

THE MEANING OF NONMEANING

(2nd Edition Revised)

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Laura Rodríguez Riccomini, Lala.

The first drafts of this work were written in the autumn of 1991. From that time photocopies started to circulate among people of the Humanist Movement in different parts of the world with the title "The Dark States of Consciousness."

In those days Lala was well known in Chilean society as a parliamentarian dedicated to the struggle against violence generated through discrimination of women, against indigenous peoples and against the marginalisation to which the poor people of our countries are subject. Day by day, through her, I got to know the suffering of the people as well as the joy. I learnt with her what the exercising of power to benefit the people was, and also what power was when the "representatives" were in these positions through "personal merit," forgetting the efforts of the many people who put them there. I learnt that the body is not "what is human," but rather a tool to express human intention in the world. "I am not my seizures" she would explain to me when the muscles of her extremities stopped responding and she had to exercise them as if she were a new born child.

It was Lala who insisted on changing the title of the book. Fascinated, I listened to her arguments and I had to recognise that she really did know how to interpret the feelings of people. Shortly before dieing we carried out a review of our lives and remembering this scene, she confessed to me in this discussion that she had not yet read it. We laughed a lot, with the intensity that laughter has when consciousness of the finite invades the soul.

When you leave, go peacefully

My love, I will be waiting for you

When you leave, go peacefully

My love, I will be looking for you

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INNER TRUTH.	1
1.-ABSOLUTE OR NAIVE TRUTH	1
2.-WHAT HAPPENS TO US	3
3.-FORGETTING MYSELF	4
4.-THE INNER LOOK	5
5.-THE EXTERNAL LOOK	7
CHAPTER II: PSYCHOLOGICAL REALITY	9
1.-THE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS	9
2.-THE EXPERIENCE OF REALITY	10
3.-BELIEFS	10
CHAPTER III: NONMEANING	13
1.-THE DESCRIPTION OF NONMEANING	13
2.-THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAP	15
3.-ANAESTHESIA OF INTERNAL REGISTERS	16
CHAPTER IV: FAILURE	17
1.-THE EXPERIENCE OF FAILURE	17
2.-THE FAILURE OF BELIEFS	19
CHAPTER V: CONTRADICTION	21
1.-THE FUNCTION OF SUFFERING IN THE PSYCHE	21
2.-THE DESCRIPTION OF CONTRADICTION	22
3.-DECISION MAKING	23
CHAPTER VI: RESENTMENT	25
1.-SOME PRECAUTIONS	25
2.-THE LOGIC OF RESENTMENT	26
3.-DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE OF RESENTMENT	28
4.-CRISIS	28
5.-RECONCILIATION	29
6.-BELIEF, FAILURE AND RECONCILIATION	32
CHAPTER VII: THE LIFE PROJECT	35
1.-WHAT TO DO WITH OUR LIFE?	36
2.-THE EXPERIENCE OF MEANING	37
3.-THE FALSE PROJECTS	38
4.-VALID OR MEANINGFUL ACTIONS	38
5.-TO REVEAL YOUR LIFE PROJECT	39
CHAPTER VIII: SOCIETY IN SEARCH OF MEANING	41
1.-THE PERSONAL AND THE SOCIAL	41
2.-WHAT TO DO	42
3.-SOCIAL CONTRADICTION	43
4.-SOCIAL NONMEANING	43
5.-THE IDEOLOGY OF NONMEANING	45
CHAPTER IX: TOWARDS A NEW TRUTH	47
1.-CHANGE IS POSSIBLE	47
2.-THE FAILURE OF HUMAN NATURE	48
3.-THE FAILURE OF VIOLENCE	52
CHAPTER X: SOCIAL CHANGE	57
1.-WHERE ARE WE GOING?	57
2.- SOCIAL MOVEMENT	60
3.- SOCIAL CHANGE	61
CHAPTER XI: THE MEANING OF LIFE	63
1.-THE PROBLEM OF EXISTENCE	64
2.-THE DEATH PROBLEM	65
3.-THE PROBLEM OF FAITH	67
4.-THE MEANING OF LIFE	68
CHAPTER XII: FINAL SYNTHESIS	71

PROLOGUE TO THE FIRST EDITION

A while ago I had the opportunity to come across these writings for the first time. They had another title and were being finished. On first read I was impressed by the truths being expressed, “psychological truths” as the author describes them. With the value that can be provoked by the agreement between what is presented and one’s own feeling. We are seeing the proposals for possible, novel solutions to some knots, all with an air of precision of “that’s it.”

But, how to classify this book? To which genre does it belong?

This is a difficulty that readers have already found, some of them erudite. They even end up expressing dislike for its apparent lack of system and rigour of thought. And I stress “apparent” because it could be as it appears. But it is impossible not to recognise great seriousness in the way that this globality has been presented here, with the author having not left aside any particularities of the theme.

It becomes apparent that a book like this can only be generated through rigour in the investigation of one’s self, a more than interesting task necessary for the times we live in, in which the lack of social parameters sometimes obliges us to look inside ourselves, not as the end point of the search, but as Dario Ergas proposes, so as to order and give a meaning to our own task that ends in others.

Is this work relevant?

It is. And it seems to me that the proposal must be studied in its globality, as the form of structuring of the ideas is speaking of a sequence that unites every part to the whole, and leads the reader to a passage of “realisation” in concentric rings and whose orientation, obviously, leads to Social Change, the penultimate chapter of the book.

However, it should also be made clear that the relevance will be such only if the reader does so effectively, allowing themselves to be carried through a sort of proposed game, through which, very quickly, they realise that it is not only to the head that the author is directing himself.

It is probable that this book may clash, disturb, or tend to be closed, but in the state of rest an eye will remain alert and uneasy. It will be the starting point to say: it is opportune.

I read the titles of the chapters: “Inner truth,” “Psychological reality,” “Nonmeaning,” “Failure,” “Contradiction,” “Resentment,” “The Life Project,” “Social Change,” “The Meaning of Life,” and the reader will agree with me in that at least we are caught up in an adventure.

Juan Chambeaux

PROLOGUE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The central nucleus of this book was written in 1991. Seven years later I have been able to revise it and give you a corrected version of something that started being a journey through the dark states of consciousness.

In this revision I have gone deeper into the state of “failure.” Failure is maybe the most important experience of those that are related here and I hadn’t managed to give it the attention that it requires. My idea here was not only to open the door to a new inner reality, but also to interpret the social world and to open the door to a new human reality.

I have also taken the opportunity to take some steps in the elaboration of a life project and also to make some approximations about the meaning of life.

“The Meaning of Nonmeaning” is, in truth, my experience of the philosophy of Mario Rodriguez Cobos, better known as Silo. I’m clarifying this because even if in some moments I make explicit reference to the books of this author, in many other paragraphs I make no mention of it, but his texts continue to be present in the lines that you will read.

I have preferred to leave the notes and bibliographical references to the end in order not to interrupt the conversation that I will try to have with you over the coming pages.

INTRODUCTION

This book speaks of what human beings experience as suffering.

Through these pages, I'm trying to assist in the comprehension of the internal world. Not the whole of the internal world, but rather those states in which I have found greater confusion and where I have seen that the knots of suffering are imprisoned.

A while ago I took on the commitment to help those who, falling into confusion, were trapped in their internal world. I wanted to try to show the keys that allow one to advance from the dark states of consciousness.

I took this commitment when, tired of looking for solutions to my problems, tired of walking the thin line that separates vigil from madness, I decided to travel the paths, get to know the labyrinths and discover the traps of the internal world.

This work hopes to be a step to advance in this commitment.

CHAPTER I: INNER TRUTH.

1.-Absolute or Naive Truth

Even before the days of the Greeks, “to know oneself” is engraved in human consciousness as an aspiration or a necessity. In various guises it has driven the searches of men.

Over the years I have seen this concern in many people.

It always caught my attention to hear things like “I know myself.” To others more modest, it is clear that, in life, the important thing is to know oneself. Some, whose search for themselves seemed to have great value, abandon this attempt when they achieve small goals with which they believe themselves to feel fulfilled.

I have also observed those who don't know themselves. “My problem is that I don't know myself,” they say. They experience an urge to travel, to visit a psychotherapist, to have strong experiences with the aim of finding themselves.

Then there are others, who recite things like “you can never truly know yourself,” thereby leaving this search among the utopian interests that people usually have.

So, in this general confusion, I followed the advice of someone or other without, frankly, being able to understand their proposals.

I listened to everything around me, and went for a long time before realising that the confusion I was experiencing was not a personal defect or something genetic that I should get used to living with. This confusion was the daily state of all human beings who were close to me and even of those who said that they had things clear.

It was difficult for me to accept that “the truths” that people affirmed were a less than rigorous expression and only indicated a mood. Although they were proclaiming their points of view as absolute and universal, in reality what they were saying was: “What I am saying in this moment of my life, given the family and social situation that I find myself in, given what has happened in the past, and given my future interests, is like this, is not open for discussion and for me it's vital and fundamental that it's like this. If someone disagrees, they are mistaken or deliberately lying to harm me and those around me.” I supposed that to make this speech explicitly on every affirmation would have been a bit excessive, so they left it out. Then I saw that they left it out not out of consideration for their interlocutor, but rather out of not knowing themselves.

I understood these “truths” not as absolutes, but rather as naive ones. The naive thing, then, was not in the lack of knowledge about the intention of the other, but rather in the lack of knowledge of their own intention. This marked a world of difference between “absolute truth” (or naive) and what I call Inner Truth.

It wasn't omission of the recognition of their own point of view. It was a total lack of knowledge of the fact that there was an intention within them. Even when they were pontificating that "no one possesses the whole truth" (another absolute), they were saying so without comprehending that within themselves is an intention, prior to the point of view, from where judgement about reality was being pronounced.

I call "absolute truth" the intellectual constructions that my mind carries out in order to interpret a phenomenon of the external world, in which, I believe that there exists an exact correspondence between the intellectual construction and the external phenomenon, with total independence from me and for an endless period of time. I add the attribute "naive" to the attribute "absolute," in order to illustrate that in the expression of this truth, consciousness is denied as a constructor of the interpretative model of this reality and, therefore the intention of my consciousness is also denied. Any formulation of a "truth" is inseparable from the intention of my consciousness, its history and its future.

It is usual to categorise as infantile the lack of knowledge of the intention of others and therefore, the naive acceptance of everything that is said. But what seems to me truly naive is to have no knowledge of our own intention every time that we pronounce judgement.

When something happens around them (those of the absolute truth), they failed in an examination or in a business deal or when a loved one took a new path, or someone died, or a child asked them for charity, any small destabilisation in the environment around them, all of these truths experienced as "absolutes" stop being so and therefore I was able to recognise in them, what I was habitually experiencing. So, trying not to question these "truths" but rather accepting them as such, I observed that, as time went by, they couldn't be sustained not even by those who had assured me of them. And I concluded that my confusion was no greater than anyone else's.

2.-What happens to us

It seemed to me that the proposal to know oneself was interesting, but what would I have to do? Where do you start? The psychologists were saying that someone was introvert or shy or schizophrenic, or with a very high or very low IQ, or coming from a family that wasn't very solid, etc. Many phrases, with the taste of absolute truth, that didn't bring me closer to finding myself.

Maybe because of this, when I heard someone comment that "the human being suffers," the simplicity resonated in me. Whether this sentence was true or false, it was happening to me, and it was also happening to the whole of the human species. From this starting point, I wasn't the only confused, anxious and disorientated person. What a simple and obvious phrase! But its importance was rooted in the fact that it was happening to me and I hadn't realised. It was happening to me and it was not circumstantial. I hadn't seen the obvious. And it was also happening to others.

To know oneself you have to start from the knowledge of what "happens to me." What happens to me cannot be put into categories of true or false, good or bad. "It happens to

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

me.” This is the fundamental thing. Nor is it convenient to be based in the interpretations that others give about what “happens to me,” above all after verifying that these others are precisely the ones who take into account least what “happens to them.”

The physicist’s hypothesis is not proven beforehand. It is necessary to accumulate enough information before interpreting or theorising about a phenomenon. The rigorousness in the measurement of the phenomenon is such that it takes into account the errors of measurement produced by the instruments and even by the observer themselves. Why should knowledge of the so-called “self” be less rigorous?¹

To know oneself starts from the act of accumulating information about oneself. If the point of view is psychological, one has to learn to accumulate psychological data.

When I say, for example: “I suffer because I’m alone,” I must accept the fact that this phrase says absolutely nothing about me. Rather, it interprets a series of unpleasant sensations that I encapsulate as “to suffer,” attributing them to being alone. To advance in the truth of myself, the phrase must be restated in this form: *I believe* that I suffer because I’m alone.

This leads me to ask, what makes me say that I suffer? What are the internal things that happen to me (registers), that I encapsulate with the words “I suffer?” This description is different from saying: I’m alone. The latter is the reason that I attribute to the displeasure that I experience. But I must accept the fact that we are dealing with an interpretation of what happens to me, an interpretation that may or may not be correct. In any case, it is an interpretation of what happens to me and not the description of what happens to me.

It’s usual to have an interpretation of everything that happens to oneself however this interpretation may not be useful. For example, it does not help us to stop being alone, if this is what concerns me. The majority of times these interpretations are phrases that I have heard from others, people more inspired than me, or that I have read in books that—I believed—spoke truths. But they have not helped me to know myself internally and the relief that they have produced, if any, has been momentary and static, without leaving me with the necessary tools to advance in an ever-changing environment.

If my interest is to know myself, I cannot do so starting from abstract human behaviour described by others and forcing myself to recognise this in my experience. I cannot start

¹ The system of self-knowledge presented by Luis Ammann in his book *Self-liberation*, (Samuel Weiser, Inc., Maine, USA, 1981), offers us a method to learn to accumulate information about ourselves. In this book, in the form of courses, extraordinary tools are developed for comprehending the internal world. The course of relaxation, psychophysical techniques, the course of self-knowledge, the techniques of catharsis, transference and self-transference constitute a system in which those interested can follow, taking advantage of the pedagogical quality of the author.

from phrases such as “life has no meaning” or “I am me and you are you” or “I am a free-thinker,” etc.

If I want to know myself, I must learn *to observe* what happens to me and to differentiate it from what I “interpret” as happening to me. To observe the tense points of the body, the way in which I breathe, the images that cross my mind, what things increase my tension, what other things diminish it, what are my thoughts and my actions in different circumstances, etc.. What I interpret is part of my observation, and I realise that I cannot stop interpreting, but I recognise that it’s a construction of my mind and not a truth in itself.

To learn to observe what happens to me is to learn to live with inner truth. To differentiate between what happens to me and the interpretation I make of it, is to approach inner truth.

I am not expressing laws of behaviour when I explain that my suffering is due to my father who destroyed my life, or because someone harmed me, or because my partner left me, or because I have little money to live on, or I need a better house. All of these are things that we believe and that move us in trying to overcome them. But, they say absolutely nothing about us. We pursue our happiness searching to find what we suppose will relieve the pain. The majority of times we don’t achieve it and if we do, we discover that what we assumed would make us happy was insufficient to calm our worry.

There are so many things that we believe, that if we were to base ourselves on them we would not be able to advance in the knowledge of ourselves. I need to differentiate between what “happens to me” and what “I believe happens to me.” The discussion is not if what I believe is or isn’t true. It is interesting to differentiate between what happens to me and what I believe happens to me. Only this. What I believe, I call “interpretation” and what happens to me, I can “observe.”

This observation is what I recognise as inner truth.

So, to know oneself is not an idea of myself, but rather the accumulation of information that I obtain thanks to the observation of myself.

3.-Forgetting Myself

This theme of inner truth has its difficulty in the fact that one is accustomed and educated to not see oneself. Rather, one is educated to get out of oneself; to look away from oneself and not see the obvious. To me, the work that I do, the novel I read, the conversation that I have, the TV film I watch, is so important, that the majority of times I am concentrating in such a way that “I forget that I exist.” This forgetting is what I experience as interest, motivation, entertainment. When something bad happens in this apparently so important and essential situation thanks to which I needed to forget myself, when something bad happens, I experience an unexpected awareness of myself, a frustration, an internal cry.

So we say: as this went badly, I’m suffering. It seems logical and obvious to us. If something went badly there, I must suffer here. Obviously.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

Well, it doesn't seem at all obvious to me. The fact that I carry out my daily activity having forgotten about myself seems important to me. What's more, if I observe well, I will notice that the activities that seem more interesting to me are exactly those that facilitate "me to forget that I exist."

This forgetting myself is different to what I call inner truth, which refers to looking, to describing and to observing what happens to you. I'm told that if you do this you'll see your suffering, your nonmeaning, your failure, more clearly. This is so, but you'll also see your joy and your unity. If it is thought that it's better to forget oneself in order to not suffer, then there will be an incompatibility in points of view in following what I'm proposing in this text. Inner truth is that I forget myself. As a consequence of this, I forget about my suffering and also the possibility to know myself and overcome it.

4.-The inner look²

² In the *Human Landscape* (Humanize the Earth, Silo, Collected Works, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 2003, p71), Silo presented the concepts of “look” and “landscape”:

1. *Let us speak of landscapes and looks, turning once again to what was said in the beginning: “External landscape is what we perceive of things, while internal landscape is what we sift from them through the sieve of our internal world. These landscapes are one and constitute our indissoluble vision of reality.”*

2. *Beginning with the perception of an external object, a naive look may confuse “what is seen” with reality itself. Some go further, believing that they remember “reality” just as it was. And still others confuse objects they have perceived and then transformed in other states of consciousness (their illusions, hallucinations, or dream images) with material objects.*

3. *It is not difficult for reasonable people to understand that objects perceived in an earlier moment can appear distorted in dreams and memories. But the simplicity of daily action, of doing with and among things, is shaken to its core by the idea that perceived objects are always covered by a multicoloured mantle woven of other, simultaneous perceptions and memories; that perception is an overall mode of being-in-the-midst-of-things, and includes an emotional tone and the general state of one’s body.*

4. *The naive look grasps the “external” world along with its own pain or its own joy. I do not look with my eyes alone, but also with my heart, with gentle recollection, with ominous suspicion, with cold calculation, with stealthy comparison. I look through allegories, signs, and symbols, and though I do not see these things in my looking, they act on it nonetheless, just as when I look I do not see my eye or its activity.*

5. *Because of the complexity of perceiving, I prefer to use the word landscape rather than object when speaking of reality, whether external or internal. And with that, I take it as given that I am referring to complexes and structures, and not to objects in some isolated and abstract individuality. I want to emphasise, too, that these landscapes correspond to acts of perception that I call looks (encroaching, perhaps illegitimately, on fields unrelated to visualisation). These looks are active and complex acts that organise landscapes. They are not simple passive acts of receiving external information (data that arrive through my external senses) or internal information (that is, sensations from my own body, memories, apperception). There should be no need to add that in these mutual interrelations between looks and landscapes, the distinction between internal and external is drawn on the basis of the direction of the intentionality of the consciousness—and not as is frequently set forth in the naive schemata that are presented to schoolchildren.*

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

In the comic strip by Quino, Mafalda³ says to Felipe: “you have to know yourself,” and Felipe, somewhat worried, responds: “and what if I don’t like myself?” I believe that Felipe’s fear is the first difficulty that we have to avoid in order to take a look at ourselves.

To observe what happens to me is a problem in the fact that what usually happens to me is not what I would like to be happening to me. What happens to me generally is very far away from what “is supposed” to be happening to me. In this clash between what I observe and what I would like to observe, I end up escaping from myself. To escape from oneself should be difficult; however it is as simple as blinking. If I look at a picture that displeases me I simply close my eyes or look at another picture. It is enough for me to concentrate on something else to have forgotten, within seconds, the thing I didn’t like. On the other hand if I’m a painter and I’m interested in painting, surely I will return to the first picture and I will observe the composition of the colours, the irregular lines, the theme of the painting and I will describe what it is that I don’t like. If the interest is “oneself,” my look will at least register that things are happening to me that displease me.

While reading what I’m proposing to you, surely you are feeling things, either you are bored, or enthused, or you can identify with it. You are also thinking things. You are discussing what I’m presenting. You may either approve of it or go beyond it with ideas that had not occurred to me. If you observe all of this while reading this paragraph it is because you have awoken a look of yourself. You are following my discourse, but in addition you are softly observing what it provokes in you. If you’ve tried, you have touched on the inner look: the look that looks at the one looking.

The inner look is the one that shows us what is happening to us, through which we are able to access knowledge of ourselves. When I observe the picture from the example I don’t take a pair of scissors to it, nor do I start to discuss if it’s horrible or beautiful. I simply observe and while I learn more about the painting, I can look at it from many angles; I observe many more things than when my recent interest in the picture first started.

Since we were little we have perceived the external world, but we are not at all accustomed to awaken the look of ourselves. We are not accustomed to direct a look at the look which is observing the external world.

What I’m saying may seem strange as this look is not carried out mechanically like the perceptions that we receive through the five senses. You may wonder why you have to do something that doesn’t happen mechanically. When Galileo decided to investigate the movement of the planets he had to invent an instrument that would allow him to look more closely at the moon and the stars, he had to create the telescope. To know space we need

³ Mafalda is a comic strip written and drawn by the Argentine cartoonist Quino. The strip features a girl named Mafalda (5 years old at the time of the comic's creation) who is deeply concerned about humanity and world peace and rebels against the world as it is. The strip ran from 1964 to 1973 and was very popular in Latin America, Europe and in Asia.

telescopes, for atoms we require microscopes and for “oneself” we need the inner look. This look does not wake up every morning when we open our eyes, it has to be awakened. It is not a “natural” look. It requires my intention for it to be awakened.

When I get up in the morning, the world of things begins to impress upon my senses, the look towards the world wakes up and with that I am perfectly able to go through the day. I could live my whole life without ever coming across the look that shows me myself. However, there are moments in life in which this inner look wakes up almost by accident. They are the moments of profound crisis and failure that we have gone through. In these difficult moments or in very special situations, sometimes what happens is that the inner look awakens and provides me with some useful information to avoid difficulties and pass on to a new stage of life. So it is probable that in more than one occasion you have been in contact with this thing that we are talking about.

If we want to go deeper into inner truth and knowledge of ourselves it is possible to awaken, train and go deeper into a look of ourselves that we call the inner look and which can be active while we launch multiple looks towards the external world. We can do this in the same way as we learn to play tennis, or to swim or to drive. In the measure that we practice, it becomes increasingly easy and with time we will incorporate a system of reflex movements that will decrease the effort that we required when we started to play. This sporting or playful attitude is very healthy because when I play, everything is amusement and learning. In the game I’m entertained by what’s happening and I don’t judge my opponents, nor do I punish myself every time my movements are clumsy. The important thing about the game is the fun and not the errors. What I observe through the inner look is marvellous, neither judgements nor punishments are required, and even if they were, I’d consider them as part of the marvels that I observe.

You may not believe that to awaken the inner look requires you to close your eyes, or to make a kind of introspection. I awaken the inner look when I observe what is happening to me when I act in the world. This “self observation” is gentle, caring, and careful, like with a child that you are getting to know.

I have been speaking to you of two looks: a habitual look that is done mechanically, that we call the *look towards the world* and a look towards ourselves that we call the *inner look*.

5.-The External Look

The denial or hiding of what happens to us leaves us exposed to interpreting ourselves through things that “are said” about the human being. Things are said about how a family is, how relations are with a partner, at work, friendships, etc. All of these things that are said are not how “they happen to me.” Upon discovering how “they happen to me” it is possible to infer how “they happen to us.” It is more probable that from this particular truth for me, we may come to a more general behaviour, than vice versa. People talk about the family, they talk about their partner, and I suffer in my family situation and I suffer in the situation with my partner. I can believe what “is said” just like I can believe in the ghost of a horror film while I’m watching it. But, that I believe it in this moment doesn’t imply its

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

existence in the real world. In the same way, I can believe what “is said” but “to believe what is said” does not imply that things happen that way.

That which “is said” is precisely what we were condemning as “naive truth,” the value judgements of which are pronounced as absolutes, hiding the intentions of those judging. Therefore the interpretation of oneself and of the human phenomenon based on this type of truth ends up being forced by external schemas belonging to the times that I happen to live in.

More than ensuring that phenomena don't happen as others say, I'm interested that they are motivated to verify it, approaching inner truth. I'm talking here about truths which are accessible through the “inner look,” differentiating it from the “external look,” which corresponds precisely to what “is said.”

Just as it is possible to awaken the inner look, there is an *external look*, but unfortunately this does not need awakening, it is very awake and active. It is a look that is observing me, or rather judging me, from outside. I don't want to confuse you; of course it is still us who are looking at each other, but we do so in an externalised way. We do so from a vision that is not ours but rather one that is suggested or imposed by the value system of the society I live in, or the social group I move in. It is the look of good and bad, of what I must and mustn't be.

This externalised look of myself fills me with inhibitions. We could not play the games we used in the above examples: we would need to be good or competitive, or have the right clothes. If I discover a talent or a vocation that I'd like to develop, I'd have to see if it is “well looked on,” if it is “valued by the market.”

The external look takes me out of myself and leaves me exposed to following proposals that have nothing to do with me. I am easy prey to outside intentions, without my consent.

If the society I live in is in crisis, confused and without meaning, the external look will drag me into the crisis, into the disorientation and the nonmeaning.

It is possible to overcome the supposed culture of a society in an historical moment and to advance in knowledge of oneself. For this we have to develop the inner look, to learn to observe what happens to us. Upon doing so, we will remember our own existence and we will differentiate between what happens to us and what “we believe happens to us” and we will discover that what we “believe” is part of a belief system which belongs to the society I live in.

CHAPTER II: PSYCHOLOGICAL REALITY

1.-The States of Consciousness

When I speak of “internal states” I’m referring to a global situation of consciousness in a given moment; to ways of being of the consciousness in which perceptions, sensations, images and thoughts pertain to this state. They are tinged by this state. Everything that happens here is tinged by a form, by a way of seeing the world in this moment.⁴

The internal states are many but I will basically concentrate on those that are experienced as suffering.

We do not perceive the world in the same way when we are asleep, depressed, joyful, or angry. This is a problem for people who believe that there is only one reality. They will tell us that the perceptions and structurings of the world that are done in all the other states are false except, of course, those that they perceive from their state of consciousness, that of course would be the “real” one. So, the perceptions of sleep and those of the world when one feels exhausted, etc., are false. Soon, they fall in love; do crazy things and when everything goes wrong they explain that they were “mad.” But now that they are “themselves” once more everything is now clear and we can forgive them for the crazy things they did. So they begin to do everything that sane people do. And one wonders if one day they will come to apologise because they believed themselves to be sane but they were “mad,” like people in love, out of their minds; now they have woken up and recognise the crazy things they did.

To discern the real from the unreal is not as simple as it may seem. Reality is a complex word which we must qualify, just like we did with the word “truth.” We will speak of psychological reality.

2.-The Experience of Reality

The consciousness structures the data that it receives in different ways according to the state in which it finds itself, and this has *psychological reality*. When we are sleeping, dreams are not experienced as dreams. We experience them as “reality.” When we’re anxious,

⁴ In Contributions to Thought (Silo, Collected Works, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 2003, p183), Silo clarifies:

“When we are afraid of a danger, for example, the whole consciousness is in a state of danger. And even though we might recognize other functions (such as perception, reasoning, or memory), it is as if they were now operating saturated by the situation of danger, with everything referred to the danger. In this way, consciousness is a global way of being-in-the-world and a global behaviour in front of the world.”

what we perceive is not experienced as characteristic of a “state.” We experience it as “reality.” The same happens if we are in love or taken by an emotion: the internal experience of what we perceive and structure of the world is of “reality.” When we are in our daily activity, we don’t experience it as a “way of seeing the world,” with other ways being possible, but rather we experience it as “reality.” When we remember what we lived through, we experience it as “reality.” However, they are all psychological realities.

Therefore, when we speak of internal states, we are speaking of ways of perceiving and structuring of the information that we are receiving. We are not discussing if what we perceive of the world is “real.” We are observing the fact that what we perceive of the world is experienced as real. And, in addition, we observe that this experience varies according to the way of structuring of the consciousness in its different moments. It varies according to the internal state.

When we dream, it is evident for us. The structurings of the consciousness in dreams are experienced as real. When comparing this structuring with another made in a state of vigil, that is, from another way of structuring, I say that what I dreamt is false. But I cannot affirm this from the dream.

When in a vigilic state, the consciousness finds itself taken by some emotion, a strong fear for example (a dark night, alone in a dense and distant forest, in which the “beyond” is watching), what we perceive and structure in this state we experience as “real.”

The same thing happens with being in love or in any magical state in which the objects are charged with their own intention.

Let’s see another example. Let’s take the case of beliefs.

3.-Beliefs⁵

In my adolescence I knew a game called “the truth game.” It consisted of us adopting an attitude of candidness with the others and we would ask each other questions about the most intimate things and answer them with total cruelty. The game advanced until someone would start to become unhappy, reaching a point at which the game could no longer continue. Even I was left paralysed once when the others gave opinions about aspects of my life which were very hard to swallow. Many times everything ended in chaos, friends offended and the next time we played only had meaning to say what hadn’t been said the previous time, in undisguised revenge.

In this game, the interesting thing was when we discovered that what we believed about ourselves did not correspond to what the others perceived.

⁵ (Dictionary of New Humanism, Silo, Collected Works, Volume II)

***Belief.** A structure of pre-predicative ideation upon which other apparently “rational” structures are erected. **Belief** determines the field or perspective chosen, from which an idea or a system of ideas is developed. In the case of dialogue, even the most rational, the parties take for granted certain undemonstrated propositions, and make use of them without examination. We call such assumptions “pre-dialogal.” **Beliefs** determine practices and customs as well as the organization of language, or the illusion of a world that is accepted as “real” but is observed from the limited parameters determined by a particular historical perspective. Any such perspective typically tends to exclude others.*

*As the historical “level” of the generations changes, so does the system of beliefs, which also involves a change in the perspective, the “point from which” one is able or willing to observe the world (personal, social, scientific, historical, etc.). This change of perspective is what allows the emergence of new ideas. These new ideas take root in the new historical level, the emerging generations, and co-presently establish new pre-predicates, new propositions that then become incontestable and in turn give rise to new beliefs. As an example we can consider a behaviour common in the West until only recently: the affirmation that certain knowledge or information was “scientific” was all that was required to defend a given position and to discredit an opposing one as “unscientific.” Several generations remained mired in this dispute, until the **belief** on which their scientific artifices were based itself became subject to debate. When it came to be understood that every scientific theory was, at bottom, a construction of approximation to reality and not reality itself, this rigidly scientific perspective began to change. However, this change in turn opened the way for the emergence of neo-irrationalist currents of thought.”*

This would cause a particular register of anxiety. You'd deny that what they said about you was how they said it. You would use all possible resources so that reality would be as you wanted or believed it to be and not how it appeared in the game.

Beliefs have psychological reality.

When we have a belief about something, it doesn't present itself as a belief. I believe that tomorrow I will go for lunch with a friend. This is something in the future that may or may not happen. We are not referring to this type of future event when we are speaking of beliefs. If tomorrow I don't go to this appointment, I understand that events won't turn out as I was expecting. We are dealing, in this case, with a future event in which I recognise its probability of occurring. We are speaking of "beliefs" when the probability of what I believe not happening is equal to zero.⁶

If tomorrow I go to the street and every car that passes tries to knock me down and run me over, I would have various problems. First, staying alive. But as important as this would be accepting that the drivers are not as I believe them. Instead of taking care to not run over the pedestrians, instead of this, they are trying to run them over. Here I would have problems and I would resist accepting that the world is not as I believed before.

This belief—that every car driver takes care to not run over a pedestrian—does not present itself to me as a belief. It presents itself as reality. If this doesn't happen, then I am going to have some problems with my image of the world! Our whole image of the world is just that: an image. Beliefs that we have about the world and people.

But for us they have psychological reality. That is, we experience them as reality and not as beliefs.

Just as we experience a dream as real—and only know that we are dealing with a dream upon waking up—in the same way, beliefs operate as realities and we realise that we are dealing with beliefs when they clash with events that we can no longer interpret. In a way,

⁶ Ideas are thought, but beliefs are, as Ortega y Gasset would say (*Ideas y Creencias*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid 1993):

“Let's use the term “idea” to designate everything that appears in our lives as the result of our intellectual occupation. But beliefs present themselves to us with the opposite characteristic. We don't reach them through a task of understanding, but rather they already operate in the background when we start to think about something. That's why we don't usually formulate them, but rather we content ourselves with alluding to them as we usually do with everything that for us is reality itself. We don't think about our beliefs: our relationship with them is much more efficient; it consists of... counting on them, always, for ever.”

Translator's note: *Ideas and Beliefs* does not seem to have been published in English. This translation is made by the translator of the current work.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

“we wake up” from this belief. We were under an illusion and now we aren’t, we are disillusioned.

So we have beliefs in our affectionate relationships, we believe in the banking system, we believe what the papers and TV say, etc.

We have beliefs about ourselves, about the behaviour of others and social behaviour. We move, guided by beliefs. For a time we act in the world and these beliefs act without making us clash with events. Therefore, this confirms its value of truth.

But, frequently, it comes to pass that our beliefs fail. So, they stop exercising power over us and we substitute them for others.

It is not possible to recognise a belief as such. We experience it as reality and we only discover its characteristic as a model of reality when some event shows us that things are not as “we believed.” Nor is it possible to recognise a dream as such while we are sleeping. On the other hand, when we wake up, from this new way of structuring, it then becomes possible to verify that what we were living through in the previous moment was a dream. This leaves us with the question of whether there exists any way of structuring the consciousness in which these beliefs can be recognised as such, without the need to wait for the moment of disillusionment. It would have to be a disillusioned way of structuring—more than a vigilic state—of recognition of the beliefs with which the consciousness operates⁷. I refer to the previous chapter when we were analysing the “inner look,” to confirm the possibility of such a state.

To reveal one’s own beliefs is not an easy task, as all our being will be opposed to it. The closest that I can find for us to approach the phenomenon are the moments of disillusionment. When a great friend deceives me or swindles me, I experience betrayal. Something that could not be, was. When I mention to other people what happened, some will say to me; “But how come you didn’t realise before? We all knew that he or she was like that.”

Other types of beliefs exist which are held by everyone who lives in the same era, in the same historical moment. If to wake up from a personal belief is difficult, then to do so from

⁷ The following phrase from the Inner Look (Humanize the Earth, Silo, Collected Works, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 2003, p10) speaks of an awake and alert way of being of the consciousness in the world:

*“I can take as real what I see when I am awake and without reveries. Here I am not speaking of what my senses register, since naive and dubious “data” can arrive from my external and internal senses as well as from my memory. Rather, I am speaking of the activities of my mind as they relate to the “data” being thought. **What is valid is that when my mind is awake it “knows” and when it is asleep it “believes.”**”*

a belief of the era is impossible. It is not possible to accept that a wall is white when everyone sees it as black. The value of truth of these beliefs is “absolute,” and they only lose their value of truth, they are disbelieved, we disillusion ourselves of these beliefs, when the end of an era approaches and a new era begins.

Beliefs not only have to do with the historical moment but also with peoples’ culture. But the extraordinary thing in this historical moment is that we are dealing with a moment of planetarisation, in which cultures are getting closer to and influencing each other. So I think that the beliefs of the era that we will disbelieve, and which will come tumbling down, in order to allow the start of a new era, are very basic beliefs of humanity, which have accompanied us from our very origins. It will be the common beliefs in all cultures that we will become disillusioned with in order to allow a new truth to arise within us: a new truth that will replace beliefs that have accompanied us, perhaps, for a dozen millennia.

Let’s close this aside about beliefs of the era and recap.

Reality itself, or objective reality, does not exist. The consciousness structures the world in different ways depending on its “state” and this structuring is experienced as reality. We give the name “psychological reality” to this experience of reality. On the basis of this structuring of reality there is a “belief system” that is the historical assumptions, the obvious truths of the times which are presented as “real and objective” truths.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

CHAPTER III: NONMEANING

1.-The Description of Nonmeaning

Here I will deal with one of the internal states. It is not difficult to recognise and it allows for different levels of profundity.

We will talk about daily nonmeaning, without yet touching this unknown that we call “death.” We live knowing that we will die, but believing that it is not so, assuming that it is something that only happens to others. It doesn’t matter how strong the evidence is that in the short term we will die, because it has happened to people close to us or for other reasons. It doesn’t matter; we believe that it won’t happen to us. Let’s not go there yet though. Let’s see nonmeaning.

We have to be careful with this theme. Many times I have come across people in situations of nonmeaning, asking themselves fundamental questions (about the meaning of existence). The thread of the discourse of these formulations is not of a strong search that motivates actions, investigations or experiments, but rather, the discourse is presented as reasons that justify nonmeaning.

This makes one suspect that these fundamental questions are part of this state and are useful to justify it, but not a motor that encourages the search for new responses.

Therefore, we will not deal with the fundamental problem of existence yet. We are going to study prior psychological situations that we must first clear up if we want to get to other types of formulation.

Mostly I’ve seen that these apparently transcendental questions disappear when a personal problem of the one formulating them is resolved. In other words, it is not worthwhile asking about the meaning of life when the sincere questions are for a new car, why I have been abandoned by a loved one, how I can make them come back to me, about the job I didn’t get, or about the exam I failed.

Let’s clear up the unknowns of the state of nonmeaning—from this way of being of the consciousness in nonmeaning—so that the interesting questions are really interesting.

We have all gone through situations of strong suffering, of great contradiction and internal violence. None of this has to do with the state of nonmeaning.

In this state, neither are big problems registered, nor do contradictory internal forces appear; there is a sort of tranquillity in which things “don’t matter.” All of my action towards the world is inertial. I wake up in the morning because the alarm goes off, I go to work because it is what I always do, if someone invites me to the cinema, I go. Few things take me out of this emotional neutrality and if something manages to make me emotional, it’s for a short instant. I do what I have always done and I allow myself to be taken by events. I register neither suffering nor motivation. Everything’s like that and nothing matters. To break the

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

inertia is unnecessary as everything is the same. If someone asks me how I am, I say fine. It does not appear that I have great problems. Nor do interesting things happen to me.

When I imagine that life is like that, that tomorrow will be the same as today, that next year will be identical to the last one, and in ten years time everything will be like now, something akin to panic starts to break out. But I can forget myself soon, as it's already time for bed and tomorrow I have to work.

It's fantastic. We could even go as far as to say that we have overcome suffering, as it doesn't give a particular sign; only this boredom for the future—a dangerous word for this state of consciousness.

The world is not at all interesting because nothing is capable of taking me out of this state. I have little energy and I'm sleepy, but sufficiently active for inertia to be maintained.

I once read a book about someone who was living like this and every once in a while he experienced that things external to him had their own existence. They were existing outside of himself and this gave him a sensation of disgust a sort of nausea, as if he wanted to expel something from within.⁸

It is a state that has the particularity that as it has no motivations, therefore there is no motivation to get out of it. Why should one get out of it if everything's the same? Also where would one go? To what?

I can also have fun; there is always something with which to dull my consciousness to keep it entertained. I can watch television, watch the football, make love or play on the computer. I can work, do things with great concentration but nothing has meaning, is interesting or motivating. Only this little word "future" produces irritation in me and the suspicion that something isn't going well.

But, how did I get to this point? Life wasn't always this way!

⁸ "Nausea," (Jean-Paul Sartre, Penguin Books, London, UK, 1965, translation from the French by Robert Baldick):

'Now I see; I remember better what I felt the other day, at the sea-shore, when I was holding that pebble. It was a sort of sweet disgust. How unpleasant it was! And it came from the pebble, I'm sure of that.'

'...Then the Nausea seized me, I dropped on to the bench, I no longer even knew where I was; I saw the colours slowly spinning around me, I wanted to vomit. And there it is: since then, the Nausea hasn't left me, it holds me in its grip.'

2.-The Psychological Trap

This state is a sort of psychological trap. I tell you that you got here through very profound contradictions that you were unable to resolve. You reached this state as a form of de-tensing, relaxing your tensions that were unbearable for your consciousness in one moment. You only wanted to flee from something, from a problem that was causing you a lot of pain, and you did something with your head, you falsified something in you so that it would stop being a problem. It no longer caused you more pain, but together with this, you started to lose interest and motivation for everything in existence.

No. It didn't happen to you. You arrived at nonmeaning. You got here when you considered that your contradiction was not as serious as you were experiencing it, that in reality, "nothing mattered." On deciding that "nothing mattered," you dulled the pain but you also lost your motivation and interest for everything. It happened bit by bit. First you lost interest in those things, people or situations that had to do with what was causing you problems; then it extended to other contiguous situations until, finally, you became absolutely calm because here nothing mattered.

So, just like in "The Neverending Story" by Michael Ende, the Nothing was advancing, covering the fantasy world, until everything disappeared.

I call this state the "psychological trap," because certain images or situations produce painful registers in me and then I anaesthetise them, thereby intending to anaesthetise only the registers that cause this precise situation. But what happens is that on doing this, I anaesthetise registers of contiguous situations and so, in a chain reaction, soon nothing matters. In other words, *everything provokes the same register*.

But it was your contradiction that brought you to this state of nonmeaning. You didn't get here through metaphysics, or through any existential philosophy; through nausea or anything similar.

It was your contradiction, that you were experiencing as pain and suffering, that seemed to have no way out, that you didn't know how to integrate, to comprehend, to forgive, which brought you to the world of nothing, to the land of the living-dead, to the land of the zombies.

It is difficult to understand this from the zombie state. To not grasp—with inner truth—that tomorrow will be the same as today, that next year will be the same as last year, and the same as the year after that, and the one after that, and the one after that; and you may want to get out of the trap you put yourself in, to lose fear of suffering and to consider that this state is worse than to suffer. It is worse because there is no way to advance, to discover, to investigate. There are no internal searches because nothing matters.

You say you overcame these old problems of your love life, or your family, or whatever, a long time ago. And you emphasise the "o" of long. You have this sensation because time, for you, was frozen and stopped passing in a kind of psychological hibernation. You think

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

that you overcame these problems because, when you remember them now, they don't come with any particular register, they don't move you. But if you are rigorous, you will recognise that in this state, nothing produces any particular feeling of being moved. So what you are saying is suspicious to say the least.

So you will tell me things that sound good; that everything ends with death, for example, or that money is not happiness, it just seems like it; things like that which you have heard around you. You are in a mind trip; a trap that has served to hide you from yourself, to make you forget a problem that seemed insoluble, to escape from contradiction. Everything is falsified in your thought, emotion and action, and there is only one thing that has meaning: to get out of nonmeaning.

There still remains a problem. To get out of the trap you will have to return to the contradiction you escaped from. You will have to go back to this thing that you could not resolve. But suffering gives more possibilities than nonmeaning. Suffering will motivate you to overcome it.

3.-Anaesthesia of Internal Registers

How is it that I cause anaesthesia? It is enough to look away from that which I experience as having no way out, to look away from what causes me pain and suffering. Upon doing this the psychological error does not disappear but the register that this error produces does disappear, or rather becomes modified.

More than once you have experienced in daily life difficulties that that you didn't want to confront. You don't want to confront them because you suspect that you will not be able to solve them. What you do in these situations is worry about other things, maybe you look at other aspects of the situation but, for sure, you escape from this thing that you suspect to be difficult. You do this until the situation explodes and imposes itself on you. So you are shocked by the apparent accident that was produced. You are furious because you weren't warned in time, because someone tricked you or betrayed your trust. I hope that you have the opportunity to verify that in any of these "accidents," it was you who did not want to see the indicators when there was still time, it was you who took your eye off this problem that later imposed itself on you.

I'm presenting this to give you an example of what I'm talking about when I say "to look away from." In this case, the look is taken away from perceptions that come from the external world. You can imagine how simple and usual it is to look away from sensations that come from the internal world.

So, in front of contradictions that I experience as strongly suffering, the state of nonmeaning fulfils the function of anaesthetising the registers. This anaesthesia is produced by looking away from the contradiction and suffering. Upon looking away, this suffering becomes

Dario Ergas

hidden to me, provoking this state, this way of being, that we have encapsulated as *nonmeaning*.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

CHAPTER IV: FAILURE

1.-The Experience of Failure

My friend, nothing is as they said, nothing is as you believed. You feel that you are the stupid one and that everything only happens to you. Only for you, has what you were hoping for from this beautiful woman that you once knew died. Only for you, has this business that would liberate you from the misfortune of fearing for your future and that of your children failed. Only you have had what money couldn't buy. It is only you who are not resigned to the loss of a loved one. It is only you who have not been visited by God in his mercy to console you. Everything only to you.

Around you, not everyone is smiling and even when you know many people who are living your same experience; to you it seems that they are also one of the stupid ones.

You force things to not be this way. Maybe tomorrow, maybe on crossing the road, you will find the right person, or fortune will smile golden and touch everyone around you and they will be saved from poverty or from this mediocrity that doesn't allow you to do what you want, like travel, and shop and... Yes, for sure, tomorrow.

Nothing is as they told you.

Nothing turns out as you believe.

But failure horrifies you.

This is a society of opportunities in which the intelligent and the beautiful triumph. But to you nothing happens like that.

At times you have received applause. You have been told you that you are worth it, and everyone has known about what was said to you, without you knowing it. You try to hear the echo of the applause that vanished. When you were in the meeting with this so-very-important person... he said to me... I said to him... and then they said to me..., but it's gone, the echo has vanished and once again the stupid ones. Fortunately no one has realised and nobody will, because tomorrow you will get her to go with you and therefore...

Nobody wants to be a failure, it's an existential insult. Besides, if someone has failed in something, it wasn't their fault. It was because of what's-her-name who abandoned me, because of my family that never knew how to recognise my virtues; even this society of opportunities has given to everyone else except me; to this I add—in solidarity—that I recognise that my social group has not been given to either, etc.

More than failure, it seems that there are people who owe me.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

It is a difficulty to recognise failure. Even now, while you are reading, you think that I am speaking to others who have failed, but not to you, because tomorrow you will have..., or yesterday they said to you that tomorrow they will give you...

Observe. It is worse to suffer than to not know how to suffer. It is like being afraid of being frightened. It is to suffer because things don't turn out how you want but, also, to suffer the tension of looking away from the situation.

Nothing turns out as you want. Full stop.

This doesn't hurt. It hurts when I tell you that tomorrow things will also not turn out as you want. But this isn't what I'm telling you. I'm saying that failure doesn't hurt, unlike the resistance to accept it.

From where we are looking at this psychological path, the reasons for which things don't turn out as you hope, matter little. The good or bad reasons matter little. What matters is that things weren't how you wanted them to be and are still not as you would like them to be. Don't answer me quickly explaining the whys. Only *observe* your failure, awaken the inner look and learn. This is of utmost importance if you really want to know yourself and you are interested in discovering your inner truth.

Nobody says out loud "I'm a failure," it sounds like "I'm a Martian"

I'm dieing of laughter! At the end of the century, the society of opportunities has blessed the human being and allowed it to triumph and be successful. Success! Everyone feels happy, complete, infused by love around them, close and secure, above all secure. Of course, maybe not you in particular, but everyone else does.

More than five thousand million particularities live on Earth and they still don't make a universe.

In everyday language the term "failure" is used pejoratively to indicate that a person has not achieved in life what "was said" had to be achieved, and neither will they be able to achieve it in the future.

Seen from outside, the term "failure" indicates that I didn't achieve what I believed was important to achieve, and that what I used to believe, is no longer tenable.

I resist seeing failure. I prefer to see that my projects deviate, or do not produce the expected result due to external accidents. This "accidental" factor, this haphazardness, gives me hope that one day the accident will work in my favour. The accidental will hide from me all responsibility for my actions. Although the situations of failure repeat themselves, I insist on considering them as accidents and attribute them to something that I call "bad luck," which is due to the positions of the stars in the moment of my birth. I

repeat my action a thousand times over, until the day I die, before confronting myself and questioning it.

This questioning is possible in failure.

When I say “the same thing always happens to me,” I do not notice that the recording of this fact could be formulated as “what happens to me is that I always do the same thing.”

My actions are orientated by my beliefs.

In failure, a rupture in the system of beliefs is produced. Certain beliefs fail and this questions my actions. Recognition of failure is not the denial of actions, but rather to take on the questioning and failure of beliefs.

2.-The Failure of Beliefs

The recognition of failure is what allows the change of look when faced with a situation of suffering. I believe that it is one of the most difficult internal experiences to accept, however it's what makes all change possible, every new search, the arrival of a new reality.

My teenage son and his friends asked me a while ago if I was a failure. Knowing that success is the central value in which new generations are formed, I responded to them, almost without thinking that, in effect, I was a failure, winning with my answer a fair amount of time of them making fun of me. One year later, they insisted again on their question, unable to accept my frank and brutal answer.

Successful people, who have not failed, have found—or believe they have found—everything that they wanted in life. They have satisfied all of their searches and dedicate their lives to implement what they have found. These people have completed themselves. When things go wrong, it is always due to external causes and it never crosses their mind that it could be that their way of seeing the world may be mistaken. They are successful people. Other people do not find a complete response to their searches, or when they do, hundreds of new questions arise in their hearts that make them feel that the path to travel is much longer than what they imagined to start with. Some people are searching for kindness, justice, happiness, meaning and do not agree or accept that their searches may be impossible. These people are constantly living the experience of failure and extract an enormous energy from it—contrary to what is thought—which impels them to continue, to fight and to search tirelessly. On the other hand it is not unusual to find successful people; tired, exhausted and without meaning. The word that these successful people use for nonmeaning is “depression.”

In the chapter on Psychological Reality we discussed beliefs. Here we demonstrated how beliefs are based on what we call reality. We said that it was not possible to recognise a belief as such: however it is a fundamental component of what we call reality. We said that when something goes wrong, when the world stops behaving as we believed, we quickly become disillusioned; we wake up from this belief.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

Failure is precisely the sudden recognition of what we believed to be real, not being so.

Failure is the experience of recognising that what I believed to be real, what my whole being experienced as true, what my logic showed me to be without doubt, was not so. Failure is experienced as painful, but it is the type of pain that I feel when the dentist extracts a decaying molar or the oncologist extracts a malign tumour.

Failure is the state of consciousness when I suffer disillusion. I can only disillusion myself when I have been under an illusion. Illusions are fantasies that I took for reality. In failure, the consciousness starts the search for a new reality, new beliefs that allows us to understand a situation in a new way. The consciousness broadens and searches for new responses which make it grow and modify the world.

When we look at the world or at ourselves, we look at it in a certain way. This way of looking, is partly our intention that is launched towards the world and partly a belief system, assumptions, upon which we structure all the data that we receive. When the belief system breaks we experience failure and it is the failure of this way of looking. It is not the failure of the intention that was trying to be implemented and completed in the world. On the contrary, now the intention is liberated from a way of looking which held it prisoner. Now this intention has the possibility to build new meanings and realities. New beliefs will occupy the space left by the old ones, but they will open the future to new worlds for us.

CHAPTER V: CONTRADICTION

1.-The Function of Suffering in the Psyche

Let's agree.

For the consciousness, suffering is a sign that a psychological process is not working well.

When you put a hand in the fire, you immediately take it out again to escape from the pain produced. This pain fulfils the function of giving a sign to the consciousness so that your body moves and gets out of danger.

Suffering also fulfils a function. It also gives a sign to the consciousness that something is not working well. In this case we are talking about psychological processes.

This point of view of suffering must not be taken lightly. I insist, because many times we read: "for the consciousness suffering is the sign of an erroneous psychological process" (I foolishly repeat), but we continue with the belief prior to this proposition, assuming that they are the same; beliefs such as "suffering redeems man," "we are born to suffer," "I suffer, therefore I exist," "suffering inspires me," "the way to heaven is a thorny path" and many other phrases that have a background in the veneration of suffering.

This working conception of suffering proposed here, is not even suggesting that when something fails in the world the coherent thing to do may be to suffer. It is saying the inverse, that the consciousness has generated a psychological construction, a psychological process, which is mistaken and false.

Science has advanced much more rapidly to help people resolve physical pain than to resolve mental suffering. The diseases that affect the body have been diminishing on the planet. Psychological illness is advancing; it is developing and becoming more profound in the loneliness of multitudes, submerging the human being in contradiction and nonmeaning.

For sure, there are points on the planet in which physical pain in the form of hunger or illnesses continue to operate and display their power. Nevertheless, in this moment of technological progress, it seems to me that this is nothing more than another symptom of the psychological illness that is advancing around the planet.

2.-The Description of Contradiction

Years ago, driving a vehicle through the streets of the city I live in, I arrived at an alley that ended in a wall. I wanted to turn left to continue my journey, but an arrow stopped me indicating that the traffic on this street was only allowed to go in the opposite direction to the one I wanted to turn. I tried to veer right, but I couldn't do that either because another arrow was indicating that the traffic has to flow in the opposite way. This paralysed me and

I reflected for a moment about the dilemma I was presented with, imagining that the rest of my life would be spent in this place.

Yes, there are registers of suffering in contradiction. There is a sensation of internal violence. You have to take a decision that you believe will alleviate this internal pain. Only, you can't do it. All the time you talk to yourself trying to resolve this situation, trying to make what happened be as if it hadn't happened. You have the same conversation with yourself time and again, you develop it and you return to the same point. You restart this internal conversation taking the same steps and using the same phrases as before. When you tell it to others, you do the same and nothing and nobody manages to calm this pain. You are trapped in a vicious circle. You feel desperate and there is always "something" that, were it to happen, would make your problem disappear. If this person was to love you, or if you had this amount of money, or if such-and-such a person were different, you experience that you would be completely happy. You don't think that you would resolve the problem, you experience that if "something" happened, you would be happy. So here you are, a long time in this conversation, trying to make "something" happen by thinking or crying about it enough. And it is not the case now to know why, but it is precisely this "something" that is not going to happen.

On more than one occasion I have found myself with people in these states of depression, explaining to me how they see the way out of the situation they live in. If they achieve "this thing," they explain to me, they would never ask for anything else in life. With such certainty it is "this thing" that they desire to happen. "Amen," they think. Let it be. Later on I met them again and asked them about "that thing" which they desired. To my surprise and joy, they got it. But also they had forgotten that "they would never ask for anything else in life" and their state of depression was similar to the first time.

It's not unusual to feel that the contradiction that we experience is compromising all existence and the future. Probably, on remembering situations of strong contradiction that occurred several years ago, we experience that the reasons for that suffering seem absurd today. Just as the situations of others who are trapped in blind alleyways today, may seem absurd. What matters is that whoever is going through it is experiencing it dramatically. So, as absurd as the contradictory motives of the past or of others may seem now, so will the motives for current contradictions seem once they have been surpassed. But while we are going through the situation, it feels like life or death. Dramatic. It is in this situation that sometimes we choose to fall into that trap called "nonmeaning"

Contradiction is painful and it breaks you from within. But this suffering is inciting you to get out of it. If you choose nonmeaning, these tensions will seem to dissolve and, with them, all pleasure of living.

3.-Decision Making

One of the most impressive characteristics of the state of contradiction is this imperious, compulsive necessity to make a decision. Sometimes this becomes so unbearable that we

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

prefer to make a quick decision, no matter what the consequences, as long as we get out of the sort of torture that we're experiencing.

On occasions, we put ourselves in such a way that events apparently manage to decide for us.

I don't know if you have ever tried to read a book or study something when you have a cold and your body temperature has risen to 40 degrees. You read and you read again and you try to stop after each sentence, then you wake up because you were asleep right in the moment in which you believed you perfectly understood something of the book. You become angry with yourself until you appreciate that you are ill, and must wait for the fever to subside before undertaking this intellectual task.

To make decisions from this state of contradiction is more or less similar to what I've just described. If you do so, the probability that the consequences of these decisions will be worse than the previous situation, is high. Why not wait for the fever to subside? Then decide. A cold is a dysfunction in a chemical or physical process. Contradiction is the same thing in a psychological process.

You are in a situation that seems to have no way out for you. You are suffering.

Why not seriously consider what we said about suffering at the start of this chapter?

We said that for the consciousness, suffering is the sign of an erroneous psychological process. This suffering is a sign that something in the conversation of contradiction is falsified, mistaken.

If you observe carefully, you will discover your anger, your rage with people and situations that you feel have harmed you. It seems to you that in one form or another, they have been responsible for the misfortunes that you are now suffering. If you review with care you will discover "resentment."

CHAPTER VI: RESENTMENT

1.-Some Precautions

Here we are coming to the central theme, namely the internal states of suffering. We are coming to the key to the fall of nonmeaning, to the fall of contradiction.

How ugly it is to see yourself resentful! It is almost an aesthetic problem.

I have seen many “good people” quickly forgive their resentments. Later on, I have seen them full of problems that they can’t quite understand, or wrapped up in an unpleasant life situation, without knowing what was happening to them. These states which we recognise as suffering but where we don’t know what is happening have always grabbed my attention. You can review your situation and not find any big problems, but nevertheless you suffer and without knowing why. I’ve recognized the emergence of great philosophies and metaphysics that explain the world, history and mankind and behind the explanations and truths put forward, I seem to have smelt resentment.

I’ve heard talk of reconciliation and often seen that this is just an escape from resentment, and not real reconciliation.

This is a central theme. It’s not good to bypass it as if it were something overcome a long time ago, because it is one of the deepest roots of contradiction and nonmeaning. It’s one of the roots of the freezing of internal time. The lack of understanding of this psychological process enchains your life to a sensation of a repetitive and routine future.

Resentment is one of the illnesses of the psyche that time cannot heal. No matter how much time on the clock passes: months or years. This thing in your consciousness is still there, present as if time had not passed. You may consider yourself to be already too old to do the things that people of your age do, but, nevertheless, you continue to have a child or a teenager within you, acting in many areas of your life. In each crisis, in each difficult situation, every time your environment changes—and today this is increasingly frequent—fears and difficulties invade you that you recognise as having always been with you. And operating here is this thing that you left pending, that you hoped time would heal.

You no longer remember.

But if you can see your contradiction or your nonmeaning, if you can see it, you will have to accompany me in this chapter. The chapter of the children who play grown ups; of the adolescents who know everything about love, but who cry for the loved one that will not appear; of your social struggle, in which you were abandoned...

At this point I remember the cry of Edgar Allan Poe⁹ when his dear Lenore died. A black raven entered at night through the window, landing on the bust of Pallas. Perched on this lucid head of times past, the poet tried to shoo him away. "Nevermore," the black raven said to him. Desperately the poet cried out, begging the raven to go away. "Nevermore" it replied. Since then the raven was always there, in the poet's room following his writings and reminding him: nevermore...

2.-The Logic of Resentment

How real resentment appears to be! What irrefutable logic justifies our speech! How obvious is; the injustice committed against us, the violence to which we were subjected, the miserable trick with which we were charmed! Death surprised us like a merciless accident! How much logic there is in the reasoning that makes us resentful! It is even correct. The contrary would be strange. It is obvious that I have been harmed and that this has conditioned my life. I didn't even take revenge, or maybe I did...

There is only one detail. I'm suffering.

You tell me that suffering is a consequence of this situation.

For the consciousness, suffering is the sign of an erroneous psychological process.

⁹ Extract from the poem "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe (first published in the American Review, February 1845, 1:143-145)

*'Prophet!' said I, 'thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us - by that God we both adore -
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels named Lenore -
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels named Lenore?'
Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'*

*'Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!' I shrieked upstarting -
'Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! - quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!'
Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'*

*And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted - nevermore!*

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

If you are suffering it's because you are mistaken about something.

If you want to overcome your resentment, if you want to find inner truth, for you, suffering will be a sign of psychological error.

For this society consciousness “happens,” reality “is imposed.” It is passive. But it's not so. It is the consciousness that constructs the image of the world. What you call “reality” is the construction of your consciousness. It is not the perception of the world *per se*, but rather the construction that your consciousness makes of the world. Therefore, suffering is a sign of an error of a false—mistaken—construction of the world.

All of this reasoning that leads you to resentment, that to you seems to have implacable logic, but which is accompanied by a sign of suffering, is a construction that you have made and it's wrong.

It doesn't matter if you haven't yet discovered the error. What matters is for you to consider that your vision of things is somehow mistaken because it is accompanied by suffering.

When something happens outside of you, it is not obvious that you must register happiness or suffering. It is not obvious that as the sun goes down in the evening, you must consider it to be beautiful. Everyone says that it is beautiful, so you see it like that. This is not so. You can see it however you wish, or at least, according to the mood in which the sunset crept up on you.

It is not obvious that the apparent calamities that have happened to you may be the cause of your suffering. So you say. But it is not so.

I tell you that they were the responses that you gave in these situations, which have remained recorded in a contradictory way. The motivations that pushed you to become involved in these situations were those that have left this bitter taste of cold, endless time.

Resentment is a state of consciousness. When I'm resentful with someone, with the person I love for example, that feeling does not remain focussed on that person alone. It's like that in the beginning. But later on, resentment extends to every person with the same characteristics. To every woman, for example. Later I start to resent love, later life itself, and so on until everything is consumed. Even when I can focus on the people I resent, this state increasingly covers the whole of my consciousness, until nothing remains. In the end, I'm just resentful. I'm a resentful person and I behave as such.

This needs to be seen in order to find the strength and the value of getting out of that situation. We are battling against a point of view that makes us see things as imposed from outside, that makes suffering seem to be coming from the external world. Things that happened to me and conditioned me, without me having had anything to do with it. If I'm resentful, it's because somewhere along the way I made a mistake.

If I accept this premise, what we can talk about may be useful.

Observe that many times you suffer without being able to determine the precise reasons or those responsible for the situation. When this happens, you are resentful, without even knowing it.

Sometimes you consider that you, and only you, are responsible for everything that has happened to you. Nobody else was responsible for your situation. You say this, but you do not manage to calm your suffering. What happens to you is that you are resentful, very resentful and you dare not see it. This guilty form of constructing “reality” seems more comfortable to you. But you are resentful and while you are unable to see it you cannot advance.

When you find the thread of resentment, you’ll see that, in fact, even though there's a particular situation that ensnares you, you resent everything and everyone.

Mostly, it will happen that you will analyse with total logic that you were harmed by these people and you’ll see your responses as coherent, given the situation these people put you in. You will say that it’s an intelligent defence or something. But you will not notice the amount of time that it has taken you to justify your answers, and you will not notice that you are suffering. You are resentful, and therefore held back. You have been trapped in a psychological process.

The damage done to us by others seems so clear that it appears humiliating to recognize that we are the ones who have erred. And yes, it's us: at least in terms of the response that we gave to this situation.

It's not that I'm mistaken: my perception is wrong. It’s the mental construction that I made and the response given to that construction that’s wrong.

Forgive me if I insist on this.

3.-Description of the State of Resentment

To recognise the state of resentment is a key to overcoming the states of contradiction and nonmeaning. But when we are totally submerged in them they don’t present themselves so obviously to us. They present themselves as unconformity with ourselves, confusion in what we are doing or what we want to do. The future appears dull and erratic. Today we think that we will do one thing and tomorrow the opposite. A daily malaise that we recognise as suffering. Many times we know that we are angry or upset with the people around us and we even think that it’s us who are bad and wrong. We tell ourselves that, but it doesn’t become clear why we are bad or what we are wrong about, nor do we know how to get out of the error. If I continue any longer in this situation it will become a general anaesthetic in which things stop mattering. This suffering malaise is anaesthetising and also anaesthetises the future and the motivation to do something in the world.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

It is this way that contradiction usually presents itself. Mostly, over time, I find something that dulls my consciousness until all of this seems to be dissolved. And I will not see these painful registers until the next crisis, until the next time that something changes around me. And so, as the years go by, although the personalities and arguments may change, it will seem to me that my life is a repetition

4.-Crisis

Many people live anxious to achieve something called “stability” nevertheless they find that the world around them is changing rapidly. They often describe themselves as being in crisis. “Stability” is another idea that is supposed to characterise human behaviour and that has no psychological reality. In other words, no one is experiencing it.

I have learnt that transformation is at the root of what is human; transformation of oneself and the world. This is quite far away from the idea of stability. At the beginning, the “crises” of my life and others seemed to me dramatic, dangerous and undesirable. Then I saw that they are at the root of all change. To make the glass by the side of my computer, it was necessary to subject a certain type of sand to high temperatures to be able to convert it into a piece of glass in the shape of a glass. The transformed matter is not made from a state of stability. On the contrary, it is necessary to destabilise its natural state to transform it into something else: to subject it to a crisis with respect to its previous state.

In its transformation, the human being lives subject to frequent crises that are destabilisations and allow us to give new responses to increasingly change and adapt to the world that we ourselves transform, in a constant feedback that we conceptualise as “progress.”

In this way, personal crises are no longer undesirable life dramas or situations. But rather they become opportunities to find new responses in the world, in a growing search for knowledge of oneself, happiness and meaning.

So, in your future and in our society, I can be sure of many crises. I can assure you of permanent instability. And I can tell you that this is not a sign of error but rather of transformation, of need and search for transformation.

Even when the instability may be permanent, it seems to me interesting to achieve that the crises bring new questions and increasingly take us to better depths and novel searches. It can be motivating to overcome the crude states of consciousness.

If what we have been speaking about is valid for you, if it possesses psychological reality, in other words, if it happens to you, then my proposal is that you get to know your resentment: that you know it well and value it.

5.-Reconciliation

It is not possible to forgive or to be reconciled with someone you are not angry with. This is obvious. But if you are lying to yourself in resentment, you will also be lying to yourself in reconciliation.

Reconciliation is not a mechanical act. Neither is it an act that may be carried out because God or someone else says that it's good. Reconciliation is an intentional act, an optional act. In other words, it's done when there is internal liberty to do it or not do it.

Doing things so that someone will not be angry with me is not reconciliation. Neither is it reconciliation if it's motivated by my fear of being alone or fear of punishment. I can become reconciled when I truly discover my resentment, and even when I find the internal option of not forgiving.

Someone once said that you cannot be truly "good" until you know just how "bad" you can become. I found this to be very true.

And this is why I insist on inviting you to thoroughly review all those things that you believe you have overcome. It's not so simple. And if it's not overcome, it will come back to you permanently. Just like bad food, badly digested, that your body wants to get rid of.

I've seen many times in people, a great fear of being resentful, or rather, a fear of recognizing their resentment; a kind of fear of not being able to get out of that state later on. A fear that could lead me to a situation of violence that is so extreme it could cause physical harm to others. A sort of fear that leads to madness. So I prefer to act as if I had been resentful and now I'm reconciled, as if I had overcome this state. But to be "as if" is not the same as actually being.

So let's agree then that you will not be able to reconcile with yourself if you don't truly recognize your resentment. Considering that you are to blame for the injury that you feel was done to you is not recognizing your resentment. That phrase seems like a tongue-twister, but you'll see that those "as ifs" present themselves to you like that.

Do not hide behind your feelings of guilt either. These are other forms you use to hide your resentment. You will not be able to advance that way.

If you believe in God, not even God will be able to forgive you for something that you have not recognized. The path of guilt is not the path to God. Guilt hides your true feelings from God. This is why God never consoles you. You were taught badly, my friend. Do not hide in guilt. Look at yourself. Discover your resentment. From where you are, you may wonder if this effort is worth it. In reality it is the effort to reach inner truth, to see yourself. I can tell you that there are easier paths. You may ask yourself how long all of this will take. And you want assurance that you'll get somewhere. It is clear that if you have something better to do; the right thing is to do it. But be careful, with this thing that appears to be better. Develop it in your imagination until its final consequences. Don't remain in

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

the first step. Develop it until this activity reaches its end. If at the end you arrive at your starting point then don't waste your time. It seems to me that the most valuable thing to do in a situation of contradiction is to get out of the contradiction. No matter how long it takes, it seems to be the most worthy task. No matter if it takes a long time or not! If you study well, it is the only meaningful and coherent task that you can do. And if you never manage to discover the entrance to new states of consciousness, anyway it would have been worth the effort to try. There is no doubt that if you experience what is described, it has meaning to get out of nonmeaning and contradiction.

Let's suppose now that you have decided, and have seen your resentment. You've seen the night of your soul. You've felt what you didn't believe possible to feel. You've desired what you dared not desire. You've heard unconfessable confessions.

Yes, now you feel that they have failed you, everyone has failed you.

You're getting closer to recognizing your failure. You'll discover that resentment also fulfils a function: to hide your failure.

Those people failed you in something that you wanted. You assumed that what you wanted was in these situations or people. What you wanted was not there. You believed it was there, but no. Now you blame them because they didn't give you what you expected. But consider that this thing you want: it's you who wants it. You assumed that you'd get it somehow, and it wasn't so.

You failed.

You didn't get what you wanted.

Will you be able to go through life knowing this?

Is it very serious? Will you be able to forgive yourself for not getting what you wanted?

Others have not given you what you were searching for, basically because you imagined that they had it. You were wrong. In these others there are equally things to be grateful for. Of course, not what you believed essential for your happiness. This failed. And the failure is yours. You made an error in the search. But how many other small things have you learnt on the way! Maybe you can forgive yourself for your failure. Maybe you can love yourself, even without that thing that seemed so vital. Maybe you can understand that others could not give it to you.

In the Chilean countryside there is an expression that says you shouldn't ask the walnut trees for pears. The walnut trees offer you nuts, if you ask them for pears and then get angry with them because they can't give them what would this be saying about you? Besides, aren't walnuts delicious even if they don't quench your thirst?

In “The Little Prince” by Saint-Exupéry¹⁰, there was a King of a planet who ordered the Sun to rise in the morning and set in the evening. To the Little Prince this seemed stupid. And the King replied: “If I ordered a general to fly from one flower to another like a butterfly, or to write a tragic drama, or to change himself into a sea bird, and if the general did not carry out the order that he had received, which one of us would be in the wrong?”

In reality, you assumed that these people and these situations should have given you “this thing” that was so important for you. It was you who needed it. You failed. To be reconciled is not only the forgiveness of others. To be reconciled is to accept your failure. It is also to comprehend that you are asking for something that they cannot give you; to comprehend that even if you haven't received what seemed essential, those relationships have offered other things, perhaps more gentle, but very interesting and enriching in other aspects.

What a titanic struggle we have with ourselves to not accept failure!

Is it so serious?

Besides, isn't it true?

¹⁰ I'll take advantage of this mention of Saint-Exupéry, to extract for you another paragraph that with singular beauty reconciles the Little Prince (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, Pan Books, London, UK, 1974). The Little Prince had experienced disillusionment on entering a rose garden with hundreds of roses equal in beauty or more beautiful than the one he left on his planet:

The little prince went away, to look again at the roses.

'You are not at all like my rose,' he said. 'As yet you are nothing. No one has tamed you, and you have tamed no one. You are like my fox when I first knew him. He was only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But I have made him my friend, and now he is unique in all the world.'

... And he went back to meet the fox.

'Goodbye,' he said.

'Goodbye,' said the fox. 'And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.'

... 'It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important.'

... 'Men have forgotten this truth,' said the fox. 'But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose . . .'

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

Yes. What you believed gave happiness, or believed to be so important for your life, wasn't here. It wasn't here and it won't be here tomorrow either. Will you be able to live knowing this? Or is it better to not know it, or better to look away from your failure and to consider that they were the ones who didn't want to give it to you. They had this possibility and they denied it to you.

You believed that they had this possibility. You believed it and put your faith in it. Well, it wasn't so. They didn't have this possibility; in reality they never had it. You were wrong. Now you can either get out of the trap and your illusion or stay there. If you want to get out, you will have to reconcile with yourself, and this means to forgive yourself for your failure and also to forgive others for what they didn't do and were not in conditions to do.

It's my opinion that on reconciling you are in condition to initiate a new search, with a better degree of inner truth. Do not fear losing meaning by recognizing failure. From where you are there is no meaning to lose. You can only gain. Of course, you lose an illusion. You lose what you thought would make you happy. But this was a false belief. An illusion of your consciousness that was only sustained thanks to resentment. But you are suffering. It's worth trying what I propose.

It is possible that you start to be interested in things that you didn't value before. I knew someone who failed in friendship and, in his loneliness, he discovered that friendship was something that was given and not received. He failed in this supposed reciprocity of friendship. Marvellous is the person who could be a friend to someone even when the friendship is not returned.

I knew someone else who struggled to be dominant, free and independent. Nothing bothered him. He believed this until he failed. He could be influenced and dependent. Then he chose someone who would influence him and someone to depend on. Curious and wise friends.

And nothing is as they taught you.

You are not independent until you discover your dependence.

You are not strong until you discover your weakness.

You are not kind until you know your cruelty.

You are not reconciled until you know your failure.

You cannot receive until you are capable of giving.

That is to say, everything is the inverse of what you assume.

6.-Belief, Failure and Reconciliation

Reconciliation is possible and it consists of modifying your way of seeing the situation. The previous chapters have tried to make you accept, at least intellectually, that to modify the way of looking, to change the point of view, is possible and with that also the responses that you can give in the future in suffering situations change. You modify the look and with that you change and you change your world. To achieve it we are bombarding the concept of truth and the concept of reality and we put the human being, or rather, ourselves, as constructors of truth, of reality and in a few paragraphs time, constructors of meaning. I will recapitulate in case an argument has slipped my mind. If you have had enough, skip the following lines and follow me in the next chapter.

But how can we modify our look on reality? How do we change our point of view?

Here is a fundamental answer: you have to want to do it. If you don't want to do it, it's impossible. Leaving your resentment behind involves a change of look. You will change. That is the cost: that is the good thing.

In this theme I always remember Mohamed when he starts the Koran saying: “As to those who reject Faith, it is the same to them whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe.¹¹” This is similar. If you say that you want to reconcile, to leap over your abyss, you have to truly want to do it. If you don't want to, you won't be able to change the look.

It is certain that this wanting presents itself confusingly. So I take a step back and say to myself; “I would like to truly want.” It seems to me more than sufficient. And if your own suffering is not enough of an argument, you can use the resource that motivated the present writing and you will find meaning in reconciling with yourself to help others to escape their darkest moments.

Resentment hides your failure. Failure is the rupture of one, or many, of the beliefs upon which you have sustained your vision of reality. Most likely is that we are dealing with very basic beliefs that have accompanied you since you were young. Failure (recognising that these beliefs are beliefs and not truths) is what makes the modification of the look possible and the encounter with other more appropriate beliefs for the new world that you live in or the new situations that you have to confront. With the change of beliefs, many things that for you were objective truths will begin to present themselves very differently, sometimes in opposing ways, to how you saw them before your failure. That's why I say in the previous point “... and everything is the reverse of what you think...”¹²

¹¹ Translators note: the quote in the original Spanish version of this book is a reference to the Koran Chapter 2 – Surah Al-Baqara (The Cow), verse 6.

¹² In *Guided Experiences* (Silo, Collected Works, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 2003), Silo uses the short story to develop a series of techniques that allow one to untie the knots of

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

Until now we have looked behind, towards the past. However, there is another force that impels us, much stronger than all that we have been speaking about. This force is the future. It is in the future where all human energy is. All resentment, all failure, disappears if we find a meaning in life: if we give meaning to life.

the consciousness. These techniques help to give flexibility to the look and give mobility to the images that we find to be fixed in our heads. These “stories” are the result of the application of a theory of consciousness drafted in “Contributions to Thought,” where the image is considered as an active form of putting the consciousness in-the-world, so actively that it acts over one’s own body. The body acts in-the-world given the intentionality that works outside of oneself. The image acts in a space-time structure and in an internal spaciality which is called the “space of representation.” The different and complex functions that the image fulfils depend, in general, on the position that it takes in this spaciality.

CHAPTER VII: THE LIFE PROJECT

*This life, unique, limited, finite, mysterious,
I can fulfil it, waste it or abandon it.*

*To waste it,
What drug lets you waste your own life?
Oh passion, whirlwind love,
a dream of life or a life of dreams,
maybe you can lull the infinite instant?
Oh power, absolute dominion over mankind and things,
divine power over the divine,
maybe you can turn the infinite instant into a pleasant dream?
All women are yours.
All men are yours.
All things are yours.
Love, power, passion, money.
Passion, sex, power, money.*

*To abandon it,
The pawns advance over the black and white squares of the existential game.
The knight's horse snorting and steaming through its nostrils, standing in front of me, resolute and neighing.
The bishops, treacherous, astute, blocking my path impeding all escape.
The queen, the laughing queen, strong and proud, humiliating me, showing me how much I need her.
I see no way out. There is no way out, a couple more moves and it's check mate.
Check mate, I'm killing, I'm killing myself, I killed myself.
There is no way out, no escape, or way out, no dream, or dreamlessness,
no hope, or hopelessness, no desire, or desirelessness,
no nothing, or nothingness.
There is no way out and the King falls on the chess board of existence.
He falls slowly.
He falls eternally.
I observe the faces of the King falling in eternal eternity.*

*To fulfil it,
Life that has been given to me
for a time that I know not,
with an objective that I search for with longing.
What do I want to do with it?
Waste it, abandon it or fulfil it?
I would like the humble freedom that is experienced when I am supported,
when you leave behind in this world more than what he gave you.
Perhaps my soul is dry.
Perhaps it contains a drop of dew.
A drop of dew, on the edge of a green leaf,
green leaf with veins of wisdom protruding,
that in some dawn will inspire a poet.*

1.-What to Do with Our Life?

We ask ourselves this question in a very special moment; a moment of rapid change. Human relationships are changing. Countries are changing. The means of production, the family and institutions in general are in crisis due to this change. Technology increasingly modifies distances, communications and lifestyles. Change that cannot be held back, on the contrary, it will continue accelerating until the human being passes to a new stage.

My beliefs become strongly affected, suffering constant disillusionment, and are replaced by others, that also rapidly fall to the floor.

Every era has its answer for the human being. Every era has an answer to the question of “what to do with our life.” The era, the historical moment, proposes an answer. There have been eras that proposed a devotional life, in others a social cause and in others work is suggested as the meaning. Many proposals in different eras.

What is today’s proposal? What does this era tell you that you must do in order to achieve happiness?

What characterises the current moment is that everything is changing so rapidly that the proposals become exhausted within a short time of having been made. In ancient times it took a life time to exhaust a proposal; something like, recovering the Holy Land in the crusades for Christianity, or the accumulation of wealth or falling in love. It took a long time to carry them out.

Today in months or years the path of life that we follow rapidly shows us its existential value.

Today, the velocity of the changes makes it such that the projects we embark upon rapidly show their existential correlate of emptiness or meaning, of failure or plenty, in a very short time. Businesses go bust, debts prevent the accumulation of wealth, love disintegrates, social causes or utopias disappear from the horizon, everything with the speed of light and leaving us time and again facing our original question. What to do with our life?

It is through the body that human life manifests. The body is the instrument that human life has for expression in the world. Our body has some limitations and, the most important is the situation of finite time in which it finds itself. The body, fundamental constituent of human life, becomes ill, gets old and dies.

Now we add a natural condition to our initial question, which we have located in an historical context: this *task* has a finite time in which to be done. This time is given by the life cycle of the body that for some is shorter and for others is a little bit longer. But in all cases it has a limit, it has a timescale.

2.-The Experience of Meaning

What sensation do we have of our life?

This is a difficult question. The sensation of my life appears variable to me according to the moment in which I ask the question. The answer could be different after talking to a good friend than when I lost my job; different even when I'm active than when I'm tired.

But let's try. Do I experience that my life has meaning? Do I experience an internal force impelling me in a direction, although this direction may not be very clear? Do I experience inner faith that I'm heading somewhere?

How does my life feel? Perhaps a bit subdued, with a background that what I do or don't do doesn't matter?

Perhaps it is possible to observe in a broad and general way how the experience of my own life is. With meaning, like something that is growing and advancing, or without meaning, as if in the background nothing matters too much. With faith or rather with indifference.

Let's remember that the driving thread of this chapter is what to do with our life. And I believe that we will be in agreement that the answer that we will find, whatever it may be, will be recognisable through its meaning and the faith that we may experience in this task.

How do I know that the life project—the path that I have given to my life—has meaning?

I know it simply because when I do this project, the existential experience—what I experience in my life—is *meaningful*.

My life isn't interesting because someone tells me; "Oh! How interesting your life is." My life isn't interesting because I am obedient to the proposal of the era and achieve the successes that this era places as a synonym for happiness.

My life is interesting when I experience it as being interesting. My life has meaning when I experience it as meaningful.

A life project will be such if the experience of life, as the project develops, is meaningful, is plentiful, in agreement with myself.

3.-The False Projects

I believe that it is possible to build life projects from another starting point and of course, with other consequences. In reality this happens all the time. I am short and I want to be big, very big, so that everyone respects me, an Emperor for example. I conquer Europe and Russia and I crown myself Emperor. They are also possible projects. I want to be famous

so that my country recognises my vocation for service, so I launch myself to be an elected representative or President of the Republic.

I want to conquer all women and they will see what a man I am. Etcetera. Observe the starting point of these projects. It is a *for-me*. Even when disguised as a cause for others, their starting point and their truth is in a *for-me*.

It is easy to recognise these false projects because they are experienced with a lot of tension, internal violence and violence is projected. Other people are functional to this project, things that are useful or not useful for me. Other people are not the target of my contribution, but rather they become useful objects for my project.

I believe that we can also recognise actions carried out from these desires.

Observe the existential register they leave behind. Is this what you would like for your life?

Remember the small actions that we defined above and that left an experience of agreement and meaning. Here there are two different life experiences. Both are possible. Everyone chooses the direction of their life. Everyone will then experience their life according to their own choice. Everyone is responsible for what they choose to be the starting point and direction of their life project.

There is another type of action that does no harm but also contributes nothing. With them we could also formulate a life project. But if we want to search with good faith, I believe that we should start from these actions that have left us with an indubitable taste of joy, peace, agreement with ourselves and faith in life.

4.-Valid or Meaningful Actions¹³

When I talk about the experience of meaning, I'm talking about an experience that I am sure that we have all had more than once in our lives.

I'm not talking about a revelation or mystical experiences. The need for meaning is so important that many people look for this meaning to be delivered through an entity that

¹³ In "The Inner Look" (Humanize the Earth, Silo, Collected Works, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 2003, p18), Silo makes a proposal for action through the Principles: "Here are the aforementioned "Principles" that can help you in your search for internal unity:

1. *To go against the evolution of things is to go against yourself.*
2. *When you force something toward an end, you produce the contrary.*
3. *Do not oppose a great force. Retreat until it weakens, then advance with resolution.*
4. *Things are well when they move together, not in isolation.*
5. *If day and night, summer and winter are well with you, you have surpassed the contradictions.*
6. *If you pursue pleasure, you enchain yourself to suffering. But as long as you do not harm your health, enjoy without inhibition when the opportunity presents itself.*
7. *If you pursue an end, you enchain yourself. If everything you do is realised as though it were an end in itself, you liberate yourself.*
8. *You will make your conflicts disappear when you understand them in their ultimate root, not when you want to resolve them.*
9. *When you harm others you remain enchained, but if you do not harm anyone you can freely do whatever you want.*
10. *When you treat others as you want them to treat you, you liberate yourself.*
11. *It does not matter in which faction events have placed you. What matters is that you comprehend that you have not chosen any faction.*
12. *Contradictory or unifying actions accumulate within you. If you repeat your acts of internal unity, nothing can detain you.*

comes from the heavens or another planet, or through the dead coming back to life. I'm not referring to any of that.

We have all had meaningful experiences throughout life. There are actions that we have done which have left us with a clear taste of agreement with ourselves, of plenty, in which life does have meaning.

These actions are difficult to find, not because they are few, but because generally they are not as spectacular as many other things that we have done. We have had fun; we have been famous, earned money, conquered people or situations. We have done many spectacular things but in the search that I'm proposing they are not useful, because they have not left us with the existential taste of meaning that we are investigating.

Let's try to search for the small gesture that we did once, or the conversation in which you experienced that you were contributing to getting a friend out of a mess. Remember, perhaps in your family or with your companions, that small action that helped the other person to escape their anxiety and continue their life. Review, because for sure there are many. Maybe with your partner. There are many actions that we have done with others, helped others and we have forgotten them because we didn't value them. Please remember.

These small or big actions that we have done throughout our lives, these actions that have left us with the experience of agreement and of meaning; they are the most important that we have done and are the raw material upon which we will base ourselves when formulating a life project. Maybe it is not the most spectacular, but it is the most fundamental.

On studying these actions we will observe some characteristics: the first is that they are actions that are done with other people. The second characteristic is that they are experienced as a contribution that one does to another or to others. We are referring to something that comes from inside of me and that is given. This contribution helps the other person in the situation they are in.

Therefore, so that our life project may have meaning it will have to have the characteristic of being a contribution to others.

These types of actions, when done, start a chain of actions that continues in others. Something happens with this action that influences others and allows them, in turn, to do actions that have as a reference what was done for them. It's a chain that will continue even when I cease to exist. This action that contributes and improves the situation of life for others can be amplified, covering increasingly large human groups. In this sense, the life project can become not only a contribution to others, but also an historical and social contribution.

5.-To Reveal your Life Project

The life project—what I’m going to do with my life—is not something separate from my biography. It is possible to recognise it and recover it from the history of my life. There is a look, a reading of life that can reveal its project to us.

If we would like to go deeper in this we could carry out a rapid biographical revision, from which we recover the valid and meaningful actions from childhood until today. Actions done for others that have contributed to them and that have left an experience of agreement with myself and inner peace in me.

With this raw material, we could then continue to study the common theme of these actions and the situation in which those to whom these actions were directed were found in. Finally to discover within them my own attributes or virtues that helped me to do these actions.

The development of this “theme” directed towards this “type of situation” of people and strengthening “these virtues” are the elements that will constitute my life project.

So today, every external proposal as the answer to our life has the sign of the era, that is, rapid change and crisis. We shape a life project in the world through the body and this has a finite timescale, therefore what I do with my life has a finite time in which to be done. My life project will be such if the experience of life as it develops is meaningful, is plentiful and in agreement with myself. And to achieve this, the project must have the characteristic of being a contribution that I make to other people. It is possible to discover this project from our own biography, reviewing the actions that provoke the experience of meaning in me, comprehending the theme to which my actions were referred, the situation of the people to whom they were directed and studying my own virtues that facilitated its realisation. This life project can be transformed into an historical and social contribution.

CHAPTER VIII: SOCIETY IN SEARCH OF MEANING

1.-The Personal and The Social

One of the reasons that motivated me to write these pages for you is the awareness that I shared my “personal problems” with everyone I knew. And I know a lot of people in many parts of the world.

How is it possible that something that is registered so personally and with suffering is shared by so many?

Is it really so personal what we call “personal problems?”

It seems suspicious to consider the problems that are experienced by the entirety of human beings on Earth as personal problems.

Society is presented to us as part of nature. I mean, it is presented to us in the same way as the moon, the stars and the trees are presented to us. We are born into a society in which there are already laws, the State, armies, schemes of production and religious organisations, and it seems that this is “objective reality.” The moon orbits the earth and society is organised in States.

Society does not seem to us to be a human construction. When we buy a technological instrument we are sure that in a few months it will be obsolete, a ten-times more superior model will be built. Society, on the other hand, does not seem susceptible to transformation by the human being.

Societies transform “themselves,” we say. But the word “themselves” does not make explicit who does the transforming. It doesn’t explain if we are referring to a mechanism of society, or divine laws, natural laws, or, whatever.

Society is a human construction and therefore historical. This social system is full of contradictions and is itself a generator of violence and suffering. It is a system built by human beings and susceptible to modification by human beings.

When we study personal resentment and failure, we clash with the values of the social system we live in. We clash with them and we will have to accept or reject them. Acceptance will mean to accept nonmeaning.

In my search for happiness I will confront the poverty of the population, the growth of barbarity, the constant abuse of human rights and violence in all its forms, and I will discover that the world I live in is not the one I want to live in. I can look away from the situation that people suffer around me. I can say that it is natural, that that’s the way things are, that others are responsible, that I tried and now I must look after “myself,” but I will

have to make an effort to hide from myself the pain that I experience. In this case, the pain produced by the perception of suffering in others.

If I accept the society in which I live and I adapt by playing by the rules of the game that are imposed on me, I will anaesthetise my feelings and over the years I will experience failure and nonmeaning.

2.-What to Do

So, you will have to resolve the dilemma of your action in the world.

You no longer have confidence in any idea or theory that is proclaimed as absolute truth. Nor is it sufficient to orientate yourself towards possessing wealth. You no longer listen to the advice of someone who recommends a way of acting that they themselves don't practice. Nor is seclusion for you. Maybe God is being born in you in a new way, but you don't want to be manipulated by any cult. It is possible that you search for a cause, but you don't want a cause that leads you to fanaticism.

Few beacons light the way to the door you want to reach and many leave you like a boat adrift.

There is a way of orientating your action in which you yourself can find the references that you need. If you think, feel and act in the same way and if you strive to give to others the same treatment that you would like to be given, your action will lead to the stamp of coherence. And if, in spite of your limitations to change all of society, you try to influence your most immediate environment so that it also goes in a unitive direction, you will feel that your influence is broadening and has a direction, has meaning.¹⁴

¹⁴ In the third letter of Letters to my Friends (Silo, Collected Works, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 2003, p463), in a synthesis about coherence, he says:

“Coherence does not begin and end in oneself, rather it is related to one’s social environment, to other people. Solidarity is an aspect of personal coherence. Proportion in one’s activities consists of establishing one’s priorities in life, of not letting them grow out of balance. Well-timed actions involve retreating when faced with a great force, and advancing with resolution when it weakens. When one is subject to contradiction, this idea is important in making a change of direction in one’s life. It is unwise to be unadapted to our environment, which leaves us without the capacity to change anything. It is equally unwise to follow a course of decreasing adaptation to an environment in which we limit ourselves to accepting the established conditions. Growing adaptation consists of increasing the influence we have in our environment as we advance in the direction of coherence.”

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

I will not listen to your social proposal if I do not observe coherence with the way in which you act in your personal life. And if I observe it, it seems to me that in this observation you have told me the most important thing.

And what I wish to see in you is the same that I'd like to see in me.

3.-Social Contradiction

Once upon a time they spoke of developed and sub-developed countries. The process of planetarisation has already surpassed this scheme and today we find ourselves with a section of marginalisation that, covering the planet, widens in the south and narrows towards the north.

Poverty and opulence are no longer characteristics of one region, but rather in every point of the planet, wealth is concentrated and poverty is expanding. No matter how much wealth exists, in this place a few will concentrate the money, many will suffer for their survival and too many will not achieve it.

Populations live controlled by, and dependent on, money. People can choose their life if they have money; choose their education, the place to be treated for illnesses, acquire things that they like, travel around the world, and to be secure in their old age. The availability of money widens the possibilities to choose life and is obtained through work and credit. Over the years, while in life we consume, we are paying for the credit to be able to acquire other things that allow us to continue choosing our destiny. To maintain work it is necessary that the country has money. Money is obtained through exports and credit. To get credit a stable country is required. For a country to be stable, it is necessary that salaries don't put investment in danger. Salaries must be adjusted and money for people must be diminished. People have no money and so cannot choose their life.

One assumes that one of the central values of any society is the life of its people. Therefore it is necessary to count on adequate war machinery to act as dissuasion—modern and efficient in its capacity to annihilate—to not be invaded by another neighbouring society whose central value is the life of their people. As a tribute to the absurd, we restrict investment in medical technology because free people are preferable to healthy people.

The danger of ecological disaster is only comparable to the nuclear danger of a couple of decades ago. Nevertheless, our Governments hand over our water, our soil, our sub-soil and our forests to large companies to be rapidly and efficiently exploited. The people, in exchange for this devastation, receive a salary.

Before people would tell me, “things are like that and you are free to pack your bags and go to a country you like more.” Today the scheme of social organisation is globalised and leaves no point of the Earth that is not homogenised. Where will they send me? Perhaps to

a nearby galaxy in which a different social experiment can be made, until the earthlings invade it with their “natural truths” and everything can start all over again.

Social change is possible because society is a construction throughout history. It is us who have created it and it will be us, through our own dignity, through our own search for happiness and meaning, who will find the path to leap over the trap that we have generated.

4.-Social Nonmeaning

It could be thought that there are not so many social contradictions, that they have been overcome, that they are on the way to being surpassed.

This way of thinking is what has submerged society in nonmeaning. We can avoid seeing the wars, the misery, the personal suicides or victims of drugs, the growing violence in daily life, technology at the service of death, fundamentalism imposing its beliefs and discrimination of all those who have insufficient money to buy their right to equality.

We can look away from the contradiction in which we live, but little by little we will be submerged in nonmeaning. To live will become routine. My aspirations will be extinguished and will be replaced by the boring proposals of TV advertising. There will be more and more people around us and we will be more alone. Today this experience is called “depression” and it is the personal consequence of social nonmeaning that is growing and expanding at the speed of an epidemic.

Contradiction is powerful and shows the mal-construction of social organisation. Just as happens with our personal contradictions, nonmeaning is advancing, anaesthetising people and robbing them of their destiny.

Until recently there was a meaning in society and it was the struggle to conquer “social wellbeing.” It was another era. The number of people was growing exponentially and production did not manage to satisfy the needs of everyone. It was a time in which Economics was defined as the science of distributing scarce resources between limitless needs. Soon the era changed, needs stopped being limitless and resources ceased to be scarce. Technological advance allowed the production of much more than we needed to live and this process continued to accelerate, soon we will even be able to clone vegetables and animals on a massive scale, something that will put at our disposal all the food and warm clothes that we will be capable of consuming. It is another world and to continue talking of the search for “wellbeing,” is one more sign that we don’t want to confront the social suffering we live in. The struggle to overcome hunger, illness, ignorance and accumulation, loses real meaning when societies are in technological conditions to overcome them. This is no longer a lack of resources; it is an erroneous social organisation. How will the current powers manage to explain that there are thousands of millions of people in the world who suffer for their basic needs, if we are capable of producing enough for everyone? They will not be able to. In recent years, in an effort to hide this disaster, the term “social wellbeing” has been replaced with “quality of life.” Although whose quality of life is not clarified, it is implied that they refer to the quality of “your” life, that is, worry about your life and not

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

about what's happening to others, with which the hiding of social suffering becomes apparent.

If you feel unadapted to this society, congratulations!

It seems good to me to feel unadapted to a society like this. But it happens that in your rebellion they explain to you that you have personal problems. As they are personal, and around you everything is working (Coca-Cola can be bought, the public vibrates with football, the people give their vote to the eternal hypocrites), you accept, without parameters and without comparisons, that they are personal problems. But no! The contradiction that you experience, in a society organised on the basis of violence, is not a personal problem.

5.-The Ideology of Nonmeaning

You will have noted that one of the characteristics of the era is the failure of ideologies that until recently orientated human action. Political parties that were the instruments of these ideologies to produce social changes turned into associations or businesses to acquire the power of the State. An ideology of nonmeaning penetrated them, without compassion, under the name of "realism" or "pragmatism."

When political parties became divorced from their original ideology, they also lost their meaning as tools of social transformation. In these circumstances, they fell easy prey to another ideology that took care of denying human subjectivity and insisting that their theories were not ideas, but rather objective reality, the absolute truth upon which the future of society is organised.

We are talking about an ideology of very few elemental ideas that has managed to occupy the social centre and to me, lead directly to dehumanisation and nonmeaning.

It says, more or less this:

"In human beings, their own particular interest predominates over the common good or that of those around them. Therefore, the social, political and economic system must consider the *selfish nature* of people. The market is the best regulator of the greed of particular interests. The greater the freedom the market has to decide over production and consumption, the more able the different interests will be able to compete and self-regulate, thereby contributing to improving the wellbeing and quality of life of the whole. Private ownership of the means of production is the only way to assure the development of the common good. The collapse of the Soviet Empire is a perfect demonstration of this affirmation. State property generates a bureaucracy that seeks to benefit itself at the cost of the work of society."

Some variations of this point of view attribute to the State the role of re-distributor of resources to dispossessed groups. The State, they think, by putting a break on the monopoly powers and redistributing the resources among the population, cushions their suffering

through their most basic needs, something that brings with it a growth in social peace and an increase in the inhabitants' capacity to consume. This, in turn, generates new competition conditions that allow the development of particular interests.

Something extraordinary in this ideology is its conception of freedom. For them human freedom has no possibility to manifest itself if there is no right to private property, and therefore, the fundamental human right is the right to property. Every time they can, they raise their threatening finger and accuse: "You, my friend, are falling into 'Statism'. You are putting the right to private property in danger, and if you attack property, you attack freedom." They consider that the greater the possibility to own something, the greater the personal freedom. The more property can be possessed, the greater the freedom. If you possess an enormous amount of property you would have enormous freedom. If you were to possess all the property in the world you would be absolutely free. If, on the other hand, my property were compromised, so would be my freedom.

From this system of truths, the pragmatists conclude that poverty is the responsibility of those with a lack of initiative to get ahead, that the uncontrollable increase in violence is due to the lack of authoritarianism, that the consumption of drugs is increasing because of an excess of production and that solidarity is a weak and paternalistic attitude that holds back competition and therefore detains progress.

The consequences are already there to be seen: economic power has been concentrated to such unimaginable levels that it now controls the free market and manages the economies of whole peoples and countries.

While pragmatism takes over societies, a futuristic and utopian ideology is timidly awakening that says:

The human being is sometimes selfish and sometimes shows solidarity. The human being is not determined by nature and it is necessary to find a social, political and economic system that motivates the development of solidarity, nonviolence, personal freedom and respect for the freedom of others. This search gives meaning to human action and will not cease while there are people who are suffering. A social organisation with these characteristics will tend towards the decentralisation of economic, political and media power. It will surpass the schemes of private or State ownership, opening the way to social ownership of the means of production. It will develop communication technology until it achieves the direct participation of every citizen in decision-making.

It considers that poverty is generated through the way society has been constructed and is defended by human intentions, and it is precisely in the concentration of economic or State power that the roots of violence are to be found.

The aspiration of this sensibility is to awaken a social movement that transcends parties and promotes social and personal transformation towards the Universal Human Nation.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

CHAPTER IX: TOWARDS A NEW TRUTH

1.-Change is Possible

Change is possible because we are living in a moment of social failure. Personal beliefs and those of the times can no longer be sustained and day by day show their inability to interpret the world and to justify our existence. It is only the recognition of failure that will allow a new truth to nestle in our hearts and impel us to organise a new world. This moment has arrived.

When we studied failure in the previous chapters, we discovered that through its recognition we were able to achieve a new look, a new perspective, and this led us to reconciliation and the possibility to elaborate a life project. It was also possible to look away, to hide ourselves from failure and this led us to resentment.

It is also possible that instead of recognising failure we choose resentment that in the case of societies takes the form of fascism, fundamentalism, fratricidal wars, fanaticism, totalitarianism and suicide.

This is the drama of human freedom. The choices that we make are not necessarily the appropriate ones. We can recognise failure and discover a new truth or affirm ourselves in *our reason* and annihilate human groups that are opposed to this reason.

In this point I have opted for an act of faith. The human being—we—will find the path that will liberate us from our own trap. We will recognise the failure of old beliefs that have accompanied us until now and we will elaborate new truths that we need in order to leap to a new stage.

I believe that we are close to recognising the failure of two great and ancient beliefs; the belief that the human being is part of nature and the belief that violence is the way to social transformation.

2.-The Failure of Human Nature

Oh! Human being, you seem not to be just one more element of this mechanical nature, without apparent meaning. Without you, human being, there is no meaning. You have transformed everything around you and you continue to do so, maybe completely alone in this immensity. What are you trying to do? Where are you going? I don't know if you know, but you are advancing with such strength, impetus and conviction that maybe you do know it.

Everything was evolving in a slow mechanical transformation between gases, water and temperature. Suddenly an infinitesimal probability and life appeared: organisms that could feed themselves, that grew and reproduced. Everything continued the same but now more beautiful than before. But when human

consciousness erupted on the face of the Earth, this consciousness started to humanise the world turning it into an instrument of its intention, vanquishing all laws of nature, turning itself into a history, building a society.

Already by the middle of the century, Ortega y Gasset had taught us about the “failure of reason”¹⁵. Physical and mathematical reason, which allowed so many advances in the technological field, had failed to help the human being in its liberation. There had been achievements in controlling it, subjecting it, but not in liberating it. Although here, fortunately, the successes were limited.

The simple observation, that all natural forces—the gravitational force, the electrical force, nuclear, etc—have not been capable in millions of years of producing transformations at the speed that human consciousness has done in its brief time, is hidden for this reason.

When I studied mathematics—exact science, pride of rationality—we built models of reality. A model consisted of a set of relationships and equations that allowed the simulation of the behaviour of a phenomenon. Through the model we formulated certain laws that allowed us to predict the behaviour of reality. I don’t remember once confusing the model we built with reality itself. This model helped us to explain reality, until along came some phenomenon that did not fit the previously formulated equations. From this moment, the “model” only had validity for a subset of this reality. It is usual to confuse a model that interprets a phenomenon with the phenomenon itself. But when natural

¹⁵ In his essay “History as a System,” Ortega y Gasset (History as a System and other essays towards a philosophy of History, W.W. Norton and Company, inc, New York, USA, 1962, p196, 200, 229) explains:

“Let us renounce valiantly, joyously, this convenient presumption that the real is logical and recognize that thought alone is logical...,”

“Physico-mathematical reason, whether in its crude form of naturalism or in its beatific form of spiritualism, was in no state to confront human problems. By its very constitution it could do no other than search for man’s nature. And, naturally, it did not find it. For many has no nature. Man is not his body, which is a thing, nor his soul, psyche, conscience, or spirit, which is also a thing. Man is no thing, but a drama—his life, a pure and universal happening which happens to each one of us and in which each one in his turn is nothing but happening.”

“So the loss of faith in God leaves man alone with his nature, with what he has. Of this nature the intellect forms a part, and man, obliged to have recourse to it, forges for himself his faith in physico-mathematical reason. Now, having lost his faith—in the manner here described—in that reason also, man finds himself compelled to take his stand on the only thing still left to him, his disillusioned life. And here we see why in our day we are beginning to discover the great reality of life as such, in which the intellect is no more than a simple function, and which possesses in consequence a more radical character of reality that all the worlds constructed by the intellect.”

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

phenomena are studied, and we have to deny or ignore certain results in order to maintain the model, it is so shocking that it ends up being relatively easy to detect and remember that the model was a model and not reality.

The tendency is to not recognise the falsehood of the model but rather to deny the phenomenon. This, sometimes, reaches absurd limits, in which this denial of the phenomenon is not done intentionally, but simply it is not perceived; it is not seen. As an aside, one of the great things about the “exact sciences” is the recognition of its inexactness. I point this out because one of the dramas of the social sciences is the confusion between model and reality.

Let’s observe that these “ideas of reality,” these intellectual constructions, help us to explain phenomena. But they do not only fulfil an interpretational task, as these ideas also act over nature and transform it. This transformation is produced without needing this “idea of reality,” this “model” to be perfect. In fact, it was not necessary to know Einstein’s theory of relativity in order to invent the electric lamp, and the technological revolution today is possible with models of the Universe that are still insufficient.

I believe that it becomes more or less clear when we study nature. Maybe we have some difficulty with the language I’m using but, in general you can understand that the consciousness of mankind constructs theories to explain nature, that these theories are only theories and not to be confused with reality. You can also understand that in the measure that time passes, we discover that these theories are false or incomplete because something happens to contradict them. Finally, these theories, as imperfect as they are, equip us with the tools to transform the natural world.

Something different happens when we study human existence. Here it seems to be completely forgotten that when we speak of the human being, we are speaking about ideas that we have about this reality; theories or beliefs that help us to explain this form of life; models that are valid only until something happens in reality that doesn’t fit.

If I explain the human phenomenon through the action of a God, or if I explain it through the action of a race, or through its capacity to produce objects, or through the good that it possesses, or through a certain morality, or through its instincts, or through its similarity to animals and if I observe that all of these models coexist at the same time, upheld by different groups of people and I discover that the advance of one model over another is done through violence and besides this, that those who uphold these models do not consider them as models but rather as realities..., I wonder if the time hasn’t come to accept that they are all false, or partial, or that only take into account a subset of human reality.

While we are unable to recognise this failure, we will impose our particular vision through violence and our social organisation will bear this sign.

Nature, as Aristotle explained, is what doesn’t change, what doesn’t vary in the movement of things. When considering the human being as part of nature, we are assuming that there

is something fixed in it, invariable, determined through mechanical laws. Nevertheless, all of history shows us that the human being is not nature.

Let's observe well what this concept encompasses.

Gravity, for example, is an enormous natural force that maintains the whole of the universe suspended and rotating. This occurred millions of years ago and will occur for many more. The gravitational force throughout time has not produced any transformation in the universe, except mechanical and slow transformations produced when some sun goes out in some part of the universe. This enormous force has not produced, in millions of years, the transformations that human consciousness has generated in a few thousand. There is no animal on the face of the Earth that remembers its predecessors and is capable of historical evolution, and not just genetic evolution. The human being, since emerging and domesticating fire, has done nothing but transgress the supposed natural order. They domesticated animals and plants, created instruments that prolonged their physical capabilities and could see the furthest star, fly faster than the wind, discover the emptiness in solid walls. They broadened their memory and their intelligence. They could know in an instant what was happening in any point of the Earth. They intervened in their bodies, prolonging life, modifying their brain chemistry, changing their organs and today they are starting to manipulate their genetic evolution. They could also produce sunlight and destroy with the force of the universe.

In human beings we observe an element that breaks the natural mechanism. In human beings we observe an *intentionality*¹⁶ towards the world that is not found in any other element of the known universe. This *intentionality* comes from human beings towards the world. This makes human beings to not be *one more thing* within nature. Only in human beings is there intentionality and therefore the laws that we have discovered in nature are not useful for comprehending mankind. It becomes absurd to impose a behaviour arguing obedience to a supposed natural order. When this happens, it is because there is an intention to dominate, demanding submission to certain social or divine laws, that in truth have been built by that intention.

Human beings are masters of their destiny. Human history is not a number of mechanical anecdotes, but rather the history of the intentionality of the consciousness, unfolding in the natural world and in the social world in order to humanise it. It is not only possible to study this intentionality in hindsight but it is possible to project it towards the future. That an intention exists prior to the appearance of the consciousness is not the issue at hand.

¹⁶ (Dictionary of New Humanism, Silo, Collected Works, Volume II)

*“The **intention** has been defined since Brentano as the fundamental characteristic of consciousness. Since the establishment and development of Husserl’s phenomenological method and the contribution of the existentialist currents of thought (existentialism), intentionality has emerged as what is substantive in all human phenomena.”*

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

Maybe. What we are saying is that starting from the appearance of consciousness; it is this consciousness that is responsible for its journey through this Earth.

This consciousness is not detained by any element that may determine it in space or time and it suffers because it recognises its spatial and temporal limitations.

It is not possible to study the human being and nature without realising that it is the consciousness that interprets the world. Everything I know, I know through the consciousness, and everything is susceptible to being transformed through the intention of my consciousness.

If I throw a stone from upon high, the stone falls. For the stone it is not possible to rise. It is not possible for it to transgress this law of nature. For consciousness, on the other hand, no natural law exists that cannot be transgressed. If some social law imposes a particular behaviour on me, I always observe that these same people who impose a law on me, transgress it. Therefore, although it may be prohibited for me to carry out an action, others are exempt from the prohibition. This shows me that what is inhibiting me is a social law and not a natural law. It is a law made by human beings with the power to impose their intentions over mine.

The consciousness is active, not only in its knowledge of nature and society, but also in its capacity to transform this nature and this society. It is active to transform it according to its intention.

When Silo proposed a definition of the human being, I was perplexed. He defined the human being as “The historical being whose mode of social action transforms its own nature¹⁷.” It’s not very often that I read a text, understand all the words, all of them being familiar,

¹⁷ J Valinsky in the Introduction to Letters to my Friends, (Silo, Letters to My Friends, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 1994) referring to the definition of the human being added:

*“Humanism therefore defines human beings as historical beings, whose mode of social action is capable of transforming both the world and their own nature. This point is of capital importance, for if it is accepted one cannot then affirm any natural law, natural property, natural institutions, or finally a future human being the same as that of today, as though the human being were complete now and forever. Today the age-old theme of the relationship between the human being and nature takes on renewed importance. On reconsidering it, we discover this great paradox in which human beings appear as without fixed character or nature, while at the same time we become aware of one constant in them: their historicity. This is why, stretching the terms a bit, we can say that **the nature of human beings is their history**, their social history. Each new human being who is born, then, is not simply equipped genetically to respond to the environment as though identical to the first representative of their species, but is rather an historical being whose personal*

comprehend all the grammar, everything being clear, and yet I understand absolutely nothing about what it's saying. As the years passed by I discovered that I could not understand it because I myself was of the belief that the human being was a "natural" being. I could have understood it and said that it was false. But no! When one is of a belief, it is impossible to see another reality.

The human being is the historical being. The human being is above all an inheritor, as Ortega y Gasset would have said a few years ago: "The great, and at the same time, most elemental discovery that the West will make in the coming years, when the binge of stupidity that gripped the 18th century is over, is that mankind is, above all, an *inheritor*." "We have inherited the efforts of the previous generations in the form of beliefs that are the capital upon which we are living."

To talk of an historical being is fantastic. Because, what is the substance of history? What is its matter or nature? It is not the aim of this work to discuss the substance of history. But in any case we are separated from the "natural" and it speaks to us of time, of life, of flow, of something that happened and that will happen: a being that is not the same today as it was yesterday. It is not the same in the 20th century or in the 2nd century, nor will it be so in the next. The historical is not "something that is," but rather "something that goes on being," something "that will be." The human being really is then a human "being" or a human that "will be" or a "being that humanises itself."

A being that has a mode of social action. A social being. Not only historical but also social. It is not only constituted in time but rather is constituted in relation to other human beings. Other human beings are a fundamental part of my humanity and they are also the characteristics of the society I live in, its values, its beliefs, its modes of production, its system of relationships.

A being whose mode of social action transforms its own nature. Not only historical, not only social. A being that will act in the world to transform itself. It will seek to modify the natural world, the social world and itself in order to overcome any condition that may produce pain or suffering.¹⁸

experience unfolds within an accumulating social landscape, within a human landscape.

¹⁸ In the *Historiographical Discussions of Contributions to Thought* (Silo, Collected Works, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 2003, p228). Silo goes in a direction of history and a direction or meaning of what is human: the overcoming of pain and suffering:

"What is it about the human constitution that necessitates this transformation of the world and itself? It is the situation of temporo-spatial finitude and deficiency in which it finds itself. This situation is registered, according to the distinct conditioning factors, as pain (physical) and suffering (mental). Thus, the surpassing of pain is not simply an animal response but a temporal configuration in which the future predominates. Hence, it is a fundamental life impulse, even when life does not find

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

Here are the axes of what is human: historicity, society, self-transformation.

It seems to me that we are very far from an evolving animal. We are very far from a being determined by natural laws. From the rational animal of Aristotle, to the rational being of Descartes, to the social animal of Marx, to the being without essence that was built in the existence of Sartre, to the inheritor of Ortega y Gasset, and to the historical being whose mode of social action transforms its own nature of Silo, we are entering the 21st century.¹⁹

itself in a desperate situation at any given moment. Suffering in the face of danger, re-presented as future possibilities, and present actualities in which pain is present in other human beings both trigger not only a natural, immediate, reflex response but also a deferred response, along with construction to avoid pain. The surpassing of pain appears, then, as a basic project that guides action. And it is that intention which has made possible communication among diverse bodies and intentions in what we call the 'social constitution'.

¹⁹ Salvatore Puledda, author of *On Being Human, Interpretations of Humanism from the Renaissance to the Present* (Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 1997, p156), in his talk about "The crisis of Traditional Humanism and Remarks on New Humanism" in the University of Rome (April 1996), tells us:

"In Marxist humanism, human beings are at once natural beings as understood in Feuerbach, while at the same time possessing a uniqueness that characterizes them as "human," that is, as fundamentally distinct from all other natural beings: this characteristic is human sociability, the capacity to form a society. For Marx, it is only in society that human beings, through their labour with others, can ensure the satisfaction of their natural needs (food, housing, clothing, reproduction, and so on), and in so doing transform nature, bringing it ever nearer to themselves, making it ever more human. However, human beings cease to be human for Marx when their natural sociability is denied or negated, as occurs in capitalist society, in which their work as a social fact is appropriated by a minority.

In Christian or theocentric humanism, as developed by Jacques Maritain, the principal exponent of this ideology which emerged in the early part of this century, the human being is conceived and defined fundamentally in terms of its limitations with respect to God – persons are human because they are the children of God, because they are immersed in the Christian story of Salvation.

In existentialist humanism, as formulated by Sartre in 1946, human beings have no fixed essence but are fundamentally existence launched toward the world, which they construct through choice. The central characteristic of being human is the freedom to choose and to choose how to be, to form projects and to form oneself. One ceases to be human upon rejecting this freedom and adopting the behaviour that Sartre calls

The belief that the human being is one more element of nature, governed by nature's laws, has left the field open to objectification (for the human being to be considered as an object within the world of things) and therefore to dehumanisation. To dehumanise a human being is to deny history, to isolate it from its society or to deny its capacity for change; to submerge it in the world of nature, permanence, and immutability; something that never changes.

Allow me an aside to help put in jeopardy our own belief about what is human. The cloning of human beings is impossible. We will be able to clone its genes, its brain circuitry, all of its physical aspects, but what makes a being human is nothing to do with this. This clone will be humanised through contact with its culture, with the other beings of society and in the responses that it will give in the social world to transform itself and to transform the conditions that lead it to suffer.

Returning to our theme, this book that you have in your hands is the product of many people who struggled, thought and discussed in their era, and all of that experience has been passed on until ending up in the words that you read here today. What you think about it is also the product of many people; those who taught you to read, and those who built the schools and libraries that have guarded the knowledge that is available to you today. The people who invented papyrus and then paper and then printing. All of history so that today, you and I, may be able to communicate. Many people around us have allowed this moment to happen.

Finally, I ask you, do you believe that you can change?

“bad faith,” dishonesty, that is: bowing to codified and accepted behaviours under the routine of given roles and social hierarchies.

*This situation was lucidly analyzed by Heidegger in the late 1940s in his famous “Letter on Humanism,” which was his response to questions from a French philosopher on how it would be possible to restore meaning to the word “humanism,” which by then had become subject to many diverse interpretations. Heidegger examines deeply and with great acuity the various traditional humanisms, finding in all of them a common, tacit assumption: **all modern and ancient humanisms agree, though without sufficiently specifying or investigating this point, that the human being conforms to Aristotle’s age-old definition: that man is the “rational animal.”** No one doubts the second part of the definition, animal, but the term rational takes on the variable character of intellect, soul, individuality, spirit, person, and so on according to each particular philosophy. Certainly, Heidegger says, in this manner one may assert various truths regarding the human being, but in all of them the human essence is conceived in the same narrow way: human essence is always thought of from its animalitas and not toward its humanitas, and the human being thus remains reduced to a natural phenomenon, no different than any other entity and, finally, to a thing, an object, forgetting that human beings are always the “who”s posing the question on the being of entities, posing the questions regarding their own essence.”*

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

Do you believe that you can become a fully human being and live in a just society? You are essentially change and nevertheless it is difficult for you to accept change. In you, there is also a belief operating that we are natural, fixed beings who are determined by genetic, cultural or social conditions.

You can change, you are going to change and you will find a meaning for your life.

3.-The Failure of Violence

I, the discriminated one, bear witness to the fact that present society is not a human society because it rejects and marginalises human beings. I, the discriminated one, suffer violence by the State, suffer violence of money and suffer violence of power over my person. I, the discriminated one, want the violence to which I am subjected made evident and I want to change the powers that conserve, maintain and justify this violence against the human being. Because, before being homosexual, indigenous, disabled, Jewish, Muslim, a servant, a woman, divorced, a sex worker, a single or poor mother, before any of this, much before, I am a human being.²⁰

Very close to the belief that the human being is nature is the belief that violence is inherent in human beings.

Violence is the consequence of considering the human being as a purely natural being, without its own intention. When I transform iron by submitting it to high pressures and temperatures to convert it into a horseshoe or a fork, which are instruments that I need, I don't say that I'm being violent to the iron. It is clear to me that to transform a natural element is not to exercise violence on it. If, on the other hand, I were to submit a human being to high pressures and temperatures in order to transform it into an instrument that I need, my appreciation of this activity would change substantially. I wouldn't do it unless, just like the iron, I considered it to be one more element of nature. So we are able to enslave the indigenous people of a place when we see them as natives or as part of nature. If I think that it is part of nature for some people to be poor, I will be able to exploit them, and I will be able to marginalise others who seem to me culturally inferior.

The construction of instruments to broaden our physical capacities is part of our evolution. So, we fly in planes, we are everywhere through television or we increase our strength with a hammer. If I consider that you are part of nature, it could be legitimate that I use you to achieve the objectives that I have in my life. Therefore if you don't like my objectives I

²⁰ The author, in a seminar about Non-Discrimination, Laura Rodriguez Foundation, Diego Portales University, Santiago, 1995:

Sometimes the fight against discrimination confuses us and leads us to fight to be accepted. But will it be interesting to be accepted by a violent and discriminatory society? Is what I am looking for, to be accepted or I am looking to live in a society where violence and discrimination have disappeared?

resort to violence so that your intention cannot be expressed so that I can use your abilities for my objectives.

The human being transforms nature, and on building a society, on socialising and considering other human beings as part of nature, it tries to use them and violence appears as a means of social relations. It is a semantic excess to speak of “violence against nature.” Nature does not have intention and therefore cannot be violated. With this expression they are trying to say that the action of mankind is perturbing the ecological balance to such a point that it is putting its own survival in danger. In other words, so-called “violence against nature” is, in terms of its final consequences, violence against the human being. Violence always refers to the manipulation of an intention and this is not a part of nature.

So, violence is the means to impede the expression of the *intention* of another human being. The objective of violence is not to destroy the body but rather to impede the advancement of the *intention*.

Generally, what we understand by “violence” is physical violence. In this the expression of the other is impeded, dominating their body by means of force. But there is also economic violence, in which I dominate the other person by restricting their access to material resources that allow them their subsistence. Psychological violence, on the other hand, impedes the expression of another person through the threat of the application of physical or economic violence.

We can apply these types of violence to individuals or to groups and so annul the expression of a race, a culture or a religion.

There exists the belief that violence is legitimate as self-defence²¹, as a way to act in front of a threat. If someone puts my life in danger, or that of my people or my property, or my liberty; in this case violence is an accepted response. We have delegated to the State the application of what we call “legitimate violence.” It is the State that possesses the right to apply violence when citizens feel threatened. In this way self-defence is only necessary in front of very limited situations, because the State apparatus has the tools to apply it when required. In the measure that social contradiction increases, the State perfects its apparatuses of repression in an endless spiral.

²¹ (Dictionary of New Humanism, Silo, Collected Works, Volume II)

Violence is not necessarily oriented toward any specific enemy (though such cases do occur), rather it is exercised to obtain certain concrete results, and therefore it is regarded as necessary and useful. Often, the one exercising violence believes he or she is acting in a just manner. This is the origin of the concept of distinguishing v. as ‘black’ (unjustified) or ‘white’ (justified). In the majority of cases it is viewed as an ethical category, as an evil, or a ‘lesser evil.’

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

If the State were controlled by the army, or by an economic group, or even by a political party, would the application of violence continue to be legitimate?

If I am the victim of discrimination, in other words, the State doesn't protect me because I don't belong to that army or to that economic group or to that political party, do I have the legitimate right to self-defence?

All power is sustained by its possibility to exercise violence over people. The State can apply physical violence, through the forces of law and order, economic violence through labour laws, tax laws and expropriation. Economic power, directly or through the State, applies violence defining the rules of the game that benefit a few and harm others. Armies are in conditions to do so when they feel threatened or when they decide to take control of the State. All of these cases are a sort of legal violence because they are protected by a judicial power. Then, there are delinquent organisations that sustain themselves through the use of illegal violence. There are also organisations that apply illegal violence but sheltered by the State, they are the mercenary paramilitary organisations.

Power and violence present themselves to us as a spiral structure in growth. In order to achieve social control violence is applied, but, on applying violence disorder increases, so power needs to grow and be concentrated in order to have a greater capacity to control. Power grows and increases its violence, but with that, greater disorder is generated, that in order to be controlled results in the need for power to be increased.

What sometimes seems to us to be a change of situation in a power, in reality is only a change in the methodology of violence that is applied. We pass from a dictatorship to a democracy for example, and it seems to us that a change of power has occurred. In reality what has happened is that the same power modifies the methodology of physical violence to another type of violence like economic or psychological. If this power becomes threatened, it will return to physical violence without any ethical or existential questioning.

A power is concentrated when it requires less and less people to dominate more and more human beings.

In general in revolutionary processes in which a change of power has been attempted, violence is legitimated in order to end the dominant power. Many times there has been success, but the consequence has been the generation of the same structure of *power and violence* which was being combated. The French Revolution derived from the dictatorship of Robespierre and the Napoleonic Empire, the Bolshevik Revolution lead to Stalin's dictatorship, just to quote a couple of examples.²² *Violence and power* are a structure in

²² (Dictionary of New Humanism, Silo, Collected Works, Volume II)

Violence is the simplest, most frequently employed, and most effective mode for maintaining power and supremacy, for imposing one's will on others, for usurping the power, property, and even the lives of others. According to Marx, violence is 'the

which both terms feed each other, grow and concentrate. The concentration of power leads to violence and the application of violence obliges us to concentrate power.

The only way to diminish violence is to de-concentrate power.

The only way to de-concentrate power is to modify it without violence.

Any power can value Machiavelli's famous phrase: "the end justifies the means" and this "end" is always its conservation and perpetuity. It is time to turn this anti-humanist phrase around and say: "it is the means that you employ which shows me what your ends are"²³.

When I fight against a power because of its monstrosity and its inhumanity and therefore use violent methods, where, radically, is the difference with the power that I want to combat? Because if what happens is that the monstrosities committed by group A, are now carried out by group B, then there has been no change in the power structure, it is only the people who occupied this power structure who have changed; the power has not changed. That is, this revolution has been a failure. It has been good for almost nothing.

When a power is supported by the passions of the masses, or collective madness exacerbates in order to justify its violence, this power has lost all legitimacy that was delegated to it in the previous moment and will have to be judged by these same people when they awaken from their passionate state.

We could think that what is required, are the appropriate people in charge of social power. The appropriate people would have self-control, or the ethical values that would allow them to make use of power for the benefit of others. In reality this is always how we think and so we choose different people to govern. However, we prove time and again that different people in the situation of power act in a similar way.

Here is another failure. We can look away from, and continue to choose, the same representatives, or we can decide to run the risk of a structural change of power.

midwife of history,' i.e., all of human history, even progress, is the result of violence – wars, appropriation of territory, conspiracies, murders, revolutions, etc. Marx claimed that all important problems of history have generally been resolved by force. Intelligence, reasoned discussion, or reforms have played a secondary role. In this sense, Marx is right; he is wrong, however, to the extent that he confers absolute priority on the role of violence, denying the advantages of evolution without violence. Neither is he correct when he justifies violence with some noble end (although he himself on many occasions expressed reservations about violence, saying that no good end can excuse the use of evil means to attain it). Advocates of violence of every persuasion justify it as a means to achieve "good" or "useful" ends and results. That focus is dangerous and mistaken, however, since it leads to apologies for violence and the rejection of nonviolent means.

²³ "The medium is the message," McLuhan would say towards the end of the 20th century.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

Refined economic violence may seem better to us than brutal physical violence, or power in the hands of one set of hands may seem better than in the hands of others, but these preferences change nothing at all in the basic situation which is that human beings are being controlled through inhuman methods.

While I am in a privileged situation within a power structure, it doesn't seem so monstrous to me and I don't see a great problem that it develops and concentrates. Sooner or later in this process, this power will turn against those same people who helped it into existence. When we discover that we helped create a monster which is now attempting to devour us, it is already too late. The monster has become strong and independent of those who created it.

Power and violence are a structure, in the same way that shape and colour are. No colour exists without a form, nor form without a colour. Violence as a way of social transformation does not change this structure. I may be able to experience rage or anger in a situation of injustice in which I live, but rage and anger don't change societies.

“Human society” will only be able to materialise through nonviolence. Nonviolence is a means of action that modifies the social world and the personal world, without violence, making personal freedom grow and respecting the liberty of others. Nonviolence does not dazzle the powerful: it makes a void to power. Nonviolence starts as an individual action and seeks for its influence to reach large groups. Nonviolence is efficient when the sought-for changes are truly wanted by human groups, and it considers as ridiculous the successes achieved by the imposition of a few on the social whole. Nonviolence is not expanding because violent actions exist in isolated individuals. Nonviolence comprehends that it is the direction of the process of changes which must carry the unquestionable sign of the future of the human being.

A humanist revolution that proposes the transformation of the political, legal and economic system cannot be separated from a proposal for personal change, for reconciliation, for coherence in thinking, feeling and acting in an individual or separated from a project that gives meaning to existence. A revolution that puts the human being at the centre will necessarily have to discover nonviolent means of struggle and will have to be wanted and built by common people.

CHAPTER X: SOCIAL CHANGE

1.-Where are we going?

The images of the 20th century race hurriedly through my mind:

The throng acclaims Mussolini, the Italian Fascist; Hitler is applauded by the German multitudes announcing the supremacy of the Aryan race on the planet; Franco overpowers the freedom of Spain; Petain in France collaborates with Hitler's troops; Stalin installs an atrocious dictatorship in the Soviet Union and Truman, President of the United States, destroys the whole of the population of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with recently discovered atomic energy.

It seems like a dream, as if this were all long ago in history, but they took place little more than 50 years ago. These scenes do not seem to be the story of the human being fighting for its freedom and its dignity. However, alongside these scenes, alongside these monsters a half-naked fakir, as Churchill called him was liberating India from the dominion of the British Empire. Gandhi, the great soul, moral reserve of an historical moment, inaugurated the nonviolent struggle as an instrument of action and revolution. Could it be that when what is human seems to be absolutely submerged, it is reborn in the most unexpected places with unusual strength? Could it be that even in the worst of dictatorships, in the blackest moments of history, there always exist people who are not of their times and rebuild lost dignity and freedom?

When the worst of totalitarianisms seems to take control of the situation, what is profoundly human struggles and searches for its way out and its future.

Even less time ago we built the atomic bomb, then the hydrogen bomb, then the neutron bomb, the nuclear arsenals multiplied and the human being lived under the threat of total destruction. When Ronald Regan, also President of the United States, decided to prepare for galactic nuclear war, the Russian leader, Mikhail Gorbachev took a surprising turn in history and started unilateral disarmament. Is this not another proof of how what is human intervenes in its history, affirming life, rejecting death, showing greatness and leaping over particular interests?

For a long time my generation was discussing whether the revolution had to be done with or without God, with or without violence, whether the determining factors were those of production or whether mankind was the only one responsible for its destiny. A long time, too much time discussing and denying one another the value and the generosity of our convictions. Too much time to discover that the truth is not absolute and that men and women are more important than any truth. In the meantime, technology made a qualitative leap; the world did too, military dictatorships indebted States, the International Monetary

Fund, the World Bank and local banks imposed a new social contract, asphyxiating the human being with external debt, business debt and personal debt.

Today, what other meaning could be possible for a nation, a people or an individual that is not that of paying financial debts!? What other freedom can be aspired too that is not freedom from owing anyone else a penny? Things today seem to be in this social and existential misery.

The number of people who need to consult a witch, review the tarot or study their horoscope in order to have some reference for what will occur in the different spheres of life grows by the day. A few years ago these practices were used to know if the wheel of love would improve or if unexpected money would fall into our hands. All of these practices were taken to be entertaining living room games with which to enjoy ourselves and pass time. Day by day, less and less in jest and more and more serious grows the need for horoscopes and charts to anticipate destiny.

Accelerated technological development, together with planetarisation, not only of the economy but also of life styles, accompanied by social disorder and growing regional conflicts, is producing a situation of instability in which one day we believe that everything is marvellous and the next day it seems to us that everything is on the verge of collapse. Any local problem makes us think of a global crisis and sometimes a mathematical economic indicator makes us feel that this world is heading towards complete happiness.

But where is this process of planetarisation going?

Planetarisation is going towards the “Planetary Civilisation”²⁴

²⁴ In the “Encounter of Humanist Culture” held in the Mapocho Cultural Centre, in Santiago in May 1994, Silo said:

As events unfold, it is highly probable that we will witness the consolidation of a global empire that will tend to homogenize the economy, law, communications, values, language, habits, and customs. This global empire, orchestrated by international financial capital, will not bother to take into consideration even the populations that inhabit the centres of decision-making. And in that concentration the social fabric will continue unravelling. Political and social organizations, the administration of the State, all will be under the management of technocrats in the service of a monstrous para-State that will tend to discipline the populations with increasingly restrictive measures as the decomposition intensifies. The capacity for abstract thought will be all but lost, as it continues to be replaced by the computational paradigm of analytical, sequential functioning. All notion of process and structure will be lost, giving way to simplistic studies along the lines of linguistics and formal analysis. Fashion, language, social styles, music, architecture, the plastic arts, literature—all will become destructured. And in every field this bewildering mixture of styles will be hailed as a great advance, just as has occurred

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

This assumption is not capricious if we review the dynamic of power from the Ottoman Empire, the World Wars, the division of the world into two big blocs until the present situation, in which only one power remains standing that is concentrating economic and military power at the same time. Only in the United States do both powers come together as Russia only has military power and Europe and Japan only have economic power.

at other moments of history with the eclecticism so characteristic of imperial decadence.

Then the ancient hope of bringing everything together in uniformity in the hands of a single power will vanish forever. This darkening of reason, this exhaustion of the peoples of the Earth, will leave the field wide open for fanaticism of every stripe, for the negation of life, for the cult of suicide, for unbridled fundamentalisms. No longer will there be science or great revolutions in thought. Everything will be reduced to technology, though it will then be called "science." There will be renewed virulence in parochialism, factionalism, and ethnic struggles, and the populations of those countries left behind by the developed nations will sweep over the centres of decision-making in a whirlwind in which the macro-cities, before so overcrowded, will become depopulated. Chronic civil wars will wrack our poor planet, on which people will no longer want to live. In short, this is a tale repeated in many civilizations that in their day believed in their own unending progress. And all of those cultures ended finally in decline and disintegration. But fortunately, when one fell, elsewhere in the world new human initiatives would arise, and in that alternation of falling and rising civilizations, the old would be surpassed by the new. It is clear, however, that in today's single, closed, worldwide system, there is no place "outside" in which another civilization might arise—leaving little possibility for anything other than a long and global Dark Ages.

If what is said in the letters regarding the foregoing turns out to be incorrect, then we have nothing to worry about. If, on the other hand, the mechanical process of historical structures is carrying us in the direction outlined above, then it's time we asked ourselves how human beings can change the current direction of events. And who will be able to produce this formidable change in direction if not the people themselves, who are precisely the subject of history? Have we reached a state of sufficient maturity to understand that from now on there will be no progress unless it is by all and for all? That is the second hypothesis explored in the letters.

(Silo Speaks, Silo, Collected Works, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 2003, p714)

From the analysis of Toynbee²⁵, the English historiologist of the 20th century, we know that in human history we can recognise 21 civilisations, and that all of them have followed a cycle of emergence, development, concentration of central power with an absolute character, social disorder and disintegration of central power and therefore, the disappearance of the civilisation.

If we accept that we are on the way to a new civilisation with a planetary character, we should also assume that we will see the steps that Toynbee observed in all civilisations.

In other words, a great world power will develop with a totalitarian and imperial character, while the social base becomes disorganised and chaotic, until the centrifugal forces of the social base end up undermining the central power, producing the disintegration of the planetary civilisation.

If we observe the present situation in light of this future possibility, I believe that it makes it easier to comprehend the growing importance and gravity that institutions have such as the

²⁵ I'm extracting a few paragraphs from "A Study of History" (Abridgement of Volumes I-VI, Oxford University Press, London, UK, 1946)

"Our researches have thus yielded us nineteen societies, most of them related as parent or offspring to one or more of the others: namely the Western, the Orthodox, the Iranian, the Arabic (these last two being now united in the Islamic), the Hindu, the Far Eastern, the Hellenic, the Syriac, the Indic, the Sinic, the Minoan, the Sumeric, the Hittite, the Babylonian, the Egyptian, the Andean, the Mexican, the Yucatec and the Mayan... Indeed it is probably desirable to divide the Orthodox Christian Society into an Orthodox-Byzantine and an Orthodox-Russian Society, and the Far Eastern into a Chinese and a Korean-Japanese Society. This would raise our numbers to twenty-one." (Introduction P34)

"If we accept this phenomenon of a universal state as a token of decline, we shall conclude that all the six non-Western civilizations alive to-day had broken down internally before they were broken in upon by the impact of the Western Civilization from outside."

"And what of our Western Civilization? It has manifestly not yet reached the stage of a universal state... and (is) preceded by what we have called a 'time of troubles'...our 'time of troubles' had undoubtedly descended upon us."

"We have already defined the nature of these breakdowns of civilizations. They are failures in an audacious attempt to ascend from the level of primitive humanity to the height of some superhuman kind of living."

"We have seen, in fact, that when in the history of any society, a creative minority degenerates into a dominant minority which attempts to retain by force a position that it has ceased to merit..." (Volume IV the Breakdowns of Civilizations, P245/6)

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

International Monetary Fund and the UN Peace Keeping forces that little by little take on a more interventionist role. The governments in Latin America, Africa and Asia are tending more to open dictatorship or ultra authoritarian democracy. It is increasingly frequent that any social disturbance or border conflict—fictitious or not—concludes in a sort of self-coup in which dictatorial behaviour is legitimised in this democracy. Social control through crude or sophisticated mechanisms of financial debt is becoming increasingly perceptible.

The economic games between Europe, Japan and the United States will have no effect at all on the development of imperial power of the latter, but they will be very useful to control China, which, at the time of writing, is not yet completely within the global “new order.”

The failure of the *free market* economic model is increasingly evident. I don't know even if this name will be remembered in the moment that this book reaches your hands. In any case the failure of the “free market” will not imply a global crisis and this model will be replaced by a “free-plan” model or another such syncretism of the end of the era.

It will be very interesting to observe the changes within the United States. Already today we hear voices that speak of the need for “strong leadership” in this country. The destiny of a strong leadership, is another one even stronger and here we will start to see the style of democracy that we know in Latin America, that is, similar to a dictatorship. It could be funny to see how bi-partisanship evolves towards the “free-mono-partisanship,” that sets in motion the “free-plan” economic model that will achieve “pax universal.” When this happens—if at all—the “common sense” of the era will have suffered a shock as strong as that suffered by any Russian who got up one morning in 1990 to realise that the Communist Party no longer existed.

The extraordinary thing of the era is not the mechanics of a civilisation. The truly extraordinary thing is that we are talking about the first planetary civilisation in history. For the first time we will live through the climax of one civilisation, without having another that is starting to develop. There is no other geographic space in this world where a replacement civilisation can develop. There is no place in which another may start its cycle while this one disintegrates.

This means that the new replacement civilisation will have to gestate, within the imperial giant that is starting to arise today.

It is a possible historical mechanism, that the “planetary civilisation” may take the path of a world empire as Toynbee illustrated. But it is also possible that, while this process is developing, human intentionality may work to open towards the future. It is also possible that an internal process may develop *in parallel* within the imperial colossus that is imperceptible to it and that may build a new look about the human being, awakening new beliefs, seeking a new meaning in life and discovering a new social project that allows millions of different and diverse human beings to converge towards the same ideal.

2.- Social Movement

A new age, the Universal Human Nation, a new type of social coordination saved from all concentration of power, the impossibility to exercise violence over the human being, the equality of rights due to the sole fact of being born, diversity and multiplicity without restriction, technology at the service of life, broadening time, overcoming the body, colonising galaxies. "Existence" becomes aware of itself and enjoys itself and in this enjoyment creates new worlds and new destinies. A new age, truly human.

How could a movement, marginalised from global powers, be introduced into the river of history and give birth to a social movement that can produce necessary changes and conditions for a new age?

It would not be possible unless this global power were to collapse.

In the present situation, the collapse of global power could arise from a global disaster, unless the progressive elements that are in similar conditions to change the structure of power-violence, and to orientate humanity towards the utopia described above, have been born, grown and developed within this civilisation itself.

If the destiny of planetarisation has to be the Planetary Civilisation and the destiny of global power, through its own mechanics, has to be collapse, the responsibility for humanists today is to give birth to the social movement that is in condition to orientate large human groups, towards the Universal Human Nation, in the precise moment in which the disintegration of global power manifests itself.

This humanist social movement, has to count on a utopian orientation (the Universal Human Nation), with a new look towards the human being (internal, historical and social) with an attitude of rebellion and struggle against discrimination and violence, with an international and multicultural organisation, with the capacity to resolve in parallel, and without being able to count on established power, local conflicts of the population and with a methodology of action (nonviolence) that is coherent with the sought-after utopia.²⁶

²⁶ (Dictionary of New Humanism, Silo, Collected Works, Volume II)

"Universalist Humanism also called New Humanism. It is characterized by an emphasis on the humanist attitude. The humanist attitude is not a philosophy but a point of view, a sensibility, a way of living in relationship with other human beings. Universalist humanism maintains that in all cultures, in their most creative period or moment, the humanist attitude pervades the social environment. In such periods, discrimination, wars, and violence in general are repudiated. Strong impulse is given to the freedom of ideas and beliefs, which in turn provides incentive for research and marked creativity in science, art, and other social expressions. Universalist humanism proposes a dialogue between cultures that is neither abstract nor institutional, but rather an agreement on fundamental points and a mutual and

3.- Social Change

Never before has the human being confronted such an enormous power as in the present moment. A great power is consolidating and overpowering the whole planet. A power that is appropriating the Earth, water, industry, energy, factories, air, space, hospitals, colleges, States, politicians and also what we think, feel, love, hate, do or leave aside, our time and our leisure. Everything is being appropriated not only in one country, but rather in every point of the globe.

But this great power will be confronted in turn with a great human being; a human being that has already conquered many times in history and which has grown and wants to fly high.

Do not believe that what is human has slept or rested or despaired. Think, rather, that it is retreating, following the millenary wisdom of the true warriors: "Do not oppose a great force, retreat until it weakens and then advance with resolution." If you look at it like this, you will see that the retreat is apparent, it is the social sea that's retreating and while it does so, it accumulates strength and in the appropriate moment returns in a surge, with an unusual energy that nothing in this world will be able to detain.

The social surge will come round again, of this there is no doubt. I believe and I am backing the human being. We have a task, a mission, a destiny: to build the social movement capable of driving the process towards the grandest of utopias... This is the challenge of men and women of this era. To vanquish the most powerful of powers will open the space for the Universal Human Nation.

concrete collaboration between representatives of different cultures based on their respective and symmetrical humanist "moments" or eras.

CHAPTER XI: THE MEANING OF LIFE

*There is a place very nearby
in which the human is connected.
My actions live in you
my life lives in you,
for life, death does not exist.
There is a place very nearby
in which everything is connected.*

*We search for true truths,
and we struggle
like Don Quixote
like computers
and we reach the end.*

*What happens to me, happens to you,
joy is much more joyful, than sadness is sad,
kindness is much more kind, than evil is evil,
sweetness is much more sweet, than bitterness is bitter.
What happens to you happens to me.*

*Life is endless,
it is not the path of the body,
intense original light,
comprehension of everything and the word Everything.
Instant of present infinity,
of splendorous white light,
in this joyful joy,
in this endless origin,
you are there.*

The one I searched for, the one I loved, the one I grieved for.

1.-The Problem of Existence²⁷

We have seen that the state of nonmeaning has the function of looking away from the consciousness, from contradiction and from suffering.

One of the great issues for human consciousness is the problem of its *finiteness*. In other words, we die, we come to an end, we terminate, disappear, nothingness.

But this problem doesn't present itself like this. No one thinks and no one believes in such finiteness. If there is something to look away from, it is that the consciousness dies. That is, perception dies, memory dies, what I recognise as "I" dies.

You may tell me that we all know that we are dying. It's true, we all know it, but we don't act as if we knew it, rather, we act as if we didn't know it.

You may tell me that there are believers. It's true, but violence as a means of social organisation and the suffering to which large groups are subjected, makes me doubt the profundity of those beliefs.

It seems to me that, believers or not, we live as if death were not going to happen. We look away from the finiteness and fall into a much more profound nonmeaning than the psychological experiences that we have been talking about.

The issue of death puts us in the presence of a sort of fundamental contradiction that provokes suffering, and to which we have responded by looking away. That is, faced with the pain caused by this contradiction, we have chosen to fall into nonmeaning. We have anaesthetised this pain and we live as if this fact won't occur.

We are in the presence of a profound contradiction, a profound nonmeaning and a profound resentment. We are in front of the denial of the most profound of failures.

Years ago a film was shown at the cinema titled "Doctor Frankenstein." This gentleman was trying, with a few gas machines and electricity (1930), to bring a dead body back to life. He always managed it, but he revived monsters; monsters that in their hideousness had a human characteristic that, sometimes, made them more human than the local residents. In the end it was necessary to destroy the monster-human in order to return to the natural and divine order.

²⁷ These words of Silo's from the *Internal Landscape* (Humanize the Earth, Silo, Collected Works, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 2003, p57) have accompanied my own rebellion in front of death:

*Until now, you and I have been companions in the struggle.
Neither you nor I wished to kneel before any god,
and that is how I would like to remember you always.
Why, then, do you abandon me even as I set forth to defy inexorable death?*

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

Human beings cannot breath below water and yet they breathed, they could not fly and they flew, they could not see small things and yet they saw them, they could not process too much information and yet they processed it, they could not manipulate their genes and yet they are doing. Will they be unable to do something interesting with this issue of finiteness?

As we said previously, we can be sure that any problem that we may have looked away from cannot be resolved. That we look at it and study it will not assure its solution, but to not touch it – this will assure that it continues the same.

In any case, we are confronting an existential problem; a problem that generates suffering and to which we respond with nonmeaning, with a Nonmeaning that in this case must be written with a capital N.

It's a problem that can be very important, one of those that all of a sudden becomes the greatest adventure that one can take on: to come out of Nonmeaning.

2.-The Death Problem

First Observation

In order to deal with this theme we find ourselves with the difficulty that that we haven't taken in the fact that we will die. We do not want to confront the fact that this phenomenon is going to occur irremediably. We will have to start by convincing ourselves that death will not happen to us.

We know that we will die. It is an intellectual knowledge, we know it with the head, but we don't experience it as truth. We think that there is a lot of time left, that it is normal, but I don't have this phenomenon present in my life. We believe it in the same way that we believe that in the future we will have a better job, or we will make a trip overseas or we will meet a person we may be able to love. All of this may or may not happen. We experience death in the same way: I will work, I will get married, I will die. Nevertheless, what is certain is that I will work or perhaps not, I will get married or perhaps not, and I will die with total security. The latter has no probability of error.

When a loved one is close to death, it usually happens that we despair and don't accept it. This desperation and this anxiety has a root and it is that, in the background, we can't tolerate the idea that what is happening to this loved one, will happen to us one day. This desperation goes far beyond the nostalgia that their departure will produce. We are confronted with the fundamental issue of our own life.

Second Observation

On death the body stops functioning. The movement of all its functions stops, feeding stops, not even the smallest cell is able to reproduce. Finally the body totally disintegrates, be it underground or in an incinerator.

This is what we see. But the doubt remains: is there no human function that is not attached to the body, *something* that does not depend on the body in order to exist?

Is the human being its body? Or is there something in it that can be independent of its material constitution.

Something that doesn't disintegrate upon disintegration of the body

Perception is a corporal phenomenon. If the visual organ suffers an injury, I stop seeing. On death, I won't be able to perceive the way I do now because these organs have been destroyed. The memory, the recollections and any brain operations are corporal. They require the brain in order to function.

We do not know human life separate from the body. But we can't say either that human life is bodily life. It is not legitimate to identify what is human with *the thing* that is the body. If someone lacks an arm or has an impediment, not because of this are they less human. When we transplant a kidney, heart or part of the brain, it's clear that we do not identify what is human with the body, as when I'm given another person's kidney, that's all I'm getting. The case of Stephen Hawking, one of the most famous physicists of the end of the century who can only slightly move his little finger, is well known. This imperceptible movement connected to complicated computer systems has allowed him to communicate and also to develop new scientific theories. All of this leads us to differentiate human existence from what we recognise as the body.

The body, from this look, becomes an *instrument* of human existence and not existence itself. In contemporary thought they talk about the body being *the instrument* or *prosthesis* of human *intention*. The characteristic of what is human is the intention, the going towards the world and for that we use the body²⁸.

²⁸ The following paragraph from Contributions to Thought (Silo, Collected Works, Latitude Press, San Diego, USA, 2003, p228) could seem a bit complicated, but even so we are approaching the comprehension of the body as the prosthesis of intention:

The world is experienced as external to the body, but the body is also seen as part of the world since it acts in the world and receives the action of the world. In this way, corporality is also a temporal configuration, a living history launched toward action, toward future possibility. The body becomes prosthesis of the intention, responding to placing-oneself-before-the-intention in both temporal and spatial senses—temporally, in the measure that the body can actualize in the future the possibility of intention, and spatially, insofar as representation and image of intention. The destiny of the body is the world, and insofar as it is part of the world its destiny is to transform itself. In this unfolding, objects are amplifications of

Third Observation

We don't know if intention can become independent of the body. We don't know if it can exist without the body, and if it can, in what form.

Here is where we no longer know, but where we believe things. At this point each one of us has our own particular beliefs. Some believe with more strength than others. This is what we understand by religiosity. We believe things about the *hereafter* and we believe with more or less strength. Some people believe one thing, some people believe another. There are even those who think that everything disintegrates leaving nothingness and nonmeaning. This is also a belief and a religiosity.

What do we believe?

What we believe is very important, not in the beyond but rather in the here and now. If I believe that I get on well with someone, I behave in a very different manner than if I think they hate me. What I believe orientates me to behave in a certain way. These things that we believe condition our behaviour in the present moment, they determine our conduct today.

What I believe will happen to me after my death orientates my actions today.

Fourth Observation

What is it that I remember of those people around me who have died?

Above all, I remember the actions that they did for other people. We usually retain the actions they did that benefited others, those that we recognise as kind; also those that harmed others. What this dead person did for others is what remains in us. Observe what we put on the scales at the end of human life. What is important to us at the end is what is done with us and with others. What we remember of those who have died is their actions at the service or at the harm of others. This is a key that can give orientation in our activity in the world.

3.-The Problem of Faith

The strongest suffering for every human being is the fear of death. The majority try to forget death as if it didn't exist. They go through life as if they'll be here forever. They live their lives escaping from finiteness, entertaining themselves in nonmeaning and being a prisoner of suffering.

corporal possibilities and the bodies of others appear as multiplications of those possibilities, insofar as they are governed by intentions recognized as similar to those that govern one's own body.

In the background we believe that everything ends with death. We have faith in death.

It worries me to make these generalisations, but if you have read to here it is because you have followed me from the chapter on failure and nonmeaning. When I say these things about faith, I do not doubt your particular religious belief. I'm referring rather to the way that our religiosity has taken; to a way of living faith.

You may have noticed that we don't always have the same faith. Sometimes we have more and sometimes less. Sometimes we experience indubitable certainties and sometimes doubtful certainties and on many occasions we live in doubt. There are different states of faith.

Fanaticism for example, is a way of faith. An illness of faith. When I have lived through fanatical moments, what I have found behind them is emptiness. The absolutism of my faith hid the absolute emptiness. Anyone who puts my faith in doubt, for example another belief, appears dangerous to me. The danger of revealing my own emptiness. Therefore the denial of others, violence and death remain justifiable elements that defend faith. They defend me from nothingness that is the inner truth of the fanatic.

There is another kind of faith that comes from this era and it is a sort of contradictory faith. I proclaim a certain belief system to the four winds, but I act in the opposite way to the path that this belief proposes to me.

Faith strengthens when I act coherently with my beliefs and weakens when I do not.

I believe that in the background of this era, we are going through a weakness of faith and it's as if a sort of reverse-faith were growing; an inverted faith, a faith in death.

Could there be something in the human being that may continue after the death of the body?

If there is meaning in human life, will it not be that this *something* of the human being is connected with what is human, beyond our diversity or our individuality?

If Life is always growing, couldn't death be an illusion of the body that really is just temporal? Does the Life in me, whose growth I experience when I walk towards the Meaning, whose plenty I experience in the expression of a human act, become exhausted as the body is exhausted, or is it liberated from this body to continue onwards?

My reason doesn't have an answer to these interrogations but my faith does. Why do I have to believe in death instead of believing in life, if both are beliefs and my logic is incapable of justifying one or the other?

Faith isn't a gift, or something that one is or isn't born with. It is not something that I obtain because some external entity gives it to me. Faith is a free act. It is the emotional correlate and an inner strength that accompanies my beliefs; beliefs that I chose freely and that are strengthened when I carry out my daily actions in coherence with those beliefs.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

Faith is not something natural to the human being, something that, with any luck, it is born with or lacks otherwise.

I can decide the answer that I will find at the end of my searches. I can impel my reason so that I may search tirelessly for the justification of these answers. I can strengthen this inner strength throughout my life. This inner strength, this faith, is strengthened when my daily actions are coherent with these beliefs.

4.-The Meaning of Life

Imagine for a moment that you have decided to go to the mountains; a high mountain that is very far away from where you are now. You don't know how much time you will take to reach there. You can hardly make out the summit and many times the clouds obscure it. Imagine that you start to walk slowly in this direction. The path is not simple so you advance in short steps. One day you discover that you can run, only that in order to run you need to take another path; a flatter path or even a descending path. When you descend the slope you can do it very rapidly. So you run, because this way you go rapidly. You run, you run, you run and one day you wonder why you haven't reached the mountain. You discover that you haven't arrived simply because you have taken the opposite path to where you wanted to go. You have gone very rapidly but in the opposite direction. You have lost your way, you have lost the direction of your life, and you have lost the meaning. So you ask another walker, hopefully with the look of a mountaineer, how to get to the mountain. They indicate a direction to you that is opposite to where you are going. So you become discouraged because the path is very long and tiring. "Look," they say to you, "every small step that you take in the direction of the mountain gets you to the summit and you will feel happy because although there is still a long way to go, you are taking the correct path, the one that brings you to your destiny. What is more important; a small step towards your destiny or a great leap nowhere?"

Suffering is an alarm that human beings have. It reminds them that they are wasting their life away and that their life needs Meaning. This is the meaning of nonmeaning: a symphony of anxiety, a poem of never-never, a desolate horizon, an eternal echo that repeats; "not this way, not this way, not this way."

As human beings we suffer and we wish to stop suffering. We want to be happy. We suffer for what happened to us, for what is happening to us or for what will happen to us when we don't want it to.

To overcome suffering, you, I and everyone need a Meaning in Life. The Meaning of life is the direction that my life takes. It is a path that we will travel while the body accompanies us. With every step we take, with every action that we do, we will experience a profound agreement with ourselves, we will know what to do and we will experience that living is

fully justified. If my life has little meaning or if it only has meaning on occasions, suffering will be waiting for me and I will be its prisoner time and time again.

The meaning of life can have different themes for every human being. ***But it only has one argument.*** There exists one, and only one, argument that gives meaning to life and it is to help others to overcome their suffering: to carry hope, future and possibility of meaning to those around me. I can be a scientist or a poet, an economist or a peasant, employed or out of work, mother, father or friend, the theme through which meaning is expressed does not matter. But the argument will always be to bring to others what I believe will help them to leap over their pain and suffering.

In the measure that my actions may take this direction, I will experience that my life grows in Meaning and faith in myself, the human being and, beyond that, what is human, will strengthen.

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

CHAPTER XII: FINAL SYNTHESIS

In this work I have tried to show the following:

Truth in itself does not exist. Perceptions and representations provoke an experience of reality that I attribute to an external fact. This structuring of truth starts with intention. Not knowing or forgetting one's own intention, in its interpreting function of the world, puts us in front of a naïve vision of reality, like it is imposed on the consciousness and not constructed by it.

There is no subjective or objective reality. The consciousness structures the world in different ways. We experience these ways as reality. On the basis of this structuring of reality there is a "belief system" that are the assumptions of the times, obvious truths of the times that are presented to us as if they were "real or objective."

The loss of meaning is caused by looking away from what produces suffering in me.

When a belief system is broken, which is the basis of what we call reality, we experience "failure". Failure is the sudden recognition that what we believed to be real was not so.

The key to understanding contradictory processes is the recognition of failure.

Suffering is the sign that the consciousness has built an erroneous psychological process. When this happens it is because the possibility to choose has been compromised and we are faced with what we experience as "contradiction." Decision-making in conflict situations becomes impossible.

Reconciliation is a process of recognition of our own failure. When we fail, that is, when what we were experiencing as reality vanishes, resentment appears. This is a structuring of situations in which specific people become responsible for my suffering. Put in another way, I consider others responsible for what I believed to be real not being so.

It is possible to reveal the project of my life. I know this when I develop a project and the experience of life is meaningful, plentiful and in agreement with myself. To achieve this, the project must have the characteristic of being a contribution that I make to other people.

To overcome suffering we need a Meaning in Life. One, and only one, argument exists that gives meaning to life and it is to help others to overcome their suffering: to bring hope, future and the possibility of meaning to those around me.

In my search for meaning I confront the suffering of society. When I look away from social contradiction and nonmeaning, I fall back into personal contradiction and nonmeaning.

In a moment of planetarisation we are approaching the failure of ancient and common beliefs in different cultures: the belief that the human being is part of human nature and the belief in violence as an efficient mode of human action. Recognition of the failure of these

The Meaning of Nonmeaning

beliefs leaves us on the threshold of discovering the new truths that humanity needs in order to leap to a new stage.

Bibliographical Notes