

The last day of Brunello Cucinelli

Text by **Álex Rodríguez**

The cashmere king. The luxury artisan-businessman who dropped out of university (engineering) at 24 to devote himself to studying the humanities. As a result he based his life on the rule of St. Benedict (*ora et labora*), discovered, like Kant, that there were only two things that really moved him (“the starry sky above me and the moral law within me”), devoured the writings of philosophers and thinkers like Socrates, Seneca, Aristotle or Marcus Aurelius, and has always drawn inspiration from the life and works of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mandela, pope Francesco and Obama, of whom he said, when Obama was president of the United States, “he thinks like a philosopher and acts like an emperor”.

Brunello Cucinelli (Castel Rignone, 1953) knows that our lives are transitory and says he feels he is a custodian. He loves beauty, which is why he has devoted half of his life to restoring and transforming Solomeo, the village where his wife Federica was born, into a mediaeval type city-corporation. Cucinelli has suffered the loss of people dear to him, one of whom he remembers with particular grief, “that of a little boy snatched from his mother’s arms by tuberculosis”.

Death, he says, is like a door for passing from one life to another. He isn’t afraid of it. What he does fear is stupidity, because, as Goya said, “it creates monsters”.

Do you believe there’s anything after death?

“From the teaching of my great masters I’ve learned that only our body dies and that the soul is immortal. Every evening I dialogue with the fond memory of my mother and everyone I’ve loved.”

Cucinelli decided that his soul was immortal when he turned 60. And he mentions Socrates, who invites us to live as well as possible. “And if it turns out in the end that there’s nothing, fair enough. The end of life will be different for bad people and those who are good at heart. If there’s nothing, you’ll have lived better.” He believes that human beings have a problem right from birth: they don’t worry much about their souls, which needs care and attention everyday. “If you want to take care of your soul, you’ll have to speak with yourself about your relationship with the world, with others, with old age, with death. I’m a lover of spirituality. I was always very drawn to it.” Brunello Cucinelli spends a lot of time on his own. He likes to have time to be on his own. By the fireside, he turns out the lights, lights some candles and

imagines having conversations with Socrates, Seneca, Aristotle or Marcus Aurelius, whose busts adorn the room.

He'd give his life for his daughters and grandchildren. But what is life for him?

It's joy, a joy we must be able to recognize even in moments of grief. We should be constantly seeking out what is right and be vigilant against the pitfalls of depression that afflict us.

Take care of your soul, love beauty and be just.

Brunello Cucinelli

You can live a whole life in a few moments

If you knew that tomorrow would be the last day in your life, what would you do? How would you spend it?

It would be a day full of grief, because I believe that life is the greatest gift of creation.

What would you have liked to have done but won't have enough time to do?

Read and study human thought.

What advice would you give those who remain?

Don't let the years erode your ideals.

How would you say your life has been?

Hard working, lived with respect for human dignity.

What are you proudest of?

My family, what I've given to protect creation.

Any regrets?

Every day on which I let anger prevail over tolerance.

The best memory of your life?

The birth of my daughters and my honorary degree philosophy and the ethics of human relations.

What would be on the menu for your last supper?

Bread made with wheat and oil from my own olives, savoured in front of a crackling fire with my dearest friends.

Then you'd go to bed?

Certainly not. Fyodor Dostoevsky knew that you can live a whole life in a few moments.

What would your epitaph be?

“He loved beauty.”