

**Liliana Dell’Osso, Daniela Toschi, Giulia Amatori.
*Figli prematuri del futuro. Darwin – van Gogh –
 Kandinskij – Wright – Picasso – Kafka – Wittgenstein
 – Lamarr – Salinger. Alpes Italia, 2023***

by Maria Rosaria Anna Muscatello

Neurodiversity, clinically expressed in the full blown and subthreshold manifestations of the autism spectrum, represents a risk factor for numerous mental disorders, but also a valuable resource related to so-called divergent thinking, the ability to come up with original ideas ahead of time, glimpsing the hidden and the unthinkable. In the genius of a neuroatypical mind lies the ability to produce unprecedented and revolutionary languages, constructed within one’s inner world and poured outward as a priceless gift. This is the focus of the essay “Figli prematuri del futuro” (“Premature Children of the Future”) written by Professor Liliana Dell’Osso, the president of Italian Psychiatric Association, and Drs. Daniela Toschi and Giulia Amatori (Alpes Italia, 2023). The book features the lives of nine famous figures – Wright, Kandinsky, Picasso, Wittgenstein, Darwin, Lamarr, Salinger, Kafka, van Gogh – who have enriched and often changed the history of humanity with their scientific or artistic contributions marked by foretelling and visionary features. Nine individualities whose genius, pushed beyond the boundaries of the commonly intuitable, dotted a life tormented by mental illness with blinding glimmers. The essay focused on these brilliant characters, authentic prototypical cases of mental disorder, with the aim of raising awareness of the many facets of a neuroatypical mind, with the dual purpose of minimizing the consequences of an innate psychic vulnerability and enhancing the marvelous resources of an out-of-the-ordinary mind. Just as “giant’s wings” prevent Baudelaire’s Albatross, monarch of the sky, from adequately walking on solid ground, so a neuroatypical mind, with marked traits of the autistic spectrum, will render the subject disadvantaged among humans, through inability to conform to common feeling. On the other hand, the same traits, when combined with mental clarity, originality and artistic or scientific talents, enable the same subjects to reach and master unexplored skies and perspectives: by virtue of their divergent visions, they make the world more comprehensible and fuller of meaning. A constant dissonance between unthinkable heights of creativity and elements of fragility woven into everyday life. Such was the case with van Gogh, Picasso and Kandinsky, whose own intense and sublime feeling gave substance to the ineffable. So it was with the literary works of Salinger and Kafka, whose pen knew how to draw from a universal ink, and with the architectural masterpieces of F.L. Wright, a phoenix from whose ashes diamonds never ceased to be born. It was the same for Charles Darwin, who overturned the world’s rules, Wittgenstein, who revolutionized the philosophy of language, and Hedy Lamarr, the actress-scientist. All of them understood in advance the germinal changes in the reality around them, opening their eyes to an unexplored reality that only the future would make manifest to their contemporaries, arousing the fascination, clamor and fright of a tight-rope walker balancing on a wire, suspended between stars and precipice. All pointed others in the direction to proceed, sometimes acknowledged, too often misunderstood: premature children of a time still distant, revealed to their eyes by a mind as precious as it was vulnerable.

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