can do it and indeed play important roles and have a significant impact on the lives of others. It can be an invitation for us to increasingly seek peace and encounter with God in the silence of our hearts. Each one of us needs a space in which we can return to our true self in order to continue our daily tasks (p. 219). There is much to be praised in the attitude of persistence, insight, concentration and sensitivity (p. 264). In fact the book by Cain can open our eyes to give respect and value those around us who are quiet.