

Diary from Quarantine – 31 – **The Hedgehog's Dilemma**

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Sara Brzuszkiewicz

The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, in his *Perergera and Paralipomena*, narrates: “On a cold winter day, a group of hedgehogs huddled together to keep warm. Soon, however, they started to feel each other’s quills and moved apart. It was freezing, so they got closer again in search for warmth, but their quills forced them apart. They were driven closer and further stuck between the two discomforts. At some point, they found the right distance between each other, which gave them both a maximum of warmth and a minimum of pain”.

Among humans, the monotony of the self and loneliness leads us to search for proximity. However, other humans’ faults and the need for our individuality drive us apart. Like hedgehogs, we go from one extreme to the other, from excessive proximity to excessive distance.

We solve this endless problem when we find the best separation between each other: close enough to keep warm, far enough not to feel the pain given by each other’s quills.

A few days ago, the Italian intellectual Walter Veltroni [used](#) the Hedgehog’s Dilemma to describe how the world should necessarily be after the quarantine.

We should not be too scared by other people – potential virus carriers – to the point that we do not interact and we look at each other only as potential health hazards.

At the same time, we should not be too dependent on proximity and closeness, to the point that our weeks of sacrifices and social distancing will be useless and we do not safeguard ourselves, physically and emotionally.

In Italy, one of the popular mottos on overcoming this emergency says “Distant but united”. For this motto not to remain nothing else but an empty sentence, I think we should all be wise hedgehogs.