



Getting Old

"Every morning, there's an old man looking back at me in my bathroom mirror", I remember hearing a comedian say once in an ITW. The sentence had genuinely amused me but without my complete understanding of what it meant since I was only about thirty years old at the time... When I reached 45, it began to really make sense.

Our body ages inexorably, more or less quickly, depending on our genes and on how we treat it; getting old is part of our human and physical experience. Nevertheless, our inner self does not age or very little: depending on people, we remain at an age between 15 and 30 years old throughout our whole life, whatever our body appearance is.

Unfortunately, we are only able to understand this phenomenon when we begin to experience it ourselves, that is to say when we advance in age, generally after reaching 40. When we live in the insolence of youth, we tend to despise elderly people who only seem to us slow and somewhat retarded since poorly adapted to modern world; it also sends us back to our parents' aging image which saddens and worries us, sometimes even infuriates us. Nevertheless, elderly people are not a separate species of human beings, they are just an older version of us all.

I am often saddened by the way we, as a society, treat our elders who, for most part, have a lot to share with us, stories to tell or even life lesson to teach us; if we care for them with love and kindness, they will care for us in return in many wonderful ways.

Unfortunately, often out of fear or lack of time, we send our elderly people into specialized institutions and let them die there, sometimes in the care of people who have little respect for them



and treat them at best like children or at worst as cumbersome sub-human beings, because we choose to change nothing in our lives rather than to make room for them with love. In many countries, we even deny them the right to choose the moment of their death or to die with dignity when a debilitating or painful illness breaks out... Unfortunately, everything we do to them, we do it to ourselves since, one day, we will undergo the same physical state.

Of course, I don't blame each and every person individually for not being able to care for an aging parent for we all have various lives and issues but I do blame us as a society for prioritizing money and ego over time, love and kindness towards one another. It's only with a shift of vision of ourselves as individuals that we will be able to take care of one another as a group. It is thus very important, when we are facing the other, to always treat him/her, and therefore show him/her love, as we would like him/her to treat us, because we're not doing it for him/her but for ourselves, always trying to feel proud and satisfied with our human being self.

I invite you to imagine each elderly person you meet with the face of the child he/she used to be, wondering what he/she looked like when playing in the elementary schoolyard. If you do so, you will almost instantly feel benevolence at work towards him/her because we rarely have malicious feelings towards a child; moreover, you will give back to this person his/her human status because we all have had schoolyard buddies when we were young and, ultimately, this person is just us in the making.

And for those who struggle every morning with aging features in the mirror, I have a little trick for you that's worth all the facelifts in the world: smile! Smiling makes all the muscles in our face go up and thus makes us lose at least a decade in terms of physical appearance. So, if all day long, you smile to yourself and to the world around you, you'll look forever young!