

# Reflections related to Silo's Message

These reflections belong to a collection called "Weekly Reflection" between April 2020 and April 2021 at the beginning of the pandemic. I have extracted all the reflections related to Silo's Message. Originally, Trudi Richards contributed with the translation from Spanish to English and Rafael Edwards with photos and drawings. My thanks to them too.

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## Questioning

It is becoming clear to me that it is necessary to question everything. Not as a mental pastime or for moral or philosophical reasons, but as a form of true dynamic meditation. This meditation begins with an existential questioning - who am I? and where am I going? - but does not stop there. It continues as I question everything I face in daily life, especially what I'm attached to and what I reject, my inclinations, my doubts, my likes and dislikes. When I stay with this meditation without hurrying, I begin to perceive an internal space that instead of getting fuller and fuller, gets emptier and emptier... and as it empties, generates another type of understanding and behavior.

June 15, 2020

## Forms

Every month for the last five years a group of us have been going to Red Bluff Park to spend time together in an unusual way. It is a loose form, without schedules, without agendas, without specific programs, a form devoid of the typical elements one sees when people from any other organization meet.

And with this lack of formality, we've also seen a lack of leadership. In other words, nobody directs anybody else or tries to organize anything in particular. Sometimes we form small groups where we talk, study, and exchange experiences and opinions.

Sometimes this relates to a particular theme we've agreed on, sometimes to something general. There are also times when we do all this with everyone included in a single group.

In this "informal form" there's a lot of respect for the other, and a lot of desire to learn and share. Individualism finds little fertile ground, and tacitly we begin to form a kind of "collective body" that we are all part of and that belongs to everyone. Our personal relationships have grown enormously, and our ability to work, study, understand and share has grown proportionately. No doubt this form comes from our group work with the Disciplines, which has continued to be an almost perfect guide for group work and work in general. I would almost dare to say that this is a future form of relationship and coexistence that goes in a diametrically opposed direction to the way everything in the system is organized.

Along with everything described above, most of us have been experiencing certain registers that have to do with spiritual and social development. This is difficult to explain, so I will only refer to something we have commonly called "inspiration." This inspiration, which has been progressively manifesting in many of us, has the taste of hope, poetically speaking; more morphologically speaking, it is a spherical form of inclusiveness and kindness. This last borrowed from Rafael Edwards' contribution entitled "Two Spaces, Two Landscapes," which we all studied together at the Park.

I believe that in the not too distant future, and in the measure that the system continues to fall apart, there will inevitably come a time when vertical forms will also enter into crisis, resulting in a vacuum to which we will be able to give a coherent response. I've always had the impression that our Parks were references for the future, but I had not realized that the future was already happening, and that the social and spiritual need was already here, present in the world around us.

With all the social upheavals that are happening, that future, or better said, that "human destiny," has begun to manifest, and very soon we will move to another kind of society in which relationships will be very different from what we have known. I believe that the inspiration we've found in the Parks and among ourselves may be the "form" in which humanity will relate in the future. Perhaps it could be useful to offer our environments to those who are fighting for a more just society and those who will have the task of designing new social and economic parameters, so that they will have the opportunity to do their work and hold their interchange in our Parks, places that are ideologically, politically, spiritually, and economically neutral.

June 29, 2020

## Immediate Action

*“...When you do everything as an end in itself, you liberate yourself”*

This is the second part of the principle of immediate action, and perhaps the most important, because at least in my case it opened the door to an unusual and revelatory understanding.

When I started working every week with the principles of valid action and in particular with this one, my efforts were concentrated in the first part, which says "When you pursue an end, you chain yourself..."

And of course it was clear and obvious that pursuing any object created by the imagination or by compensation led me straight to everything related to desires, frustrations, false hopes, escapism of every kind, and the consequent enchainment characteristic of material and immaterial acts and objects. Understanding something so obvious wasn't all that interesting until one day it changed.

It happened one morning when the garbage disposal connected to the dishwasher finally broke, and without a penny to spare, and pressed by the circumstances, my partner and I decided to do all the work of taking it out and thoroughly cleaning it, as well as of taking out the automatic dishwasher that had stopped working years ago.

For some not-so-obvious reason, I approached the job with a positive attitude and full of curiosity and interest in something that under normal circumstances would have been worthy only of a few expletives.

These were not normal circumstances. At least internally I was observing something without judgment, and that observation was extended to the entire dismantling process.

There, covered with grease and decomposed food, and with only a very dim flashlight and few available tools, we worked without haste until we got everything out, and replaced the pipes and the entire system, making the welcome discovery that the automatic dishwasher had stopped working only because it was connected to the automatic disposal.

In the midst of all this mess I realized the true meaning of doing something as an end in itself. It had nothing to do with morality, or spirituality, or guilt, or anything like that. It was just being in the present with my whole being. Fueled by observation, that presence stopped all projections into the future and gave me the clear register that it was an end-in-itself. I contemplated various mental acts, but without much identification. Almost like watching a movie of my mental contents. So, observing everything but focusing my interest on the dishwasher, I felt happy and free internally. I felt like I could learn without limits and like all I had to do was develop that attitude that regardless of its apparent importance, any activity, any chore, was an opportunity to practice presence.

In this process that has taken a little more than a year, I have been discovering many details connected to this attitude toward being in the world, but I think I have gone on long enough and had better leave those for another reflection. Yes, I want to mention that other people have also had this experience, among them my friend Roberto Verdecchia in Canada, whose understanding and experience prompted me to write down my own... Thank you Roberto!

July 6, 2020

## Guidance

There is a great difference between a Master and a Guide. A Guide operates within us, and even when it can be represented externally, there is a way that it also becomes configured internally. If Jesus is my guide, for example, when I communicate with him,

I automatically configure that image within me, in my space of representation. The subject becomes an internal representation and for some reason that I am just discovering, that kind of image operates differently. Silo represented as a Guide has a completely different flavor than Silo represented as a Master, at least for me.

The Guide orients while the Master teaches. The Guide's attributes of wisdom, strength and kindness are within reach and can be internalized, while in the Master those attributes remain as external qualities that we admire.

The allegorical image of the Guide of the heights or the Guide of the mountain or the Guide of the New Times has a strong appeal. He carries a message from the heights that we locate in a different internal space from that of daily life, in the upper regions of the earth in our space of representation. His message is a message that makes human beings happy and free, a message of hope, a message of profound love for humanity, nature and the spirit. He brings the connection between human beings and their best internal qualities. He orients those who search so that they might find what they seek in the depths of their own consciousness and in the depths of their own hearts. He carries an inward message. He orients our look toward the internal realm.

The Guide does not teach, the Guide simply orients us towards our experiences. The Guide leads us to our shipwrecks, where reconciliation is possible, and also to those regions in which we make contact with the divinity that exists within us.

The Guides exist within us, and that is such a powerful image. Our look is being shifted toward the internal. When we recognize our failure, that is when we search in those vast internal places. When we feel defeated, that is when the internal world is revealed.

To ask and to receive can be very unitive when we connect it to the attributes of the Guide. To be grateful when a great joy overwhelms me and to remember at that moment to give thanks inside me is to generate unity within me. It is also to have and to ask for kindness, strength and wisdom, which can also be translated into a daily attitude of peace, force and joy.

There is a lot to say about the Guide. What is most important is to recognize the need to be guided, the essential necessity of a path and a direction for our lives. I was born without an internal compass and I have craved one since I can remember. I was given many external options, practices, rituals and beliefs. All of them were interesting, but it wasn't until I found the Message of the Guide of Mount Aconcagua that I knew with an enormous certainty that I had found in his words that which resonated internally with my searches.

There is so much more I can say but I feel I have said enough.

July 13, 2020

## Normality

I have to confess that I am not very willing to go back to normal. I prefer this situation we find ourselves in. Unstable, precarious, confusing, alarming, and true. Above all true. Where I cannot project very much, or wait very long, or plan anything, neither can I suffer much. It is almost like understanding that practically everything is ephemeral, illusory and ineffective.

The aspect that attracts me most is that I don't have much trouble being in this kind of bardo. This situation has helped me enormously to reflect, to think, to feel, and sometimes to experience moments full of a soft joy that I don't even know where it comes from, but it comes ...

This situation has helped me value others, and see that we are all on the planet in the same way. This is something that doesn't happen every day, and has never happened before, at least never on a global scale and so completely intertwined as it is now.

What we experienced before was not normal. It was inexplicably flat. It was an experience of total madness, of excessive consumerism, of an exacerbated inversion of values - essentially a runaway race toward total non-meaning. I see this pause that the world has had as necessary, but more than that, I see it as inevitable, and unfortunately, the inevitable is a direct consequence of what has been done wrong.

Something built without the right materials, cutting corners wherever possible in structural terms, ends up falling apart sooner or later. This time we caught it early, and there is much that can be done if our reflection at all levels is deep and unhurried. For my part, I am into it, and I feel that many other people all over the planet are in the same place.

That we coincide in this is interesting on the one hand because of everything it may mean in the future. Since I do not have the gift of prophecy, I cannot say anything about that; but it is important to value this moment in the present. I feel like we are connected, and connected by invisible but strong ties. I feel that there is a rush of affection, of real interest in the other, and that the "we" is growing in stature, intensity and intelligence.

I am grateful for everything that is happening, and I hope that the positive aspects compensate for the tragedy that many human beings, and those close to them, have experienced in leaving this existence abruptly and in some cases unnecessarily. I hope that a new sense of justice appears in the world, where "my rights" truly begin and end in "the next person's rights." Yes, indeed many hopes are being forged and many more are on the way. Perhaps the only thing that is clear to me is that this new process is moving in an upward direction, while "normality" was walking in the footsteps of death.

It is necessary to support life, to support what is growing, what is moving forward, carrying within itself the best aspirations of the human being. That is what we are...

July 20, 2020



## Self censorship

When I first heard of the concept of self-censorship, it struck me that I had never heard anyone else talk about it. I first heard of it from the mouth of **Silo in 2006, when he was talking about how the Message expands as it takes a stand against censorship and self-censorship.**

He said that taking a stand against self-censorship is the development of a disposition to abandon this system and create a different vision of how things are and how to act on them.

At that time it was just an expression, but 14 years later it is much more than that, and the expression has a deeper and more expansive meaning. I imagine that the expression has been used before, and probably Silo himself used it before too, but the important point is that my recognition of it started that day. I am talking about an internal recognition of my own self-censorship.

As he said, censorship has weakened enormously over time, but self-censorship has not. The whole context is still interesting, even though it is a bit redundant, but sometimes a word or phrase can modify a whole behavior, or at least produce an internal turnaround and an observation that is at first superficial and then becomes more internal. That more or less was how my study of self-censorship began. Most difficult has been the effort not to judge, criticize or degrade my self-censorship. Yes, it is clear that it does not work in the moment, but it is more important to understand it than to judge it. And in that effort, I have been able to see and experience that this is actually the best way to open up this "disposition" to change.

When I am able sometimes to suspend the tendency to judge, an opening begins to occur in me and I can see that what was most repressed in my self-censorship, was the possible intuition and the possible unprejudiced and free observation of external and internal phenomena. Let's see if I can explain it a little more poetically.

*“Cafet totally abandoned himself to the experience he was having. Thousands and thousands of kilometers from where he had started, in a strange and wonderfully real and incomprehensible dream. On a journey to his highest yearnings, which had not been at all as he had imagined. Cafet followed Graciela connecting with an intuition that she would take him where he needed to go. There are times when the absurd and the extraordinary mix in a way that is impossible to predict and it only remains to follow that tenuous thread without too many questions, without much caution, and with enough confidence that one will get where one should go. ”*

This paragraph is from a story I wrote based on a dream. Dreams are absurd and special precisely because they have no censorship, because there is no one guarding the contents that are just flowing, and one participates in the most extravagant, extraordinary, immoral, inspired situations, etc. and self-censorship disappears ...

This is only an approximation to the subject and I have taken dreams only as an example. It is neither possible nor recommended to transfer dreams to the state of vigil, but it is important to understand how this mechanism operates and how, little by little, without being extravagant or extraordinary, or immoral and/or inspired, one can gradually release one's own criticism,

especially of one's own contents, especially of one's own conceptions, especially because intuitions are more interesting than schemes.

And by letting go of all that, we come up with internal understandings and openings about how systems are built. If one notices the tendency to self-censor, and observes it without compulsions, it tends not to occupy the central space in our action in the world, and when it does not occupy that space, something different begins to manifest itself. In the best of cases a void is produced, and that emptiness is meaning-giving because it comes from the deepest part of the human being.

Resistance against self-censorship does not have a warlike character but rather are efforts to silence the great compulsions that take us away from what is sacred inside us and outside us. It is certainly worth the effort in that direction. Sometimes it is experienced as instability, but it is the type that can be very welcomed.

July 27, 2020

## **The YES diet**

A few years ago, my partner told me one morning that the most important thing was to be able to say YES to everything. That doing so produced a quite extraordinary opening to the world and made her feel happy.

I was thinking to myself that she was absolutely right, and I couldn't help remembering one of the most meaningful experiences I've had with this thing of saying YES. But today I am not going to bore you with stories from the past and will only say a few words about the subject.

I have been practicing "the YES diet" for some years, saying "YES" to everything that comes my way as long as it does not go against basic principles, and I have to say that it is a very good way of being in the world. It creates a positive disposition toward what is presented and is one of the best ways to observe my resistances, fears, apprehensions, justifications, etc. In short, it clearly shows me whatever is paralyzing me or getting in my way, so that I can immediately work on it, because by saying YES over and over, I have created a positive attitude not only toward the world but also toward myself.

Saying YES is actually an experiment that has a lot to do with working with the Principles of Valid Action, because it produces coherence in my actions in the world.

I say "coherence" because when I say YES I am thinking, feeling, and acting in the same direction, without contradictions. The YES is the glue that binds my feelings, ideas and actions. All we have to do is to just practice it ...

August 3, 2020

## Poverty

Apparently, because lately I am not sure of anything, there is a moment in all our lives when we begin to ask ourselves things we normally only ask others. Questions that have to do with the meaning of our lives. I use the word "meaning" as direction, more than anything. That is, nothing very nebulous, just "where am I going?" and occasionally "who am I?"

It's understood that we ask ourselves these things not because we already know, and apparently - again - perhaps we do not know, otherwise we would not feel "confused" or "lost" or "depressed" or "insecure" or any of the multiple expressions that exist to express such lack of direction.

Based on what I have been observing in myself, I have the impression that when I look for answers outside myself, that is when I move away from my true meaning or direction. Conversely, when I resist the tendency to seek answers and ways of doing things outside me, I come closer to myself. This is very awkward at first, almost hesitant, but then it gets more comfortable, more secure and also more humble. If I continue to resist that tendency, I begin to discover that I have various answers inside me; in other words, I begin to discover my true motives, intentions, and direction.

I realize then that I have to affirm all this instead of ignoring it, forgetting it or degrading it, even though it isn't so sophisticated or brilliant or extraordinary, or any of the more or less absurd adjectives with which we have been taught to describe what exists outside of us.

To be "out of control" is to be outside of oneself, and it is really worth the effort to learn to be with oneself and to value and refine what we have inside us, even if it is "poor." It is possible that "poverty of spirit" is really bliss, and that in this poverty the best of us exists; this translates into something many people have observed for centuries. Poor people are the most generous... Not having or possessing is actually a virtue that has not been highly valued, especially when that virtue has to do with internal possessions.

Failure in general quickly brings us closer to this understanding... So we must not avoid failure, but rather must receive it with great willingness, because it is a gift from the divinity within us.

August 10, 2020

## Structure

When I contemplate a clay bowl or an empty glass or any other object that acts as a container, I can realize that its basic function implies creating a void inside the object itself. When I contemplate the same object again, focusing on that inner emptiness, the object does not change but is perceived more completely, because now I can't help seeing "the external and the internal." I don't necessarily see them at the same time, but even if I see them one after the other, my senses now perceive that object from two perspectives.

In reality, that's not the way it is. My senses only perceive what "I am seeing," in other words, a glass of water, but my consciousness "structures" or configures a complete glass of water. Not only from those two perspectives, but in addition it completes everything my eyes do not see. For example, more than 40% of the glass is inaccessible to my sight, but my consciousness "knows" what is unseen thanks to the memory, which helps it complete every perception.

Going back to the empty space that exists within this kind of object, it's significant that this emptiness, which we don't really think about, ends up being its most important aspect. But strictly speaking, the two aspects cannot exist separately. In other words, containers and contents are such because they exist as a single structure whose aspects differ only in their functionality.

In everything that exists, there are the senses, and in the senses the consciousness is always structuring with the help of the memory. And this whole knot is another structure that we can only separate out in order to understand it, but that is always acting as a whole. The memory, which is always sending information and completing "mental acts" in every process, does so in that way because there is a tendency in the structure of our mental form to tie every representation to a mental object as a mental act.

Seeing all this, we can say that this mental structure is configured as the relationship between acts and objects. The important thing about all this is that it is inescapable, which means we can speak of enchainment. Every structure, configured as an act that completes an object thanks to the tendency of the memory, ends up enchaining the consciousness, and ultimately, this enchainment is also structural. This enchainment is "permanent."

This has to be experienced the same way one experiences perceiving a glass of water. But what I want to share, aside from my mental divagations, is how extraordinary it is to discover those empty spaces within objects. It is extra-ordinary to dis-cover that in our solar system there is more emptiness than anything else. Don't even think about the universe... an endless void... an essential void is what predominates in all of existence. Seeing things this way, at least once in our lives we have to experience an internal void that is not negative, but that on the contrary is paradoxically "full" of meaning.

My suffering is based on possession, and my liberation is tied to my capacity to let go and to understand that it is not "my" liberation but the liberation of all of us that reveals all meanings. And in this letting go the void is present because it is the indicator of our inner liberation.

August 17, 2020

## The Golden Thread

A few years ago one of my best friends wrote an essay on "the golden thread."

*"I give you the end of a golden string,*

*Only wind it into a ball:*

*it will lead you in at Heaven's gate,*

*Built in Jerusalem's wall.*

*William Blake"*

"The Golden String, used only once in Blake's poetry, is an image that suggests that the end of the Golden String is given to us and we must do more than just follow it. We must actively wind it into a ball. If we do not keep the string taut and if we do not keep on winding, we may lose our way and wander off into the non-meaning."

Recently those words from Ken - my friend - struck me, as usually happens to me with things I re-read these days, as if I were reading them for the first time. They put me face to face with a path I am very interested in traveling, the path that goes towards meaning, towards increasing happiness. It is an internal path where I rely on what is most dear, most precious internally. It is a direction that started a long time ago without me realizing it.

I have been so dazzled by "objectives" that I didn't notice that mental directions operate within us from the time we become more or less conscious, that is, from our childhood. I observed that as a child I was very interested in everything spiritual and also in the natural world, which is also a "spiritual" world. Why?

I have no idea, or I have many ideas, but the important thing is that these worlds make up an internal direction that I recognize as a source of inspiration. This is a way of understanding that golden thread, of following it and keeping it co-present. It corresponds to a belief that one has to work with what already exists, with what is operating within us, and not necessarily with what one needs to "acquire," either because it is not available or because one doesn't recognize that one already has it.

Anyway, any "acquisition" takes me down another path that doesn't interest me. Today, it is a matter of letting go and not adding, and that is why I am interested in discovering how the formative has to do with what is most essential within us. Something essential that I can connect with a purpose that makes me ascend. What I am becoming clear about is that this purpose has emotional force, is driven by great affection, and all this is within me and not outside.

Perhaps the most important thing is that I can experience it emotionally and poetically. I feel it as an impulse, a direction, an inspiration, an intuition, and the taste of something that is both great and humble, something that belongs to me and to the entire human race.

August 24, 2020

## Plenitude

According to the English dictionary, the word “plenitude” means “the state of being full or complete.” The Spanish dictionary is a bit more precise, defining the word “plenitud” as “The state of a thing or person that has achieved its moment of maximum perfection or development.”

Interesting that in both languages the word refers to a state. I believe this is important because it suggests a goal that is not something to be obtained, but an experience one arrives at through a process.

The other thing that calls my attention is that the word is seldom heard in either language, having practically no practical use, and remains on the periphery of ordinary, economic and political language. And something that is not even mentioned is that the word immediately suggests a positive feeling or image, like those normally located in the upper levels of the states through which we pass.

Plenitude doesn't seem to be something transitory or passing, but on the contrary evokes an undreamed of permanence, especially in these changing and metamorphosed times. The first sentence of *The Inner Look* reads, ***“Here it tells how the non-meaning of life is converted into meaning and plenitude.”*** I believe this is very important and worth studying as thoroughly as possible, because it is the entrance to the essential knot of being human: how to convert the non-meaning, which seems to be everywhere, permeating every human activity.

A lot has been said about the non-meaning, probably because we experience it on a daily basis, and little has been said about plenitude, probably because it's not so easy to experience it. Even so, there it is, awaiting us as the unchanging consequence of all efforts toward true conversion. When I experience plenitude, even if it's not as often as I would like, I feel “complete” but not “full.” This is an important distinction, because I feel complete essentially because I am empty - empty of uneasiness, problems, frustrations, fears, unresolved issues, etc. Once again I encounter the paradox that the more I let go, the closer I come to that feeling of plenitude that I register as something light and inspiring.

August 31, 2020

## Sacrifice

I have the impression that the worst thing about so-called “sacrifice” is that it is in vain. I am very clear that what I am saying can be considered heresy but that doesn’t keep it from being true.

The first thing I’ve been able to glimpse is that sacrifice as a concept and implementation has covered our human history with a dark, fearful and cruel shadow. Neither human, animal, nor psychological sacrifices have been able to make sacrifice interesting and unitive. In the best of cases sacrifice has been glorified to hide the stupidity of wars and other confrontations where the absurdity of death uses sacrifice as a palliative. On the most mental level, sacrifice has been used to justify incoherent thoughts and actions, and on the spiritual level to control, manipulate, and convince the unwary that there is intrinsic value in sacrifice. And it is not surprising that the "maximum sacrifice" is giving one's life for others. That’s okay. I am not at all interested in discussing the veracity of these claims, nor do I intend to spoil anyone’s belief in such concepts. Everyone believes in what is best for them, and that way we are all OK.

However, looking at my own sacrifices and the way they operate in me, I can't help seeing their absurdity. To begin with, if I accept that I have to sacrifice something, I automatically become a victim, and that’s something I don't want to do. If I do not accept the need for sacrifice, I am practically obliged to give a different answer than "acceptance," and that means an internal and external change that may put me in an unexpected situation. Then a great possibility opens up: I can "deny" the sacrifice. That implies a strong denial, not of the "activity" in which the sacrifice is immersed, but in my internal attitude toward this sacrificial activity...

In simpler words, I can do the same things I used to consider a sacrifice, without "sacrificing anything." If someone close to me asks for my help - and not for the first or third time - and I see it as a sacrifice, chances are I'm going to do it simply so I don't feel guilty. But I can give that help from a different perspective and attitude. Then my answer will be the same, but without the basic internal element of all sacrifice, which is expectation: expectation either that I will receive something in return, or that "my effort" will be useful for something or someone. If I eliminate that "illusory utility" in my doing, either by not having expectations or by simply not accepting a situation that is conflictive for me, I free myself from the entire sacrificial family, which includes both sacrifice and his younger sister, guilt.

I'm not quite sure that sacrifice and guilt are the product of religious education, at least not completely; I think the root is deeper and we have to investigate it in ourselves. But I can't help thinking how important it is to free ourselves from both, especially from mechanical sacrifice.

Without a doubt, however, unless my attitude changes consciously, I will end up in that contradiction, chained to the expectation of doing something "that works," or simply declaring "I love sacrifice," which is worse still.

This is a complex subject and has many nuances. I had been “brooding” over it for a long time when I realized that in the Inner Look, in Chapter I, “Meditation”, it says: ***“Here sacrifices, feelings of guilt and threats from beyond the grave are rejected.”*** And of course



my first response to this phrase was: "Obviously." Then I was able to see more internally how sacrifice, guilt, and the fear of threats from beyond the grave need to be illuminated by the light of a deeper understanding, generator of a new attitude towards this "historical family" that puts us in need of true meditation.

September 21, 2020

## Learning

*“To be on the path is to decide that every day I’m going to learn something about myself, others, and humanity. Learning begins with the beautiful recognition that I don’t know.”*

A little over a year ago, these words came to me after a conversation with my good friend Rafael about “the Path.” Until then I had not noticed the road signs, but had only seen the Path from a poetic point of view, and it was a great surprise to be able to go deeper into it than the simple aesthetic beauty of what it suggests, and the intellectual and emotional agreement with it. What it suggests is simple, and is explained in four phrases:

***“Learn to treat others the way you want to be treated.***

***Learn to overcome pain and suffering in yourself, in those close to you, and in society.***

***Learn to resist the violence that is within you and around you.***

***Learn to recognize the signs of the sacred within you and outside you.”***

Four suggestions that seemed very good to me, but got even better when Rafa pointed out that they all begin with the word “Learn.” And there I had my first crisis and also my first revelation with this path.

The crisis - to give it a name - was my realization that I don’t really know much about what these phrases are saying, and that learning is the only way to make them come true. Just agreeing with them isn’t enough. I realized that I’m not clear about how I want to be treated, that I need to learn, and I also need to learn how to treat others that way. I need to learn how to overcome pain and suffering; I need to learn how to resist violence; and I need to learn how to recognize the signs of the sacred. Because honestly I had never proposed this to myself as a learning situation, and on formulating that first statement, I understood a little more that learning is something that is life-long, a way of being in the world and of relating to others.

This revelation - to give it a name as well - came to me when I said to myself: Learn as if learning were a new attitude. As if you were hearing those phrases for the first time. Ask yourself about the sacred, about violence, about pain and suffering, about how you want to be treated. If you can see it in yourself, you can see it in others. And the other way around. If you can see it in others, you can see it in yourself.

And in asking myself these things every day, I began to understand better that I can have learning as a permanent attitude. Then I couldn’t help thinking about another phrase that has been very meaningful for me for many years: “I will tell you the meaning of your life here: It is to humanize the earth! What is it to humanize the earth? It is to overcome pain and suffering, it is to learn without limits, it is to love the reality you are building.”

To learn without limits has a connotation, at least for me, of an open future anchored in a way of living that is constantly in motion, that requires an active behavior where I am attentive both to what is happening and to how I am affected by what is happening. This attention allows me to learn, and even more, it’s given me a taste for learning, which I recognize is a good way to exist.

This is very similar to childhood, where a taste for learning is always present, and we have that desire for learning that we lose later in life, when we begin to hold onto beliefs and truths that we don’t even know where they came from, and instead of learning and acknowledging

our ignorance, we limit ourselves to what we already know and can handle. These limitations are what I abandon when I dedicate myself to learning...

September 28, 2020

## Uncertainty

It can be argued ad infinitum that everything is true or that nothing is true, and that to “predict” essentially means just what its Latin roots - prae (before) and dicere (to say) - suggest: to say something will happen before it happens, but without any guarantee that it will happen.

Even so, it is almost impossible to stop predicting based almost entirely on the fact that something has happened before and is continuing to happen. This is how prediction models keep being built, and how we keep adjusting our predictions about the climate and everything else we know to be cyclical, which curiously ends up being EVERYTHING. I say "everything" because it is easy to observe that we are immersed in a planetary structure that moves according to cycles and rhythms. And if we move beyond the planetary context and just look at what happens on the earth and with ourselves, we still end up seeing everything in terms of cycles and rhythms.

Implicit in the concept of cycle is the idea of repetition, and everything that is repeated can be projected into the future without much problem or doubt. Thus we tell ourselves that tomorrow exists and also the day after tomorrow, and in a few hours night will fall and then day will come. This tendency to project keeps us feeling secure because it turns out to be relatively accurate; nevertheless we do encounter surprises from time to time, and then our certainties falter and uncertainty appears.

Uncertainty usually causes us problems because it doesn't fit into our predictable world. This year, 2020, is full of uncertainty, and of course there will be many predictions of all kinds explaining the reason for these anomalies. The opinion makers and those who do not believe in them will be divided equally trying to explain, and to explain to themselves, everything that does not fit and produces uncertainty. The result of all this will probably be to produce even more uncertainty. After all, no one really wants to admit that it's impossible to coherently explain all these rampant transformations. Unless you deeply study how changes (of all kinds) operate in the individual, in society and on the planet... just to begin with.

Personally, I am inclined to think that it is neither important nor correct to keep trying to explain what happens based on what has happened. Because if I examine things closely, these predictions are only correct if they are framed in terms of the general and not the particular. Earthquakes in a specific place can be explained by geological and geographical studies, etc., but that kind of understanding does not make it possible to predict them. Viruses cannot be predicted either, and viruses are sometimes not well understood. Not to mention social uprisings, or even less, economic collapse.

Those who dedicate themselves to prediction are still in the dark about the rhythms of processes. Anyway, I have my serious doubts about how so many experts in everything can be constantly adjusting their predictions and forgetting the previous ones.

Uncertainty is not resolved through predictions or explanations. In fact, I don't think it can be resolved at that level at all. I do think that the "uncertain" can be extraordinarily positive, in that it can push us down untraveled paths, helping us gain in understanding and in true certainty, which I locate internally. If I only always walk the same path, I never have the

opportunity to learn and to see what I have not seen yet, to experience new sensations and new ideas. I limit myself and I limit others.

On the other hand, if I see uncertainty as something that opens up new possibilities, I have the opportunity to see everything that does not fit within the predictable in a new way. Then without a doubt I lose my security and gain in internal experience. This is a good arrangement in a world that is increasingly in crisis, where the old explanations no longer ring true to the tired ears of a world that yearns for total renewal.

October 5, 2020

## Illusions

It's curious that human suffering has so much more to do with illusions and beliefs than with images of suffering. Mental suffering and all the best sufferings come from illusions that have not come true, or beliefs that have no basis. And - why not say it - from the idea that we die, that we are not immortal.

I've been pondering this subject for a while because it is something that's important to understand, and the best way is to see it in oneself. To see my own illusions and beliefs, and to see how they make me fearful when they do not come true. Fear causes internal violence, and that is suffering. Many fears are based on a belief in something that is not going to come true. I fear poverty, I fear illness, I fear rejection, and I fear death. I fear war, hunger, population explosion, ecological disaster, etc.

In short, I fear everything that could happen to me, and the worst part is the "could happen." I could get sick, I could become poor, I could die. In fact it's most probable that I will get sick and die, because I'm already getting poorer and poorer. The "probable" tends to justify my fears, and that's because I don't understand that my fears are illusory.

It's not that they don't exist. Of course I am going to die, but of course it's not going to be how I imagine it, and that's the most interesting part of the suffering. When I think about everything I've imagined at a fairly low level - how I imagine I'm going to feel when something happens, how I imagine people I've never met - what I imagine almost never has anything to do with what actually happens.

But I don't structure it that way. I don't think about it that way, I don't take the time to say to myself, "nothing I imagine really happens," because if I really understood it that way, I would understand the mechanism of illusion more deeply. At most, I say superficial things like "how surprised I was when I met so and so," but in reality, it wasn't such a surprise, it was just that what I imagined didn't correspond to the reality, and I called that "a surprise," or "a nice surprise," because the imagination often leads us down the opposite path, down that of positive expectations, and then the same thing happens, but in reverse... "an unpleasant surprise."

Certainly neither my negative nor my positive imaginings come true in reality, but "that" which doesn't happen is directly linked to my imaginings, to the expectations and beliefs I have about "it."

When my beliefs, expectations and fears are illuminated by my understanding of them, which sometimes happens, then I can see how they cause problems not only in me but also around me. Then I also have the opportunity to understand them in their illusory structure, and this is where it's important to understand that we don't need to fight against our beliefs and illusions, but instead need to see and discover their compensatory nature. They exist because I have deficiencies. They exist to balance out my deficiencies, but unfortunately they are not very effective, and that is where the difficulty lies.

In spite of all our inefficiency, we have a great capacity to observe all these mechanisms and tendencies. I say "observe" and not "interpret" because it is in the light of observation that my

beliefs and my illusions lose their suggestive power. And it is in the light of that same observation that I can generate a different behavior in a more coherent direction.

My most lucid moments when I practice this observation accumulate, and I begin to experience a kind of gentle awakening to something deeper in myself and in others, something that my illusions and beliefs had not been letting me see. In other words, I experience an inner liberation from the bondage of my beliefs and illusions.

October 19, 2020

## Difficulties

“A difficulty is an opportunity in work clothes” – that’s what I read in a little book I received at the age of twenty. At first I found the idea novel, but with the passing of time it has become an inner reminder that I value greatly to this day.

I imagine this has been said in various other ways, but for me at least, the picture fits. I have always imagined each difficulty dressed in blue overalls, ready to be “worked on.”

Visual images aside, whenever I detect a difficulty, an internal tension also arises. Difficulties are not friendly, they do not show up with good manners, asking for permission. They break into my life causing all kinds of discomfort, and I respond with resistance, forgetfulness, justifications, and all kinds of other responses at the same level.

I think that almost all my so-called difficulties have something in common, and that is that if they are overcome, they make me grow internally – and also externally, but I am more interested in internal growth. So for some time now I have been reflecting at the end of each week on how the difficulties that arise in my life have made me grow internally. To my surprise, I am becoming friends with those ladies, and that has changed my relationship with them and with myself. I no longer cross the street to avoid them – instead I smile, sometimes converse with them lightly, and definitely do not antagonize or ignore them. And so I am beginning to see that my difficulties generally show up as true indicators of where I need to work.

All my difficulties ask is that I acknowledge their presence and existence, and in exchange for that, they show me clearly where I have to “work.” If I don’t like something, I can investigate it. If someone offends me, I can investigate that. The same if I feel sad, anxious, fearful, etc. If I do not run away from these states, but instead let myself get closer to the root of these conflicts, I can work on them and make them disappear.

I have no idea how the idea became so widespread that difficulties should be avoided at all costs and that we should be smiling all the time as if we were on display. This does not mean we will have fewer of them, so it is important that they become what they really are: excellent opportunities in work clothes.

I say excellent opportunities because when difficulties appear, we get to choose which path to follow, and in the constant process of choosing more deeply, we keep fine-tuning the way we work with ourselves. When I choose to work on my difficulties, the possibility of liberation truly appears, and that is something that is internally very precious.

October 10, 2020



## Affection

In a few words and with a lot of feeling. If I had to choose from different possibilities for describing what is best about humanity, I would say it is affection. The most extraordinary thing about this feeling of affection is it doesn't require any explanation at all. It should be ranked with the air we breathe in the hierarchy of basic needs.

I have been working with the Principle of Solidarity, which says: ***“When you treat others as you want to be treated, you liberate yourself,”*** and in trying specifically to discover how I want to be treated, discarding different possibilities like “with respect,” “with kindness,” “with honesty,” etc, which all sounded correct but lacked internal truth, I realized that “with affection” was fireproof. That's how I want to be treated, without any doubt, and so I'd better begin treating others that way.

In that context, when I express this affection, “the other being” seems close, warm, friendly and true, and in a very simple but real way, I can experience that I exist because the other exists.

This affection that I feel, or can feel for others, also has the quality of being felt for and by myself. I can treat myself with affection, and that is one of the best ways to treat myself, and I'll say it again, to treat others.

October 26, 2020

## To choose

To understand that I have not chosen is quite revolutionary, or at least quite provocative, as my friend Danny would say. In any case, this comprehension has the magical and unequivocal ability to liberate me internally. Which is always positive and comforting.

As the eleventh Principle of valid action advises, ***“It does not matter in which faction events have placed you. What matters is that you comprehend that you have not chosen any faction.”***

This is a complicated theme because of the enormous effort that has been dedicated to convincing humanity that our existence requires some kind of “identification” - with a cause, a religion, an ethnicity, one’s education, etc. etc. etc. The list is endless, as are the reproaches if you decide not to do it. And in this process of identification we simply get chained to beliefs that awaken in us a blind impulse to defend them at all costs whenever they are questioned. This is where the enemies and the allies come in, together with all the superstructures of justification for such beliefs.

In reality, the problem lies not with the factions but with the fact that we have not chosen any faction. No one is born belonging to a faction. But of course without giving us any time to reflect, the environment starts working on us and our “identity” gets configured according to the geographic location we were born in and everything else that goes along with that: language, ethnicity, education, social and economic strata, etc. It’s very difficult to avoid having our identity configured in all those ways; in fact, it’s impossible.... But what IS possible is to reflect more deeply, which lets me see that none of this has been my choice.

So I ask myself: What’s the problem with having received all this that I have no control over at all? And I answer: There’s nothing either good or bad about all these aspects of my identity, because what I’m proposing is simply the lack of choice, without speaking in terms of good or bad. I don’t need to question what I’ve received... unless it causes problems for me. Unless it makes me violent inside or makes me violent to others.

If I feel like a prisoner of my beliefs, if I feel like my faith is being attacked, then I need to reflect on this weakness that is mine and no one else’s. But if my faith is in what is beyond the circumstantial, beyond what I have acquired, beyond the “natural,” then it’s not so hard to understand that these divisions, these factions, are not as solid as they might seem. Otherwise they would not need so much defense and violence to maintain them.

All this is complicated because the mere idea of not being part of any faction in particular gives us a sensation of abandonment, of being set intellectually and emotionally adrift. Of being alone and unprotected. The tendency to be attached in general is so strong that the idea of liberation is a little intimidating. It’s like being left with nothing, like being a weathervane turning in the wind, like being without commitment, being unable to “define” oneself, etc. etc. etc...

This essay already has too many etceteras, but that is testimony to the interminable litanies connected to this theme of understanding that one has not chosen any faction, which is why

understanding it is not easy. What's more, this is not a call to abandon any faction, and that's even more difficult to integrate. This is a call for mental liberation, which has little to do with the external. If I am able to understand, if only for instants and not as deeply as I might wish, that it is the "mental" that enchains me, that it is what I "believe" that generates suffering, that it is what I "defend" that gets me into messes, that it is what I "attack" that produces problems for me and others, then I will direct my "re-flections" toward those beliefs in order to understand them. With no need to abandon anything at all... because my effort is directed toward freeing myself of the suffering caused by this "identification" that is nothing more than reveries and beliefs.

This inner capacity to see and understand my internal mechanisms and my responses is what I am interested in developing. Sometimes I manage to see that I have no need to defend or attack anybody or anything. Those are the best moments in this process because then I am at peace with myself and I can see that I have truly chosen very little, and this is the understanding I need if my actions are going to be truly valid.

Something important to clarify about this attitude is that it implies absolutely no need to explain the incoherent actions of others. I do not need to explain that the other person had a difficult childhood or give any of the fashionable psychological explanations. No, there is no need to explain anything. The point of comprehension is with myself, and that is where my reflection begins and ends.

November 9, 2020

## Weave with a fine thread.

There is a saying in Spanish: “Hilar fino.” I am not sure how it translates in English, but it means to weave with a very fine thread or in a more popular way: “Splitting Hairs”. We use it when we are talking about something into which we need to go deeper than it appears on the surface. This is almost always true when we are talking about the Principles (of valid action) and the Message.

In one of our weekly meetings we discussed the principle of the factions and the discussion somehow ended up in the sentence from the book *“Cruelty horrifies me, but in itself it is not better or worse than kindness.”*

This is a monumental sentence, at least for me, especially considering the context. It appears in the third chapter of the book, *“The Non-meaning”*. The apparent affirmation of two known values that are opposed to each other, in which that opposition disappears or is questioned in its fundamental validity, is not made lightly. On the contrary, I believe it is a serious and profound statement and requires us to use a “fine thread,” and here is the beginning of a very fine tapestry in need of study and reflection.

In my opinion, when someone affirms “there is no meaning in life if everything ends in death” and writes extensively on the subject, the reader needs to exercise due diligence in trying to understand where this statement comes from, because this is the most important issue in our human existence. We can ignore this sentence, we can dismiss it, we can affirm it, or we can deny it internally and externally, but the truth of the matter remains: if death erases everything we know and experience, why, then, do we live? It obviously makes no sense to live unless that is not the case, and there is a meaning in life, despite the apparent absurdity that we humans experience from the moment we are born until we die. The absurdity of death is an important issue, probably the most important in our fleeting existence, and it is no surprise that the effort to find an answer to it has given rise to religions, philosophies, occultism, morals, beliefs, etc, etc.

A question without an answer is extremely unsatisfactory, especially in the type of society that we, accidentally, did not choose to be born into, a random and unfair event that, unfortunately or not, we have no option of changing. We have only two options: either to ignore the question, or to dive into it. In the process we may find something that illuminates this absurdity and perhaps goes a little further...

But I am not fond of false expectations, so we can basically concentrate on the “non-meaning of life” concept, and if something else is revealed, we can welcome that as well.

In this state of “absurdity,” what is most obvious is the fusion of the body with the “being”. In other words, we say “we are” or “we exist” because we recognize ourselves with a body, a face, a beating heart, a name that was given to us, and a lot of other “concrete” ways of identifying ourselves with our existence. It is very hard to separate these realities from other more subtle phenomena such as feelings, intuitions and thoughts, even though we also recognize those as part of our identity.

This capacity to recognize who we are and where we are gives us a unique perspective. We become aware of time and space, and we also become aware that the physical part, at least, is temporal, that it exists in a given space for a period of time.

This basic conditioning is such only because we are “aware” of it. We really don’t have any idea whether other species have this seemingly absurd recognition that no matter what we do, we end up dying, so I will only talk about what we know. Confronted with this inescapable fact, this predictable future, this essentially contradictory state in which every cell of our being fights to stay alive forever or at least for “as long as possible,” we experience an existential anguish that develops with the passage of time. But eventually, no matter what we do, death arrives, and we cease to exist.

This is our human condition, like it or not. This very uncomfortable but absolute reality is part of our very essence. It doesn’t really matter in “objective” terms how we deal with it. We can accept it or deny it; we can try to forget about it; we can do all sorts of things to deal with it and in the “big scheme of things” it is hard to see whether or not that changes the reality. We can throw beliefs of all sorts at it, we can stoically accept it, we can imagine whatever we want about it, but nothing seems to change the facts.

This is my own version of the “non-meaning”. I am sure that there is one for every individual on the planet. The recognition of our own mortality is a common human experience independently of the way we structure it and respond to it. This recognition is as important as recognizing the blue of the sky or a beautiful melody or the fragrance of the spring flowers or the taste of love and passion. It is also the recognition of brutality, cruelty, injustice and darkness. It is in the structure of our beings to be able to “differentiate,” to know an object by “what it is not.” We know kindness because we know cruelty. We know high because of low, or dark because of bright, and so on and so forth. We structure our vision of the world in this fashion because it is the way our consciousness works. Life and death, meaning and non-meaning...

Without cognition and recognition we can't really understand external reality, nor can we understand much of anything.

Every human being is born in this situation, therefore it is important to address it in a way that is devoid of guilt, fear, and false expectations. In other words, as a fact.

It is equally important to continue to read what the author explains in the book about ***“Dependence” and the “Intimation of the Meaning.”***

I have come to see that it is not in the so-called “facts” that the understanding of something grows, but rather in the understanding of the structure of the facts. I do not understand a car because of how it looks or how it performs. I understand it when I see an entire structure at work in which the engine, the wheels, the transmission, the gas, the ignition, etc. make the car move. This amazing ability of the consciousness to integrate information is what allows us to go further in understanding ourselves and the world in which we live.

When we see that the “cart of desire,” as Laura pointed out during the meeting, moves thanks to the wheels of pleasure and pain, because they are connected by the same axle, then we

begin to understand how opposites are really structured into one. Going beyond the opposites and seeing them as an inseparable structure allows us a comprehension that is absolutely necessary if we wish to go beyond non-meaning in life. We don't advance much when we simply give "values" to phenomena - good and bad, nice and ugly, etc. etc. We go farther when we see beyond values as part of our comprehension of a phenomenon. After all, we really know all these "valued objects" because we can recognize them in ourselves. We are capable of cruelty and kindness, and if we are, we'd better try to understand how that is possible. Otherwise we simply deny the undeniable, and that is a poor error of judgement, not in itself but because in general it leads to hypocrisy or fanaticism.

The author dedicates an entire chapter to the notion that opposites are in essence irrelevant when confronting a lack of meaning. He does so precisely because in general we do not think in structural terms. We simply emphasize one perspective, and the opposite is by default the "wrong" one. This dual way of thinking is not what is needed when we are trying to understand what is being said in the Inner Look.

It is relevant to note that when working with opposites that are integrated into a structure, a void is generated, a void that will tend to fill up sooner or later. This void may cause our thinking to stretch and allow us to understand that the opposites of anything simply reveal a complete structure with positive and negative values, but still one current, one object. This effort to think structurally is what is needed if we wish to understand what it is proposed in this chapter. It allows us, in a way, to "weave with a fine thread."

November 16, 2020

# Trust

When the institutions that are a society's pillars are not perceived as such, that is the beginning of that society's disintegration. Science is no longer credible, education is doubtful, religion is uninspiring, justice is no longer blind, politicians no longer represent any truth.

Trust is a key ingredient in a correctly functioning society. Generally trust is lost when the keepers of the trust fail in their actions. Normally trust is never recuperated when it breaks down. Doubt and mistrust poison everything they touch, and unfortunately the antidote has not yet been found for this enormous problem

When there is trust, there is tolerance and respect, because it is understood that errors can be correctable. That is not the case when trust evaporates. Then all tolerance and respect disappear in a whirlwind of mutual recriminations, and finally everything gives way to violence and total disintegration. This happens in human relationships and in human societies. So we ask ourselves, what can be done? How can we emerge from this situation?

Will we again give our trust to those who have betrayed us? Will we pardon all their mistakes? Will we exchange some for others without any certainty that things will get any better? Will we listen to new promises made without the slightest conviction? Such promises do not inspire trust no matter how great an effort we or anyone else makes. They do not sound sincere because they are not.

The sincerity we need is intimately linked to the recognition that this society has failed at every level. This failure cannot be repaired with promises and declarations, nor by a tough nor a soft approach. It doesn't matter which individual or individuals have declared themselves the savior, because they do not inspire trust. Maybe by now we are at last completely fed up with what we've been seeing for thousands of years.

Really recognizing our social failure would put us in an extraordinary situation, tremendously painful for a few and liberating for the rest. Such a recognition implies being able to admit our ignorance at all levels. It implies being able to look at all our mistakes without prejudice, without cowardice and without blaming anyone. We gain nothing by blaming anyone because if we're really being sincere, we'd better share the blame. But I do not believe that is the best approach, nor that it is what we aspire to. True justice has little to do with guilt and blame.

If we as a society can experience our failure, perhaps we can move on to a new stage where a new way of organizing ourselves and of looking at things is possible.

Inevitably at this first stage of recognition, fear is the first thing we need to accept, see, and abandon. Fear is exactly what is keeping us from advancing as a society toward a more coherent form of relationship and government. Fear of losing what we do not have or what we believe we have, fear of not achieving what we believe we need to achieve, fear of what we remember having had or what we believed we had have always led us to destruction and violence as individuals and as societies. This fear exists at every level of our lives and that is why our social structures are in decline and disintegrating. "Each clinging to their own gods..." as the famous and true song goes. Without even realizing that those "gods" that we cling to are the same that all the enemies we keep creating cling to.

The truth is, it's a sad situation for all humanity, and like it or not, we are all immersed in this system that is now global and we have no possible way to escape this reality.

Like all "realities" we need to start seeing it for what is, and the sooner the better. If there is any possibility of change, it is now and not tomorrow, and that change will only be possible if each of us has a strong desire for change. This change has to begin with the individual who becomes fully aware of the situation of failure at an individual and social level. If we naively believe that the individual and the social are separate and that it's the society that is messed up and we are fine, we won't go anywhere very interesting. The opposite idea, where society is fine and the individual is messed up, is equally mistaken.

What I am writing about is one of the most difficult things to do, and at the same time the most effective. When change begins in an individual it is because an internal recognition has put them in a situation of "truth" that can be reached in no other way. How I would love to take a pill and have everything be fine when I wake up, or drink a glass of something that would make me feel better. Or maybe take some drugs. Nothing very strong, just enough to make me forget this reality that I have not created and that has nothing to do with me. I could also surround myself with people like me and therefore not feel my miscalculations or my internal failure, and I could calmly blame everyone else. I have to admit that sometimes this works for a while but the moment inexorably passes and something happens that breaks that artifice and I am again violated internally by the facts and by what I do not want to admit.

The false doors for ending our internal violence and the social disintegration that comes with it are many, but the only important thing is that they are false. Truth is always felt as such, and its main characteristic is that it does not bring violence. The violence we are talking about is physical, racial, sexual, gender, religious, economic, etc. – all the known forms of violence. The truth is felt as an inner liberation, an expansion, a soft joy, peacefulness, and a certainty that the other is as important as oneself. If we have to justify and explain what we call "the truth" because we cannot feel it, then all those explanations are useless, because they do not touch the human heart, which is where the real possibility of transformation begins.

Maybe I don't feel this thing that holds the truth all the time, but it's enough to feel it a few times in order to orient our lives in that direction that is human and, why not say it, transcendent. Transcendent in that it truly transcends the personal, the individual trivialities, and puts us in resonance with life itself, a life that keeps being built from inner realities and not from slogans and great economic, political, or moral declarations.

This ascending direction brings me to a situation of trust in the other and in myself that can be experienced without any doubt, because I can feel in the other the same thing I feel in myself.

When this happens, when I can put myself in the other's shoes, that is when my position in the world changes, and therefore everything changes. To want and to be able to treat the other as I want to be treated is the golden rule for a real society. It is the foundational pillar for building something that is true.

When the human being is divorced from their deepest feelings, that is when meaning is lost or fades. When I separate myself from what is true in me, that is when the society I belong to no longer reflects a meaningful direction. That is when all the "enemies" appear, ready to snatch what I believe I have. That is when the indefensible appears, when all the flags are raised



signaling that what is most important is the individual, the family, private property, religion, and the fatherland.

And maybe that is the way it is, but all of it is tinged with fear and violence. It does not inspire trust, quite the contrary. It causes internal disintegration and makes me betray what I believe I believe in. On one hand I am ready to do the impossible for my loved ones, and at the same time everything that is not part of that small circle is my enemy. Of course I am going to justify that a thousand different ways. That justification will keep growing and suddenly I will find that war, killing, and control by fear are “necessary” because they are the enemies of “my fatherland” and my “beliefs” and everything that exists.

If anyone dares ask me how it is possible for all that to be justified, for the religion I profess to be one of “love and not hate,” or any other question that reveals my deep inner contradiction, I will respond with insults and more violence.

Curiously there is no religion on the planet that promotes hate in its original teachings; nevertheless, here we are, with the defenders of the faith armed to the teeth to protect something that was never even said.

One could say that this is all an absurdity, and of course it is. But we have gone past the limits of what can be said, and what we are facing is a disintegration that will not respond to anything anyone can say, or to any brainy analysis. This is something that is growing like a cancer and will keep weakening the social body until it destroys it. I am not exaggerating in the least. This social breakdown began decades ago, and we are now in the midst of one of the greatest crisis humanity has ever faced.

All the alarms in our short memory of history are going off and even the most cynical and the most optimistic silently know that we are going in the wrong direction.

I do not believe that anyone will be very happy with this quite brutal and apparently negative analysis, but unfortunately we find ourselves at a historical crossroads of immense proportions. This is not the moment for soft words or for denying what exists and where it is taking us. Nor is this the moment for statistics and intellectual justifications.

We need to observe and understand that this environment we live in that we call social has a lot to do with us. In reality it is almost impossible to separate the individual from society. The two are a structure, and must be understood structurally. It is in the structure itself that the problem of lack of truth, lack of faith, lack of trust is being generated. The individual and their environment feed each other and cannot be conceived separately, no matter how hard we try to imagine that.

I think and also want to believe that we can transform ourselves and transform our environment. I think and believe that it is possible to move in a unitive and growing direction. I’ve had internal flashes of recognition that push me strongly toward believing that it is possible not only to live with internal unity but also to act in the world as a transformative force.

To learn to treat others as I want to be treated is the most coherent way I can be in the world.  
It is something that gives me meaning and an ascending direction.  
Then to learn to overcome suffering in myself, in those close to me, and in society.  
To learn to resist the violence that is within me and outside of me.  
Finally, to learn to recognize the signs of the sacred within me and around me.

In this way we can be in the world, in society, and learn to develop ourselves internally. It is important to understand that it is necessary to “learn.” This is not just a word, but carries within it a way of being in the world where learning is the key, where every day I ask myself what is important, where every day I try to learn as much as possible about myself and those around me. In some way I believe that this is a “path” that will lead us to a different society, one that is human, profound, and much truer.

Trust is the basis of all human relationships. If trust is lost, it is like losing the doors and windows of a house. If trust is built, then the future opens wide.

November 23, 2020

## Conversion

The process of changing - or changing something - from one form into another is generically called “conversion.” In any kind of conversion, whether we’re speaking in scientific, economic, mundane, or spiritual terms, what is generally considered the important thing is the final objective, not the process of transformation that leads up to that objective. In other words, the process of conversion takes a back seat. I am more interested in the process of conversion than in the final product, because that way I can understand how conversion operates in me, how that transformation unfolds.

***“Here it tells how the non-meaning of life is converted into meaning and plenitude.”*** That is the first sentence in the book *The Inner Look* by Silo. It explains that what is being discussed here is the process of conversion, and that this is what the book is about. Of course when I read the book for the first time, I barely grasped that first sentence, and since then, as I’ve continued to study and come to new comprehensions over the years, I’ve delved more deeply into the extraordinary details of this writing.

At first everything appeared to me as static, because that was how I understood and saw the inner and outer world. From non-meaning to meaning, from one place to another, from one relationship to another relationship, everything of course aimed at “obtaining” that meaning, regardless of the fact that my objective began with its opposite, which was the point of origin or birthplace of this possibility. To put it more simply, there is no way to arrive at meaning without starting with non-meaning. But what is more important is the process of conversion from one into the other.

It is in this conversion process, as we study the principles of valid action for inner liberation, that we begin to discover the meaning to be found in failure, as well as the correct attitude, the suspicion of meaning, and the Force within. “I do not speak to you of liberty. I speak to you of liberation, of movement, of process,” explains the introduction to the Principles. And it is important to be clear about this, because it is precisely in my daily behavior that I will have to keep transforming my responses and my actions in the world. If my actions in the world are not coherent, no meaning can possibly appear.

But with the effort to think, feel and act in one direction, my actions begin to become more unitive, and this I feel is where the path toward meaning begins, in a diligent work to generate a new way of existing. It is important to understand that we work with what we have, with the nonmeaning we come from, which is the raw material that keeps being transformed, keeps being converted in an ascending direction.

All conversions have a point of origin, a process and a purpose, but it is in the process of “carefully meditating in humble search” that the meaning is revealed internally, and that is the process of conversion to which I aspire.

November 2, 2020

## The Gift

When we received this gift a few years ago at the inauguration of the South American Hall, its simplicity and profundity surprised me. I liked it so much that for almost a whole year I tried to do it every day as an internal and external centering exercise.

It is still a meaningful practice, and it begins like this: ***“At some moment of the day or night, take a breath of air and imagine that you are breathing that air into your heart.”***

First of all, there’s no schedule given, no special posture, no appropriate setting, not even any suggestions; it simply says to do it whenever and however seems best to you. When I breathe into my heart, I can feel almost automatically that I am lifted up internally. It’s a sensation, and it’s not important to explain it because I’ve always felt it and thought of it as “appropriate.”

And then I have to ask: ***“Then ask with strength for yourself and those you care most for.”***

Ask with strength. That means I’m doing something with great interest, with dedication and at the same time humbly. First I ask for myself, and this is important because in the beginning I had no idea how to ask for myself. I had never asked for myself before, I only knew how to ask for others. I had to learn how to ask myself what I really need. That’s not as simple as it seems, but neither is it so complicated. I had to “look at myself” in a different way. I had to look inside me and see my weaknesses, my desires, my needs, my longings, my reveries, my failures, and everything else that constitutes our internal world, but above all, my needs.

And then I ask for the loved ones I care most for. That seemed a lot easier, and then I began to understand that there are levels of profundity to what others need as well. Perhaps the most meaningful thing about this phrase is the word “most.” Those loved ones I care the most for. In other words those for whom I have great affection. Not long ago I wrote about affection and how important it is. In this simple asking, the word “most” implies great affection, and when I ask for my loved ones, that affection strengthens my asking.

I discovered that asking with affection for others and for myself is something very special, because it connects me with my heart in a way that’s easy and profound at the same time.

The rest of the asking brings me back to myself: ***“Ask with strength to move away from everything that brings you contradiction; ask for your life to have unity.”***

And for good measure there’s a brief but precise explanation of the meaning of “to move away from contradiction”: ***“Moving away from contradiction is the same thing as overcoming hatred, resentment, the desire for vengeance. Moving away from contradiction means cultivating the desire for reconciliation with others and with yourself. Moving away from contradiction means forgiving and making amends twice over for any hurt you have inflicted on others.”***

“Moving away from” means taking distance, separating myself from a conflictive situation, and to be able to do all that I need to do in order to recognize, and not just superficially, that I have hatred, resentment, and the desire for revenge inside me.

I feel “unitive” when I’m not divided internally, when I feel like being kind to myself, like I’m “centered.” Then I feel a gentle joy, and am truly interested in everything around me,

especially in the human beings. I identify all this “feeling” as cultivating the desire to reconcile with others and myself. I know what reconciliation with others means, but I have to admit that I don’t always know what it’s like to reconcile with myself. I have clear experiences of reconciling with others, but not so clear when it comes to reconciling with myself. This is where I can see my contradictions. This intolerance for myself, this internal arguing, this eagerness to protect and defend “who I am,” shows me that in my case, the most important work of reconciliation is with myself.

I’ve discovered that reconciling with myself is not an act, but a process that is more or less long. It’s not like I can just tell myself to reconcile, or just recognize my need to, and then reconcile and be done with it forever. That’s not my case, and I can see that reconciliation has levels of depth, and that over time I can notice some progress.

And of course there are also “the others,” and even if it’s easier to recognize my reconciliation with them, it’s also important to reflect on the importance of making amends twice over for the harm I’ve done them.

I’m not exactly sure how to make amends twice over, but I know I have to make an effort that goes beyond just asking for forgiveness and recognizing my mistake. I believe that each person has to decide according to their situation and the severity of the wrongdoing.

In any case, reconciliation is the important aspect of this simple asking to move away from contradiction, and it is in the effort to “cultivate the desire” for reconciliation with others and with myself that I keep moving forward in this process.

November 30, 2020

## Processes

*"It is hard to understand what a process is. Processes are phenomena that happen inside us; it's impossible to understand them from outside. History is the process of human beliefs manifesting the world as behaviors and transformations. We are in a moment of historical change, of change of beliefs, and we will continue saying that what we are seeing is incredible. The incredible thing is not to realize the profundity of the change we are experiencing."*

**Silo, 1992**

I've always liked this quote because it clearly explains at least a couple of things. One about processes and the other about beliefs. I am extremely interested in understanding processes, and more specifically in understanding the process of our human history.

The context of this quote about process has to do with explaining why, when a thought that is (from my perspective) highly coherent and rich, there is always someone who asks what the ideas are. That is as odd as asking a musician at a concert if his performance includes music. Of course anyone will say that asking such a question is absurd, how can someone with a minimum of neurons ask such a question? But it turns out that this happens much more frequently than we think, and reveals something much more interesting. Despite being at the concert, the person did not listen to the music. And this happens because what is structured in the consciousness does not correspond to the present, but has more to do with the famous beliefs we hold, and these are epochal beliefs that have an enormous influence on us.

More than fifty years ago, a group of scientists decided to study the possibility of nuclear fusion. Of course the scientific and non-scientific worlds told them that they were dreamers, and furthermore that since fusion needs more energy coming in than going out because of the high temperatures at which the phenomenon takes place, it's an impossible task...

All this was said while our sun and millions of other suns in the universe were operating with a nuclear fusion that we are grateful for, since it makes it possible for us to exist on our planet.

So despite all the evidence and all the study carried out by those privileged minds, that epochal basic belief, without expanded knowledge about quantum physics or artificial intelligence, limited everyone to "thinking" that a nuclear reaction can only occur through fission, and that if fusion were possible it was not economically viable. In other words, it was "practically impossible."

Today, we have nuclear reactors that operate by fusion and produce higher temperatures than those registered in our sun. This is only the beginning, and the important thing is that this reality now aligns with our epochal beliefs, and accepting it has little to do with people's neural capacity.

Of course, it has been quite a process to get to this point, and that is why it is important to structure what we know in terms of process. It is clear to all of us that our lives are a process,

especially if we make a little effort to see our different biographical stages and the type of beliefs that exist around us in each stage.

The words "impossible" and "incredible" are an intrinsic part of the fabric of these processes and both reveal what is believed epochally. Again, it does not matter if the evidence is before us if an idea has not yet been "structured" as such in the epochal consciousness.

I have always very much liked the story of Newton. I have no idea whether it's true or not, but the image of a man looking at a tree and then an apple falls to the ground is very dear to me. Who knows how many apples had fallen for thousands of years before that, and in all the people who saw them fall, probably all those apples didn't produce a single thought. But that was not Newton's case - most likely his favorite hobby was structuring phenomena, and so he ends up formulating the law of gravity. Now, the law of gravity is nothing so outrageous, and thanks to our understanding of it, humanity has come a long way. It has become one of our epochal beliefs.

All this is valid for historical processes, in the same way that it is valid for "dis-coveries" ["un-coverings"] of all kinds.

When epochal beliefs begin to falter through the same historical process that keeps moving forward, not in a linear way but rather in an upward spiral, then we can intuit that what is coming is a destructuring process where what is best in the historical moment keeps going while what does not serve much purpose collapses, decays and is forgotten. These are "incredible" moments not because they are not believable but because our epochal beliefs interfere with our correct structuring of phenomena. After all, Newton simply structured the phenomenon differently. The phenomenon of falling objects had been present for thousands of years in our history, but it did not become evident until that consciousness was able to structure the same phenomenon from a new perspective.

I believe that it is very appropriate at this time to make an effort to understand that what we are witnessing historically is not very different from understanding that many of the stars that we see every night disappeared long ago, and we can still see them only because thousands of years later, light has made them present. The future of humanity is already here and what we are "seeing" is what has already vanished ...

Who knows what is coming, or is already here - but it is coming... or has already arrived.

January 5, 2021

## Ambits

Of all the words in existence - and there are many - the word "ambit" is one of the least used and one of the most important. I say all this because few native English speakers are very familiar with this word, and hardly anyone uses it. This is not that significant in terms of language itself, but when you consider the meaning and its breadth of the word, its absence in common language is at the very least disturbing.

Whenever you want to express yourself in Spanish using the word "ámbito," it's not a problem. You can say "I was in a very small ambit." You can talk about "the ambit in which the ideas arise"... An ambit can be formal, excluding, or inclusive.

You can talk about physical ambits like the environment, and also about social, ideological, spiritual, psychological and scientific ambits.

"Ambit" and "environment" are equivalent, and ambit can also be used as a tangible or intangible space. It comes from the Latin "ambitus" which is related to circular movement, contour, circuit or detour. And we cannot ignore the space, sphere, circle, area, field, realm, terrain, domain, kingdom and world - all equivalents or synonyms for the word ambit...

This is certainly important because it implies a definition in spatial relation to the observed object. I have not been able to find the existence of any object (material or mental) that does not have an ambit or a medium in which it is inserted. Apparently, existence itself can only occur within a given area.

In English, however, there is no good translation. Which is not a very big problem because it is still understood, and although with few words the idea of an ambit is perfectly well understood.

I think that I'm the one with the problem, and when I write about it, I'm also solving it, which is very appropriate because I do not believe that any particular language is the "best" vehicle of universal expression. Looking at it this way, it's much less disturbing and allows me to see beyond the words. This means that there is an almost intrinsic understanding that the ambits and the objects within those ambits have an interdependent and therefore structural relationship. And that structurality is given not only by the language but by the consciousness itself. The consciousness is what structures objects within a given area, and also what gives universality to everything.

Here I am, in my house, writing. My house is the ambit. My laptop is on the table and that is its ambit. Around the house are the neighbors and beyond that are the boundaries of the neighborhood. And this neighborhood is in a city, and so on and so forth, out to the Milky Way and even beyond. All of this in a spatial ambit. It's difficult to think abstractly about the medium in which existence flows, and for that very reason I believe that this little word is important. Apart from being the container for that which exists, it also has the capacity to offer a "medium" where existence can manifest itself.

When I was a child, I had to do an experiment where in a glass jar I put some lentils and on those lentils I put layers of cotton that I kept wet for a week and at the end of the week, I picked up the cotton and all the lentils had a sprout green and beautiful. It's something I could never forget. The magic of growth and transformation because the environment was right.



Many times we become obsessed with growth not only external but also internal and this has led me to reflect on the scope and simply because that growth can be extremely effective if one considers the human environment, the environment or human environment, where this process has the possibility of developing and in the best possible way.

I have come to the conclusion that kindness, good treatment, gentleness and perseverance are the most suitable elements for internal growth when we see it from the perspective of that appropriate field. And this is something intentional, it is something that does not spring from the naturalness of the environment. It is something created, re-created and needs to be maintained by all and all those people who value the environment in which human relationships and all internal growth arise. Perhaps, it is the best effort we can do for ourselves and humanity.

January 25, 2021

## Physical violence

On June 14, 2017, fifty people were murdered at a Club in Orlando, Florida and another fifty-eight in Las Vegas the week before that. A couple of weeks ago, on January 6, 2021 a group of people stormed the capitol and four more people were killed. Things are so bad that it is now a weekly or daily occurrence.

Beyond the horrifying reality that all of these human beings died for no reason and the inexplicable suffering that surrounds these murders, I had to reflect on this sad and dark subject.

All actions are moved by images, by ideas and beliefs. All ideas, beliefs and images are mental. What is mental is within us, and often is formed from external sources. I guess that's almost always the case. We can draw inspiration from external sources and we can also become discouraged, hateful, confused, violent, and many other negative and positive states can influence our minds. I am learning that at the root of all acts of violence is desire. Desire generates frustration the same way a mirage does in the desert. We never reach the mirage and we can never satisfy our desires, and when we do have a wish fulfilled, a new one is formed immediately. Frustration breeds aggressiveness, which in turn creates violence. The illusion of desire and its possessive root move us in the direction of achieving our dreams, and failing to achieve our desire or our dreamed-of object or seeing that it is impossible generates frustration and violence. At that point all that violence is internal, but if nothing is done, then it will manifest itself outwardly in violent acts.

Due to all this and the difficulty of truly understanding the root of violence and truly managing that violence within ourselves, it is important that we understand clearly and without further detours or intellectual superstructures that "there are no false doors to escape this blind desire for violence." The best thing we can do is work internally every day to resist the violence within us and help others do the same.

I am sure that some day in the not too distant future, we will recognize that all our rights begin with the individual, but also that they end with the "other" individual. When the "other" is as important to me as I am, I have become truly human and internally transformed. So, I can't help but reflect on a part of "The Path" in Silo's Message:

***"Learn to treat others the way you want them to treat you.***

***Learn to overcome pain and suffering in yourself, in those around you and in human society.***

***Learn to resist the violence that is inside you and outside of you.***

***Learn to recognize the signs of the sacred within and around you. "***

Much learning ahead... and no wonder. Learning is precisely the most important formula for stopping suffering, resisting violence, and transforming ourselves internally. And in truth, there is no other way, there is no magic wand or political party or religion that can do the job of overcoming internal violence. When I heard these phrases fifty years ago from Silo's mouth, the subject did not seem so important to me. Now, however, it is perhaps the most relevant thing we can say in the historical moment in which we live, and at some point it is

also relevant to say it with all its lyrics. There is no other way to end violence than to learn, meditate, and increase our inner faith. Everyday...

February 1, 2021

## Persuasion

Persuasion has a bad reputation, but that's not her fault. In reality it's nobody's fault, and the negative or positive meanings that some words awaken in us have little to do with the words themselves. They have to do instead with the meanings that have been built, sometimes over centuries, for certain words. Unfortunately or fortunately, Persuasion has a cousin named Manipulation who looks a lot like her, but in reality they are very distant relatives whose similarity is only apparent.

Probably the most significant thing about persuasion is that the person using it isn't trying to get anything out of using it. In other words, persuasion isn't used for one's own benefit. Persuasion is the ability to empathize with others, and requires putting oneself in the other's place, not just in order to understand them, but also - in some cases - to be able to help them. On the contrary, to use persuasion's cousin, manipulation, a person needs only their own self-interest. It is important to note that manipulation of all kinds begins and ends in the individual or group that has decided to manipulate. There are no benefits for others except imaginary ones, which in reality do not exist as such. Manipulation generally comes into play when I want something that I can only get through others, and this speaks to me of possession, of desire, of fear, of psychological violence.

It is common and accepted that to impose something on others one has to manipulate, and this manipulation can be grossly or subtly expressed. To manipulate whole groups of people one needs only to appeal to some baseless fear - and most fears are baseless. Others resort to threats, promises, lies, etc. It doesn't seem to matter how one arouses in others the doubts, hopes, affirmation or negation that are necessary for obtaining benefits. It's also common and accepted that when I want to convince someone else of something that would benefit me directly or indirectly, I resort to manipulation.

Feelings of guilt, fear, and insecurities of all kinds are the perfect tools for getting something from others. The best manipulations are the ones that appeal to the "common good," the "needs of the whole," "our fatherland," "the neighborhood," "the community," etc., calling on guilt, either covertly or up front, to produce or obtain something from that group.

Fortunately, or unfortunately - once again, because I am not sure - persuasion has nothing to do with manipulation. Persuasion truly is an aspiration of the human being, an aspiration that has to do with what is best in us and in others. An aspiration without ulterior motives, with only respect, recognition, and an ability to put oneself in the other's place. If fears and resentments come together in manipulation, they completely disappear in persuasion.

It is good not to confuse these two young ladies. Persuasion is joyful, warm, sincere, generous, and perceptive. The other is the opposite, but both wear the same dress when they are introduced. They can be recognized by what they produce internally. Persuasion always appeals to what is best in others. She almost never tells me what I should or must do, but simply asks me, "And what would you do?" She always puts me in touch with what is best in me, which is how I keep discovering how different she is from her cousin, and how I keep understanding more and more deeply the meaning of the words, "*We aspire to persuade and to reconcile.*"

February 8, 2021

# Vengeance

*“Let us save man from vengeance, preparing the way for the new humanity that is approaching.”*

This sentence has been forever engraved in my memory since I first read it, more than fifty years ago. I still remember it word for word, and it is still one of those themes for reflection that never leave me.

The impression it made on me is still working on me today, because I could not precisely comprehend what it was saying, and even today I don't understand it.

Let me see if I can explain...

Considering our history, saving the human being from vengeance is a monumental task. It is striking that our whole judicial system is based on vengeance, and this is not easy to digest or to justify, because we know no other form of justice. What we call justice is simply vengeance, and every time a crime is committed we resolve it vengefully.

All of this sounds like an accusation, but I say it without the slightest intention of accusing anyone, and even less of judging anyone. I see this situation as a done deal. It is what we do, and our societies function thanks to judicial mechanisms in which the crimes committed are punished. Nobody really knows why, except that this is how we “do justice,” and there's almost always a tacit internal agreement about it. Yes, it's true, we call for justice, we find the guilty party, and give them the punishment they deserve. It is not possible to justify a “crime,” and it's not for nothing that nobody wants to or is able to say that “impunity” is a possibility. I cannot imagine a society that doesn't think about punishing its “criminals.” Not to do so would set off a commotion as complicated as a civil war.

I cannot imagine someone murdering another human being without somebody doing something to “punish” them for it. The desire for vengeance is much stronger than we believe or want to admit. We call it “justice,” and that's fine - but even though we use this more acceptable term, the problem hasn't gone away.

I don't know exactly how this mess came about, but I understand that the Hammurabi Code, which has been with us for at least 4000 years, has a lot to do with this problem. To say it as succinctly as possible, the Hammurabi Code is one of the first efforts to codify laws of protection and retribution. The idea is to protect those harmed by the acts of others, and to punish those who do such harm, by applying a similar action as retribution or retaliatory justice. If someone breaks someone else's leg, that person is punished by having his own leg broken. In other words, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” and as someone said a long time ago, “we're all left blind and toothless.” It's an interesting form of equality, but not very convincing.

Two thousand years after the code attributed to the Babylonian King Hammurabi, and two thousand years before the current time, teachings that unequivocally opposed this code appear in the document known as “The Sermon on the Mount.” In a kind of public talk, this document explains what is, from my point of view, the purest essence of original Christianity. If there were a way of synthesizing the Christian doctrine, the Sermon on the Mount does it, establishing the foundations for a form of behavior completely different from what had been known up to that time. It begins with the Beatitudes, continues with the offering of the “other

cheek” when confronted with violence and vengeance - a novelty for that historic moment - and explains that you must not judge others, and that you should not do to others what you would not like them to do to you (the negative version of the Golden Rule). It gives many guidelines for behavior, and ends with an explanation on loving both one's neighbors and one's enemies.

This sermon, plus some other unusual interventions like when Christ is arrested by soldiers and one of the disciples cuts off the ear of a servant of the high priest, and the Latin phrase, “Qui gladio occidit, gladio occisus erit” - “He who lives by the sword will die by the sword” is explained, is a teaching that has been written and rewritten over and over in all the known languages - yet we do not practice it, and it is truly extraordinary that something so essential, so purely and clearly expressed, is not practiced.

Almost 1900 years after these “recommendations” appear, a Russian writes a book that is censored in his own country until 1894, when Tolstoy's book titled “The Kingdom of God is Within You,” based on what was said in the famous sermon mentioned earlier, is printed for the first time in Germany. Tolstoy again shows the relevance of the idea of “nonviolent resistance to violence,” and his book is without any doubt one of the most important precursors of today's pacifism. Nevertheless, despite all efforts to offer another path, human societies have not managed to practice the most important teachings given over the course of millennia.

Probably inspired by Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi shakes British Imperial India by means of pacifism and nonviolent protest, until, on January 30, 1948, he is assassinated. Martin Luther King, inspired by similar ideas twenty years later, does the same in the struggle for the rights of African Americans in the United States, launching the Civil Rights Movement. Unfortunately, on April 4, 1968, he too was assassinated.

One year and one month after the violent tragedy of King's assassination, on a mountainside in the southern part of the American continent, a place unknown to the rest of the world, a young man of 31 launches a talk called “The Healing of Suffering.” And once again in our short human history so full of tragedy, violence, revenge, wars, oppression, intolerance and all the rest, someone proposes a way out of this vicious circle, offering a proposal of faith, hope, love, etc., but above all of overcoming the violence inside us and in the environment we live in.

It seems that the only possible way for us humans to save ourselves from violence is by overcoming the internal suffering caused by a disjunction between what we think, feel, and do. This is much more than simply being “good.” It effectively means achieving inner peace and bringing it to others. This inner peace appears when contradiction disappears and when human lives achieve a transcendental meaning. But this does not happen without internal work on oneself, or just because it is correctly proposed. Since the root of the problem of revenge, of making another suffer the way I have suffered, is so deep in our western mental form, transformation does not seem possible without effecting a profound transference of values in society, beginning with oneself.

And here I will stop, because I recognize, as I said in the beginning, that I do not precisely understand the problem. I need to study it in myself, I need to see how this desire for revenge is produced within me, and that is what I am working on.

Up to now I have encountered only two situations in my life in which I clearly saw and was able to resist the desire for vengeance when it began to take me over internally. In both situations I had an energetic register of comprehension, a register I have not yet been able to put into words or to integrate well. But without a doubt these experiences have been for me a source of reflection and intuition that there is another path for overcoming vengeance... and consequently that a future humanity will truly be able to find the reconciliation we need to save ourselves from vengeance.

February 15, 2021

## Reconciliation

The theme of violence and vengeance is a fairly heavy one, but at the same time it creates the space for me to ask myself, “How do I get out of this mess?” No matter how much I’d like to offer the other cheek, I am not completely convinced of the effectiveness or enduring validity of that approach. And after ending up without cheeks from offering them so often, how can I really overcome those forces that keep being generated within me?

Going deeper, I have to recognize that sometimes my worst enemy is inside me. If I am my worst enemy, offering my cheeks won’t help me much.

Then I see more clearly the need to reconcile with myself, and with everyone who has harmed me. The path of reconciliation is arduous, but demands sincerity; and it is the only path that offers a way out of the vicious cycle of internal violence and resentment - the same cycle that makes others mistreat me and makes me mistreat myself.

So, considering all this, there arises within me the natural impulse of forgiveness. But forgiveness, while still important, is not enough. It is not enough because it obliges me to put myself in those totally unexpected situations where I pardon my aggressor and they don’t realize I’ve done so, and just go on being aggressive. Now, humiliated on top of being hurt, I decide that forgiveness isn’t very effective, since I find myself again resentful, but now doubly so because my forgiveness has not been gracefully welcomed. And even if, as in the best of cases, my forgiveness is accepted, I feel morally superior, and that’s the end of all my efforts toward a more interesting transformation. Besides, there remains an unanswered question: how do I forgive myself?

I need to go a little deeper inside... and unfortunately I can’t do that just by forgetting what happened. Forgetting doesn’t work very well, because the painful memory is still there, and no matter how hard I try to push it down, it surfaces and keeps bringing that situation back into my present awareness, even though I’ve tried to forget it. Sometimes just a scent or a color brings back all those memories I thought I’d forgotten, and again I find myself in a situation of resentment.

Little by little, and almost without any other options, I begin to reflect that the only way to overcome all this is through a deep and sincere reconciliation that begins specifically with myself. As has been said, this process begins when I accept that I have a problem, when I can admit that I don’t like myself as much as I believed, and sometimes don’t really like myself at all. This lack of affection for myself is complicated and makes me suffer, and its causes and origins are hardly important. What is important is that it exists, and is continually begging to be recognized and resolved. There I am with this burden that gets lighter only when I begin to treat myself differently, when I begin to see myself in a different way, when there appears within me a desire for a kind of transformation not linked to any feeling of guilt or desire to “improve” myself, or any requirements of that sort. A transformation where I simply see myself as someone with a lot of positive and negative attributes, with longings and hopes, failures and successes - a truly human being with all kinds of needs, and also someone who’s interested in others and in coexisting with them and loving them - and also in loving myself. When I can see myself that way, my future opens and I feel I can escape the trap of resentment.



Then I recognize the validity of not judging myself or anyone else. I recognize the need to transform my life and the lives of those around me, but not compulsively, or for any other reason than to overcome myself. Because I understand, although not always very deeply and not always completely, that this is an effort that is made without concern for retribution or reciprocity. In other words, it's neither necessary nor important for others to respond in kind. It's a kind of "unilateral disarmament" that I experience as internal liberation, as a sensation of lightness and coherence, something that fits internally.

Finally I can perceive that when, as I strive to reconcile with myself, I begin to achieve this unilateral disarmament, it reinforces in me the feeling of reconciliation with others. Now I can sometimes see how all those individuals who have wounded me are exactly the same as me. I can perceive them in their humanity, and this is possible because I am humanizing myself. So after going around and around on this issue, I realize that everything begins to transform when I make the decision to reconcile with myself.

It is that effort, and no other, that allows me to escape from the closed circle of violence and vengeance. The best thing about this whole process is the silent joy that begins to accumulate within me, and I feel a profound gratitude for all these teachings that we have received.

February 18, 2021

## Guilt

The dilemma around guilt is that even though nobody wants to feel guilty, we all do anyway, no matter what we say about it, what we preach, how we deny it or try to ignore it. I've noticed that when someone says they feel guilty, all kinds of advice about the absurdity of feeling that way immediately arises, and there's no lack of right words and phrases to convince the person that they have no reason to feel guilty. Undoubtedly we do all this to convince ourselves that guilt is something harmful and negative, something that should not figure greatly in our lives.

I strongly agree, but that does not mean the feeling of guilt diminishes. Despite all the enormously wise advice and, in the worst of cases, the most agonizing confessions, the problem stubbornly persists. In less than five minutes, there we are again, feeling guilty in spite of everything that's been explained to us.

Since no one likes this theme of guilt, we're always hearing how outdated our guilts are, how they surely belong to another time in people's lives; but secretly, those statements are made with little conviction.

Many years ago, when I was complaining to a woman I was married to about how guilty I felt (over something unimportant to anyone else), she told me that if I felt guilty, it was because I WAS guilty. When she told me that, I was stunned, because it was not what I expected, and on top of that, it bore the heavy charge of accusation. Very angry, I told her how could she say things like that, and she, without blinking an eye, replied that indeed I WAS guilty because otherwise I would feel differently. In other words, if I didn't feel guilty, I wasn't guilty.

That was a revelation for me, and made me realize two big things about feeling guilty. One, which has to do with the human mental form - so to speak, since guilt is part of the society and culture in which we are immersed, and whether we like it or not, it exists as part of the greater field in which we are all interconnected. It is useless to try to "blame" religions for these feelings, because even though for centuries religious institutions have used guilt to their own advantage, guilt is not an inherent part of any spiritual system, and those who have been born and raised in secular environments, even though they know nothing of religion, feel no less guilty because of that.

The other thing is that guilt is closely linked to "what should be", that is, to what is ethical, which is also a cultural and social attribute. We were born and raised under the influence of this idea, and precisely because it is so "all-enveloping" it is not easy to eradicate or fully understand. We tend only to know that we don't like it.

The constant search for the "guilty party," when something does not fit what is predictable and acceptable in our societies, does not help much either. Even less do we get any help from the judicial system, on which we have commented in previous reflections.

To admit that I was "guilty" based on my feelings of guilt was as unpleasant a novelty as the feeling of guilt itself. For a long time I couldn't understand it, but obviously there was a truth there that I could not avoid. Little by little I began to realize that indeed one "is" or "is not" guilty, and not only guilty, but also any other attribute of that type. You are "generous" or you are not; funny, thoughtful, happy, sensible, sad, bitter, etc. etc.

I know that nobody likes the idea of negative attributes; we all want to be “positive,” and in Spanish, to take the sting out, we use the verb “estar” - the temporary meaning of “to be,” instead of “ser,” the form of “to be” that expresses an ongoing state. When we are depressed, sad, angry, furious, etc., etc. we use “estar,” and this makes our existence more flexible. Emotions are fleeting, they are states of mind that come and go. So we keep adjusting our “to be” or “not to be,” varying the shape of our expression with the help both of language and of the fleetingness and instability of the emotions.

All this is more or less acceptable, but with guilt it’s more than just "being guilty" temporarily. Guilt is without doubt a feeling that we carry throughout our lifetime, and therefore I do not think it is something that we can easily shake off. We can, however, observe this feeling, and without condemning it, suppressing it, justifying it or denying it, we can decide if we want to "be guilty" or not.

My examples are not very elegant, but here’s one: I promise to do something with someone, but then I get lazy, or I forget, or something else comes up and I don't do it. I telephone the person and justify myself for not showing up (because I couldn’t bear the guilt). Another example: I make a commitment to someone to do something and despite not wanting to do it for whatever reason, I tell myself it’s better to do it than to feel guilty. I do it, and I don't feel guilty. I also could have not committed to doing anything with anyone, and then I probably wouldn't have felt guilty at all either.

With these examples I can see how guilt is armed in me and how I can also disarm it. But what I decide internally is important, and has to do with my image of myself in the world, how the world sees me, how I present myself to the world and how much I value all that. It has a lot to do with the “what should be” mentioned above.  
How do I get out of this strange conditioning?

I am not quite sure, but I am clear that it is a kind of conditioning, and that it is incoherent. And the more I observe and the more I generate the correct attitude that gives me the fewest internal contradictions, the more I move forward with this issue of guilt.  
For me the important thing has been to reflect on the following: ***"When you harm others, you remain enchained. But, if you do not harm anyone, you can freely do whatever you want."*** Because for me this principle has opened a way out of that conditioning. Especially when I understand that although my freedom of action is freedom within conditions, it has the unmistakable flavor of coherence when it is measured in relation to my neighbor or to those around me.

This principle has had an effect opposite that of the one I mentioned about feeling guilty and being guilty. The simple idea that you can do what you want if you do not harm others is simply revolutionary. Of course each of us has to see that harming others can happen either through acting directly or through failing to act. But in any case, the important thing is that the other person is the important consideration, and not how I am affected. When I can displace (even a little) the "I" from the equation, and consider others, then "what I have to do or should do" is clearer, and that clarity is what illuminates the guilt-free action.

All this is a great experiment that I can do and keep in mind in my daily action in the world. I have very lucid moments and others that are more confusing, but simple observation helps a lot to define a unitive behavior where guilt is nothing more than an incentive to discover a new way of being in the world. It is almost redundant to say it, but the problem of guilt is that it is an internal element that brings disintegration, and for that reason it is appropriate to reconcile with it regardless of one's reasons for being or feeling guilty.

February 26, 2021

## Kindness

The other day I had a coffee with my inner guide. In a rather brief moment, despite the coffee and my reflections with the guide, I asked about kindness, because it is not very clear to me how to register kindness. Intuitively, I perceive that it is something more profound and meaningful than simply "being good." The guide referred me to an experience I had some years ago after a group asking in Manantiales Park, when he approached me and said, "*What do you think?*" and without waiting for my answer he went on, "*Yes, everything very good, everything very good... all very soft... that's the way...*" And without saying any more he disappeared with a cup of coffee that someone had brought him.

I sensed at that moment that there was a great truth to discover in his words because he never said anything superfluous, and I stayed for a long time absorbed in trying to decipher this thing of softness. From that day on, I started "having coffee" with my guide or with the guide, because apparently it is not as personal as I originally believed, and when I remember that moment I feel good asking. It's a little ritual that helps me with this thing of asking.

So, asking about kindness, because I recognize it easily when I see it in the guide or in others, this answer came to me about softness and also about how important it is to develop that in myself, because somehow it resonates for me that "that's the way," and going even a little further, I can see how important and necessary it is to be kind to yourself to begin with. And there I had another discovery that is not really a discovery, but an understanding of something that I thought I knew, but that has been revealed in a new way. We ask for kindness as an attribute. We want to be kind and for that reason it's something we admire. However, my first way of seeing it was as a kindness I feel for others. Now I see that it is a kindness I feel for myself and for others.

This does not seem all that important, but it's like those old sayings like "Charity begins at home." In this case kindness begins with oneself. Experimenting with this issue I have at times felt a great joy, a feeling of closeness with myself that I had not felt since I was a child, a strange and comforting feeling of "coming home." The truth is that it's surprised me and made me review this issue of kindness, and therefore I've had to reflect on the scope of kindness, which brought to mind an interesting phrase from 2005, about kindness from another perspective: "At some moments in history an outcry arises, a heartrending call from individuals and from entire nations. Then, from the Profound a signal arrives. May this signal be translated with kindness in these times, may it be translated in order to overcome pain and suffering—for behind this signal are blowing the winds of great change."

I certainly hope that our future as humanity brings that kindness, and for now I want to deepen that kindness that exists in me for others and for myself as well. In what I have been able to experience with myself I see an attitude of kindness, rather than an act or acts of kindness. In fact, I cannot speak of actions but of attitudes, feelings and an emotional openness towards myself and towards others.

For some reason that I don't understand very well at this moment, I perceive that kindness is an issue of the future; that has been my impression since I began to reflect on the subject after asking my guide about kindness as a register. When I can gently feel an affection for myself and others, and a recognition that the other and I are very similar, it translates into a register that we are "connected" beyond traditional ties, I would almost say, at the level of the human race. And this opens up the whole future for me.

Then and for that moment I understand that what is "good" has a lot to do with the attitudes of kindness that produce this attribute. "Good" knowledge then has a fertile field in which to expand for the benefit of all humanity.

March 10, 2021

## Expectations

*“Without expectations, there are no disappointments, nor is there suffering.”* That is one of the phrases we learned when we were very young, and it still has extraordinary validity. Expectations tend to ruin the nicest surprises, and even in the best of cases, are short-lived. Sometimes it happens that “reality exceeds our expectations,” but as I said before, it’s short-lived, because a second later we “expect” something new, and even better than before. And we can spend an entire life like that. Expecting things to improve, and being disappointed... Or we can cut our expectations to the minimum, paying attention to what really happens or concentrating on the present.

The future is always complicated because in spite of all our efforts to predict it, it is uncertain. The past also gets complicated by all the distortions we impose on our memories, and the present... I don’t know very well what happens in the present because I rarely find myself there. But those few times have had an extraordinary power to reveal or unveil what I perceive, in a way that’s different from what I perceive through the tinge of expectation or memory.

I believe that of all the suggestions I’ve received, the one that brings me closest to being in the present is the principle that says, ***“If you pursue an end you enchain yourself. If you do everything as an end in itself, you liberate yourself.”***

This suggestion is apparently linked only to the future, to what I want to achieve, to what I want to obtain, but it has the advantage that when I do something as an end in itself, I locate myself in the present, and therefore I receive the benefits I mentioned earlier. I begin to perceive in a different way, and the register is one of liberation, of letting go of expectations, without analyzing or condemning them. On letting go of expectations, I place myself in the space and time I’m living in, and in spite of being paradoxical, this allows me to plan in a different way. Planning is something we do with the future in mind, and often - if not always - these plans are no more than expectations. But when I place myself correctly in the present, letting go of expectations, I can make plans from a new perspective.

This happens when I travel. I have the possibility of filling my trips with expectations, or of simply going and staying open to whatever presents itself. Minimal planning is needed for the practical aspects, and the rest is about trying to do everything as an end in itself. Trying to be present as much as possible, and being internally flexible. I believe that this flexibility is an attitude that’s opposite to that of having expectations.

In conclusion, I’ve been experimenting with this thing of expectations and I have the strong impression that the more I work with the attitude of letting go, the more I understand and the more I remember to come back to the present time and time again. As for illusions, I don’t see much difference between them and expectations. Maybe expectations are more specific, and illusions more generalized in time and space, but without getting too technical about mechanisms of illusion and all that, I believe at least that dis-illusionment, in spite of being being experienced as suffering, is a signal along the way that indicates where to go and where not to go...

March 19, 2021

## Judgements and Prejudices

When it comes to understanding the difficulties of human relationships in any kind of society, we have plenty to consider with our opinions and judgments. But in addition, we can't neglect our prejudices, which unfortunately hail from a very old family and are very difficult to ignore.

Not content with all the possible judgments that can be made in a lifetime and over the millennia, some even come to the end of their life believing that a final judgment awaits them in the "other life." In other words, we are born, we grow up, we die and after we are dead we still have a pending judgment. As some old people in Spanish speaking realms would say: "No hay salud..." - literally, "There is no health ..." In other words, you can't win - no one can endure so much judgment.

It seems that our lives pass between judgments, since much of what gives legality to our existence depends on judgments, and when we aren't dealing with legalities, other kinds of judgment arise. Lawsuits and judgments of all kinds - over money, over property, over fraud, over business, over abandonment, over sticking out one's tongue at the neighbor, over mistreating animals and sometimes people, over robberies, attacks, impure thoughts, over not obeying, over obeying what one should not obey, over being where it is forbidden, over not being where one should be, over befriending the powerful, over feeding the hungry, over clothing the naked, over paying with false coins, over falsifying documents, over not falsifying documents... The list is long and broad, and we're all familiar with it. It's part of our daily lives and we go from judgment to judgment, trying to use them to resolve our differences. Maybe it's no coincidence that we are always judging others and feeling judged. And as if that weren't enough, we judge ourselves. Definitely ... no health!

It is curious that justice depends on judgment. It is curious that she is depicted allegorically as a blindfolded woman with a balance in one hand and a sword in the other. Obviously this is a representation, a way of roughly explaining the need for punishment, equanimity and proportion; but the figure of a woman really does not fit, the attributes do not correspond at all. But hey, there they are... Until a very short time ago all judges were male. Law at the service of the state, the kingdom or whatever, has always been dominated by the masculine, and the idea of adding a feminine touch is hardly convincing.

In any case, I say that this representation is curious because of the obvious effort to synthesize all the ideal elements of justice, when in reality everything is reduced to judgments, innocent or guilty. The innocent avoid the punishment that is applied to the guilty and thus "justice" is done. What seems significant to me is the cultural weight assigned to what we call "judgment." This gives it greater weight inside the individual, so that even though many of us have never been "tried," we internally judge others and ourselves. In other words, we have internalized this whole entanglement without even realizing it.

Now, if we consider that poor relative of judgment we call "prejudice," we can better understand how it has been installed socially, religiously, culturally, ethnically and in every "entity" we might encounter. Prejudice may be "poor," but it is massive. Prejudice does not need judges, trials, juries, lawyers, laws, guilty or innocent parties. Prejudice is an a priori



condemnation that anyone can make without any legal or rational support. Perhaps the irrationality generated by fear of the unknown is prejudice's favorite food.

Prejudices poison everything they manage to touch and generally thrive on the differences found in societies. If we consider that the first thing we learn as human beings is to distinguish, to differentiate, this behavior is no coincidence. Differentiation is an attribute of perception and of the structuring capacity of the consciousness. We separate, distinguish, differentiate, and that is how we understand the world around us. We separate what we perceive into opposites; highs and lows, light and dark, good and bad, happy and sad, etc, etc. and thus we begin shaping a fairly rigid reality that is structured enough to allow us to exist.

Our existence and our understanding of existence are intimately tied to prejudice and to the actions that correspond to prejudice. We are educated to have certain "values" that highlight certain attitudes and elements over others. It could be said that this is inevitable and necessary, and it may be, but that does not justify the narrow criteria that are generated when only one alternative and its opposite are seen, with nothing between the two.

In educational terms, little effort is put into establishing relationships, into complementation, into understanding that extremes are always part of a whole. Little effort is made toward real education, toward recognizing that ***"It doesn't matter in which faction events have placed us; what is important is to understand that we have not chosen any faction."*** Seldom do we see that this approach to life would be much truer and more interesting than simply condemning others and condemning ourselves without any understanding beyond what we perceive and what is imposed on us.

When I begin to consider that I have not chosen, that is when I also begin to see the fears I have acquired. When I observe those fears, those irrational identifications, I also have the possibility of understanding the possessive roots of my attachments, attachments that only serve as long as they are not confronted. When they are confronted, I react, and my prejudices decide. Then I defend what I have not chosen, generating problems and rigidity in myself and suffering in others. Yes, clearly... "there is no health"!

And what would happen if I didn't react? If indeed I did not give in to fear? If I tried to understand all this? Most likely, I would feel many different things, among them a kind of internal release of weight acquired without any conviction or reason. I would probably feel a bit unprotected, but at the same time I would feel internally light, and interested in learning, investigating, and understanding. Without a doubt, I would be advancing against prejudice, and in terms of human relationships, I would be getting closer to understanding others and myself.

Then we would be able to say: "There is health"!!

March 27, 2021

## Conflicts

Characteristically, conflicts are forces that oppose each other and generate internal division, or in the case of armed conflict, end in wars and disasters. The most important conflicts are the internal ones because they can be worked on, and can even "disappear." This is extremely important for many reasons, the most significant of which has to do with internal unity. If the conflict disappears, the division also disappears, and instead of forces opposing each other, a direction appears that tends to be one single direction.

I have observed that when I am in a situation of conflict, my tendency is to look for an immediate solution. It is difficult to stay in a conflict. My whole being is looking for a resolution so that I can "continue," but I rarely understand what it means to "continue." What do I continue? This does not appear very clear, either as a question or as a possibility for resolving conflicts.

I'm not sure if what happens to me happens to others, but most of my conflicts are structured around what I "want" and what I "should do." What I want - what I aspire to or desire - and what really happens that does not coincide with what I want. Or what does not coincide with what I should do, think or feel. Of all the angles from which I have observed my internal conflicts, the feeling of "disagreeing with myself" is almost omnipresent. Internal conflict always traps me in that situation of disagreement, the feeling that "something is not working."

I don't like how I feel and I don't like the answers I give. I don't like anything related to my conflict, because I experience it with internal contradiction whether or not I want to admit it. So far I have at least been able to realize that my conflicts exist, and this has been the first important step. The second step, which is really a stumble, has been to accept that I am indeed in a conflictive internal situation. I am divided and not in agreement with myself. This is my inner reality, whether I like it or not. The third step has been to ask myself about the root of my conflict.

When I ask myself about the root of my conflict, I don't ask myself about the causes but about my fears and my reveries. At least in my case, I almost always find something meaningful when I can see my fears and my daydreams. Both speak of something that doesn't really exist. I know that here I am getting into a mess, because I'm questioning "existence," and I can clearly feel my fears and describe my reveries, so how can I say they do not exist when I have a register of them? Perhaps I should put it another way that is softer and more precise: they are illusory. They exist as illusions. Illusions about reality, about the world around me, and about myself.

When I am able to see my illusions, only then do I discover the root of my conflict - but that is not as easy as it sounds. One of the biggest difficulties is in "trying to resolve my conflict," because that desperate search for a solution is precisely what will end up fueling the conflict. So I don't "do anything"... I just stay there observing my fears and reveries. And as I observe them, a special light, the product of attention, begins to illuminate them and they no longer have the suggestive power that they normally have. In simpler words, they lose the power to "fool me," and then they can effectively "disappear." After all, the illusory is by definition, something that can disappear or "not exist."

I must say that all these conflicts are reflections and experiments related to the principle that says: ***"You will make your conflicts disappear when you understand them at their ultimate root, not when you want to resolve them."***

And I must also clarify that this is only a personal experience and not an explanation or a development of this principle, since there are many other ways to understand and interpret it. In my case, I have always wanted to delve into the concept of the "disappearance of the conflict" because I find it incredibly interesting. As someone said a couple of weeks ago, we always have difficulties, but they do not need to turn into conflicts. The difficulty may remain, but the conflict may disappear and that in itself brings me a register of internal unity because the important thing, as I said at the beginning, is to "bring together" the forces in a single direction. Once again, I understand that this whole thing of understanding conflicts has to do more than anything with an internal attitude towards them.

April 7, 2021

## Reciprocity

Human relationships being an extremely important part of our lives, I have been thinking about the situations in which my relationships are not of the best quality. Lately I have noticed that they have been deteriorating, and this probably has something to do with Covid-19, which by its nature has abruptly interrupted many of our relationships. Even so, I believe the matter goes beyond the pandemic, and since I have no way of knowing whether or not the pandemic is indeed a factor, I have focused on trying to see which are my best relationships and which are the worst, independently of the situations we find ourselves in.

I have noticed that with certain people I have a fluid and relaxed relationship, while with others this does not occur. Leaving aside all that could be explained by affinity or lack thereof, I distinguish that in the best of cases there is a tacit form of complementation that I define as "reciprocity." Reciprocity is a kind of revolving door where what goes in is quite similar to what comes out. What is given is similar to what is received, and this is the optimal situation as a register. Friendship in general is fed by this register and extends over time the same way.

When what goes in is not proportional to what goes out, reciprocity fails and the register is negative. One feels "used," little resentments and more or less absurd confrontations take place, things that normally do not happen if the balance between giving and receiving is maintained. It has been curious for me to observe all this in myself and in others. Without having to draw too many conclusions, I can say that reciprocity is important in human relationships because it establishes a certain proportion, a proportion whose disruption brings with it complications.

I have found it especially useful to note that ideas that are a bit naive, where one only wants to give and receiving is considered "selfish," are resolved much better when there is equality on both sides, without moral codes that turn into burdens and contradictions. It is also good to clarify that there are times when "giving" is something one simply wants to do, something that does not really require reciprocity but is a very pure act in its essence. Yes, there are certainly these exceptions, but in the non-exceptional world, proportion can maintain an important balance when it comes to relating with others in daily existence.

All these considerations about proportion, balance, etc. have arisen from observing and practicing the principle that says ***"Things are well when they move together, not in isolation."*** In general I had been seeing this principle in an abstract and generalized way, without fully considering its application in daily life and in my behavior. Even though it was a bit obvious to me that this was the case, I hadn't been paying attention to my registers of balance, of concomitance in my personal relationships. I think this issue of reciprocity is important in the context of interpersonal relationships and in light of the principle of proportion.

April 15, 2021

## Identification

The concept of identity is complex because it commits every human being to being defined either by their own will or by the enormous number of accidents and also choices that define who we are. To wonder who I am is to put that identity to the test - but why wonder who one is if identity is supposed to answer such a question? It is very difficult to admit that one does not know who one is; even worse, it seems like a joke.

“Who are you?”

“I don't know, and who are you?”

“I don't know either...” So better not ask.

This would be a fairly short dialogue, and if one imagined all of this in the context of social introductions, it would be practically a comedy. So to avoid all this questioning, the concept of identity magically appears and answers for us. “I am Fernando” - according to the name my parents gave me - and from there begins a long explanation about everything I am. In reality I have not chosen any of this, but nevertheless it is accepted as an answer to the question. In the end, I am something that has to do with the basic conditioning in which I was born and raised, which explains very little about who I really am. Yet it is accepted and respected.

It is so respected and accepted that I end up believing it myself, and then my identification with everything I think I am arises. Without realizing it, I identify myself with my name, with my roots, with my work, with the society in which I live, with everything that makes me feel that I have an identity. And it could not be otherwise, even though the simple idea is quite appealing and absurd. The simple idea that I am nothing of what I appear and pretend to be... I cannot imagine an explanation of that type, but I still think it is interesting to propose it to myself.

So, if I ask myself who I am, and instead of answering affirmatively, I define myself by what I am not, I have the impression that I am left without an identity. I am left in a nebulous space where I have nothing to hold onto that defines me. It is not very terrible to be there, but it is not easy either, and it becomes essential for me to find an answer to who I am. I can say and tell myself that I am "something," or that I am many things, or that I am nothing, and everything I perceive becomes a great uneasiness about not being able to define myself. It's even worse if I tell myself that I am something I've stopped being. I am a man and not a child. So when I was a kid, was I myself, or not? Apparently this kind of illusion about who I am has continuity, because I never realize that I have changed in the present. I only realize it when I look back and compare. Which is lucky, because if it were otherwise I would spend my whole life in a kind of altered bardo.

Returning to what I am not, it is clear to me that there's no answer there. But there *is* a look that goes beyond my identification. A way of seeing myself where I understand that what gives me identity does not necessarily explain who I am at a deeper level.

Since I find no answers but only questions, I begin to realize that despite my need to answer myself, I feel like all the answers are incomplete, which is fine.

But I have come a long way, because my initial identification has given way to a strange sense of inner lightness. It is possible that I am everything I think I am and at the same time I am something different that has nothing to do with that belief. I keep asking myself and I keep answering myself, and my answers keep having less and less to do with that precious and cherished identity that defines me to myself and to the world. These new responses consider much more important something that certainly does not exist, but that is also just as much a determining factor as the basic conditions in which we are born. That something is the future. It is intention launched towards the future that begins little by little to answer who I am. I would never have imagined it. The connection between my identity and the past is so deep that if I hadn't been distraught with wondering, I wouldn't have found these answers. I am glad that I'm keeping on asking because these types of answers do not exist in what has already been, but in what is to come.

All this is quite complicated, or maybe I'm making it more complicated than it needs to be, but I have not been able to explain it any better than the way I have attempted to in this writing. The starting point is the same tendency that has led me to question my identity: the tendency to identify with "practically everything." And when I've managed to briefly observe and halt that identification (which gives me identity), I have been able to glimpse a new possibility of "being." The best step forward has been the discovery that who I am is illusory, and I define it in those terms because it does not satisfy me deeply. I am left with a feeling that there is something beyond what I tend to identify with. Something that doesn't need identification. Something that is, and that exists in everyone, independent of all the original conditionings we might have. I do locate it in the future because I don't know where else to locate it. It's not in the present or in the past. It's very similar to the intuitions that are from another time, when one anticipates situations that do not exist or that have not existed and that occur in the future. So I feel that "I am" a great possibility "in motion," in movement. I am a progressive transformation towards something light, luminous and less and less suffering, a transformation that is complemented by others going in the same direction. Pretty confusing... but it's just a way of expressing it.

In any case, all this long rambling around identity and identification is part of **“The Path”**:  
**Don't let your life go by without asking yourself: who am I?**  
**Don't let your life go by without asking yourself: where am I going?**

April 24, 2021

## A Poem

Almost fifty years ago, in the last century, in 1972, we received the first copy of “*The Inner Look*”. Rafa, my brother Pablo and I devoured the book in one afternoon and when we finished reading we were speechless. We couldn't say a single word for a long time until Pablo broke the silence with a memorable phrase: “*Shit! ... He said it all.*”

I will never forget that moment and the tremendously synthetic phrase with which Pablo exactly defines the impression that reading the book made on us at that time, when its author was “*Anonymous.*”

In February 2017 I was at Punta de Vacas Park of Study and Reflection and one morning I went to the Hall and for the first time since the park was built, I found it empty. There are almost always people there, but that time there was no one, and I sat down and had a beautiful experience that I wrote down a few days later in a poem.

## Within Arm's Reach

*The book was  
as they say  
within arm's reach.  
Do I pick it up?  
Do I read it?  
I've read it more than fifty times  
Well, one more time then...  
“Here it tells  
how the nonmeaning of life  
can be converted  
into meaning and plenitude.  
Here it speaks  
of the inner revelation  
at which all arrive  
who carefully meditate  
in humble search...”  
Brilliant words  
that resonate internally  
in a waterfall of melodies  
heard for the first time,  
for the very first time  
Each phrase*

*a poetry  
a new comprehension never before formulated  
either in images or in ideas  
All the language felt  
like an instrument strummed  
by the hands of an expert musician  
touching the intimacy of the soul  
Deep feeling and inspiration  
More words, phrases and sensations  
until my heart could not move beyond  
the tenth chapter  
and I stopped  
knowing without a doubt that it was enough  
at least for now.  
With gratitude I closed the book and my eyes  
while my body  
returned to the space of the hall,  
and the everyday world  
expressed itself as sacred  
and an enormous and boundless joy  
enveloped me for eternal moments.*

*Santiago, Chile, February 2017*

April 2021