

Reinhold Messner

The Murder of the Impossible

What have I personally got against "direttissimas"? Nothing at all; in fact I think that the "falling drop of water" route is one of the most logical things that exists. Of course it always existed - so long as the mountain permits it. But sometimes the line of weakness wanders to the left or the right of this line; and then we see climbers - those on the first ascent, I mean - going straight on up as if it weren't so, striking in bolts of course. Why do they go that way? "For the sake of freedom," they say; but they don't realize that they are slaves of the plumbline.

They have a horror of deviations. "In the face of difficulties, logic commands one not to avoid them, but to overcome them," declares Paul Claudel. And that's what the 'direttissima' protagonists say, too, knowing from the start that the equipment they have will get them over any obstacle. They are therefore talking about problems which no longer exist. Could the mountain stop them with unexpected difficulties? They smile: those times are long past! The impossible in mountaineering has been eliminated, murdered by the direttissima.

Yet direttissimas would not in themselves be so bad were it not for the fact that the spirit of that guides them has infiltrated the entire field of climbing. Take a climber on a rock face, iron rungs beneath his feet and all around him only yellow, overhanging rock. Already tired, he bores another hole above the last peg. He won't give up. Stubbornly, bolt by bolt, he goes on. His way, and none other, must be forced up the face.

Expansion bolts are taken for granted nowadays; they are kept to hand just in case some difficulty cannot be overcome by ordinary methods. Today's climber doesn't want to cut himself off from the possibility of retreat: he carries his courage in his rucksack, in the form of bolts and equipment. Rock faces are no longer overcome by climbing skill, but are humbled, pitch by pitch, by

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Umor nemogočega

Kaj imam sam proti direttissimam¹? Prav nič; v resnici celo mislim, da je smer 'padajoče kaplje vode'² ena izmed najbolj logičnih stvari, ki obstajajo. Ta smer je seveda vedno obstajala – če jo je le gora dopuščala. A včasih linija v svoji šibkosti zatava levo ali desno iz te smeri; takrat vidimo alpiniste – mislim na tiste med prvenstvenim vzponom, ki plezajo naravnost navzgor, kot da drugače ne gre, ob vrtnanju svedrovcev seveda. Zakaj se odločijo za takšno linijo? »Zaradi svobode,« pravijo; vendar se ne zavedajo, da so sužnji direttissime.

Groza jih je odmikov. »V težavah nam logika zapoveduje, naj se ne izogibamo problemom, ampak naj jih premagujemo,« pravi Paul Claudel. Isto pravijo zagovorniki direttissime, saj se zavedajo, da jim bo oprema, ki jo imajo, pomagala premagati vsako oviro. Zato govorijo o problemih, ki ne obstajajo več. Bi jih gora lahko ustavila z nepričakovanimi težavami? Nasmehnejo se: »Ti časi so že davno minili.« V alpinizmu nemogoče ne obstaja več, umorila ga je direttissima.

Direttissime same po sebi ne bi bile tako napačne, če se ne bi njihov duh vtihotapil tudi v vsa področja alpinizma. Vzemimo alpinista v steni, pod seboj ima linijo svedrovcev, okoli sebe pa same rumene previse. Že izmučen vrta novo luknjo nad zadnjim svedrovcem. Ne obupa. Trmasto, svedrovec za svedrovcem, se prebija naprej. Njegova smer, in nobena druga, se mora prebiti čez steno.

Svedrovci so danes samoumevni; s seboj jih nosimo za vsak primer, če težav ne bi mogli premagati na običajen način. Sodobni alpinist

¹ Direttissimas: navpičnice, direktnice; direktne linije.

² Avtor izjave je legendarni italijanski alpinist Emilio Comici: »Nekega dne želim preplezati smer, z vrha spustiti kapljico vode, in njen padec bo sovpadal s potekom moje smeri.« ('I wish some day to make a route, and from the summit let fall a drop of water, and this is where my route will have gone.')

methodical manual labor; what isn't done today will be done tomorrow. Free-climbing routes are dangerous, so they are protected by pegs. Ambitions are no longer built on skill, but on equipment and the length of time available. The decisive factor isn't courage, but technique; an ascent may take days and days, and the pegs and bolts counted in the hundreds. Retreat has become dishonorable, because everyone knows now that a combination of bolts and singlemindedness will get you up anything, even the most repulsive-looking *direttissima*.

Times change, and with them concepts and values. Faith in equipment has replaced faith in oneself; a team is admired for the number of bivouacs it makes, while the courage of those who still climb "free" is derided as a manifestation of lack of conscientiousness.

Who has polluted the pure spring of mountaineering?

The innovators perhaps wanted only to get closer to the limits of possibility. Today, however, every single limit has vanished, been erased. In principle, it didn't seem to be a serious matter, but ten years have sufficed to eliminate the word 'impossible' from the mountaineering vocabulary.

Progress? Today, ten years from the start of it all, there are a lot of people who don't care where they put bolts, whether on new routes or on classic ones. People are drilling more and more and climbing less and less.

"Impossible": it doesn't exist anymore. The dragon is dead, poisoned, and the hero Siegfried is unemployed. Not anyone can work on a rock face, using tools to bend it to his own idea of possibility.

Some people foresaw this a while ago, but they went on drilling, both on *direttissimas* and on other climbs, until they lost the taste for climbing: why dare, why gamble, when you can proceed in perfect safety? And so they become the prophets of the *direttissima*: "Don't waste your time on classic routes - learn to drill, learn to use your equipment.

si noče odrezati možnosti umika: svoj pogum nosi v nahrbtniku, v obliki svedrovcev in druge tehnične opreme. Sten ne obvladujemo več samo s plezalnimi veščinami, ampak jih premagujemo, oprimek za oprimkom, s sistematičnim fizičnim delom; kar ni storjeno danes, bo storjeno jutri. Prosto preplezljive smeri so nevarne, zato so zavarovane s svedrovci. Ambicije ne temeljijo na plezalskih veščinah, temveč na opremi in razpoložljivem času. Odločilni dejavnik ni pogum, ampak tehnika; vzpon lahko traja več dni, svedrovcev in klinov lahko uporabimo na stotine. Umik je postal sramoten, saj vsi vemo, da nas kombinacija svedrovcev in neomajnosti lahko pripelje kamorkoli, tudi po najbolj odbijajoči *direttissimi*.

Časi se spreminjajo, z njimi pa tudi koncepti in vrednote. Posameznikovo zaupanje vase je nadomestila vera v opremo; plezalna naveza žanje občudovanje glede na število bivakov, medtem ko so tisti, ki še vedno pogumno plezajo »prosto«, zasmehovani, kot da jim primanjkuje vestnosti.

Kdo je onesnažil prvinski izvir alpinizma?

Inovatorji so se morda samo želeli približati meji mogočega. A dandanes so izginile že vse meje, bile so izbrisane. Sprva se ni zdelo, da gre za pomembno zadevo, a je bilo potrebnih le deset let, da smo besedo nemogoče izločili iz alpinističnega besedišča.

Napredek? Danes, deset let zatem ko se je vse skupaj začelo, je marsikomu vseeno, kam zavrta svedrovec, naj bo to v prvenstvenih ali klasičnih smereh. Ljudje vse več vrtajo in vse manj plezajo.

»Nemogoče« ne obstaja več. Zmaj je mrtev, zastrupljen, in epski junak Siegfried je brez dela. Ne more prav vsakdo šariti po steni in jo z orodjem prilagajati svoji predstavi o mogočem!

Nekateri so to že davno predvideli, a so nadaljevali vrtanje tako v *direttissimih* kot v drugih smereh, dokler jih ni minilo zanimanje za plezanje: zakaj bi izzival, zakaj bi tvegali, če lahko nadaljujem popolnoma varno?

Be cunning: If you want to be successful, use every means you can get round the mountain. The era of direttissima has barely begun: every peak awaits its plumbline route. There's no rush, for a mountain can't run away - nor can it defend itself."

"Done the direttissima yet? And the super direttissima?" These are the criteria by which mountaineering prowess is measured nowadays. And so the young men go off, crawl up the ladder of bolts, and then ask the next ones: "done the direttissima yet?"

Anyone who doesn't play ball is laughed at for daring take a stand against current opinion. The plumbline generation has already consolidated itself and has thoughtlessly killed the ideal of the impossible. Anyone who doesn't oppose this makes himself an accomplice of the murderers. When future mountaineers open their eyes and realize what has happened, it will be too late: the impossible (and with it, risk) will be buried, rotted away, and forgotten forever.

All is not yet lost, however, although 'they' are returning the attack; and even if it's not always the same people, it'll be other people similar to them. Long before they attack, they'll make a great noise, and once again any warning will be useless. They'll be ambitious and they'll have long holidays - and some new 'last great problem' will be resolved. They'll leave more photographs at the hut, as historical documents, showing a dead straight line of dots running from the base to summit - and on the face itself, will once again inform us that "Man has achieved the impossible."

If people have already been driven to the idea of establishing a set of rules of conduct, it means that the position is serious; but we young people don't want a mountaineering code. On the contrary, "up there we want to find long, hard days, days when we don't know in the morning what the evening will bring". But for how much longer will we be able to have this?

Tako so postali preroki direttissim: »Ne zapravljaj časa v klasičnih smereh – nauči se vrtati, nauči se uporabljati opremo. Bodi zvit: če želiš biti uspešen, izkoristi vsako možnost, da prelisičiš goro. Obdobje direttissim se je šele začelo: vsak vrh čaka na svojo direttissimo. Ne mudi se, saj gora ne more pobegniti – niti se braniti.«

»Si že splezal direttissimo? Kaj pa super direttissimo?« Po teh kriterijih se danes meri alpinistično junaštvo. In tako se mladci odpravijo v steno, zlezejo po lestvi iz svedrovcev navzgor, nato pa sprašujejo druge: »Si že splezal direttissimo?«

Vsakomur, ki ne sodeluje v tej igri, se smejejo, ker si drzne nasprotovati prevladujočemu mnenju. Generacija direttissime se je že utrdila in brezobzirno umorila ideal nemogočega. Kdorkoli temu ne nasprotuje, je sokrivec. Ko bodo prihodnji alpinisti spregledali in spoznali, kaj se je zgodilo, bo že prepozno: nemogoče (in s tem tveganje) bo pokopano, razpadlo in za vedno pozabljeno.

A vse še ni izgubljeno, čeprav 'oni' vračajo udarec; in če tudi ne gre vseh ljudi tlačiti v isti koš, so za njimi še njihovi podobneži. Že veliko prej, preden bodo napadli, bodo zagnali tak vik in krik, da bo spet vsako svarilo brez učinka. Ambiciozni bodo in vzeli si bodo veliko časa – in spet bo preplezan kak nov 'zadnji veliki problem'. V planinskih kočah bodo pustili še več dokumentarnih fotografij, kot dokazno gradivo, ki bo prikazovalo popolnoma navpično pikčasto črto od vznožja do vrha, v sami steni pa nas bodo spet opominjale, da »je človek dosegel nemogoče«.

Če smo že bili prisiljeni k oblikovanju pravil obnašanja, to pomeni, da je situacija resna; toda mi mladi nočemo alpinističnega kodeksa. Prav nasprotno, »tam zgoraj si želimo dolgih, napornih dni, ko zjutraj ne veš, kaj bo prinesel večer«. A kako dolgo bomo to še lahko imeli?

Skrbi me tisti mrtvi zmaj: nekaj moramo storiti, preden bo nemogoče dokončno pokopano. V vihri klinov in svedrovcev se zaganjamo v vedno bolj divje stene: prihodnja generacija se bo morala znati osvoboditi vseh

I'm worried about that dead dragon: we should do something before the impossible is finally interred. We have hurled ourselves, in a fury of pegs and bolts, on increasingly savage rock faces: the next generation will have to know how to free itself from all these unnecessary trappings. We have learned from the plumbline routes; our successors will once again have to reach the summits by other routes. It's time we repaid our debts and searched again for the limits of possibility - for we must have such limits if we are going to use the virtue of courage to approach them. And we must reach them. Where else will be able to find refuge in our flight from the oppression of everyday humdrum routine? In the Himalaya? In the Andes? Yes certainly if we can get there; but for most of us there'll only be these old Alps.

So let's save the dragon; and in the future let's follow the road that past climbers marked out. I'm convinced it's still the right one.

Put on your boots and get going. If you've got a companion, take a rope with you and a couple of pitons for your belays, but nothing else. I'm already on my way, ready for anything - even for retreat, if I meet the impossible. I'm not going to be killing any dragons, but if anyone wants to come with me, we'll go to the top together on the routes we can do without branding ourselves murderers.

- Mountain #15, 1971

<http://web.mit.edu/lin/Public/climbing/Messenger.txt>

teh nepotrebnih pasti. Mi smo se učili od direktissim; naši nasledniki bodo morali ponovno doseči vrh po drugih smereh. Čas je, da poplačamo svoje dolgove in ponovno poiščemo meje mogočega – potrebujemo jih, če se jih mislimo lotiti s pogumom. In moramo jih doseči. Kje drugje bomo sicer lahko našli zavetje na begu pred pritiskom vsakdanje enolične rutine? V Himalaji? V Andih? Vsekakor, če nam bo uspelo priti do tja; vendar bodo za večino izmed nas tu le dobre stare Alpe.

Zato rešimo zmaja in v prihodnje sledimo smeri, ki so jo načrtali alpinisti pred nami. Prepričan sem, da je ta še vedno prava.

Obuj plezalke in pojdi. Če imaš soplezalca, vzemi s seboj vrv in nekaj klinov za varovanje, a nič drugega. Sam sem že na poti, pripravljen na karkoli – tudi na umik, če naletim na nemogoče. Zmajev sicer ne bom ubijal, če pa kdo želi iti z menoj, se bova skupaj povzpela do vrha po smereh, ki sva jim kos, ne da bi bila pri tem ožigosana za morilca.

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Prevod: Kaja Peršolja
Jezikovni pregled: Mojca Luštrek
Redakcija in priredba: Ines Božič Skok
Uredil: Borut Peršolja
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