

**MANUAL OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT  
FOR MEMBERS OF THE  
HUMANIST MOVEMENT**

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Humanist Movement works for personal development as a function of social transformation.

It struggles for the humanization of the world as an internationalist and anti-discriminatory force based on solidarity and nonviolence as a methodology of action.

The doctrinaire aspects of the Movement's activities and projects are based on the vision of Universal Humanism and this vision is the basis for its development and for the personal training of its members.

This Manual includes a series of Study Themes and Modules recommended for all members of the Movement who feel the need to advance in personal growth and strength, simultaneously with the development of their projects of social transformation.

It is organised in two major sections: 20 study themes and 15 seminars and retreats of personal work.

The themes developed in both sections summarise the most relevant theoretical and practical aspects of Humanist doctrine.

These study themes, retreats and seminars of personal work have been conceived to be done in the Centres of Work of the Parks of Study and Reflection since these places, with their open spaces and Halls, inspire internal experience and rich interchange. When our Parks are not available nearby, a Centre of Work can be considered to be any place temporarily rented to do these works.

Finally, in every one of the works we give bibliographical references to which each person can refer in order to broaden and deepen the themes dealt with.

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## **STUDY THEMES**

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY THEMES

The Study Themes include 20 formative themes that summarise the most important aspects of the thought and doctrine of Universal Humanism.

They have been arranged into 4 subject areas:

1. Themes of Universal Humanism
2. Themes about overcoming suffering
3. Themes about nonviolence
4. Themes of humanist psychology

They have been prepared in order to serve as guides for days of study, reflection and interchange between members of the Humanist Movement and also as themes of support for the seminars and retreats that are done in the Centres of Study and Reflection and that are developed in the second section of this manual (Modules).

They are structured with the aim of facilitating the clarification and comprehension of the fundamental themes of Universal Humanism.

Deepening of the themes developed here can be done based on the bibliography at the end of every section.

The order in which these works are presented does not imply an order of importance, or an order to be followed. Every study group will see how to undertake them, paying attention to the needs of the members and each one's moment of process.

These themes can be studied individually or in teams. In any case, it is recommended that they are studied following the points of the material entitled "Point of View, Description, Summary and Synthesis" that is included in Appendix 1 of this manual.

# **I – THEMES OF UNIVERSAL HUMANISM**

## WHAT IS THE HUMANIST MOVEMENT TODAY?

Is it perhaps a refuge in the face of the general crisis of the system in which we live? Is it a sustained critique of a world that is becoming more dehumanized day by day? Is it a new language and a new paradigm, a new interpretation of the world and new landscape? Does it represent an ideological or political current, a new aesthetic, a new scale of values? Is it a new spirituality, destined to redeem subjectivity and diversity through concrete action? Is the Movement perhaps the expression of struggle in support of the dispossessed, the abandoned, and the persecuted? Or is it a manifestation of those who feel the monstrosity inherent in human beings not having the same rights and the same opportunities?

The Movement is all that and much more. It is the practical expression of the ideal of humanizing the earth and the aspiration of moving towards a universal human nation. It is the seed of a new culture in this civilization that is becoming planetary, and which will have to change its course, accepting and valuing diversity and giving to all human beings equal rights and identical opportunities, because of the dignity that they deserve by the simple fact of their having been born.

The Humanist Movement is the external manifestation of the profound changes that are taking place in the interior of the human being and that are history itself: tragic, disconcerting, but always growing. It is a small voice, which announces, ahead of its time, what is to come beyond the human being we have known. It is a poem and a rainbow of diverse colours. It is a David facing an insolent Goliath. It is the softness of water against the hardness of rock. It is the strength of the weak: a paradox and a Destiny.

My friends, even when we do not immediately achieve the results that we have hoped for, this seed exists already, and awaits the arrival of the times that are to come.

To all and from heart to heart, there is the fervent desire for this coming [approaching] social change and the hope for this silent transformation which, beyond all compulsion, beyond all impatience, beyond all violent aspiration, beyond all guilt and all feelings of failure, is already nesting in the intimate depths of many humanists.

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### **<sup>i</sup>Bibliography**

Message read by Silo (Founder of the Humanist Movement) in an international meeting held in the *Obras Sanitarias* sports stadium in Buenos Aires on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1998.



## **STATEMENT OF THE HUMANIST MOVEMENT**

Humanists are women and men of this century, of this time. They recognize the achievements of humanism throughout history, and find inspiration in the contributions of many cultures, not only those that today occupy centre stage. They are also men and women who recognize that this century and this millennium are drawing to a close, and their project is a new world. Humanists feel that their history is very long and that their future will be even longer. As optimists who believe in freedom and social progress, they fix their gaze on the future, while striving to overcome the general crisis of today. Humanists are internationalists, aspiring to a universal human nation. While understanding the world they live in as a single whole, humanists act in their immediate surroundings. Humanists seek not a uniform world but a world of multiplicity: diverse in ethnicity, languages and customs; diverse in local and regional autonomy; diverse in ideas and aspirations; diverse in beliefs, whether atheist or religious; diverse in occupations and in creativity.

Humanists do not want masters, they have no fondness for authority figures or bosses. Nor do they see themselves as representatives or bosses of anyone else. Humanists want neither a centralized State nor a Parastate in its place. Humanists want neither a police state nor armed gangs as the alternative.

But a wall has arisen between humanist aspirations and the realities of today's world. The time has come to tear down that wall. To do this, all humanists of the world must unite.

### **I. Global Capital**

This is the great universal truth: Money is everything. Money is government, money is law, money is power. Money is basically sustenance, but more than this it is art, it is philosophy, it is religion. Nothing is done without money, nothing is possible without money. There are no personal relationships without money, there is no intimacy without money. Even peaceful solitude depends on money.

But our relationship with this "universal truth" is contradictory. Most people do not like this state of affairs. And so we find ourselves subject to the tyranny of money—a tyranny that is not abstract, for it has a name, representatives, agents, and well-established procedures.

Today, we are no longer dealing with feudal economies, national industries, or even regional interests. Today, the question is how the surviving economic forms will accommodate to the new dictates of international finance capital. Nothing escapes, as capital worldwide continues to concentrate in ever fewer hands—until even the nation state depends for its survival on credit and loans. All must beg for investment and provide guarantees that give the banking system the ultimate say in decisions. The time is fast approaching when even companies themselves, when every rural area as well as every city, will all be the undisputed property of the banking system. The time of the parastate is coming, a time in which the old order will be swept away.

At the same time, the traditional bonds of solidarity that once joined people together are fast dissolving. We are witnessing the disintegration of the social fabric, and in its place find millions of isolated human beings living disconnected lives, indifferent to each other despite their common suffering. Big capital dominates not only our objectivity, through its control of the means of production, but also our subjectivity, through its control of the means of communication and information.

Under these conditions, those who control capital have the power and technology to do as they please with both our material and our human resources. They deplete irreplaceable natural resources and act with growing disregard for the human being. And just as they have drained everything from companies, industries, and whole governments, so have they deprived even science of its meaning—reducing it to technologies used to generate poverty, destruction, and unemployment.

Humanists do not overstate their case when they contend that the world is now technologically capable of swiftly resolving the problems in employment, food, health care, housing, and education that exist today across vast regions of the planet. If this possibility is not being realized, it is simply because it is prevented by the monstrous speculation of big capital.

By now big capital has exhausted the stage of market economies, and has begun to discipline society to accept the chaos it has itself produced. Yet in the presence of this growing irrationality, it is not the voices of reason that we hear raised in dialectical opposition. Rather, it is the darkest forms of racism, fundamentalism, and fanaticism that are on the rise. And if groups and whole regions are increasingly guided by this new irrationalism, then the space for constructive action by progressive forces will diminish day by day.

On the other hand, millions of working people have already come to recognize that the centralized state is as much a sham as capitalist democracy. And just as working people are standing up against corrupt union bosses, more than ever citizens are questioning their governments and political parties. But it is necessary to give a constructive orientation to these phenomena, which will otherwise stagnate and remain nothing more than spontaneous protests that lead nowhere. For something new to happen, a dialogue about the fundamental factors of our economy must begin in the heart of the community.

For humanists, labour and capital are the principal factors in economic production, while speculation and usury are extraneous. In the present economic circumstances, humanists struggle to totally transform the absurd relationship that has existed between these factors. Until now we have been told that capital receives the profits while workers receive wages, an inequity that has always been justified by the “risk” that capital assumes in investing—as though working people do not risk both their present and their future amid the uncertainties of unemployment and economic crisis.

Another factor in play is management and decision-making in the operation of each company. Earnings not set aside for reinvestment in the enterprise, not used for expansion or diversification, are increasingly diverted into financial speculation, as are profits not used to create new sources of work.

The struggle of working people must therefore be to require maximum productive return from capital. But this cannot happen unless management and directorships are cooperatively shared. How else will it be possible to avoid massive layoffs, business closures, and even the loss of entire industries? For the greatest harm comes from under-investment, fraudulent bankruptcies, forced acquisition of debt, and capital flight—not from profits realized through increased productivity. And if some persist in calling for workers to take possession of the means of production following nineteenth-century teachings, they will have to seriously consider the recent failures of real socialism.

As for the argument that treating capital the same way work is treated will only speed its flight to more advantageous areas, it must be pointed out that this cannot go on much longer because the irrationality of the present economic system is leading to saturation and crisis worldwide. Moreover, this argument, apart from embracing a radical immorality, ignores the historical process in which capital is steadily being transferred to the banking system. As a result, employers and business people are being reduced to the status of employees, stripped of decision-making power in a lengthening chain of command in which they maintain only the appearance of autonomy. And as the recession continues to deepen, these same business people will begin to consider these points more seriously.

Humanists feel the need to act not only on employment issues, but also politically to prevent the State from being solely an instrument of international capital, to ensure a just relationship among the factors of production, and to restore to society its stolen autonomy.

## **II. Real Democracy Versus Formal Democracy**

The edifice of democracy has fallen into ruin as its foundations—the separation of powers, representative government, and respect for minorities—have been eroded.

The theoretical separation of powers has become nonsense. Even a cursory examination of the practices surrounding the origin and composition of the different powers reveals the intimate relationships that link them to each other. And things could hardly be otherwise, for they all form part of one same system. In nation after nation we see one branch gaining supremacy over the others, functions being usurped, corruption and irregularities surfacing—all corresponding to the changing global economic and political situation of each country.

As for representative government, since the extension of universal suffrage people have believed that only a single act is involved when they elect their representative and their representative carries out the mandate received. But as time has passed, people have come to see clearly that there are in fact two acts: a first in which the many elect the few, and a second in which those few betray the many, representing interests foreign to the mandate they received. And this corruption is fed within the political parties, now reduced to little more than a handful of leaders who are totally out of touch with the needs of the people. Through the party machinery, powerful interests finance candidates and then dictate the policies they must follow. This state of affairs reveals a profound crisis in the contemporary conception and implementation of representative democracy.

Humanists struggle to transform the practice of representative government, giving the highest priority to consulting the people directly through referenda, plebiscites, and direct election of candidates. However, in many countries there are still laws that subordinate independent candidates to political parties, or rather to political manoeuvring and financial restrictions that prevent them from even reaching the ballot and the free expression of the will of the people.

Every constitution or law that prevents the full possibility of every citizen to elect and to be elected makes a mockery of real democracy, which is above all such legal restrictions. And in order for there to be true equality of opportunity, during elections the news media must be placed at the service of the people, providing all candidates with exactly the same opportunities to communicate with the people.

To address the problem that elected officials regularly fail to carry out their campaign promises, there is also a need to enact laws of political responsibility that will subject such officials to censure, revocation of powers, recall from office, and loss of immunity. The current alternative, under which parties or individuals who do not fulfill their campaign promises risk defeat in future elections, in practice does not hinder in the least the politicians' second act—betraying the people they represent.

As for directly consulting the people on the most urgent issues, every day the possibilities to do so increase through the use of technology. This does not mean simply giving greater importance to easily manipulated opinion polls and surveys. What it does mean is to facilitate real participation and direct voting by means of today's advanced computational and communications technologies.

In real democracy, all minorities must be provided with the protections that correspond to their right to representation, as well as all measures needed to advance in practice their full inclusion, participation, and development.

Today, minorities the world over who are the targets of xenophobia and discrimination make anguished pleas for recognition. It is the responsibility of humanists everywhere to bring this issue to the fore, leading the struggle to overcome such neo-fascism, whether overt or covert. In short, to struggle for the rights of minorities is to struggle for the rights of all human beings.

Under the coercion of centralized states—today no more than the unfeeling instruments of big capital—many countries with diverse populations subject entire provinces, regions, or autonomous groups to this same kind of discrimination. This must end through the adoption of federal forms of organization, through which real political power will return to the hands of these historical and cultural entities.

In sum, to give highest priority to the issues of capital and labour, real democracy, and decentralization of the apparatus of the State, is to set the political struggle on the path toward creating a new kind of society—a flexible society constantly changing in harmony with the changing needs of the people, who are now suffocated more each day by their dependence on an inhuman system.

### **III. The Humanist Position**

Humanist action does not draw its inspiration from imaginative theories about God, nature, society, or history. Rather, it begins with life's necessities, which consist most elementally of avoiding pain and moving toward pleasure. Yet human life entails the additional need to foresee future necessities, based on past experience and the intention to improve the present situation.

Human experience is not simply the product of natural physiological accumulation or selection, as happens in all species. It is social experience and personal experience directed toward overcoming pain in the present and avoiding it in the future. Human work, accumulated in the productions of society, is passed on and transformed from one generation to the next in a continuous struggle to improve the existing or natural conditions, even those of the human body itself. Human beings must therefore be defined as historical beings whose mode of social behaviour is capable of transforming both the world and their own nature.

Each time that individuals or human groups violently impose themselves on others, they succeed in detaining history, turning their victims into "natural" objects. Nature does not have intentions, and thus to negate the freedom and intentions of others is to convert them into natural objects without intentions, objects to be used.

Human progress in its slow ascent now needs to transform both nature and society, eliminating the violent animal appropriation of some human beings by others. When this happens, we will pass from pre-history into a fully human history. In the meantime, we can begin with no other central value than the human being, fully realized and completely free. Humanists therefore declare, "Nothing above the human being, and no human being beneath any other."

If God, the State, money, or any other entity is placed as the central value, this subordinates the human being and creates the condition for the subsequent control or sacrifice of other human beings. Humanists have this point very clear. Whether atheists or religious, humanists do not start with their atheism or their faith as the basis for their view of the world and their actions. They start with the human being and the immediate needs of human beings. And if, in their struggle for a better world, they believe they discover an intention that moves history in a progressive direction, they place this faith or this discovery at the service of the human being.

Humanists address the fundamental problem: to know if one wants to live, and to decide on the conditions in which to do so.

All forms of violence—physical, economic, racial, religious, sexual, ideological, and others—that have been used to block human progress are repugnant to humanists. For humanists, every form of discrimination, whether subtle or overt, is something to be denounced.

Humanists are not violent, but above all they are not cowards, and because their actions have meaning they are unafraid of facing violence. Humanists connect their personal lives with the life of society. They do not pose such false dichotomies as viewing their own lives as separate from the lives of those around them, and in this lies their coherence.

These issues, then, mark a clear dividing line between humanism and anti-humanism: humanism puts labour before big capital, real democracy before formal democracy, decentralization before centralization, anti-discrimination before discrimination, freedom before oppression, and meaning in life before resignation, complicity, and the absurd. Because humanism is based on freedom of choice, it offers the only valid ethic of the present time. And because humanism believes in intention and freedom, it distinguishes between error and bad faith, between one who is mistaken and one who is a traitor.

### **IV. From Naive Humanism to Conscious Humanism**

It is at the base of society, in the places where people work and where they live, that humanism must convert what are now only simple isolated protests into a conscious force oriented toward transforming the economic structures.

The struggles of spirited activists in labour unions and progressive political parties will become more coherent as they transform the leadership of these entities, giving their organizations a new

orientation that, above short-range grievances, gives the highest priority to the basic proposals advocated by humanism.

Vast numbers of students and teachers, already sensitive to injustice, are becoming conscious of their will to change as the general crisis touches them. And certainly, members of the press in contact with so much daily tragedy are today in favourable positions to act in a humanist direction, as are those intellectuals whose creations are at odds with the standards promoted by this inhuman system.

In the face of so much human suffering, many positions and organizations today encourage people to unselfishly help the dispossessed and those who suffer discrimination. Associations, volunteer groups, and large numbers of individuals are on occasion moved to make positive contributions. Without doubt, one of their contributions is to generate denunciations of these wrongs. However, such groups do not focus their actions on transforming the underlying structures that give rise to the problems. Their approaches are more closely related to humanitarianism than to conscious humanism, although among these efforts are many conscientious protests and actions that can be extended and deepened.

## **V. The Anti-Humanist Camp**

As the people continue to be suffocated by the forces of big capital, incoherent proposals arise that gain strength by exploiting people's discontent, focusing it on various scapegoats. At the root of all such neo-fascism is a profound negation of human values. Similarly, there are certain deviant environmental currents that view nature as more important than human beings. No longer do they preach that an environmental catastrophe is a disaster because it endangers humanity—instead to them the only problem is that human beings have damaged nature.

According to certain of these theories, the human being is somehow contaminated, and thus contaminates nature. It would have been better, they contend, had medicine never succeeded in its fight against disease or in prolonging human life. "Earth first!" some cry hysterically, recalling Nazi slogans. It is but a short step from this position to begin discriminating against cultures seen to contaminate or against "impure" foreigners. These currents of thought may be considered anti-humanist because at bottom they hold the human being in contempt, and in keeping with the nihilistic and suicidal tendencies so fashionable today, their mentors reflect this self-hatred.

There is, however, a significant segment of society made up of perceptive people who consider themselves environmentalists because they understand the gravity of the abuses that environmentalism exposes and condemns. And if this environmentalism attains the humanist character that corresponds, it will direct the struggle against those who are actually generating the catastrophes—big capital and its chain of destructive industries and businesses, so closely intertwined with the military-industrial complex.

Before worrying about seals, they will concern themselves with overcoming hunger, overcrowding, infant mortality, disease, and the lack of even minimal standards of housing and sanitation in many parts of the world. They will focus on the unemployment, exploitation, racism, discrimination, and intolerance in a world that is so technologically advanced, yet still generates serious environmental imbalances in the name of ever more irrational growth.

One need not look far to see how the right wing functions as a political instrument of anti-humanism. Dishonesty and bad faith reach such extremes that some exponents periodically present themselves as representatives of "humanism." Take, for example, those cunning clerics who claim to theorize on the basis of a ridiculous "theocentric humanism." These people, who invented religious wars and inquisitions, who put to death the very founders of western humanism, are now attempting to appropriate the virtues of their victims. They have recently gone so far as to "forgive the errors" of those historical humanists, and so shameless is their semantic banditry that these representatives of anti-humanism even try to cloak themselves with the term "humanist."

It would of course be impossible to list the full range of resources, tools, instruments, forms, and expressions that anti-humanism has at its disposal. But having shed light on some of their more deceptive practices should help unsuspecting humanists and those newly realizing they are humanists as they re-think their ideas and the significance of their social practice.

## **VI. Humanist Action Fronts**

With the intention of becoming a broad-based social movement, the vital force of humanism is organizing action fronts in the workplace, neighbourhoods, unions, and among social action, political, environmental, and cultural organizations. Such collective action makes it possible for varied progressive forces, groups, and individuals to have greater presence and influence, without losing their own identities or special characteristics. The objective of this movement is to promote a union of forces increasingly able to influence broad strata of the population, orienting the current social transformation.

Humanists are neither naive nor enamoured of declarations that belong to more romantic eras, and in this sense they do not view their proposals as the most advanced expression of social consciousness or think of their organization in an unquestioning way. Nor do they claim to represent the majority. Humanists simply act according to their best judgment, focusing on the changes they believe are most suitable and possible for these times in which they happen to live.

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### **<sup>ii</sup> Bibliography**

Silo, Complete Works, Volume 1, "Letters to my Friends", Sixth letter to my friends

## HISTORY AND FUNDAMENTAL POINTS OF UNIVERSAL HUMANISM

Today we will speak about a current of thought that proposes a transforming action, and which is beginning to be taken into account due to the profound changes underway in society. This current is Humanism. We will review very briefly its historical antecedents, its development and its present situation.

### **Difference between humanist current and humanist attitude**

We must first establish a difference between humanism as a current of thought and humanism as an attitude. The latter was already present in various cultures before the word humanism was coined in the West. The humanist attitude is common to different cultures in certain stages of their history and it is characterised by: 1. Placement of the human being as the central value; 2. Affirmation of the equality of all human beings; 3. Recognition of personal and cultural diversity; 4. A tendency to develop knowledge beyond that which is accepted as absolute truth; 5. Affirmation of freedom of ideas and beliefs and, 6. Rejection of violence.

This attitude is central to our New Universal Humanism, and it is the different cultures that show us how to love and practice this position in front of life. For those interested in the theme I refer you to the study of humanism in different cultures (Yearbook 1994 published by the World Centre for Humanist Studies, in particular to Professor Serguei Semenov's contribution on Pre-Colombian Humanism of Central and South America).

We should also make a perhaps puerile distinction between the humanities studied at universities or colleges and the personal attitude defined not by a professional commitment but by a position regarding the human being as a central concern. Those who define themselves as humanist do not do so with reference to their knowledge of the humanities and, conversely, students of those subjects would not consider themselves to be humanists purely on that account. We add this comment because some people have tried to link humanism to a particular type of knowledge or cultural level.

In the West, the word humanism is given two accepted meanings. Humanism is spoken of referring to any form of thinking that affirms the value and dignity of the human being. Within this meaning, humanism may be interpreted in the most diverse and contrasting ways. In a more restricted meaning, but locating it in a more precise historical perspective, the concept of Humanism is used to refer to the process of transformation that began towards the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th, and which under the name of the Renaissance, dominated Europe's intellectual life in the following century. Suffice to mention Erasmus, Giordano Bruno, Galileo, Nicolas de Cusa, Thomas More, and Juan Luis Vives to comprehend the diversity and scope of historical Humanism. Its influence lasted throughout the 17th century and a large part of the 18th, leading to the revolutions that opened the door to the Contemporary Era. This current appeared to dwindle progressively until the middle of this century, when discussions amongst thinkers concerned with political and social questions set it in motion once more.

The fundamental aspects of historical Humanism were, approximately, the following:

1. A reaction against medieval life. Here starts a strong recognition of other cultures, in particular the Greco-Roman in art, science and philosophy.

2. The proposal of a new image of the human being that extols its personality and transforming action.
3. A new attitude with respect to nature, accepting it as mankind's environment rather than an underworld full of temptation and punishment.
4. An interest in experimentation and research into the surrounding world, as a tendency to search for natural explanations without recourse to the supernatural.

These four aspects of historical Humanism converge towards a common objective: to allow confidence in human beings and their creativity to arise and to consider this world to be mankind's kingdom, a kingdom that can be dominated by means of scientific knowledge. This new perspective expresses the need to construe a new vision of the universe and history. In the same way, the new conceptualisations of this historical Humanism lead to the reappraisal of the religious question in its dogmatic and liturgical structures as well as in its organisational ones which, in fact, permeate medieval social structures. Humanism, as a correlate of the modifications in the economic and social forces of the times, represents an increasingly conscious revolutionary thinking that orientates itself more and more towards a questioning of the established order. But the Reformation in the German and Anglo-Saxon worlds and the Counter-reformation in the Latin one try to put a stop to these new ideas by proposing again in an authoritarian way a traditional Christian vision. The crisis moves from the Church to the structures of the State. Finally the Monarchy and Empire by Divine Right are eliminated by way of the revolutions that take place towards the end of the 18th century and the 19th.

However, after the French Revolution and the American wars of Independence, Humanism practically disappears, despite remaining in the background of social ideals and aspirations that inspire political, scientific and economic transformations. Humanism retreats in front of conceptions and practices that reign until the end of Colonialism, World War II and the polarisation of the planet into two fronts. In the midst of this situation, the old debate re-opens – the debate about the meaning of the human being and nature, the justification for political and economic structures, the orientation of science and technology and, in general, the direction of historical events.

After travelling this long road and in view of the latest discussions in the field of ideas, it is clear that humanism must redefine its position not only as a theoretical conceptualisation but also in its actions and social practice. For this, we will refer basically to its foundational Document.

The state of the humanist question should be presented today with reference to the conditions in which human beings live. Such conditions are not abstract. Therefore it is not legitimate to derive humanism from a theory about Nature or a theory about history, or a faith in God. The human condition is such that the immediate encounter with pain and the need to overcome it is unavoidable. Such condition, common to so many other species, finds in human beings the additional need to foresee in the future how to overcome pain and achieve pleasure. Its provision for the future is supported on past experience and the intention to improve its present situation. Its work, accumulated in social productions, is passed and transformed from generation to generation in a permanent struggle to overcome the natural and social conditions in which it lives. Because of this, Humanism defines human beings as historical beings with a mode of social action capable of transforming the world and their own nature. This point is of utmost importance because by accepting it, it will not be possible to later affirm the existence of natural law, or natural property or natural institutions or, finally, that human beings in the future shall be identical to those that exist today, as if the latter were already in their definitive form.



The ancient theme of human beings in relation to nature again becomes important. As we face it anew, we encounter this great paradox in which human beings appear without fixity, without a nature, while at the same time we observe in them one constant: their historicity. Stretching the point we may therefore say that the nature of human beings is their history; their social history. Therefore each human being that is born is not a first example, equipped genetically to respond to their environment, but rather a historical being that develops personal experience in a social landscape, in a human landscape.

We see that in this social world the common intention of overcoming pain is denied by the intention of other human beings. We are saying that some humans naturalise others by denying their intention: they transform them into objects to be used. In this way, the tragedy of being subjected to natural physical conditions impels social work and science towards new actions that overcome such conditions. But the tragedy of being subjected to social conditions of inequality and injustice impels human beings towards rebellion against such a situation in which we can see not the action of blind forces but rather the action of other human intentions. Those human intentions which discriminate against others lie within a field that is very different from that of natural tragedies in which there is no intention. Consequently every form of discrimination makes a monstrous effort to establish that differences between human beings are due to nature, whether physical or social, which carries out its interplay of forces without the intervention of intentions. Racial, sexual and economic differences are in this way justified by genetic or market laws, but in all cases distortion, falsehood and bad faith are at work.

The two basic ideas presented above: the human condition subjected to pain and the impulse to overcome it, and the definition of the human being as a social and historical being, are at the centre of the question for present day humanists. I have referred to these particular themes in my book "Contributions to Thought", in the essay "Historiological Discussions".

The foundational document of the Humanist Movement declares that what is necessary to pass from pre-history to a true human history is to eliminate the violent animal appropriation of some human beings by others. In the meantime it will not be possible to start from any other central value than human beings fulfilled in their achievements and their freedom. The proclamation: "Nothing above the human being and no human being below another", is a synthesis of all that. If God, the State, Money or any other entity is placed as the central value, human beings become subordinated thereby creating conditions for their future control or sacrifice. Humanists have this point clear. As Humanists we may be atheists or believers, but atheism or faith is not our starting point to give foundation to our vision of the world and our actions. We begin from human beings and their immediate needs.

As Humanists, we state our position. We do not believe that we have appeared from nowhere but rather we are the tributary of a long process and collective effort; we commit ourselves to the present moment and propose a long struggle towards the future. We support diversity in open opposition to the regimentation imposed until now and justified by explanations that diversity creates a dialect between the elements of a system in such a way that by showing respect for all particularities centrifugal and disintegrating forces are given free way. Humanists think the opposite and, at this precise moment, suppression of diversity leads to the explosion of rigid structures. Because of this we emphasise the need for a convergent direction and a convergent intention and we oppose the idea and practice of eliminating supposedly dialectic conditions in a given human group.

In the Document, we acknowledge the antecedents of historical Humanism and we are inspired by the contributions of different cultures, not only those that occupy at present the central place. We think about what is to come trying to overcome the present crisis. We are optimistic, we believe in freedom and in social progress.

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## REGARDING WHAT IS HUMAN

To have an understanding of the human phenomenon in general is one thing, while one's own register of the humanity of the other is something quite different.

### **The first question: understanding the human phenomenon in general.**

If one says that what is most characteristic of the human being is sociability, or language, or the transmission of experience, one still has not fully defined the human being, because we find all of these expressed in the animal world as well, if only in some elementary state of development. We can observe chemical recognition, and consequent attractions or rejections, in organisms of the hive, the school, or the pack. There are host, parasitic, and symbiotic forms of organization in which we can recognize elementary patterns of what we later see in more elaborate form in human groups. We also find a kind of animal "morality," with social punishment for transgressors, even when those behaviours, viewed from the outside, might be interpreted on the basis of the instinct of preservation of the species or as a complex of conditioned and unconditioned reflexes. Rudimentary technology is also not unknown in the animal world, nor are the emotions of affection, hostility, grief, and solidarity, whether among members of a group, or between groups, or between species.

Well then, what is it that defines what is human as such, if not the reflection of the socio-historical as personal memory? Every animal is always the first animal, while every human being is his or her historical and social environment, along with a reflection of, and a contribution to, the transformation or inertia of that environment. For an animal, the environment is the natural environment. For the human being, the environment is the historical and social environment, the transformation of that environment, and certainly the adaptation of nature to both immediate and longer-term needs. When compared to the systems of ideation, behaviour, and life of the animal world, the human being's deferred response to immediate stimuli—the meaning and direction of human labour with respect to a future that is planned (or imagined)—presents us with a new characteristic. The broadening of the temporal horizon of human consciousness allows it to delay responses to stimuli, locating such phenomena in a complex mental space configured for the placement of deliberations, comparisons, and conclusions that lie outside the field of immediate perception.

In other words, in the human being there is no human "nature" unless this "nature" is considered a capacity, distinct from that of other animals, to move through various times that are outside the horizon of perception. Putting this in yet another way, if there is something "natural" in the human being, it is not in the mineral, vegetable, or animal sense, but rather in the sense that what is natural in the human being is change, history, transformation.

It is difficult to adequately reconcile the idea of change with the idea of nature, and therefore we prefer not to use the word nature as it has been used in the past—this term that has been so often used to justify all sorts of treachery toward the human being. For example, simply because the original inhabitants of a particular place appeared different from their foreign conquerors, these inhabitants were called aboriginals or "natives." Because other races presented different morphologies or coloration, they were ascribed different "natures" within the human species, and so on. Thus, there was a "natural" order, and changing that order was a sin against all that was eternally established. Different races, different sexes, different social positions—all were fixed within a supposedly natural order that was to be conserved for all time.

The idea of "human nature" that had served an order of natural production broke down in the period of industrial transformation. Yet even today we still see vestiges of the zoological

ideology of human nature—in the field of psychology, for example, in which people still talk about certain natural faculties such as the “will” and similar things. Natural law, the State as part of a projected human nature, and other such notions have not contributed to progress, but only to historical inertia and the negation of transformation.

If copresence in human consciousness functions because of its enormous temporal broadening, and if the intentionality of human consciousness allows it to project a meaning, then what is most characteristic of the human being is being and making the meaning of the world. As this is said in *Humanize the Earth*:

Namer of a thousand names, maker of meanings, transformer of the world, your parents and the parents of your parents continue in you. You are not a fallen star but a brilliant arrow flying toward the heavens. You are the meaning of the world, and when you clarify your meaning you illuminate the earth. When you lose your meaning, the earth becomes darkened and the abyss opens.

I will tell you the meaning of your life here: It is to humanize the earth. And what does it mean to humanize the earth? It is to surpass pain and suffering; it is to learn without limits; it is to love the reality you build.

We stand, then, at a great distance from the idea of human nature—in fact, at its polar opposite. What I mean is that if an imposed, supposedly permanent order, a “nature,” has ended up suffocating that which is human, now we are saying the contrary: What is natural must be humanized, and this humanization of the world makes humankind a creator of meaning, direction, and transformation. And if that meaning liberates us from the supposedly “natural” conditions of pain and suffering, then what is truly human is what goes beyond the natural—it is your project, your future; it is your child; it is your dawn; it is your breeze and your storm; it is your anger and your caress; it is your fear and trembling for a future, for a new human being free from pain and suffering.

### **The second question: one’s own register of the Human in others.**

Insofar as one registers the presence of the other as “natural,” then the other will be no more than an object-like, or perhaps animal presence. Insofar as one is anesthetized against perceiving the temporal horizon of the other, the other will have no meaning beyond a for-me. The nature of the other person will be a for-me. But when I constitute the other person as a for-me, I constitute and alienate myself in my own for-myself. I say, “I am for-me,” and in saying that I close my horizon of transformation. People who make others into “things” make themselves into things, too, thereby closing off their own horizons.

Insofar as I do not experience the other except as a for-me, my vital activity will not humanize the world. The other must be an inner register for me, a warm sensation of an open future that does not end in the objectifying non-meaning of death.

To feel that which is human in the other is to feel the life of the other in a beautiful, multicoloured rainbow that moves farther and farther away the more I try to stop, to seize, to capture its expression. You grow farther away, and I take comfort if I have helped you to break your chains, to overcome your pain and suffering. And if you accompany me, it is because in a free act you constitute yourself as a human being, and not simply because you were born “human.” I sense in you the liberty and the possibility of your constituting yourself as a human being, and in you my acts find the liberty at which they aim. And so, not even your death can halt the actions you set in motion, because you are in essence time and liberty. What I love in the human being, then, is its growing humanization. And in these times of crisis, reification, and dehumanization, I love the possibility of the human being’s future vindication.

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## **THE HUMAN BEING: SOCIAL OPENING**

We do not initiate our conception of things with the affirmation of generalities, but rather in the study of the particulars of human life: what is particular to existence, what is particular to the personal register of thinking, feeling, and acting. This initial position means that the conception outlined here is incompatible with any system that starts from an idea, the material, the unconscious, the will, society, and so forth.

If someone accepts or rejects a given conception of things—however logical or eccentric it may be—it is always the person who is in play, accepting or rejecting this conception. The person does this, not society, or the unconscious, or matter.

Let us speak, then, of human life. When I observe myself, not from a physiological point of view but from an existential one, I find myself here, in a world that is given, neither made nor chosen by me. I find that I am in situation with, in relationship with phenomena that, beginning with my own body, are inescapable. My body is at once the fundamental constituent of my existence and, at the same time, a phenomenon homogenous with the natural world in which it acts and on which the world acts. But the nature of my body has important differences for me from other phenomena, to wit: (1) I have an immediate register of my body; (2) I have a register, mediated by my body, of external phenomena; and (3) some of my body's operations are accessible to my immediate intention.

### **The Human Being: Nature, Intention, and Opening**

It happens, however, that the world appears not simply as a conglomeration of natural objects, it appears as an articulation of other human beings and of objects, signs, and codes they have produced or modified. The intention that I am aware of in myself appears as a fundamental element for the interpretation of the behaviour of others, and just as I constitute the social world by comprehending intentions, so am I constituted by it.

Of course, I am speaking here of intentions that manifest in corporal action. It is through the corporal expressions of, or by perceiving the situation of the other, that I am able to comprehend the meanings of the other, the intention of the other. Moreover, natural or human objects appear as either pleasurable or painful to me, and so I modify my situation, trying to place myself in favourable relationship to them.

In this way, I am not closed to the world of the natural and other human beings, rather precisely what characterizes me is opening. My consciousness has been configured intersubjectively in that it uses codes of reasoning, emotional models, and schemes of action that I register as "mine," but that I also recognize in others. And, of course, my body is open to the world insofar as I both perceive and act over the world.

The natural world, as distinct from the human, appears to me as without intention. Of course, I can imagine that the stones, plants, and stars possess intention, but I find no way to hold an effective dialogue with them. Even those animals in which at times I glimpse the spark of intelligence appear as basically impenetrable to me and changing only slowly from within their own natures. I observe insect societies that are completely structured, higher mammals that employ rudimentary technology, but still only replicate such codes in a slow process of genetic change, as if they were always the first representatives of their respective species. And when I observe the benefits of those plants and animals that have been modified and domesticated by humanity, I see human intention opening its way and humanizing the world.

## **The Human Being: Social and Historical Opening**

To define human beings in terms of their sociability seems to be inadequate, because this does not distinguish them from many other species. Nor does capacity for work stand out as their most notable characteristic when compared to that of more powerful animals. Not even language defines them in their essence, for we know of numerous animals that use various codes and forms of communication.

All new human beings, in contrast, find themselves living in a world that is modified by others, and it is in their being constituted by this world of intentions that I discover their human capacity of accumulation within and incorporation to the temporal—that is, I discover not simply a social dimension but a socio-historical one.

Viewing things in this way, we can attempt a definition of the human being as follows: Human beings are historical beings whose mode of social action transforms their own nature. If I accept the above, I will also have to accept that such beings are capable of intentionally transforming their own physical constitutions. And this is just what is taking place.

This process began with the use of instruments by human beings which, placed before their bodies as external “prostheses,” allowed them to extend the reach of their hands and their senses and to increase both their capacity for work and its quality. Although not endowed by nature to function in either aerial or aquatic environments, they have nevertheless created means to move through these media and have even begun to leave their natural environment, the planet Earth. Today, moreover, they have begun to penetrate their bodies, replacing organs, intervening in their brain chemistry, carrying out fertilization in vitro, and even manipulating their own genes.

If by the word “nature” one is trying to indicate something permanent and unchanging, then today this idea has been rendered seriously inadequate, even when applied to what is most object-like about human beings, that is, to their bodies. And in light of this, regarding any “natural morality,” “natural law,” or “natural institutions,” it is clear that nothing in this field exists through nature, but on the contrary that everything is socio-historical.

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## THE TRANSFORMING ACTION OF THE HUMAN BEING

Along with the conception of a human nature is another prevalent conception that has asserted the passivity of the consciousness. This ideology has considered the human being to be an entity that functions primarily in response to stimuli from the natural world. What began as crude sensualism has gradually been displaced by historicist currents that, at their core, have preserved the same conception of a passive consciousness. And even when they have emphasized the consciousness's activity in and transformation of the world more than the interpretation of its activities, they have still conceived of its activity as resulting from conditions external to the consciousness.

Today, these old prejudices regarding human nature and the passivity of the consciousness are once again being asserted, this time transformed into neo-evolutionary theories embodying such views as natural selection, determined through the struggle for the survival of the fittest.

In the version currently in fashion, now transplanted into the human world, this sort of zoological conception attempts to go beyond earlier dialectics of race or class by asserting a dialectic in which it is supposed that all social activity regulates itself automatically according to "natural" economic laws. Thus, once again, the concrete human being is overwhelmed and objectified.

I have noted those conceptions that, to explain the human being, have begun from theoretical generalities and maintained the existence of an unchanging human nature and a passive consciousness. We maintain, quite the opposite, the need to start from human particularity, that the human being is a socio-historical and non-natural phenomenon, and that the human consciousness is active in transforming the world in accordance with its intention. We see human life as always taking place in situation, and the human body as an immediately perceived natural object, immediately subject as well to numerous dictates of each person's intention. The following questions therefore arise:

- How is it that the consciousness is active; that is, how is it that its intentions can act upon the body, and through the body transform the world?
- How is it that the human being is constituted as a socio-historical being?

These questions must be answered from particular existence so as not to fall again into theoretical generalities, from which a dubious system of interpretation might be derived.

To answer the first question, one must apprehend with immediate evidence how human intention acts over the body. To answer the second, one must begin from evidence of the temporality and intersubjectivity of the human being, rather than beginning from supposed general laws of history and society.

I will not go into greater detail here regarding these questions, as this would take us away from the broad themes of the present letter. For a more extensive treatment I refer you to two essays in the work *Contributions to Thought* that deal with the above questions. The first essay, "Psychology of the Image," studies the function that the image fulfills in the consciousness, highlighting its aptitude for moving the body through space. The second essay, "Historiological Discussions," studies the theme of historicity and sociability.

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## **II – THEMES ABOUT OVERCOMING SUFFERING**



## **THE THEMES OF SUFFERING**

### **Happiness and Suffering**

One of our objectives is to gain growing satisfaction with ourselves. This is possible only in the measure that we understand the factors that impede our growing happiness. Happiness is a state in which there is no suffering. Is it possible to progressively overcome suffering? Of course it is, even though the opposite appears to happen in everyday life: for many people, suffering only seems to increase as the years go by.

But what do we do in order to obtain growing happiness? We have to comprehend how suffering is produced, and then begin to act in ways different than those that create it.

At times we see suffering and how to go about avoiding it. But first of all, we should understand what we mean by the word "suffering". Many people believe that they do not suffer, but rather that they simply have problems -- problems with money, problems with sex, with their family, with other people, etc. They believe that they simply experience tension, anxiety, insecurity, fears, resentments, and all kinds of frustrations. Well, all of these problems together are what we call "suffering".

It is important to distinguish between pain and suffering. Pain is physical, and the progress of science and society has a lot to do with overcoming it. On the other hand, suffering is mental. Sometimes physical pain will induce mental suffering or mental suffering may in turn produce physical pain and illness. This distinction between pain and suffering is one of the first things we begin to understand through our work in the Community. Later on, we will learn to search for the true roots of suffering and will discover the need to change the behaviour that produces suffering.

### **The Three Pathways of Suffering**

There are two very important faculties that each of us as human being has memory and imagination. Without them, it would be impossible to carry out any of our activities in everyday life. When one of these faculties is diminished in capability or becomes altered in any way, our everyday activities become difficult.

Memory and imagination are essential for life. If, instead of helping us open our way through life, we find that they are enclosing us in suffering, we must take effective action to change this situation. If our memory continuously feeds us negative memories, this will prevent it from giving us the help we need. The same thing can happen with the imagination if it continuously feeds us fears, anxieties, and doubts about the future.

We can also consider our senses (which feed us the perceptions of the present instant), as another faculty that is decisive for life. Through our senses we are able to see, hear, touch, etc. In essence, they give us an account of what is happening around us. Some things that we experience through our senses we like; other things we do not. If we feel hungry, or we run into something, or we get too hot or too cold, we register pain through our senses. But in contrast with this kind of pain (which is directly physical), we also experience suffering that is mental. This is the kind of suffering we feel when we do not like what we see in the world around us, or it seems to us that things are not as they should be.

The memory, the imagination and the senses are the three pathways necessary for life. However, they may become enemies of life if they function in ways that make us suffer. We suffer through the memory when we remember past failures and frustrations, when we remember lost opportunities, things we have lost, or loved ones we have lost.

We suffer through the imagination when we think the future holds negative things, because this brings us fears - the fear of losing what we have, the fear of being lonely, of sickness, of old age, and of death. Our imagination makes us suffer when we think it will be impossible to achieve what we desire for ourselves or for other people. We suffer through our senses when we feel our present situation is not how it should be, or when we do not receive positive recognition from our family or from other people, or when we are discriminated against at work, when we encounter difficulties in the things that we are trying to do.

So, instead of talking about these three very important faculties (senses, imagination, memory), we must speak of the three pathways of suffering, because they are functioning badly. In addition, we must also recognize that these three pathways are interconnected, and when something goes wrong in one of them, this interferes with the other two pathways. There are connections and contacts between these pathways at many points. The experiences of the Humanist Movement work precisely on the three pathways of suffering, overcoming problems in them so that our lives may develop without difficulty.

### **Suffering through Memories**

Your memory produces sensations that are sometimes agreeable and at other times it produces suffering. Every person suffers because of people or things they have lost, and for things they have done that have turned out badly. So, they prefer not to go back and think about these memories. But, even if they don't wish to, many things in their present life make them remember disagreeable scenes from that past. So, they try to avoid any reminders of past problems in their present life, and this can make them limit their activities a great deal. Often, people do not realize that many present feelings or states of anguish, anxiety or fear have to do with the memory of past negative situations or disagreeable things. If people knew how to work on these past memories correctly, this would solve many problems. The idea in working on them is not simply to remember negative things continuously, because this would just create pessimism and negativity in one's life. Rather, what we are suggesting is to work on reconciling these negative memories in an appropriate way, like with the kind of work we do in some meetings of the Movement.

### **Suffering through the Imagination**

Imagination is necessary for life. Thanks to our imagination, we can plan ahead, make projects, and eventually change real life, by putting into practice the actions that come from our imagination. Our imagination is an enormous force, but the results of using it depend entirely on how it is directed. If our imagination is channelled toward negative actions, this will produce all kinds of maladjustments, generating suffering.

When a person fears losing something they have, or they are afraid they will not reach one of their goals, then they are suffering through their imagination. When a person sees the future as uncertain or disastrous, they are also suffering through their imagination. This kind of suffering can sometimes be converted into actual physical pain and illness. We should point out that many illnesses begin with only imaginary symptoms, but as time passes they become real. Negative imagination produces mental tension that reduces all of our capabilities.

This capacity of the imagination to lead us to act poorly in the world and to negatively influence our bodies can be modified. The guided experiences of the Community are based on this great faculty of the human being. In the weekly meetings, we work to separate the imagination from the suffering that has accompanied it until now.

### **The Meaning of Life**

If we are disoriented, or if we do not have a direction or a meaning in life, we become lost in these three pathways, and we do not know how to sweep the obstacles out of our path, because we do not even know where we are going. Certainly, discovering a meaning in life

is what will most help us to convert these three pathways of suffering into three pathways that are positive for our existence.

In the book “Humanise the Earth”, “The Internal Landscape” chapter VII, Silo states:

*“...If, perhaps, you imagine yourself to be a fleeting meteorite that has lost its brilliance upon falling to earth, you will accept that pain and suffering are simply the nature of things. But if you believe you have been thrown into this world to fulfill the mission of humanizing it, you will be thankful to those who have come before you, who have built with great labour the steps that allow you to continue the ascent.*

*Namer of a thousand names, maker of meanings, transformer of the world, your parents and the parents of your parents continue in you. You are not a fallen star but a brilliant arrow flying toward the heavens. You are the meaning of the world, and when you clarify your meaning you illuminate the earth. When you lose your meaning, the earth becomes darkened and the abyss opens.*

*I will tell you the meaning of your life here: It is to humanize the earth. And what does it mean to humanize the earth? It is to surpass pain and suffering; it is to learn without limits; it is to love the reality you build.*

*I cannot ask you to go further, but neither should it offend if I declare, “Love the reality you build, and not even death will halt your flight!”*

*You will not fulfill your mission if you do not apply your energies to vanquishing pain and suffering in those around you. And if through your action they in turn take up the task of humanizing the world, you will have opened their destiny toward a new life”.*

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## CHANGE AND CRISIS

(Based on Letter 3 from the book, "Letters to My Friends")

In this time of great change, individuals, institutions, and society all find themselves in crisis. And the pace of change—and the intensity of these individual, institutional, and social crises—will only continue to increase. This portends further upheaval, which broad sectors of society will perhaps be unable to assimilate.

Today's transformations are taking unexpected turns, resulting in widespread disorientation about the future and confusion about what to do in the present. In reality, it is not change itself that is so disturbing to us, because we can recognize many positive things in contemporary developments. What is troubling is not knowing in what direction these changes are heading, and therefore not knowing in what direction to orient our actions.

Everything around us—the economy, technology, society—is undergoing enormous transformations. But above all it is in our own lives that we experience these changes: in our workplaces, our families, our friendships, and not least in our ideas and what we believe about the world, other people, and ourselves. Amid the rush of events we find many things exciting, yet other things confuse or paralyze us. Our own behaviour and that of others all too often seems incoherent, contradictory, and as lacking in any clear direction as the events around us.

Since change is inevitable, it is of fundamental importance to guide it, and there is no other way than to begin with oneself. One must find in oneself a direction for this chaotic change, whose future course is unknown to us.

Individuals do not exist in isolation. Thus, if they truly give their lives direction, this will change their relationships with the people in their families, their workplaces, and everywhere they carry out their activities. Giving direction to one's life is not simply a psychological problem that can be resolved within the head of an isolated individual; on the contrary, it is resolved by changing—through coherent behaviour—the situation in which one lives with others.

When we become excited by our successes or depressed by our failures, when we make plans for the future or resolve to change our lives, we often forget the fundamental point: The situation in which we live involves relationships with others. We can neither explain what happens to us nor make any choice in our lives without also including certain people and concrete social ambits. Those people who are of special importance to us and the social environments in which we live place each of us in a particular situation, and it is from this situation that each of us thinks, feels, and acts. To deny this or to disregard it creates enormous difficulties both for us and for others. One's freedom to choose and to act is delimited by these circumstances. Any change one desires to make cannot be proposed in the abstract but only with reference to the actual situation in which one lives.

### Coherent Behaviour

If my thoughts, my feelings, and my actions are in agreement, if they all go in the same direction, if my actions do not create contradiction with what I feel, then I can say that my life has coherence. But though I am true to myself, this does not necessarily mean I am being true to those in my immediate environment. I still need to achieve this same coherence in my relationships with others, treating them the way I would like to be treated.

Of course there can also be a destructive type of coherence, which can be seen in those who are racists or fanatics or in those who are violent or exploit others. It is clear, however,

that their relationships with others are incoherent, because they treat others very differently from the way they desire to be treated themselves.

That unity of thought, feeling, and action, that unity between the treatment one asks from others and the treatment one gives to others—these are ideals that are not realized in everyday life. Here is the point: to adjust one's conduct in the direction of these personal and social proposals. These values, taken seriously, give life a direction that is independent of any difficulties one may face in realizing them. If we observe things well—not in static but in dynamic—we will understand this as a strategy that continues to gain ground as time passes. Here, one's intentions do matter (even though one's actions may at first not coincide with them), especially if these intentions are sustained, perfected, and extended. These images of what one wants to achieve are firm references that give direction in every situation.

What is being proposed here is not very complicated. We are not surprised, for example, when people dedicate their lives to pursuing great wealth, even when they lack any tangible reason to believe they will achieve it. This ideal spurs them on, despite the absence of relevant results. Why, then, is it so difficult to understand that these ideals of how to treat others and personal coherence can provide a clear direction for human conduct? And these ideals can give one direction despite the fact that these times are neither conducive to having the treatment one asks correspond to the treatment one gives nor to having one's thoughts, feelings, and actions be in agreement.

### **The Two Proposals: Coherence and Solidarity**

To have one's thoughts, feelings, and actions go in the same direction and to treat others as one wants to be treated—these two proposals are so simple they can be viewed as mere naiveté by people accustomed to the usual complications. Yet underlying this seeming simplicity lies a new scale of values in which coherence comes first, a new morality in which one's actions are not a matter of indifference, and a new aspiration that entails a consistent effort to give direction to human events. Behind this apparent simplicity one is either staking one's future on a meaning in life that will be truly evolutionary, both personally and for society, or one is following a path that leads toward disintegration.

As mistrust, isolation, and individualism increase, they erode the fabric of society, and we can no longer rely on old values to provide the cohesion among people that is so essential. The traditional solidarity found among members of a given class, or within associations, institutions, and groups is rapidly being replaced by a savage competition, from which not even the closest bonds of marriage or family escape.

As this process mechanically proceeds to dismantle social structures, a new solidarity cannot arise out of the ideas and conduct of a world that has already disappeared—it can come only from the concrete need that people have to give direction to their lives. And this new direction will entail changing the environment in which they live. This change in their environment, if it is to be true and profound, cannot be imposed from without, cannot be set in motion by external laws or any form of fanaticism. It can only come from the power of shared opinion and minimum collective action with the people who make up the social environment around them.

### **Reaching All of Society Starting with One's Immediate Environment**

We know that by changing our situation in positive ways we will be influencing our surroundings, and that others will share this point of view and form of action, giving rise to a growing system of human relationships.

So we must ask ourselves: Why should we go beyond the immediate environment where we begin? The answer is simple: To be coherent with the proposal of treating others in the same

way we want them to treat us. Why wouldn't we pass on to others something that has proven to be of fundamental importance in our own lives?

If our influence begins to expand, it means that our relationships and therefore the constituents of our environment have also developed. This is a factor we need to bear in mind right from the first, because even though our actions may begin in one small area, their influence can project very far. And there is nothing strange in thinking that others will decide to accompany us in this direction. After all, the great movements throughout history have followed this same course—logically, they began small, and then developed because people felt these movements interpreted their needs and concerns.

If we are coherent with these proposals we will act in our immediate environments, but with our vision placed on the progress of society as a whole. For what meaning is there in speaking of a global crisis that must be faced with resolution if society is only going to end up as isolated individuals for whom others have no importance?

Out of common need, then, those working together to give a new direction to their lives and to events will create environments for direct communication where they can discuss these themes. Later on, as awareness spreads through many means of communication, this surface of contact will grow. A similar process will occur as people create organizations and institutions compatible with this proposal.

### **The Social Environment in Which One Lives**

We have already seen that the impact of this swift and unpredictable change is experienced as crisis—the crisis with which individuals, institutions, and entire societies are now struggling. So, although it is indispensable to give direction to developments, how can one do this, subject as one is to the action of larger events? Clearly, one can direct only the most immediate and nearby aspects of one's life, and not the operation of institutions or society at large. Nor is it easy attempting to give direction to one's life, since no one lives in isolation; everyone lives in some situation, in some environment.

We may think of this environment as the universe, the Earth, our country, state, province, and so on. Each of us has, however, an immediate environment—the environment in which we carry out our daily activities. This is the environment of our family, our work, our friendships, and our other activities. We live in a situation of relationship with other people, and this is our particular world, which we cannot avoid, as it acts on us and we on it in a direct way. Any influence we have is on this immediate environment, and both the influence we exercise on it and the influence it exerts on us are in turn affected by more general situations—by the current disorientation and crisis.

### **Coherence as a Direction in Life**

If we want to give a new direction to events, we must begin with our own lives and include the immediate environment in which we carry out our activities. But the question remains: To what direction will we aspire? Without doubt to one that provides coherence and support in such a changeable and unpredictable environment.

To propose that one will think, feel, and act in the same direction is to propose coherence in life. Yet putting this into practice is not easy, because the situations in which we find ourselves are not entirely of our own choosing. We find ourselves doing the things we need to do, even though these things may not at all agree with what we think or what we feel. We find ourselves in situations over which we have no control. To act with coherence, then, is more an intention than a fact—it is a direction, which if kept before us guides our lives toward increasingly coherent conduct.

Clearly, it is only by exerting influence within one's own immediate environment that one will be able to change any aspect of the overall situation in which one lives. In so doing, one will

be giving a new direction to one's relationships with others, and they will be included in this new conduct.

Some may object that their employment or other factors cause them to frequently change their residence or other aspects of their lives. But this in no way affects the proposal, for every person is always in some situation, is always part of some environment. If we are striving for coherence, the treatment we afford others must be of the same type as the treatment we demand for ourselves, no matter where we are.

There are, then, in these two proposals the basic elements for giving direction to our lives to the extent of our strength and possibilities. Coherence advances as a person is increasingly able to think, feel, and act in the same direction. And we extend this coherence to others—because only in this way are we ourselves being coherent. And in extending this to others we begin to treat other people the way we would like to be treated. Coherence and solidarity are directions, they represent conduct to which we aspire.

### **Proportion in One's Actions as a Step Toward Coherence**

How can we advance in the direction of coherence? First, we need to maintain a certain proportion in the activities of our daily lives. We need to establish which among all the things we do are most important. For our lives to function well, we need to give the highest priority to what is of fundamental importance, less to secondary things, and so on. It could turn out that simply by taking care of two or three main priorities we will achieve a well-balanced situation.

We cannot allow our priorities to be turned upside down or to become so fragmented that our lives grow out of balance. To avoid having some activities move far ahead while others fall too far behind, we need to develop all of our activities as a connected whole and not as isolated actions. It is all too easy to become blinded by the importance of one activity and to allow this single priority to unbalance all of our other activities. And then, because our whole situation has been jeopardized, in the end we fail to accomplish what we had considered so important.

It is true that at times urgent matters arise that we need to deal with right away, but it should be clear that this in no way means we can go on indefinitely postponing the things necessary to maintain the overall situation in which we live. It is a significant step in the direction of coherence to establish our priorities, and then to carry out our activities in appropriate proportion.

### **Well-Timed Actions as a Step Toward Coherence**

There is a daily routine we follow that is set by schedules and timetables, our personal needs, and the workings of the environment in which we live. Yet within this framework there is a dynamic interplay and richness of events that go unappreciated by superficial people. There are some people who confuse their routines with their lives, but they are in no way the same, and quite often people must make choices among the routines or conditions imposed on them by their environment.

Certainly it is true that we live amid inconveniences and contradictions, but it is important not to confuse these things. Inconveniences are simply the annoyances and impediments that we all face. While they are not terribly serious, of course if they are numerous or repeated they can increase our irritation and fatigue. Without question we have the capacity to overcome them. They neither determine the direction of our lives nor stop us from carrying a project forward. They are simply obstacles along the way that range from the minor physical difficulty to larger problems that may nearly cause us to lose our way. While there are important differences in degree among inconveniences, they all lie within the range of things that do not stop us from going forward.

Something quite different happens with what are called contradictions. When we are unable to carry out our central project, when events propel us in a direction away from what we desire, when we find ourselves trapped in a vicious circle from which we cannot escape, when we do not have even minimal control over our lives, then we are ensnared by contradiction.

In the stream of life, contradiction is a sort of counter-current that carries us backward in hopeless retreat. This is incoherence in its crudest form. In a situation of contradiction, one's thoughts, feelings, and actions oppose each other. And though in spite of everything it is always possible to give direction to one's life, one has to know when to act.

In the routine of daily life we often lose sight of whether or not our actions are timely, and this occurs because so many of the things we do are codified or set by convention. But when it comes to major difficulties and contradictions, we must not make decisions that expose us to catastrophe.

In general terms, what we need to do is to retreat when faced with a great force, and then advance with resolution when this force has weakened. There is, however, a great difference between the timid, who retreat or become paralyzed when faced with any difficulty, and those who take action to surmount the difficulties, knowing that it is precisely by advancing that they will be able to get through the problems.

At times it may happen that it is not possible to go forward immediately because a problem arises that is beyond our strength, and to tackle it head on without due care could lead to disaster. This problem we are facing that is now so large is also, however, dynamic, and the relationship of forces will change, either because our influence grows or because the problem's influence weakens. Once the previous balance of forces has shifted in our favour, that is the moment to advance with resolution, for indecision or delay at that point will only allow further and perhaps unfavourable changes in the balance of forces. Well-timed action is the best tool to produce a change in the direction of one's life.

### **Growing Adaptation as an Advance toward Coherence**

Let us further consider the theme of direction in life—of the coherence we want to achieve. To propose a direction toward coherence raises the question: To which situations should we adapt?

To adapt to things that lead away from coherence would, of course, be highly incoherent, and opportunists suffer from a serious short-sightedness on precisely this point. They believe that the best way to live is simply to accept everything, to adapt to everything. They think that to accept everything, as long as it comes from those with power, is to be well-adapted. But it is clear that their lives of dependence are very far removed from what could be understood as coherence.

It is useful to distinguish three kinds of adaptation: being non adapted, which stops us from extending our influence; decreasing adaptation, in which we do not go beyond accepting the established conditions in our environment; and growing adaptation, through which we build our influence in the direction of the proposals outlined here.

To close, let us synthesize the themes of this letter:

1. Driven by the technological revolution, the world is undergoing rapid change, which is colliding with established structures and the formative experience and habits of life of both individuals and societies.
2. As change makes more factors in society become "out of phase," this generates growing crises in every field, and there is no reason to suppose this will diminish; on the contrary it will tend to intensify.



3. The unexpectedness of today's events clouds our ability to foresee the direction that these events, the people around us, and ultimately our own lives will take.
4. Many of the things we used to think and to believe in no longer work. Nor do we see adequate solutions forthcoming from any society, any institution, or any individual—all of whom suffer the same ills.
5. If one decides to stand up to these problems, one must give direction to one's life, striving for coherence among one's thoughts, feelings, and actions. And because we do not live in isolation, we must extend this coherence to our relationships with others, treating them as we want to be treated. While it is not possible to fulfill these two proposals rigorously, nonetheless they constitute the direction in which we need to advance, which we will be able to accomplish above all if we make these proposals permanent references, reflecting on them deeply.
6. We live in immediate relationship with others, and it is in this environment that we must act to give a favourable direction to our lives. This is not a psychological question, a matter that can be resolved solely in the head of an isolated individual; it is related to the concrete situation in which each of us lives.
7. Being consistent with the proposals we are attempting to carry forward leads us to the conclusion that it would be useful to extend to society as a whole those elements that are positive for ourselves and our immediate environment. Together with others who are moving in this direction, we will put into practice the most appropriate means to allow a new form of solidarity to find expression. Thus, even when we act very specifically in our own immediate environment we will not lose sight of the global situation that affects all human beings and that requires our help, just as we need the help of others.
8. The precipitous changes in today's world lead us to seriously propose the need for a new direction in life.
9. 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.
10. Proportion in one's activities consists of establishing one's priorities in life, of not letting them grow out of balance, and basing one's actions on these priorities.
11. 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.
12. It is unwise to be non adapted 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.

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## **VIRTUES**

Nowadays, in their social and personal lives, people tend to emphasise the difficulties and negative things about themselves and the people they deal with.

This degrading vision of oneself generates a very particular attitude, a way of feeling and living, whose result will be negative in the short and medium term.

We do not deny that there are a great number of difficulties that we are faced with on a daily basis. But it is very important to recognise that this way of facing things is a consequence of an inhuman system that is imposed upon us, and that tends to make people become negative.

This attitude can be mechanically repeated, or instead one can discover how to strengthen a way of living, a way of thinking and feeling that is different, that is based on what is most interesting in everyone; that is based on one's own virtues.

By 'virtue', we mean all attitudes that, when converted into actions, put us in agreement with ourselves, independently of our ability to carry them out, leaving us with a register of profound peace.

If we recall these situations, it's likely that we will see that they are not only linked to certain actions, but also to a way of carrying them out in which we act from the best of ourselves.

If we recognise these attitudes, if we manage to colour our daily action with this way of doing things, we will recognise not only our virtues, but also the virtues of others, and surely we will be able to surpass the difficulties, to modify situations and in this way reach the proposed objectives of our lives.

In any case, making a list of one's own virtues (be they attitudes, ways of behaving, abilities, activities, etc), and then imagining how they could be strengthened in their application in the world, is a work of utmost importance for one's life and for that of others.

This way of doing and feeling things, this position in front of life based on one's virtues should be set in motion immediately. It is the attitude that allows one to resolve difficulties, to advance, and to grow in a coherent and positive life direction.

## TRUE SOLIDARITY

Let us consider this idea: "Wherever I see suffering, and I can do something to reduce it, I will take the initiative. Where I can do nothing, I will continue on my way joyfully." This idea seems useful, but it leaves us with a feeling of a lack of solidarity, a lack of compassion. How can we continue on our way joyfully, leaving people suffering behind us, acting as though we were unaware of other people's suffering?

Let us look at an example. Suppose we see a man fall down in violent convulsions in front of us on the sidewalk. And suppose the people passing by crowd in around us, giving contradictory instructions and forming a suffocating circle around the sick person. The people are acting out of concern for him, but they are not being effective. On the other hand, the person who goes and calls a doctor, or who gets the on-lookers to stand back to avoid crowding the sick man, would probably be acting most wisely. To help the most, I could take initiative in this situation, or perhaps I might just assist someone else do something positive and practical. But, if I act out of simple solidarity and the desire to help and instead create confusion or get in the way of those who can really do something, then I don't help; instead I create harm. From this example we can understand the first part of the saying, but what does the second part mean when it says, "...where I can do nothing I will continue on my way joyfully"? This certainly does not mean that I become happy because of the misfortune that happened to this man. Rather, it means that I should not block my own progress and direction because of events that are inevitable; that once I have done all I can do to help, I should not pile up more problems on top of the problems that already exist. It means that I must look at the future positively, because doing the opposite is not good, for me or for others.

Some people, misunderstanding what solidarity is, negatively criticize those who do not want to be of help, and thus harm themselves. These people detract from solidarity, because the energy they waste in their critical behaviour could have been positively applied in another direction, to other people, to other situations where practical results could actually have been obtained. When we speak of practical results, we are not referring only to what is primarily material, because even a smile or an encouraging word is useful if there is any possibility that it can be of help.

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<sup>ix</sup> **Bibliography**

The Book of the Community

### **III – THEMES OF NONVIOLENCE**

## THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Violence is a methodology of action.

Silo, in the Dictionary of New Humanism defines violence as: “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”, and later goes on to say:

“...Today, violence has penetrated all aspects of life: it appears continually and on a daily basis in the economy (exploitation of some human beings by others, coercion by the State, material dependency, discrimination against women in the workplace, child labour, unjust taxes, etc.); in politics (domination by a single or small number of parties, the power of certain leaders, totalitarianism, the exclusion of citizens from real participation in decision-making, war, revolution, armed struggle for power, etc.); in ideology (the imposing of official viewpoints, the prohibition of free thought, subordination of the communications media to particular interests, the manipulation of public opinion, propaganda of ideas that are inherently violent and discriminatory but convenient to the ruling elite, etc.); in religion (subjection of the interests of the individual to clerical edicts, stringent thought-control, prohibitions against divergent beliefs, persecution of heretics); in the family (exploitation of women, dictatorial control of children, etc.); in education (authoritarianism of teachers, corporal punishment, prohibition of diversity in curricula and teaching methods, etc.); in the armed forces (arbitrariness of officers, unthinking obedience of soldiers, punishment, etc.); in culture (censorship, the prohibition of innovative currents and movements, prohibitions against publishing certain works, edicts by the bureaucracy, etc.).

“When people speak of violence generally what they mean is physical violence, the most overt expression of corporal aggression. Other forms of violence, among others, economic, racial, religious, and sexual violence, can sometimes take place while their character is hidden, nevertheless resulting in the subjugation of human intention and liberty. In cases where these forms of v. are exercised openly, they are also applied through physical coercion.”

Everyday we can recognise that the majority of these forms of violence are exercised in a concealed way, so it is difficult for the population at large to identify them as such.

We observe that all acts of physical violence find their origin in these other forms of violence. Definitively they are the seeds that end up triggering responses of physical violence.

And when this “visible” response arrives, actions are usually attempted to take advantage of it, without saying that this is only a consequence, the final link in a chain of other acts of violence that pass unnoticed by everyone except the ones who suffer them.

This response can come from the powerful, exercising violence over those who rebel and who can no longer be disciplined; or it can be the expression of those who have suffered violence of all kinds.

Economic violence, for example, exercised by governments over the population – and generally over the most destitute sector – does not show its true face right from the start. Instead, governments disguise it as they need to gain the “trust” and the votes of the people, and they don’t inform us about the seed of violence that has already been planted.

Now, when desperation is growing through the loss of jobs, access is restricted to healthcare and education. Marginalisation, child labour and school truancy, to mention just a few,

begins to grow. So the population reacts and the powers “discipline” all attempts at condemnation with repression.

The established powers always have resources to use within the country, or externally to threaten and extort when faced with even a minimal attempt at “disobedience”. They threaten invasion and war in order to impose conditions.

So the chain of violence that starts in one place, over a sector of society or a whole people, finds no limit in its deployment with the aim of concentrating political or economic power. If to this we add the ingredient that, globally, economic power is built on one of the most profitable businesses – weapons production – the panorama is complete.

Only in this way can we see the violence that was already there at the origins of the process.

Only with this point of view can it be understood that the physical violence unleashed has its origins in the economic violence exercised by those in power.

At any rate, at this point, the ill-fated consequences of the physical violence that has been unleashed can no longer be cured and are unstoppable.

The Dictionary of New Humanism also says: “For those forces that are authentically humanist, it is a task of special importance to overcome the aggressive features of contemporary social life: to build harmony, nonviolence, tolerance, and solidarity.”

There exists a widespread attitude that rejects violence.

However, we ask ourselves, where is this society that is sick of violence, when at every set of traffic lights you can see a line of children and adolescents asking for money, knowing that they are at the mercy of any offer that is made in exchange for a coin?

And where in all its moral justifications does it place the image of so many children that are seen daily searching through rubbish, eating garbage and collecting cardboard boxes; exploited and abused from all sides?

Where is the sensibility of a society that is not moved even minimally to promote policies that could change the situation for these children?

How can it not be seen that a breeding ground is being generated here that will unleash a process of violence of unpredictable consequences for them and the rest of society?

And when it is seen, how is it that society does not organise itself to demand a drastic change of conditions to end the violence?

The campaigns and actions against violence towards the environment and animals have gained more supporters than a combined action to banish violence towards human beings.

In fact, there are no massive marches in which the whole of society is involved indiscriminately, to demand that rights for children are brought into effect, or to condemn child exploitation – so visible to all – or for equal opportunities for young people, or against the drug trade.

In the meantime, sensitive citizens proudly form human chains to defend the “rights of whales”.

Surely if society as a whole knew about this multiplicity of forms of violence that affect broad sectors of the population and were to argue convincingly and decidedly for their

disarticulation, they would no longer be working on the consequences but rather on the causes of violence. And in this way they would avoid irreparable misfortunes.

If we want to work on the factors that generate violence we must point out that when an act of physical violence is produced, it's already too late. That process that is produced within people has already been unleashed – a process surely created outside – and it leaves the one that is truly responsible off the hook.

The prior step is the recognition of this seed of violence that we can all identify in each one of us, and that can be disarticulated, avoiding a situation of undesirable consequences.

We need to stop for a moment and observe the social injustices and consider that this violence will necessarily have catastrophic side-effects: social disturbances, mass protests, with a high component of violence (impotence), which will all surely be met with brutal repression.

We have the right to live without violence, without suffering and without others suffering in order to achieve the ideal of peace.

This requires a combined action on the part of the International Community, each government, every nation and every person. To this effect, Silo has said what the action is that is required of each person:

*“Something needs to be done,” is what you hear everywhere. Very well then, I will tell you what must be done, but nothing will come of it because no one will listen.*

*I say that at the international level, all who are invading territories of others should withdraw immediately and comply with the resolutions and recommendations of the United Nations.*

*I say that at the internal level of each nation, an effort must be made to make law and justice function, as imperfect as they may be, before making laws tougher and enacting repressive measures that play into the very hands of those who now obstruct law and justice.*

*I say that at the domestic level people should practice what they preach and leave behind the hypocritical rhetoric that poisons the new generations.*

*I say that at the personal level each person should strive to make their thoughts coincide with their feelings and their actions, shaping a coherent life and thus escaping from the contradiction that generates violence. (Punta de Vacas, May 4, 2004)*

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## **VIOLENCE, THE STATE, AND THE CONCENTRATION OF POWER**

(Based on Letter 4 of the book "Letters to My Friends")

Human beings, through their opening, their freedom to choose between situations, their ability both to defer responses and to imagine their future, also have the possibility to negate themselves, to negate aspects of their bodies, to negate their bodies completely as in suicide, or to negate other human beings. It is this freedom that has allowed a few to illegitimately appropriate the social whole, that is, to negate the freedom and intentionality of others, reducing those others to prostheses, to instruments of the intentions of the few. Therein lies the essence of discrimination, with physical, economic, racial, sexual, religious and other forms violence as its methodology. It is through power over the apparatus of social regulation and control, that is, the State, that violence can be established and perpetuated. Because of this, social organization will require an advanced type of coordination that is safe from any concentration of power, whether private or of the State. When it is claimed that privatizing all areas of the economy will make society safe from the power of the State, what is not disclosed in this is that the real problem lies in the monopoly or oligopoly, which simply transfers power from the hands of the State to the hands of a Parastate, no longer managed by a bureaucratic minority but now by that private minority itself as it continues to advance this process of concentration.

The various social structures from the most primitive to the most sophisticated are all proceeding toward ever-greater concentration. Eventually they will reach the point that they become immobilized and begin a stage of dissolution, a stage that will give rise to new processes of reorganization, but at a higher level than before. From the beginning of history, society has proceeded toward globalization, and there will come a time of maximum concentration of arbitrary power, displaying the character of a world empire, which will be without any further possibilities of expansion. The collapse of this global system will follow the logic of the structural dynamics of all closed systems, in which disorder necessarily tends to increase. Just as the process of the current structures tends toward globalization, however, so does the process of humanization proceed toward increasing opening of the human being, moving beyond both the State and Parastate toward decentralization and de-concentration in favour of a superior form of coordination among autonomous social particularities. Whether everything ends up in chaos and civilization starts anew, or we begin a stage of progressive humanization, does not depend on inexorable mechanical designs, but on the intentions of individuals and peoples, on their commitment to changing the world, and on an ethic of liberty, which by definition is something that cannot be imposed. And we will aspire no longer to formal democracy, controlled until now by the special interests of the various factions, but instead to real democracy in which direct participation can be realized instantaneously, thanks to communication technologies that are every day more able to bring this about.

### **The Human Process**

Those who have diminished the humanity of others have in so doing necessarily brought about new pain and suffering, rekindling in the heart of society the age-old struggle against natural adversity—but now between on one side those who wish to "naturalize" other human beings, society, and history, and on the other side the oppressed, who need to humanize themselves in humanizing the world. That is why to humanize is to move beyond objectification to affirm the intentionality of every human being and the primacy of the future over the present situation. It is the image and representation of a future that is both better and possible that allows the modification of the present and makes every revolution and all change possible. This is why the pressure of oppressive conditions is not in itself sufficient to



set change in motion, rather it is necessary to realize that such change is possible and that it depends on human actions.

This struggle is not between mechanical forces; it is not a natural reflex. It is, rather, a struggle between human intentions. And that is precisely what permits us to speak of oppressors and the oppressed, of the just and the unjust, of heroes and cowards. This is the only thing that allows the meaningful practice of social solidarity and commitment to the liberation of those who suffer discrimination, whether they are a majority or a minority.

For more detailed considerations regarding violence, the State, institutions, the law, and religion, and so as not to exceed the limits of this brief letter, I refer you to the work entitled *The Human Landscape* in the book *Humanise the Earth*.

I do not believe that the meaning of human actions has to do with senseless upheavals or “useless passions” that end in nothing but absurd disintegration. I believe that the destiny of humanity is oriented by intention, and that as people become increasingly conscious of this intention it opens the way toward a universal human nation.

From what we have previously seen it is abundantly clear that human existence does not simply begin and end in a vicious circle of self-enclosure, and that a life aspiring to coherence must open itself, expanding its influence toward people and social ambits, advancing not only a concept or a few ideas but precise actions that extend the growth of freedom.

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## ACTIVE NONVIOLENCE

“Nonviolence” is an attitude in front of life whose fundamental characteristic is the rejection and repudiation of all forms of violence.

Its methodology of action is “active nonviolence”.

This methodology promotes a profound transformation of social conditions that generate suffering and violence in human beings.

The most historical forerunners are found in the figures of Leo Tolstoy, M. K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. – exemplary precursors, known for their nonviolent struggle in front of institutional violence.

Today there are thousands of daily examples of nonviolent action that are carried out around the world at different levels of social action, where individuals, institutions and organisations are working every day with the aim of denouncing and eradicating different expressions of violence in society, and working for peace.

“Nonviolence” as a methodology of personal and social action promotes concrete actions in order to create awareness of the problem of violence, of its real roots, of its different forms of expression such as physical, racial, economic, religious, psychological and moral violence. At the same time, it encourages exemplary actions that tend to eradicate violent practices from the face of the Earth. Some of its principle tools of personal and social action are:

- The rejection and creation of a void in front of different forms of discrimination and violence.
- Non-collaboration with violent practices.
- The denunciation of all acts of discrimination and violence.
- Civil disobedience in front of institutionalized violence.
- Social organisation and mobilization based on volunteer work and solidarity of those who promote it.

Organised, united and mobilized nonviolence constitutes the only force capable of modifying the violent and inhuman direction of the dangerous events in today’s world.

The danger of the present world situation and the foreseeable possible consequences in the immediate future provoke the urgent need to demand the setting in motion of concrete and immediate actions.

Some of these actions are:

1. Immediate nuclear disarmament that halts the danger unleashed by the new nuclear arms race, through the dismantling of existing arsenals under the supervision of the United Nations.
2. The immediate withdrawal of troops from occupied territories and the respect for the resolutions and recommendations of the United Nations.
3. The immediate advance in the presentation of regional proposals that include progressive disarmament of regions and the replacement of armies of war, by regional forces of peace that would collaborate in situations of catastrophe and the resolving of the basic problems of the population.

4. To immediately advance towards international legislation to declare nuclear weapons illegal, and their development and use included among "crimes against humanity".
5. To demand, as an urgent measure, the redirection of national and international public funds towards the development of campaigns that have as a priority the eradication of the terrible and inhuman problems of hunger, healthcare and education that today affect vast zones of the planet and generate hundreds of thousands of deaths every day.
6. To promote a sustained action from individuals and organisations of all kinds and levels, in the social, political and cultural fields, with the aim of raising awareness of the dangerous present situation and with the aim of organizing exemplary actions in the direction of a "culture of peace and nonviolence".

## **IV – THEMES OF HUMANIST PSYCHOLOGY**

## HUMANIST PSYCHOLOGY (PART 1): THE PSYCHISM

(Based on a chapter of Psychology I from the book “Psychology Notes”)

### The Psychism as a Life Function

Since its beginnings, life has manifested itself in numerous forms. Many species have disappeared because they did not adapt to the environment, to new circumstances. Living beings have needs that they go to their environment to satisfy; this situation in the ecological environment unfolds in constant movement and change. The relationship is unstable and unbalanced, producing responses in the organism that tend to compensate the disequilibrium and thus enable it to maintain its structure, which otherwise would abruptly disappear. Thus we see living nature deploy itself in a variety of forms, in an environment that has numerous characteristics that are different and variable; and at the base of living nature we see simple mechanisms of compensation in front of the disequilibrium that threatens the structure's permanence.

The adaptation to external change also implies an internal change in organisms for their survival. When this internal change does not take place in living beings, they eventually disappear and life chooses other paths to continue its growing expansion. The mechanism of responding in a compensatory way to disequilibrium will always be present in the sphere of life and life forms, and its complexity will be greater or lesser depending on each species' degree of development. This task of compensating the external environment, as well as internal needs, will be understood as adaptation (and, specifically, as growing adaptation)—as the only way to prevail in the dynamic of instability in movement.

Especially, animal life will develop according to functions of nutrition, reproduction and locomotion. Of course these functions exist in plant life as well, and even in unicellular life; but clearly, in animals these functions constantly relate the organism with its environment, maintaining the structure's internal stability. This will be expressed in a more specialized way as vegetative tendencies, as “instincts” of conservation and reproduction. The first maintains the individual structure; the second, that of the species. In this preparation by organisms to preserve themselves as individuals and perpetuate themselves as a species, an inertia (we would say, the “memory”) is expressed that tends to ensure permanence and continuity, in spite of the variations.

In animals, the functions of nutrition and reproduction will need locomotion in order to be deployed. This allows for displacement in space in order to obtain food. Internally there is also a mobility, a transporting of substances in order for them to be assimilated by the organism. Reproduction will be internal within the individual, and external in the multiplication of individuals. The first is verified in the form of the generation and regeneration of tissue; the second as the production of individuals within the same species. Both will need to use locomotion to accomplish their purpose.

The tendency to go toward the environment—from the search for food supply sources, to flight or concealment from danger—gives direction and mobility to living beings. These specific tendencies in each species form a team of tropisms. The simplest tropism consists of giving a response to a stimulus. This minimal operation, of responding to an element

alien to the organism that provokes a disequilibrium in the structure, in order to compensate and re-establish stability, will later manifest itself in a diverse and complex way. All the operations will leave "tracks," which will be preferential pathways for the new responses (in Time 2 the living being operates on the basis of conditions obtained in Time 1). This possibility of recording is of prime importance for the structure's permanence in a changing external environment, and a variable internal environment.

As the organism tends to go toward the environment to adapt to it and survive, it will have to do so by overcoming resistances. In the environment there are possibilities but also inconveniences, and to overcome the difficulties and surpass resistances, energy must be invested; work must be done that requires energy. This available energy will be used in that work of overcoming environmental resistances. There will be no energy available again until the difficulties are overcome and the work is completed. The recordings of tracks (memory) will allow responses based on previous experiences, which will leave free energy available for new evolutionary steps. Without energetic availability, it is not possible to carry out more complex tasks of growing adaptation.

On the other hand, the environmental conditions present themselves to the developing organism as alternatives of choice, as well as being the tracks that allow it to decide between the different alternatives of adaptation. In addition, the adaptation is carried out by looking for the path of least resistance in front of the different alternatives, and that will require the least effort. This lesser effort implies less energy expenditure. And so, concomitantly with overcoming resistances, the attempt is made to do so with the least amount of energy possible, so that the free energy available can be invested in new evolutionary steps. In each evolutionary moment there is transformation, both of the environment as well as of the living being. Here is an interesting paradox: the structure, in order to preserve its unity, must transform the environment, and also transform itself.

It would be erroneous to think that living structures change and transform only the surrounding environment, since this environment becomes increasingly more complicated, and it is impossible to adapt while keeping the individuality unchanged, just as it was created in its beginnings. This is the case of man, whose environment, with the passing of time, is no longer just natural, but is social and technical as well. The complex relationships between social groups and the accumulated social and historical experience create an environment and a situation in which man's internal transformation will be necessary.

Following this roundabout description in which life emerges as organizing itself with functions, tropisms and memory so as to compensate a variable environment and thus increasingly adapt, we see that a coordination among these factors (however minimal) is also necessary for the opportune orientation toward favourable conditions of development. When this minimal coordination appears, the psychism emerges as a function of life in growing adaptation, in evolution.

The function of the psychism consists of coordinating all the operations of compensation of the living being's instability in its environment. Without coordination, the organisms would respond partially without completing the different compositional parts, without maintaining the necessary relationships; and, finally, without preserving the structure in the dynamic process of adaptation.

## **In Relationship with the Environment**

This psychism that coordinates the vital functions makes use of the senses and the memory for the perception of variations in the environment. These senses, which through time have become more complex (like all parts of organisms), provide information on the environment that will be structured in adaptive orientation. The environment in turn is very varied, and certain minimal environmental conditions are necessary for the organism's development. Wherever these physical conditions are present, life emerges; and once the first organisms appear, the conditions are progressively transformed in way that is increasingly more favourable for life. But in the beginning, organisms require optimal environmental conditions for development. The variations in the troposphere reach all organisms. Thus, daily cycles and seasonal cycles, as well as general temperature, radiation and solar light, are influential conditions in the development of life. So is the composition of the Earth, which, in its wealth, offers raw material that will be the energy and work source for living beings. The accidents that can occur all over the planet are also decisive circumstances for organic development. From glaciations, cave-ins, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, even wind and water erosion—all are determining factors. Life will be different in the deserts, in the mountain heights, on the poles or on the seacoasts. Large numbers of organisms and diverse species appear and disappear from the earth's surface once life arrives from the oceans. Many individuals encounter insurmountable difficulties and perish as a result. This also happens to complete species—species that were unable to transform themselves or the new situations that arose in the evolutionary process. Life nonetheless continually opens up its path, encompassing many possibilities through great numbers and diversity.

When diverse species appear within one same space, different relations arise among them, apart from those that exist within the same species. There are relations of symbiosis, of association, parasitic relations, saprophytic relations and so on. All these possible relations can be simplified into three major types: relations of domination, relations of interchange, and relations of destruction. Organisms maintain these relationships among themselves, with some surviving and others disappearing.

We are dealing with organisms with functions that are regulated by a psychism; organisms equipped with senses to perceive the internal and external environments, and with a memory that is not just genetic memory for the trans-mission of the species' characteristics (instincts of reproduction and conservation), but also individual recordings of new reflexes that make it possible to decide in front of alternatives. The memory also fulfills another function: the register of time; memory makes it possible to give continuity to the passing of time. The first circuit of short reflexes (stimuli-response) allows for variations in its complexity, thus allowing specialization of the nervous and endocrine systems. On the other hand, the possibility of acquiring new reflexes originates learning and domestication, also enabling specialization of multiple mechanisms of response. As a result, variable behaviour can be observed; variable conduct in the environment, in the world.

After many attempts by Nature, mammals began their development, producing different and numerous cases. These mammals gave rise to different branches, among them the hominids of recent date. From hereon in, the psychism begins a specific development.

## **In the Human Being**

A notable leap forward is produced when the codification of signs (sounds and gestures) begins among the hominids. Later the codified signs are fixed with greater permanence (in

engraved signs and symbols). These signs improve the communication that relates individuals amongst themselves, and tells of matters of importance for them regarding the environment they live in. Memory expands and is no longer just genetic transmission and individual memory; but thanks to the encoding of signals, data can be stored and transmitted through signs, resulting in the increase of information and social experience.

Subsequently, a second important leap forward takes place: memory data become independent of the genetic apparatus and the individual. Dispersed memory appears, which progresses from the first signs on walls and clay tablets to alphabets that make texts, libraries, teaching centres, etc., possible. The most important aspect that has operated here is that the psychism goes outside itself and shapes itself in the world.

At the same time locomotion expands, thanks to an inventiveness that, on one hand, creates devices not found in nature, and, on the other, domesticates animals and plants, allowing their transport over water, steppe, mountain and forest. From the nomadic populations, to the locomotion and communication that has attained a remarkable degree of development in our times.

Nutrition is perfected, from primitive gathering, hunting and fishing until the domestication of plants by the early farmers. It continues to develop with the domestication of animals and progressive systems of storage, conservation and synthesis of new foodstuffs and their resulting distribution.

Reproduction organizes the first social groups of the horde, tribe and family, which leads to rudimentary settlements upon their establishment in fixed locations. These later acquire a complex form of social organization, with the concomitant participation of different generations in one same historical and geographical moment. Reproduction undergoes important transformations up to the present time, when techniques for the production, modification, conservation and mutation of embryos and genes already loom in the horizon.

The psychism has become more complex while still reflecting its previous stages. The psychism also specializes apparatuses of response, such as the neuro-hormonal centres, which develop from their original vegetative function up to an intellect of increasing complexity. In accordance with the degree of internal and external work, the consciousness has gained levels, from deep sleep to semi-sleep, and later, an increasingly more lucid level of vigil.

The psychism emerges as the coordinator for the structure 'living being-environment'—that is, the structure 'consciousness-world.' The result of this coordination is the unstable equilibrium within which this structure will work and process. External information will arrive to the specialized apparatus that will work within different ranges of capture. These apparatuses are the external senses. Information from the internal environment, from the intra-body, will reach the capture apparatuses, which are the internal senses. The imprints of this internal and external information, as well as the tracks of the operations of the consciousness themselves, in its different levels of work, will be received in the apparatus of memory. Thus, the psychism will coordinate sensorial data and memory recordings.



On the other hand, in this stage of its development the psychism is equipped with apparatuses of response to the world—very elaborate responses and of varied types, as are the intellectual, emotional and motor responses. These apparatuses are the centres. In the vegetative centre, the organic bases are found of the vital functions of metabolism, reproduction and locomotion (even though this last has become specialized in the motor centre), as well as the instincts of conservation and reproduction. The psychism will coordinate these apparatuses as well as the vital functions and instincts.

Furthermore, in the human being there is a relational system with the environment that cannot be considered an apparatus with neuro-physiological localizations, and which we call “behaviour.” A particular case of psychological behaviour in the interpersonal and social relationship is the “personality.” The structure of personality serves adaptation, through its continual adjustment to different and variable situations in the interpersonal environment. This capacity for appropriate adaptation requires a complex situational dynamic, which the psychism will also have to coordinate, at the same time maintaining the unity of the entire structure’s unity.

On the other hand, the biological process that a person goes through—from birth and childhood, through adolescence and youth, until maturity and old age—markedly modifies the internal structure, which travels through vital stages with differing needs and environmental relationships (in the beginning there is dependence on the environment; later establishment and expansion within it, the individual tending to preserve their position, until they finally move away). This process likewise needs precise coordination.

In order to achieve an integrated vision of the work of the human psychism, in later works, we will present its different functions that can be physiologically localised. We will also bear in mind the system of impulses capable of generating, translating and transforming information between the apparatus. These presentations will be developed in other themes of study within this manual (*See Humanist Psychology – Part II and Part III*)

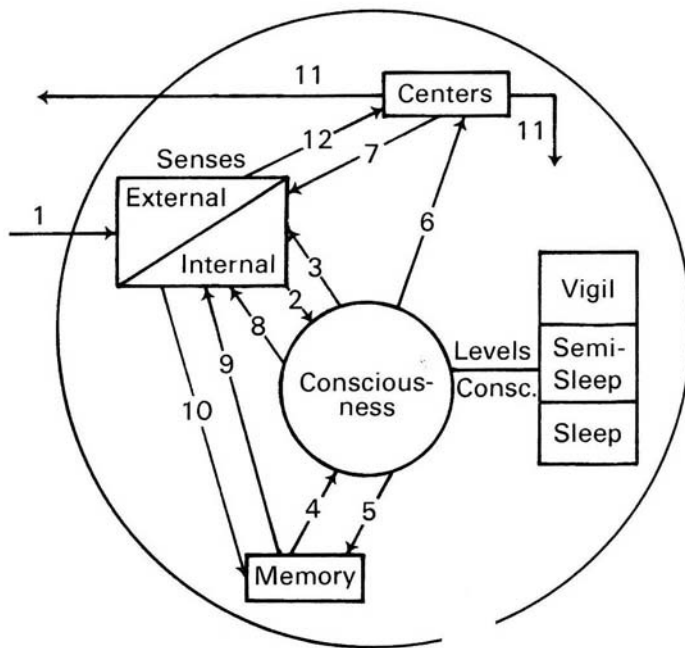
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## HUMANIST PSYCHOLOGY (PART II): SCHEME OF THE PSYCHISM

(Based on the chapters; Psychology I and Psychology II from the book of Psychology Notes)



1. Impulses from the external and internal worlds
2. Perception
3. Apperception
4. Remembrance
5. Evocation
6. Impulse of response (images)
7. Register of the response
8. Sensations of the operations of the consciousness
9. Register of the memory
10. Recording
11. Responses of the centers (external and internal)
12. Stimulus which directly mobilizes a response (reflex)

### Apparatuses of the Psychism

'Apparatus' is understood to mean the sensory and memory specializations that work integrately in the consciousness, by means of impulses. These, in turn, undergo many transformations, depending the psychic ambit in which they act.

### Senses

The senses have the function of receiving and sending data to the consciousness and the memory and are organized in different ways, according to the psychism's needs and tendencies.

The apparatus of the senses has its origin in a primitive tactile sense that progressively becomes more specialized. One can differentiate between external senses that detect information from the external environment, and internal senses, when the information is captured from the interior of the body. According to the type of activity they can be classified as: chemical senses (taste and smell); mechanical senses (the tactile as such and the internal senses of cenesthesia and kinesthesia) and physical senses (hearing and sight). As for the internal senses, the cenesthetic sense provides information on the intrabody. There are chemical receptors, thermoceptors, baroceptors, and others; the detection of pain also plays an important role.

The work of the centres is detected cenesthetically, as are the different levels of work of the consciousness. During vigil, cenesthetic information has a minimum of registers, as this is when the external senses predominate and the entire psychism is moving in relation to the external world. When vigil lowers its potential, the cenesthesia increases the emission of

impulses. There is a deformed register of these impulses and they act as the raw material for the translations that will be made in semi-sleep and sleep. The kinesthetic sense provides data on movement, body posture, physical balance and imbalance.

## **Memory**

The memory's function is to record and retain data from the senses and/or the consciousness. It also supplies data to the consciousness when necessary (the act of remembering). The greater the amount of data from memory, the more options there are in the responses. When responses have antecedents, energy is saved and there is a balance left of surplus availability. The memory's work provides the consciousness with references so that it can be oriented as to its location and can maintain its continuity through time. The rudiments of memory appear in the inertia that is proper to the work of each sense, broadening out to the entire psychism as general memory. The theoretical minimum atom of memory is reminiscence, but what is registerable is that in memory, data from the senses and from the coordinator in the form of structured recordings are received, processed and ordered. The ordering is carried out in ranges or by thematic zones and according to a chronology of its own. From all this it is deduced that the real atom would be: data + activity of the apparatus.

## **Consciousness**

The consciousness can be defined as the system of coordination and register that the human psychism implements. Accordingly, any phenomenon that is not registered is not considered conscious; nor any operation of the psychism in which tasks of coordination have no participation. This is possible because of the very broad spectrum of possibilities for registering and coordination, with the greatest difficulties arising when thresholds, limits of register and of coordination, are considered. This leads us to briefly consider the following: "Consciousness" is commonly linked to "vigilic activity," with everything else being left outside of the consciousness, and this has made such poorly-grounded conceptions arise, such as the concept of the "unconscious." This is because there has been insufficient study of the different levels of work of the consciousness; neither has the structure of presence and co-presence been observed, which the attentional mechanism works with. There are other conceptions in which the consciousness is seen as passive, when in fact the consciousness works by actively structuring, coordinating the psychism's needs and tendencies with the contributions of the senses and the memory, while it orients the constant variations of the relationship between the body and the psychism—in other words, the relationship of the psychophysical structure with the world.

We consider that the mechanisms of reversibility are fundamental, which allow the consciousness to orient itself, through the attention, toward the sources of sensory information (apperception) and mnemonic information (evocation). When the attention is trained at evocation, it can also discover or highlight phenomena that were not noticed at the time they were recorded. This recognition is considered as: apperception in the evocation. The activation of the reversibility mechanisms is directly related to the level of work of the consciousness. As one descends in level of consciousness, the work of these mechanisms decreases, and vice versa.

## **The Structure of the Consciousness**

The minimum structure of the consciousness is the relationship between act-object, linked together by the consciousness's mechanisms of intentionality. This bond between acts and objects is permanent, even though there do exist acts that are launched in search of objects that are not precisely defined at that moment. This situation is what gives its dynamic to the consciousness. The objects of consciousness (i.e., perceptions, memories, representations, abstractions, etc.) appear as the intentional correlates of the acts of consciousness. The intentionality is always launched toward the future—registered as tension in the search—and

also toward the past, in evocation. Thus, the times of consciousness intersect in the present instant. The consciousness futurizes and remembers, but at the moment of the impletion, it works in the present.

In the case of a search for a memory, when the evoked object appears it “makes itself present”—and until this happens, the consciousness does not complete its act. The completed action is registered as distension. When acts find their objects, there is free energy left that is used by the consciousness for new tasks. The operations that have been described are characteristic of the level of vigil, since in other levels (such as in sleep, for example), the structure of time is different. Psychological time, therefore, depends on the level of work of the psychism. The time of the coordinator’s work in vigil is the present. From this level, multiple temporal games of protentions and retentions can be effected, but always intersecting in the present moment. The effectiveness of the reversibility mechanisms and of the present time are characteristics of vigil.

## **Levels of Consciousness**

The consciousness can find itself immersed in deep sleep, in semi-sleep or in vigil, and also in intermediate or transitional moments. There are gradations between the levels of consciousness, not sharp divisions. To speak of levels is to speak of different operations and of the register of these operations. It is thanks to the register that a distinction can be made between different levels of consciousness, and one cannot have a register of the levels as though they were empty ambits.

It can be affirmed that the different levels of consciousness fulfill the function of structurally compensating the world (understanding by “world,” the mass of perceptions, representations, etc., that originate in the stimuli from the external and internal environments). This is not simply about giving responses, but about giving structural, compensatory responses. These responses are compensations in order to re-establish equilibrium in the unstable relationship between consciousness-world or psychism-environment. As free energy is left over from the work done in the vegetative function, the levels rise because they receive the energy that feeds them.

## **Deep Sleep**

In this level, the work of the external senses is minimal; there is no other information from the external environment except for whatever breaks through the threshold imposed by sleep itself. The task of the cenesthetic sense is predominant, contributing impulses that are translated and transformed by the work of the associative mechanisms and resulting in the emergence of oneiric images. The substantive characteristics of the images at this level are their strong suggestive power. Psychological time and space are modified with respect to vigil, and the act-object structure frequently appears without any correlation between its elements. Likewise, emotional “climates” and images tend to become independent of one another. The disappearance of critical and self-critical mechanisms is typical, which, starting from this level, will gradually increase their work as the level of consciousness rises. The inertia of the levels and the formal ambit that they establish cause the mobility and the passage from one level to the other to occur gradually (thus, the exit from and entrance into sleep will take place after passing through semi-sleep). The tone of this level is the same as that of the others: it can go from an active to a passive state, and there can also be states of alteration. There are no images in passive sleep, whereas active sleep does have images.

## **Semi-Sleep**

At this level, which precedes vigil, the external senses start sending information to the consciousness—information that is not entirely structured, because there is also interference from reveries and the presence of internal sensations. The contents of sleep lose their suggestive power when they continue to appear, due to the semi-vigilic perception that

provides new parameters. Suggestibility continues acting, especially in the case of some very vivid images (called “hypnagogic”) of great power. On the other hand, the system of frequent reveries—which can wane in vigil and disappear in sleep—reappears. It is in this level where the reverie nucleus and the secondary reveries are more easily registered, at least in their basic climates and tensions. The reverie mode that is proper to this level tends to be transferred through inertia to vigil, supplying the raw material for divagation; though in the divagation, elements from vigilic perception also appear. In this ambit the coordinator can already carry out a few operations. Let us also mention that this level is extremely unstable and therefore is easily disequibrated and altered.

We also find the states of passive and active semi-sleep. The first offers an easy passage to sleep; the second, to vigil. At this point we can also make another distinction: there is an active semi-sleep due to alteration, and another that is more calm and attentive. Altered semi-sleep is the base of the tensions and climates that can arrive to vigil with force and persistence, giving rise to “noise” and modifying behaviour, making it inadequate for the surrounding situation. The tracking of vigilic tensions and climates can be done in altered active semi-sleep. The different states, both active and passive, are defined by the energetic tone and intensity proper to each level. The degree of intensity that emotional climates and tensions can have is expressed in tones.

## **Vigil**

In this level the external senses contribute a greater volume of information as they regulate the internal senses through inhibition, enabling the coordinator to orient itself toward the world in the psychism’s work of compensating the environment. Here the mechanisms of abstraction and of criticism and self-criticism function and attain high degrees of manifestation and intervention in the tasks of coordination and register. The mechanisms of reversibility, whose manifestation in the previous levels was minimal, can amply operate here, allowing the coordinator to balance the internal and external environments. Suggestibility in the vigilic contents diminishes with the increase in reference points. There is a tone of active vigil that can be attentive, with maximum control over apperception, or there may be a tone of altered vigil. In this last case, silent divagation and the more-or-less fixed reveries appear.

## **Integrated Circuit of Senses, Memory and Coordinator**

The connectives between senses, memory and consciousness reveal important aspects of how the psychism functions. These connective circuits operate within a complex self-regulation. Thus, when the coordinator performs apperception of perception, evocation is inhibited; and inversely, apperception of memory inhibits perception. While the external senses are acting, the entrance of internal stimuli is inhibited and vice-versa. There is maximum inter-regulation during the changes in the level of work, when, as sleep increases (or vigil diminishes), the reversibility mechanisms are blocked and the associative mechanisms are then powerfully released. On the other hand, when vigil augments and the critical mechanisms begin their work, they inhibit the associative mechanisms. There is also automatic inter-regulation between the senses: when sight expands its average threshold, the sense thresholds of touch, smell and hearing are reduced, and this happens in all the senses for example, people tend to close their eyes in order to hear better).

## **The centres of response**

Thus, the apparatuses that control the output of impulses of response toward the world are what we know as “centres.” The mechanism of stimulus and reflex response becomes increasingly more complex, until the response becomes deferred and coordination circuits intervene which are capable of channelling the responses, precisely, through different centres. Thus, a deferred response has travelled through numerous circuits before it is effected toward the external world.

The centres work structurally among themselves and with their own registers, simultaneously with the general register that the coordinator has, and this is possible thanks to the information that arrives from the internal senses at the moment of action in the environment, as well as to the interconnections between centres and coordinator.

The *vegetative centre* is the base of the psychism, where the instincts of individual preservation and the species are activated, and, excited by the corresponding signals of pain and pleasure, they mobilize for the defense and expansion of the total structure. I have no register of these instincts apart from certain signals. Such instincts are strongly manifested at the moment when a part or the totality of the structure is compromised.

The sexual centre is the main energy collector and distributor that operates through alternating concentration and diffusion, with the aptitude for mobilizing the energy in a localized way or diffuse way. Its work is voluntary and also involuntary. And somewhat the same thing happens with the sexual centre as with the vegetative centre, of which the sexual centre is, in turn, a specialization—the vegetative centre's most immediate specialization.

The motor centre acts as regulator of the external reflexes and of the habits of movement. It allows the body to displace itself in space, working with tensions and relaxations.

The emotional centre is the regulator and synthesizer of the situational responses, through its work of adhesion or rejection. From the work of the emotional centre, the psychism's particular aptitude is registered for experiencing sensations of approaching what is pleasurable or of moving away from what is painful, without the body's necessarily performing an action.

The intellectual centre responds to impulses of the mechanisms of consciousness known as abstraction, classification, association, etc. It works through selection or confusion of images, in a range that goes from ideas to the different types of imagination, directed or divagational, with the ability to elaborate forms of response such as symbolic, signical and allegorical images.

There are differences of speed in the dictation of responses to the environment. Said speed is proportional to the centre's complexity. Whereas the intellect elaborates a slow response, the emotions and the motricity do it with greater speed, the inner velocity of the vegetative and sexual functioning being considerably greater than that of the other centres.

The centres can work dysfunctionally, which also occasions errors of response. The contradictions arise in the work among the centres when the responses are not organized structurally, and the centres trigger activities in directions that oppose each other.

The functioning of the centres is structural. This is registered by the concomitances in the other centres when one is acting as the primary one. Intellectual work is accompanied by an emotional tone, for example, a certain liking for the study that is being carried out, and which helps sustain the work. In this case (i.e., while one is studying), the motricity is reduced to the minimum. In the case of vegetative recovery after an illness, the subject would experience fatigue or weakness and all the energy would go toward the body's recovery. The vegetative centre would work full time to give equilibrating internal responses, and the other centres' activity would be reduced to the minimum.

These centres that we separate in order to better understand them are really working in structure, with psychophysical energy circulating between them, or, more simply, nervous energy. In general, when activity increases in some centres, it decreases in others.

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<sup>xiii</sup> **Bibliography**

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## HUMANIST PSYCHOLOGY (PART III): THE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE I

(Based on the book Psychology Notes)

We understand the consciousness as the system of coordination and register that is effected by the human psychism. Sometimes we talk about “consciousness” and other times of “coordinator,” and still others of a “registerer.” What happens is that even when the same entity is concerned, it is fulfilling different functions; but we are not dealing with different entities. A very different matter is what we call the “I”. We don’t identify that “I” with the consciousness. We consider the levels of consciousness as different ambits of work of the consciousness, and we identify the “I” with that which observes the psychic processes—not necessarily vigilic ones—that develop. In vigil I go about registering and carrying out numerous operations. If someone asks me, “Who are you?” I will answer: “Me.”—And I will add to that, an ID card, a number, a name or things of this sort. And I have the impression that that “I” will register the same operations from inside, it will observe the operations of the consciousness. For now we already have a distinction between the operations that the consciousness carries out and this observer that refers to those operations of the consciousness. And if I pay attention to how I go about observing things, I see that I observe things “from inside.” And if I observe my own mechanisms, I see that my mechanisms are seen “from outside.” If I now lower the level of consciousness and I go down to sleep, how do I see myself? I walk along the street, in a dream; I see cars that pass by, people that walk by—from where do I see the people who pass, the cars that drive past? From inside myself? (As I see you now, and I know you are outside of me, and therefore I see you from inside me.) Is this how I see myself [in sleep]? No, I see myself from outside. If I observe how I see from the level of sleep, I see myself seeing the passing cars, the passing people, and I observe myself from outside. Do it another way—try it with the memory. Now you remember yourselves in a situation when you were children. Good. What do you see in that scene? Do you (as children) see yourselves from inside, the way you see the things that surround you? You see yourselves from outside. In that sense, where is the “I”? Is the “I” inside the system of structuring that the consciousness carries out, and perceives things, or is the “I” outside? On one hand, one has the impression that in some cases it is inside and in other cases it is outside. And on the other hand, one sees that upon observing the same operations of the consciousness, the observer is separated from these operations. In any case, the “I” appears as separate—be it inside or outside. What we do know is that it isn’t included in the operations.

That I then—how is it that I identify it with the consciousness if all the registers that I have are of separation between the “I” and consciousness? If I observe all the registers that I have of the “I,” I will see that all these registers are of separation between this thing I call “consciousness and operations of the consciousness” and what I call “I”.

How is this “I” constituted; why does this “I” arise and why do I make the mistake of associating the “I” to the consciousness?

My “I” is based on memory and the recognition of certain internal impulses. I have a notion of myself because I recognize some of my internal impulses that are always linked to a characteristic emotional tone. Not only do I recognize myself by my biography and my memory data; I recognize myself by my particular way of feeling, my particular way of comprehending. And if we were to take away the senses, where would the “I” be? The “I” is not an indivisible unit, but results from the sum total and the structuring of the data from the senses and the data from memory.

Can the 'I' function then, even if we remove the data from memory and the data from the senses?

Let's look at this point carefully. The entirety of acts through which the consciousness thinks of itself depends on internal sensorial registers; the internal senses provide information on what occurs in the activity of the consciousness. That register of the consciousness's own identity is given by the data from the senses and the data from memory, plus a peculiar configuration that grants the consciousness the illusion of identity and permanence, despite the constant changes that take place in it. *That illusory configuration of identity and permanence is the "I"*.

*(Amplifications and a fuller development of the consciousness and the I can be found in the book Psychology Notes – Psychology 3 and Psychology 4).*

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## REALITY, LANDSCAPES AND LOOKS

*"I cannot take as real what I see in my dreams, nor what I see in semi-sleep, nor what I see when I am awake but in reverie."*

*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." Only rarely do I perceive reality in a new way, and it is then that I realise that what I normally see resembles sleep or semi-sleep." From the book, The Inner Look by Silo.*

### REALITY (Chapter II of the book The Internal Landscape)

1. What is it that you want? If you answer that it is love or security that is most important, then you are speaking of moods—of things that you cannot see.
2. If you reply that it is money, power, social recognition, a just cause, God, or eternity that is most important, then you are speaking of something that you see or you imagine.
3. We will be in agreement when you say, "I choose this just cause because I reject suffering! I want this because it brings me tranquillity, and I reject that because it disturbs me or makes me violent."
4. Is your mood, then, at the centre of all aspiration, all intention, all affirmation, and all denial? You might reply that whether you are sad or joyful, a number remains the same, and that the sun would be the sun even if human beings did not exist.
5. I will tell you that the same number differs depending on whether it is something that you have to give or receive, and that the sun fills greater space within the human being than in the heavens.
6. The radiance of a spark or of a star dances for your eye. And though there is no light without the eye, on other eyes this radiance would fall with different effect.
7. Therefore let your heart affirm, "I love this radiance I see!" But may it never say, "Neither sun, nor spark, nor star have anything to do with me."
8. Of what reality do you speak to fish or reptile; to gigantic animal, tiny insect, or bird; to a child or an old person; to one who sleeps or one who keeps watch in cold calculation or feverish terror?
9. I say that the echo of the real murmurs or resounds according to the ear that hears, and that for other ears what you call "reality" would play a different song.
10. Therefore let your heart affirm, "I love the reality that I build!"

### THE EXTERNAL LANDSCAPE (Chapter III of the book The Internal Landscape)

*Look at this couple slowly walking. While his arm gently encircles her waist, she rests her head softly on his welcoming shoulder. They stroll on while the autumn of leaves that fall around them is crackling and dying in yellows, reds, and violets. Young and beautiful, they continue, inevitably, into the grey overcast afternoon. A cold drizzle begins to fall on the children's toys, abandoned in deserted gardens.*

1. For some this scene revives a gentle and perhaps pleasant nostalgia. For others it awakens dreams, and for still others, promises to be fulfilled in radiant days to come. Before the same sea one person becomes anguished, while another, inspired, feels exhilarated. And a thousand more are overawed in contemplation of those frozen crags, while still others gaze in admiration at those crystals carved on such gigantic scale. Some are depressed, others uplifted before the same landscape.
2. A single landscape, then, may be very different for two people, but wherein does the difference lie?
3. The same occurs with what we see or hear. Consider, for example, the word "future." It sets one person on edge, while another remains indifferent, and still others would sacrifice their "today" for it.
4. Consider for example, music, or words with social or religious significance.
5. There are moments when a multitude or an entire nation will condemn or embrace a certain landscape. But does that rejection or acceptance lie in the landscape or in the hearts of that multitude or nation?
6. Between doubt and hope, your life is orientated toward landscapes that coincide with something that is within you.
7. This entire world, which you have not chosen but which has been given for you to humanise, is the landscape that most grows as life grows. Therefore may your heart never say, "Neither the autumn, nor the sea, nor the ice-covered crag have anything to do with me." Instead may it affirm, "I love the reality that I build!"

#### **THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE (Chapter IV of the book *The Internal Landscape*)**

*If even the most distant star is connected to you, what should I think of the living landscape, where deer slip between ancient trees and even the most savage animals gently lick their offspring? What should I think of the human landscape, where opulence and misery are found side by side, where some children laugh while others cannot even find the strength to cry?*

1. For if you say, "We have reached other planets," you must also declare, "We have massacred and enslaved entire peoples. We have filled our jails with those who cried out for liberty. We have lied from morning until night. We have falsified our thoughts, our affections, and our actions. We have assaulted life at every turn, for we have created suffering."
2. I know my way in this human landscape, but what will happen if we pass each other going in opposite directions? I renounce every faction that proclaims an ideal higher than life and every cause that, to impose itself, generates suffering. So before you accuse me of not being part of any faction, examine your own hands—you may find on them the blood of complicity. If you believe it valiant to commit yourself to those factions, what will you say of one whom all the murderous bands accuse of being uncommitted? I want a cause worthy of the human landscape: a cause committed to surpassing pain and suffering.
3. I deny the right to make accusations to any faction that, whether recently or long ago, has figured in the suppression of life.
4. I deny the right to cast suspicion on others to any who conceal their own suspicious faces.
5. I deny that anyone, even someone arguing the extreme urgency of present circumstance, has the right to block the new roads that the human being must travel.

6. Not even the worst of what is criminal is foreign to me, and if I recognise it in the landscape, I recognise it also in myself. So it is that I want to surpass what in me as in everyone fights to suppress life: I want to surpass the abyss!

*All worlds you aspire to, all justice you demand, all love you search for, all human beings you would follow or destroy are also within you. Everything that changes within you will change your direction in the landscape you inhabit. Thus, if you have need of something new, you must surpass the old that dominates within you. And how will you do this? Begin by realising that even if you change your location, you carry your internal landscape with you.*

## **THE INTERNAL LANDSCAPE (Chapter V of the book, *the Internal Landscape*)**

1. You search for what you believe will make you happy. This may not, however, be the same as what another is searching for. It might happen that you both desire things that are in some sense opposed, and you may both come to believe that the happiness of one opposes the happiness of the other. Or you may both long for the same thing, and if this thing is unique or scarce, you may again come to believe that the happiness of one opposes the happiness of the other.

2. It seems, then, that you can argue over the same object as much as over objects opposed to one another. What a strange logic beliefs have, that they are capable of producing similar behaviour toward both an object and its opposite!

3. There, in the heart of your beliefs, lies the key to what you do. So powerful is your fascination with what you believe that you affirm its reality, even though it exists only in your mind.

4. But returning to our theme: You search for what you believe will make you happy. What you believe about things, however, does not reside in the things themselves but in your internal landscape. Gazing at this flower, you and I may agree on many things. But if you go on to say that this flower will bring you utmost happiness, it may become more difficult for me to comprehend, for you are speaking no longer of the flower but instead of what you believe it will do within you. You speak of an internal landscape that perhaps does not coincide with mine. It would be but one more step for you to try to impose your landscape on me. Consider well the consequences that could follow from such a deed.

5. Clearly, your internal landscape is not only what you believe about things, but also what you remember, what you feel, and what you imagine about yourself and others, about facts, about values, about the world in general. Perhaps we can now understand how: 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.

## **LOOKS AND LANDSCAPES (Chapter 1 of the book *the Human 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.

6. If you have understood the foregoing, you will also understand that when I speak of the human landscape I am referring to a type of external landscape that is composed of people and—even on those occasions when the human being per se is absent—human acts and intentions made manifest in objects.

7. It is important, then, to distinguish between the "internal world" and "internal landscape", between "nature" and "external landscape", between "society" and "human landscape". What I am trying to emphasise is that to speak of landscapes always implies "one who looks", as opposed to situations in which the internal (psychological) world, nature, or society are naively taken as existing in themselves, independent of any interpretation.

### **From the presentation of "Humanise the Earth"**

Reykjavik, Iceland, 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1989.

The third work, "The Human Landscape," dedicates its opening chapters to a clarification of the meaning of the ideas of landscape and the looks with which one gazes upon that landscape. It questions the way in which we look at the world and understand its established values. This work also examines the significance of one's own body and the bodies of others, and it examines subjectivity and the curious phenomenon of the appropriation of the subjectivity of others. It is, further, a study (divided into chapters) of intention: intention in education, intention in the story that is told of History, intention in ideologies, intention in violence, in Law, in the State, and in Religion. It is not a work, as I have said, that is simply polemical; rather, it proposes new models in each area that it criticizes. "The Human Landscape" attempts to ground action in the world, reorienting meanings and interpretations regarding values and institutions that might seem to be "givens."

With respect to the concept of landscape, let me say that it is the cornerstone of our system of thought, as can be seen in other, more recent works such as "The Psychology of the Image" and "Historiological Discussions" in Contributions to Thought. In the book we are concerned with today, the idea of landscape is more modestly explained, and within the context of a work with no pretensions to rigorous thought. So it is that the work "The Human

Landscape” begins with the following: “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.”

And who better to understand these ideas than you Icelanders? Although human beings are always to be found in a landscape, that does not mean that they are always aware of this. But the landscape becomes a living datum for people when the world in which they live presents itself in full contrast as a contradiction impossible to bear, as unstable equilibrium par excellence. The inhabitants of vast deserts or infinite plains have in common the experience that there, in the distance on the horizon, the earth merges with the skies so gradually, so subtly, that finally one cannot tell what is earth and what is sky . . . only empty continuity appears before the eyes. And there are other places where utmost ice clashes with utmost fire, glacier with volcano, island with sea that surrounds it; where water erupts furiously from the earth in geysers hurling skyward; where all is contrast, all is finitude, and the eye turns upward to the immobile stars, seeking repose. But then the very skies begin to move, the gods dance and change shape and colour in gigantic aurora borealis. And the finite eye then turns back upon itself, generating dreams of harmonious worlds, eternal dreams—dreams that sing histories of worlds lost in hope of the world to come.

And so I believe those places are landscapes where every inhabitant is a poet who may not recognize him- or herself as such, every inhabitant a traveller who carries his or her vision to other places. That being the case, then in some measure and in some form all human beings have something of the Icelander about them, because their original landscape always imposes itself on their perceptual vision, because all of us see not only what is there before us, but our comparisons and even the discovery of the new are based on what we have already known. Thus, we are dreaming even as we gaze at things, and then later we take them as though they were reality itself.

But the concept is even broader, since landscape is not only that which is natural, that which appears before our eyes; it is also that which is human, that which is social. Every person interprets other people from within his or her own biography, investing the other with more than what is perceived. That being the case, we never see in the reality of the other, what the other is in him- or herself; rather, we have of the other a schema, an idea, an interpretation, that arises out of our own internal landscape. One’s internal landscape is superimposed on the external landscape, which is not only natural but also social and human. Clearly, over time that society continues to change, and the generations succeed one another, and when a generation’s time comes to act it does so trying to impose values and interpretations that have been formed in an earlier moment. This can go relatively well in periods of historical stability, but in times like the present, of tremendous dynamism and change, the gap between the generations widens alarmingly as the world changes before our very eyes.

Toward what is our look to be directed? What must we learn to see? It is not surprising that in these times the idea of “turning to a new way of thinking” is becoming more popular. Today, one must think fast because things are moving faster all the time, and what we took as late as yesterday to be immutable reality we find is no longer so today. And so, friends, in today’s world we can no longer think from our landscape if this landscape does not become dynamic and universal, if it does not become valid for all human beings. We need to understand that the concepts of “landscape” and “look” can serve to help us advance toward that much-heralded “new way of thinking” demanded by this ever-accelerating process of planetarization.

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## IMAGE AND SPACE OF REPRESENTATION

(Based on the first part of the book Contributions to Thought: Psychology of the Image)

### Distinctions among Sensation, Perception, and Image

We can provisionally understand sensation as the register obtained upon detecting a stimulus from the external or internal environment that produces a variation in the tone of operation of the affected sense. But the study of sensation must go further, since we observe that there are sensations that accompany the acts of thinking, remembering, apperception, and so on. In every case there is a variation in the tone of operation of a sense or, as with coenaesthesia, a combination of senses, but of course thinking is not “felt” in the same way or mode as an external object. Therefore, the sensation appears as a structuring carried out by the consciousness in its activity of synthesis, but analyzed in a particular way in order to describe its original source, that is, in order to describe the sense from which the impulse originated.

We understand perception as a structuring of sensation that is performed by the consciousness in reference to a sense or combination of senses. We understand the image as a structured and formalized representation of the sensations or perceptions that originate, or have originated, from the external or internal environment. The image, then, is not a “copy” but a synthesis; an intention, not the mere passivity of the consciousness

### The Internal Register Through Which the Image Is Given in Some “Place”

Pressing the keys on the keyboard I have in front of me causes the appearance of graphic characters that I can see on the monitor connected to it. The movements of my fingers are associated with particular letters, and automatically, following my thoughts, the phrases and sentences flow out. Now, suppose that I close my eyes and stop thinking about the previous discussion in order to concentrate on the image of the keyboard. In some way I have the keyboard “right in front of me,” represented by a visual image that is almost as if copied from the perception I was experiencing before I closed my eyes.

Opening my eyes, I get up from my chair and take a few steps across the room. Again I close my eyes, and upon remembering the keyboard, I imagine it somewhere behind me. If I wanted to observe the image exactly as the keyboard presented itself to my perception, I would have to place it in a position “in front of my eyes.” To do that, I must either mentally turn my body around or “move” the machine through the “external space” until it is located in front of me. Now the machine is “in front of my eyes,” but this produces a spatial dislocation, because if I open my eyes I will see a window in front of me. In this way, it becomes evident that the location of the object in the representation is placed in a “space” that may not coincide with the space in which the original perception was given.

It becomes evident that the location of the object in the representation is placed in a “space” that may not coincide with the space in which the original perception was given.

Furthermore, I can go on to imagine the keyboard located in the window in front of me, or I can imagine the whole ensemble closer to or farther away from me. I can even expand or shrink the size of the whole scene or some of its components. I can distort these bodies, and finally, I can even change their colours.

But I also discover some impossibilities. I cannot, for example, imagine those objects without colour, no matter how hard I try to make them “transparent,” since it is precisely colour or “shade” that will define the edges or differences of the transparency. Clearly, I am confirming that extension and colour are not independent contents, and hence I cannot imagine colour without extension. It is precisely this point that makes me reflect that if I am unable to represent colour without extension, then the extension of the representation also denotes the “spatiality” in which the represented object is placed. It is this spatiality that interests us.

### **Image of the Perception and Perception of the Image**

So it is, then, that if I face the keyboard and close my eyes, I can still, with relative accuracy, extend my fingers and hit the correct keys. This is because my fingers follow images that operate in this case, “delineating” my movements. If, however, I displace the image toward the left in my space of representation, my fingers will follow the delineation and will no longer coincide with the external keyboard. If I then “internalize” the image toward the centre of the space of representation, placing the image of the keyboard “inside my head,” for example, the movement of my fingers will tend to be inhibited. Conversely, if I “externalize” the image, placing it “several meters in front of me,” I will experience that not only my fingers but also entire areas of my body will tend in that direction.

If the perceptions of the “external” world correspond to “externalized” images (“outside” the cenesthetic-tactile register of the head, “inside” of whose boundary is the “look” of the observer), the perception of the “internal” world will have corresponding “internalized” representations (“inside” the limits of the tactile-cenesthetic register, which in turn is “looked on” also from “within” this boundary but displaced from its central position, which is now occupied by that which is “seen”).

### **Representation: Capacity for Transformation**

In our example we saw how the representation of the keyboard could be altered in its colour, shape, size, position, perspective, and so on. It is also clear that we could completely “recreate” the object in question, modifying it until it became unrecognizable.

If, finally, our keyboard becomes a rock (as the prince becomes a frog), even if all the characteristics in our new image are those of a rock, for us that rock will remain “the transformed keyboard.” Such recognition is possible thanks to the memories and the history that we keep alive in our new representation. This new image will involve a structuring that is no longer simply visual. And it is precisely this structuring in which the image is given that allows us to establish memories, climates, and affective tones related to the object in question, even when it has disappeared or been drastically modified.

Conversely, we can observe that the modification of the general structure will produce variations in the image (when recalled or superimposed on the perception).

We find ourselves, then, in a world in which the perception seems to inform us of its variations, while the image, in stimulating our memory, launches us to reinterpret and modify the data coming from that world. Accordingly, to every perception there is a corresponding representation that unfailingly modifies the “data” of “reality.” In other words, the structure perception-image is a behaviour of the consciousness in the world, whose meaning is the transformation of this world.

## **Image, landscape and transformation**

I constitute the world in which I perceive and carry out my daily routine, not only through representations that allow me to recognize and act but also through copresent systems of representation. The structuring that I make in the world I call a “landscape,” and I can verify that the perception of the world is always a recognition and interpretation of a reality according to my landscape. This world, which I take to be reality, is my own biography in action, and the action of transformation that I carry out in the world is my own transformation. When I speak about my internal world I am also speaking about the interpretation that I make of it and the transformation that I carry out in it.

The distinctions that we have made until now between “internal” and “external” space, based on the register of boundaries set by the tactile-cenesthetic perceptions, cannot be maintained when we speak about this globality of the consciousness in the world, for which the world is its “landscape” and the I its “look.” This mode of consciousness-being-in-the-world is basically a mode of action in perspective, whose immediate spatial reference is the body itself, not simply the intrabody. But the body, while being an object of the world, is also an object of the landscape and an object of transformation, and in this way it ends up becoming a prosthesis of human intentionality.

If images allow recognition and action, then according to the structure of the landscape and the needs of individuals and peoples (or according to what they consider their needs to be), they will, in the same way, tend to transform the world.

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## GUIDED EXPERIENCES

Guided experiences are basically works with images.

There are those who maintain that, as in dreams and fantasies, nothing special happens with images since they have no relation to daily life. Others, in turn, would like to supervise everything that happens in them, because it seems to them that if images are not under control they will become extremely dangerous weapons.

Some religions accuse others of idolatry, declaring that to visually imagine God or present different artistic representations, is impiety. It's clear that the accusers also have their prayers, imagine sounds and locate the body in certain directions, without knowing that in these cases they are also working with images, just not visual images.

Many think that certain images should be prohibited on TV because here they find the causes of present-day violence. Others are of the opinion that thanks to images, leaders conserve and amplify their power and businesses improve their sales.

So, the deceit in these fields is extraordinary and everyone can find the position that best accommodates their interests, or their particular beliefs.

There are various images that correspond to the external senses (visual, auditory, olfactory, taste and touch) and also images that correspond to the inner senses (cenesthetic, proper to the intrabody; kinesthetic, proper to movement and the position of the body; thermal, that correspond to external temperature and many more that correspond to receptors of pressure, acidity, alkalinity, etc.)

For our part, we consider images to be an interesting support for varying the point of view; accelerating mental dynamics and ingenuity, to recapture emotions, remember life events, and design projects. Our guided experiences tend to make existence positive, to strengthen contact with oneself, to support the search for meaning in life.

Guided Experiences consist of a series of phrases which describe a mental scene in which the listener places herself, producing emotional climates that allow her particular contents to emerge.

The phrases are separated by ellipsis that indicate to the reader that appropriate time should be given for each person to mentally locate the individuals or objects that are most appropriate for them. Asterisks (\*) indicate more prolonged silences.

This originality makes the listener – instead of passively following all the development – participate actively in the experience, filling scenes with their own mental contents. In this way, although the basis is the same for all, the same experience ends up being totally different for every person, something that can be verified afterwards during the interchange and discussion about the work carried out.

In general we find the following structure in the experiences:

1. Establishing of the Scene
2. Tension (knot)
3. Resolution
4. Exit in a positive climate

The intention is that in the process, this system of imagery becomes integrated into the psychism of the subject until it influences their daily life in a positive way.

Our system of personal and social work functions as a big guided experience in which the subject carries out a process of surpassing resistances and limits.

In synthesis we can say that:

In the Guided Experiences it is important to establish relationships between what happens in one's own psychism and what happens in daily life. It is also interesting to relate the difficulties that one has with the guided experiences with those that happen in daily life.

What is important are the fundamental modifications that are produced in one's behaviour.

One starts to really develop when, in one's own conduct, responses that overcome and grow emerge. That is, positive changes are produced in oneself and help is given to others in the same direction.

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## ATTENTION

A function of the consciousness with which it observes both external and internal phenomena or objects. When a stimulus crosses a certain threshold, it awakens the interest of the consciousness and moves into the central field of the attention. That is, the attention functions through interest; it follows things that in some way impress the consciousness and create a register. A stimulus that awakens interest stays in the central attentional field which we call the field of the "present." This is related to perception. All objects that are not strictly part of the given central object become gradually diffused in the attentional field, that is, less attention is paid to them. However, other objects which are not actually present may accompany or be linked to the central object through associative relationships. We call this attentional phenomena the field of the "copresent" and it is related to the memory.

In the act of evocation, one moves one's attention from an object in the attentional presence to an object in the co presence; this is possible because there is a register of both the present object present and the copresent object. Through copresence one can structure and interpret new data never before seen. We say that when one attends to an object, what is evident is made present, while the non evident appears in a copresent way. This occurs in the consciousness when it perceives something, so that one always structures more than one literally perceives, overlaying other things onto the object under observation.

There are various types of attention depending on the way in which one attends to phenomenon. So, we can talk about simple attention, divided attention, directed attention and also a tense attention.

Simple attention is a way of attending where the attention is exclusively dedicated to the activity being done.

Divided attention is that in which one attends to two stimuli simultaneously. For example, attending to an object or phenomenon and simultaneously being attentive to a part of one's body.

Directed attention is a form of apperceptual attention in which the activity of thinking is linked to registers of relaxation, self-observation, comprehension and inner clarity. Attending, and in the meantime, observing from within myself that I am attentive.

There also exists a tense attention in which the activity of thinking is linked to bodily tensions of a muscular kind – tensions that are unnecessary for the attention process.

It is important to point out that the type of attention that is used in every situation is directly linked to one's perspective, look, location in front of things, in front of others and in front of life in general.

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## **APPENDIX I**

### **POINT OF VIEW, DESCRIPTION, SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS**

Within the context of the plan of study and practices proposed for members of the Humanist Movement, it's of interest that they are aware of the basic notions of how to make a summary and a synthesis beginning with a description. It is of interest that the postulants can make summaries and syntheses not only for their study and work on each of the proposed themes but also for the final reports required for each retreat.

Therefore we offer some brief explanations of what we call description, summary and synthesis.

Description, summary, and synthesis are ancillary training and educational resources. They are practices for ordering one's thinking.

#### **Description**

A description is a story, a narrative that brings together the characteristics of the themes. It is the raw material which will be later used for the summary and the synthesis. For example, the extensive account of your life in the practice of self-knowledge is a description.

It is good to keep in mind that every description is always made from a certain point of view or a particular interest. So we could describe an object from a geometric point of view, an aesthetic, chemical, or physical one, etc.

As the point of view changes, the object is presented to us in one way or another (from one point of view or another). In this way there can be different descriptions of a given theme or object. As we change our point of interest, our location could change as well as our way of seeing the object, but not the object of study itself.

#### **Summary**

A summary is a shortening of the exposition of an idea. It seeks an economy of words, of resources, but without losing the sense of the description.

It does not change the point view. It removes things without changing anything. It is the same thing already expressed, but less extensively.

It is a short story in which the continuity, sequence and the process are not lost.

In the summary I compress the description. I don't fix a point of view but rather I faithfully reduce the description and eliminate the insubstantial.

#### **Synthesis**

The synthesis is a restructuring of the summary based on a fixed point of interest. The synthesis is elaborated based on a summary. While the summary should maintain the order of exposition of the description, the synthesis can lose that continuity.

In terms of length, the synthesis is much shorter than the summary.

The way the synthesis is structured can vary, but it never loses what is substantial. It may not maintain continuity, but it should address the essential.

The synthesis is more creative than the summary which necessarily maintains the description. In the synthesis the various elements are mutually implied; they are interrelated and form part of a new structuring.

Because it is a structuring, the synthesis already involves interpretation.

The synthesis allows us to understand the structure of what is being studied from the chosen point of view.

In the synthesis, the interest is set and it doesn't matter whether it is manifest, or explicit. We construct the synthesis according to the interest we have fixed.

In the autobiography, for example, we begin by writing an extensive narrative. After that we summarize the story, which is to say, we go removing words without losing the order of events or key aspects. First we make a description, next we summarize it and finally we are interested in the structure, in other words, the synthesis.

For example, when we produce the autobiographical synthesis on the basis of the repetitions, accidents, general tendencies, projects, deviations, changes of reveries, modification of the nucleus, etc. we are restructuring the narrative or summary according to the interest we have fixed. We are trying to understand how these elements relate to each other. We are structuring a synthesis.

This is no longer a short story, it loses the anecdotal, we are searching for meanings, for the internal plot, we are giving it structure.

The synthesis might be very arbitrary but it has a structure, a coherence that can be grasped.

Note:

This material was produced based on explanations given about this theme by Silo in a retreat in 1993.

## **PERSONAL WORK MODULES**

## INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULES OF PERSONAL WORK

The retreats and seminars of the modules included in this manual are recommended for the personal work of members of the Humanist Movement, and are based on the books of Self-Liberation, by Luis Ammann, and Guided Experiences (Collected Works, Vol. I) by Silo. Also included are modules on various themes and techniques carried out in their moment by the councils of the Humanist Movement and useful for deepening personal work.

The seminars and retreats can be considered independent units in the sense that there is no need to follow a certain sequence or order of process. Consequently, each group can choose any of them in accordance with their interests and needs. This way of doing things applies to all works except the retreats on Operative that have a defined order which require work and study prior to the themes and techniques explained in Self-Liberation.

The Study Themes of the first part of this Manual, as well as the bibliographical references included at the end of the retreats and seminars, are recommended in order to deepen the theoretical context of the different techniques and exercises carried out.

It is recommended to follow the sequence of work of the retreats and seminars themselves. As for the times that are required to develop the themes and the exercises, only very general estimates are given, so that each group may regulate the times according to their internal rhythm and style of work.

The duration of the retreats and seminars are as follows:

- a) The seminars start and finish on the same day.
- b) The retreats last two or more days, with the arrival of the participants taking place on the afternoon of the day before the retreat begins.

# SEMINARS



## SEMINAR I: ATTENTION EXERCISES

The present seminar can be done in a long day of work without fixing times for the exercises, putting the accent on the search for an emotional background of great liking for the theme. In this way, every person will be able to regulate the times needed to achieve the corresponding registers, repeating the exercises time and again in order to go deeper, studying the *Comments*, taking notes and interchanging with others.

As is usual in our seminars and retreats, the work is first done individually, then there is interchange in small groups and finally, joint interchanges can be made about the experiences and comprehensions achieved.

We will start with very simple exercises trying to clearly detect the registers of:

- Simple attention
- Divided attention
- Directed attention

### Exercises of Simple Attention:

**Exercise A:** Move 5 objects from one place to another. Then return each object to its original location.

**Exercise B:** Do the same as exercise A, but now with 10 objects.

*Comments: In the cases in which one manages to do the exercise well, one notes that the Attention is on the object and not on oneself. One can sometimes also lose the attention on the object. When one loses Attention on an object, it could be that one is attending to another object (for example, a divagation), but in any case, one is not attending to oneself.*

**Exercise C:** Simple Attention on the divagation.

*Comments: If this exercise is done well, there is a conflict produced: either the level of consciousness lowers immediately, or the divagations are detained. If this doesn't happen, it means that Attention is being placed on an object that is not the divagation, for example, on oneself, or in an intellectual task.*

### Exercises of Divided Attention:

**Exercise A:** Divide the Attention between two simultaneous readings.

**Exercise B:** Divide the Attention between a reading and one's fist.

**Exercise C:** Attend to two simultaneous questions and respond to both of them.

*Comments: Where are you when you attend to two simultaneous stimuli? You don't exist. You are not attending to yourself in this moment. In all these exercises you do not have consciousness of self. The registers of simple Attention are more peripheral (in the eyes for example), whereas in divided Attention you internalise the register more (in some cases in the head).*

### Exercises of Directed Attention:

**Exercise A:** Readings are made, trying to detect the register of directed Attention.

*You pay attention, and at the same time you know that you are paying attention. You have the intention to not lose your Attention.*

**Exercise B:** It is proposed to exercise directed Attention in different situations (games, chats, etc)

*Comments: This is a work where things get a bit more complicated. It shouldn't end up as something robotic. The more "natural" the better, knowing what it is that happens in one's own head. You can be into any thing but still in theme. It doesn't matter if it's a joke or a chat about physics. It's not the object to which the consciousness refers that makes one be in theme, but rather the intention to pay attention, the attitude of being alert. According to this, the most interesting thing is not the object (be it something physical, one's own body, or representations like one's self-image, an interesting topic of conversation, a landscape, a loved one, etc.), but rather the mental direction that originates from being emplaced in the acts and not in the objects of consciousness.*

### **Some comments on the registers:**

- The place from which you look feels like it is further back in the head.
- The emotional tone changes. It's more neutral. Everything seems more artificial.
- One is also present. I exist.
- Distance becomes more apparent, as well as the space between things.
- Time or movements become slower.
- Responses become deferred.
- If you manage to achieve consciousness of self, you become aware of the things that irrupt as inertia (for example, those who are always talking, talk less, and those who generally don't talk so much, talk more.

### **Interchange in groups of three**

#### **Interchange as a whole group**

*Comments: Things that help one enter:*

*In this case of a loss of consciousness of self from an external look, the problem is in the entrance before they get you, before you get sucked in. Through the different works that we have done over time, we have this entrance associated to different things: body posture, the register of the fist, the spatial reference, the breathing, etc. Do it however you like, use whichever you like, find which one you like best.*

*What are you supporting yourself with right now? That is your way in.*

### **Synthesis of the practices of Attention:**

Simple Attention: Attend to an object. 'Simple' doesn't mean it's low-level. Doing something carefully with simple attention can be something done very well.

Divided Attention: When there is more than one attentional focus at the same time.

Directed Attention: I have the intention to not lose my attention, to maintain my attention.

Attention on oneself, or consciousness of self. When, no matter what I'm doing, I don't forget myself. It's a way-of-being structurally among things, and the emotional tone is different.

There are many forms of attention, each one with a different emotional tone.

Attention is badly associated with effort, tension, and seriousness.

We differentiate between an exercise and a way of being in the world. In an exercise, things are forced so that one can find the register.

The emotional quality is different. In an exercise, there is a register of "obligation". In the way of being, there is something pleasant: "It's very nice to be paying attention."

There is a form of attention that is not recommended. That is, a kind of self-observation in which what is operating is introspection. Very often one can fall into an introspective phenomenon, due to the cultural influence of the times. For us, this is not a way of working with attention. It's not advisable as a daily attitude, it creates intermediations. It might be useful if I'm doing an investigation to see how certain phenomena arise. It would be good to not confuse that kind of work with attention, which is to move in situations with a good level of attention. In introspection, there is a falling inward. It creates an artificial division in the structure of consciousness-world. Inhibitions in the way of relating are created. The tendency to go inwards is the symptom of attentional work done badly.

With directed attention, the noise lowers. Mental direction will have more meaning if it's done from a place with a minimal degree of freedom.

You attain a vigilic position, vigilance over your compulsions. In any case, errors, defects and inabilities are not avoided with consciousness of self.

Even with all the techniques, any planning done with "out of theme" elements will not go well, since it's the mental direction of one's compulsions.

Any planning that is important for you, do it in the best vigilic state possible.

Even with a lot of expert technique in the development of projects, the mental direction can be there through the compensation of compulsions, frustrations, revindications, etc.

The exercise of directed attention has its registers. Our aim is that it be pleasing. It can't be done if you're not into it, it's tiring. This mechanism should end up being pleasing.

How do you know you're paying attention? Is there some indicator? What are the registers of knowing that you're paying attention? Your look moves back in a little.

What happens to time with that look? To consciousness, it seems as if it gets slower. Compulsions lower.

What happens to the functioning of one's reasoning? You have the impression that it's done more carefully.

### **Personal summary and synthesis**

Finish the day's work and summarize and then synthesize your personal experience in terms of registers and comprehensions.

### **Conclusion of the seminar with a friendly, shared meal.**

## APPENDIX 1

### CONCLUSION ABOUT ATTENTION

*Based on a chat of Silo's on "Attention" in Mendoza, September 1989. It is interesting to read this conclusion at the end of the exercises as it complements the work, connecting the perspective of attention to the action of the system. It also perfectly defines the way of working with attention.*

In a time of strong hypnosis like this one, we find that the suggestive power of the image is very strong. The suggestive power of the moment in which one lives, of the social environment, the press, TV, they all act very strongly. There is no way to compare, everywhere you find the same thing, there are certain set values and everything is accepted without discussion. We are subjected to a large field of influence and are trapped in this hypnosis of the system. There is little critical capacity because you cannot compare things outside, and there is little self-critical capacity because you cannot compare things within yourself.

In this situation in which we live, attention is a formidable tool to counter the influence of the system, to discover its weaknesses and develop points of view and approaches that can help clarify people so that they may be able to resist.

We were saying that a good attitude for learning, a good memory, an increased ability to stick with one's plans and overall, growth in one's capacity for change, all depend on attention.

When we pay attention, we are not as susceptible or vulnerable to peer pressure or situational pressure, or to the presentation of phony images. When we pay attention, our ability for criticism and self-criticism increases. Self-criticism doesn't mean to say, "I am an idiot." In any case that's the vision that you believe others have on you and that you take on as your own. Self-criticism has to do with a soft state of attention on yourself, in which you can discover both positive and negative aspects. Ones to improve and others to be strengthened. Nor is criticism that sour attitude of negating everything. Criticism is a soft, open, unbiased and creative attitude on what we find around us.

With the exercises we have seen, we are not intending to give a technique of permanent work - attention cannot be worked at in a way that is forced. The point is to recognize that soft register of being attentive, of feeling well emplaced. The theme of attention, more than a practice, is an attitude that, if we maintain it, because it's good to be in that state, we would have registers of greater strength and clarity.

We are talking about a different kind of mental behaviour that is undoubtedly very different from the normal mental behaviour we see around us.

## APPENDIX 2

### ATTENTION

A function of the consciousness with which it observes both external and internal phenomena or objects. When a stimulus crosses a certain threshold, it awakens the interest of the consciousness and moves into the central field of the attention. That is, the attention functions through *interest*; it follows things that in some way impress the consciousness and create a register. A stimulus that awakens interest can stay in the central attentional field that we call the field of the “present, ” and which has to do with perception. All objects that are not strictly part of the given central object become gradually diffused in the attentional field, that is, less attention is paid to them. However, other objects that are not actually present may accompany or be linked to the central object through associative relationships. We call this attentional phenomenon the field of the “co-present” and it is related to the memory.

In the act of evocation, one moves one’s attention from an object in the attentional presence to an object in the co-presence. This is possible because there is a register of both the object present and the co-present object. Through co-presence one can structure and interpret new data never before seen. We say that, when one attends to an object, what is evident is made present, while the non-evident appears in a co-present way. This occurs in the consciousness when it perceives something, so that one always structures more than one literally perceives, overlaying other things onto the object under observation. The co-presence also includes the different levels of consciousness; thus, in vigil there is a co-presence of reveries, and in sleep, there is a copresence of vigil. This gives rise to the different states.

(Extracted from the Glossary of Self-Liberation)

### Bibliography

Luis A. Amman, Self-Liberation, Glossary.

## **SEMINAR II: PRACTICES OF ATTENTION**

### **Introduction**

The duration of this seminar is one day and it consists mainly of exercises that help to train the "muscle" of attention. Indeed, the practice of attention, with an experimental basis and through various exercises, widens the field of registers, increasing the capacity of alertness in general and the capacity of concentration in particular. In this way, experiences can accumulate to the point where finally our consciousness has more registers of itself. These are experiences that are designed to enrich directed attention, that alert mental behaviour that allows you to not forget yourself.

We need to consider that every attentional exercise has to be done with liking, without forcing, with pleasure and a liking for experimentation, as if it were a game in an ambit of open and friendly relations with others.

It will be very helpful to take note of the registers of ease and difficulty in each of the practices, as well as the "discoveries" observed, and the concerns and ideas that arise. All of this will enhance the interchanges and promote understanding.

The day begins with a complete relaxation guided either by the person giving the seminar or on CD.

After all the exercises are completed, the participants can read and discuss the talk on attention given by Silo in 1989.

### **Attention exercises with external senses**

#### **Work for the whole group**

These exercises can be done while sitting, standing or walking.

#### **Attention through Sight**

The idea here is to pay attention to everything you see in a period set by the facilitator of the seminar, who gives the start and stop times of the exercise. Once the time is up, each participant makes notes in their book about the sequence of what they saw. For example, first I saw the table, then the chair, then the window, next the tree, etc.

First exercise: 15 seconds. This is repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on the sequence of stimuli each time.

Second exercise: Same as above, but now for 30 seconds. This is repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on the sequence of stimuli each time.

Third exercise: 60 seconds. Same as above. This is repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on the sequence of stimuli each time.

#### **Interchange**

Difficulties as well as what was easy to do are discussed. Generally, impediments are of three types. Physical: fatigue, discomforts with the body, sleepiness, etc.; Emotional:

concerns about relationship problems, violence in any form, etc.; Mental: judging oneself and others, scepticism, and so on. Conversely, when one feels good, your body does not bother you, the emotions are neutral or high, and the head is clear and open. Take notes.

### **Attention through Hearing**

Just as with sight, here we try to attend to all the sounds that occur during a fixed time. Once the time is up, each participant will make notes in their book about the sequence of what was perceived. For example, first I heard my breathing, then my friend walking, then the sound of a car, right after that a door opening, etc.

First exercise: 15 seconds. This is repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on the sequence of what was perceived according to the succession of stimuli each time.

Second exercise: Same as above, but 30 seconds. This is repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on the sequence of what was perceived according to the succession of stimuli each time.

Third exercise: 60 seconds. Same as above. This is repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on the sequence of what was perceived according to the succession of stimuli each time.

### **Interchange**

Comments on difficulties and what was easy to do, and relations are made with the exercise of attention through sight. Take notes.

(Free time)

### **Attention through Touch**

Here we try to attend to everything we perceive through the skin, within a fixed period of time. Once the time is up, each participant will make notes in their book about the sequence of what was perceived. For example, first my face leaning against my hand, then my feet on the floor, then the clothes I'm wearing, next the pen I have in my hand, etc.

First exercise: 15 seconds. This is repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on the sequence of what was perceived according to the succession of stimuli each time.

Second exercise: Same as above, but 30 seconds. This is repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on the sequence of what was perceived according to the succession of stimuli each time.

Third exercise: 60 seconds. Same as above. This is repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on the sequence of what was perceived according to the succession of stimuli each time.

### **Attention with two senses: Sight and Hearing**

Here, in a fixed period of time, we try to attend to everything perceived simultaneously through sight and hearing. Once the time is up, each participant will make notes in their book about the sequence of what was perceived. For example, first I saw the table and heard my

breathing, then I saw the chair and I heard my friend walking, next I saw the window and heard the sound of a car, then I saw the tree and heard a door opening, etc.

First exercise: 15 seconds. Repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on what double-stimuli were perceived in sequence each time.

Second exercise: Same as above, but 30 seconds. Repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on what double-stimuli were perceived in sequence each time.

Third exercise: 60 seconds. Same as above. Repeated four times with short intervals in between, and notes are taken on what double-stimuli were perceived in sequence each time.

**Note:** *If people have a liking for these exercises and wish to continue working with them in daily life, they could experiment with other variations, for example, adding one more sense, attending simultaneously to sight, hearing and touch.*

## **Interchange**

Comments on the difficulties and also what was easy, trying to describe the differences registered through perceiving by one sense or another, as well as by attending simultaneously through two senses. Take notes.

## **Individual work**

Summarize your experience with all the exercises, especially noting the clearest resistances or impediments, as well as the registers of concentrated attention, without chains of association or divagations. To synthesize, consider what can help you have a more attentive attitude in front of the world of stimuli in general.

(Shared lunch)

## **Attentional exercises with the internal senses**

### **Work for the whole group**

#### **Attention through Kinesthesia**

In a comfortable, seated position, the idea is to attend to the equilibrium and harmony of the position of your body. After a time, change your body position, and so on, five (5) times. Then, do the same thing, but now standing, changing the body position five (5) times. Finally, five (5) times again, but walking. Each participant regulates the times and the number of attempts for themselves. To add a degree of difficulty that may raise the level of alertness, the exercises may be done while talking with someone. Take notes.

#### **Attention through Cenesthesia**

Here we try to attend to the registers of internal and mental relaxation, but with our eyes open. The attention is placed on the intrabody, aiming to maintain a degree of relaxation that allows you to interact well with the environment, that facilitates the giving of different responses before a variety of stimuli and circumstances. The idea is not to disconnect from



the world, but instead to live actively within it, with your attention placed on a lightly relaxed intrabody.

Each participant regulates the time of the practice. It's recommended to experiment with talking to others. Take notes.

### **Interchange**

Comments on the ease and difficulties with this attentional work with the internal senses. Take notes.

### **Relaxation as an attentional practice**

The mental journey through external, internal and mental sensations is a work of the gradual concentration of attention. Therefore, the depth of the relaxation will depend on it.

The advantage of linking attention with relaxation is that since we do this relaxation often, we can broaden the scope of our attentional practice, noticing when we go out of theme, start to divagate, and lose the thread of the mental journey through the body. In the process, the idea is to eventually be able to do a complete relax with the least amount of interference or loss of concentration possible.

### **Work for the whole group**

The facilitator of the seminar guides a complete relax or plays one on a CD.

### **Interchange**

Comments on the ease and difficulties of concentration in terms of the complete relax . Take notes.

### **Attentional practices with internal states**

Here you try to evoke the register of the *presence of the human* or of *treating others as I want to be treated* and keep your attention concentrated on this internal state, regardless of the situation in which you have to act, or especially when you relate to other people.

The idea is to first work with one of the states and then the other. Participants regulate their own times, while they relate to others, read or write.

### **Interchange**

Comments on the ease and difficulties of maintaining your attention connected to those internal states.

### **Group Reading**

The talk given by Silo in 1989 is read, commented upon and discussed.

### **Individual work — Summary and synthesis**

- 1 Summarize and synthesize the talk.
- 2 Summarize and synthesize the personal work of the day.

**Conclusion of the seminar with a friendly, shared meal.**

## APPENDIX 1

### CONTRIBUTION REGARDING ATTENTION

(Transcription of a cassette of a talk by Silo. September 1989)

In an era of strong hypnosis like this one, attention is a powerful tool with which to counter the influence of the system, discover one's weak points and develop points of view and proposals that can serve to clarify people and help them in their opposition to the system. Our people have to make a little effort in this direction. Knowledge of oneself is very powerful. It increases reversibility, diminishes hypnosis, and allows one to make decisions.

I hear the liberal good-for-nothings, I see their televised proclamations covered in ideology and I am attentive. I know that I am paying attention, and the problem with directed attention, the problem for them, is that I don't lose my reference, I'm not taken by the sensory promises that I'm presented with.

We know of one kind of attention that is daily attention. The attention that goes in the direction of the stimuli. A stimulus is produced, and I pay attention. I ring a bell and the dog goes to eat. I go toward things according to how my attention is called by a sensory stimulus.

We know of another kind of attention. There are many stimuli and, out of all of them, I go toward those stimuli that coincide with my interests. In the first case the attention is called simply by stimuli, and it's a mechanical response. I make noise and away the people go. The second case, in which the subject has their interests and all that, appears to be an attention that is a little more conscious. But it's an attention that is equally mechanical. It doesn't come from the stimulus but instead goes from you to the stimulus – in any case the attention is still taken, taken by those aspirations, by those behaviours that have not even been reviewed. One doesn't even know why one has those interests. And so why do we go? Because that's how we're built, that's how we're conditioned to respond to the stimulus. Very interesting.

I'm not sure if you see how the source is different, regarding the orientation of the attention. The first is a kind of animal attention, called by external stimuli, and the second is an attention that really is human, which is that thing of going to the other. Interests. But observe that as much in one case as in the other, one isn't moving with genuine control, moving and knowing what one is doing – in neither of those cases. There is a difference between the two, but it's clear that one doesn't know what one is doing in either case.

We know these forms of attention. We know what divided attention is, for example. We know what it is to be attending to two stimuli at the same time. That kind of attention in reality is not very frequent. Except for in a few professions, some occupations, or in exercises. There is a certain capacity to attend to two things at the same time. Sometimes a profession will demand that.

Someone might say: "Okay, then that thing becomes mechanical and we see a guy driving the bus, he takes the fare, gives the ticket, makes change, yells at the people in the back. That becomes mechanical. But there are professions in which that practice, that attention, is divided. Through experience, through practice, works, exercises, we know about that kind of attention. There is another kind of attention which is directed attention. We can do many exercises or experiences and the only thing that we are going to achieve with those exercises is to understand that attention is very elastic, that it allows for different forms, and we are going to be able to test our own attention. But we can't propose these practices beyond what they really are: a practice or a test.

We can't do that (go beyond practice) because if we think there will be a transformation by exercising a form of attention through effort and sustained practice, in reality what is going to be produced is fatigue. And we'll work hard on day 1, day 2, day 3, a little less on day 4, less

on day 5 and then, nothing... It takes a lot of effort and we can't put it aside to then pick it up again without much effort, it's such a short time, and consequently we don't obtain benefits proportional to our efforts. So these are things that can't be sustained.

Those tests are of interest because they allow us to understand the secrets of attention. One of the things that directed attention can allow us to understand is that our reversibility works with greater fluidity. In the measure that we are conversing and we are aware of what we are saying, we don't lose our centre of gravity. We realize that it is pretty difficult for us to be taken. Because we could be told one thing or another, but our look is clear. We are neither as susceptible nor as vulnerable to the pressure of the group or of situations, nor to the presentation of cheap images. Because we have our centre within ourselves.

At one point it was said that one of the characteristics of hypnosis was the loss of reference within the subject, and the capacity to make comparisons. That loss of the ability to make comparisons to the point where the object became the central thing – at that point it wasn't possible to compare it to anything, and without those comparisons one would fall into that whole field of influences. That happens in dreams as well. And it doesn't just happen in hypnosis. It happens in daily life. The suggestive power of the image is very strong, the suggestion of the moment in which one lives, the social environment, the suggestion of the press, the TV, these act very strongly. There is nothing to make comparisons with, everything is the same everywhere, there are certain established values, all of that is accepted, all of that is not thought, that is what happens, that is what occurs, you are subjected to that great field of influences and your attention finally ends up going in that direction. And there we are trapped in that hypnosis of the system. We have spoken about these things at times.

The capacity for reversibility and for self-criticism diminishes considerably in all people. If there is little ability for critical thinking it is because things cannot be compared; that's why it can't be done. And if there is little ability for self-criticism it is because one cannot compare things within oneself. If you don't know yourself you can't compare things within yourself, and right away you are hindered in your ability to be self-critical. If you don't know yourself, you can't be self-critical.

But at times people believe they are being self-critical. There are people who sometimes say: "I admit that I have to be more self-critical. I'm an ass." When they say these things, in reality they are not making comparisons between things that are happening to them. They are using the look of another to then dump it upon themselves. Their self-criticism really has no value. It's as if others were criticizing them, they are saying what other people say about them, but as if it were their own thinking.

If there is no self-criticism and there is no criticism, there can be no reversibility. That is, the aptitude isn't there to leave that field of external influences that come from the system.

You don't have self-criticism because you don't have knowledge. (...)

One's emplacement is put into play in these phenomena. That form of directed attention, if we present it as a practice and from there try to generate it, it's going to end up being forced, it won't give us time to obtain any results and the thing is going to get screwed up.

If we were to remember a few interesting moments in which, with attention, we did things without losing consciousness of ourselves, and we felt a great internal strength, without any forcing, that would help us more than this thing of proposing that we maintain a certain kind of attention.

It is enough that right now while we are talking (softly, softly, always very softly), while we are talking attentively, attentive to what is being said, attentive to the other people and all of that, it would be enough if we felt emplaced, here, where we are, for us to notice a look that is quite a bit clearer. It is not a compulsive proposal; it isn't an effort to maintain one's attention. It is, simply, to feel emplaced, here where we are, talking, knowing that we are

talking, discussing certain themes, we are thinking while we are discussing them. If we maintained that attitude (it's not a practice or anything forced) and we achieved registers of greater strength and freshness, not an intermediation by the image, I think we could get quite a bit out of that mental conduct.

We are talking about a different mental conduct. One that, without a doubt, is very different from the normal mental conduct that we observe around us. We observe a very determined mental conduct around us – it is not managed very much at all, not very clear, and of course, not very strong. It seems that we can acquire this mental demeanour, which is also a behaviour, a mental conduct that can give us quite a bit of reversibility, critical and self-critical ability and strength in our thinking. But this isn't to say that one doesn't get taken, right? In front of certain stimuli, in front of certain things... one gets taken. It's not bad. What I'm saying is that if we could convert this thing of it being more interesting to be attentive, attentive to what is really happening, attentive to what is being done, what is being said, have all that as a kind of "background buzz" – if we could somehow convert that into a psychological value, that it is good to have an attentive attitude, to be centred in front of things, I think we would gain a lot. If we propose it as a practice or as a discipline, or as something forced, we are going to have problems.

If we propose it as an attitude, I think we will register an interesting strength, a greater clarity in our ideas, a very critical axis, very critical. I think that that is intelligence. There is a mental conduct that one can take on; it's a behaviour as well.

And if I get taken, fine, I get taken, but I have that value. It's important to have an attentive mental attitude. I think it is very difficult if you are well placed in your attention, I think it is really much more difficult to get screwed by climates, by things like that... things that are operating mechanically over you. I think it is more difficult than if you are simply called by stimuli or seeing if that thing there has something to do with me, or not. If it has something to do with you, you go; if it has nothing to do with you, you look at the bug on the wall. You're screwed, you're subjected to a whole field of influences, very much so. Whether it's of the system or of your values, you'll have problems.

I'm not talking of things that are very easy, but they are soft.

You must have, in some moment, playing around and experimenting with attention, you must have registered that clarity, that power. You must have registered it. If you frame it as a practice, there will be difficulties. You'll get tired... and finally you'll drop it, you'll have no success.

I distinguish between many forms of attention. There is one that is almost animal, that depends on external stimuli. The other attention that has to do with interests, interests that one doesn't even know where they come from, nor why one follows them... like a meteor flying... what am I saying, 'a meteor'... a ball of mud! There you go, uh uh uh, so attentive! And no detail is lost, because one's interest is there. But you don't even know what you're doing! Okay, so that's another kind of attention.

There are divided attentions and directed attentions (unclear on audio tape) whose centre of gravity is the eye of the one who looks, it's soft, it's interesting, it's critical. And among many registers, there is a register of internal strength.

That mental conduct produces a different mental functioning in the person who is emplaced in that way, compared to the rest of the people who have a mechanical attention. It seems evident that they have a different mental functioning. I would take into account that suggestion, even if it were to criticize it, discuss it, and turn it around in your head. I would take it into account, that suggestion regarding directed attention. An attention that, sustained without forcing, makes you more clear and that has more interesting registers accompanying it, more powerful. But careful, it's soft.

*Question: Is there a register of internal "disposition" as well?*

Yes. You're interested in all kinds of stupid things, it seems impossible, and it's inadmissible for any reasonable person. Some goof comes and starts talking to you about a fly, and you're there, attentive. Knowing what you are doing, you're into something else. Yes, there's great disposition there, everything is very interesting if your attention is working. Yes, it's a strong internal disposition. No, reasonable people, stereotypical people, sketches of people don't have that kind of disposition, they only have it for certain themes that are connected to their interests... In that sense, attention brings with it great disposition, everything is very interesting because it is the attention that is working. Everything is very interesting. Of course, you have your interests and your things, but your attention is very much at your disposal. It's almost childlike.

It's not a myth, it's no legend, it's a different mental conduct. And it has its rewards. You can be annoyed, you can be angry, but you're emplaced. You're emplaced, you're centred.

There can be no valid action without valid attention. How can there be valid action for someone who is all distracted? What's he talking about? It's a contradiction in terms. That can't be.

There can be no reflective action if one doesn't reflect on what one is doing. Reflective action is reflection upon the action. Reflection upon an action implies attention upon what one is doing. What reflective action are you talking about, if you're moved by stimuli that have nothing to do with re-flection? Re-flect, thinking again. If, while you're doing things, you don't know what you are doing, if while you're thinking you don't know what you're thinking, if while you're listening you don't know what you're listening to; what reflective action are you talking about? So then, you don't know what you are talking about. I'm saying that it is a different mental conduct, and not natural. It's an intentional way of putting one's head. Well, that's a way to touch one's own mechanisms; yes, it's a way of touching those mechanisms, it has to do with that. That way of thinking is not "natural"... it's not "natural" that way of feeling... No. It's not at all natural. And that is very good. (laughter)

Softly. Without complications, without forcing things. But considering it as an interesting value. The value of taking on, among all those conducts that seem valid to us, among all the things that one says: those are good, those others are terrible, that's worthwhile, not that other thing, among all those values, we also have something to say about mental conduct. It's a form of action. We have something to say about mental conduct. Not just about acting with one's hands, with things...

We're talking now about a certain mental conduct. But I don't get into any problems of moralism. If I lose myself in something, fine, I lose myself.

And I'll tell you very frankly that it is much less susceptible to the irrational influence of external stimuli. I say that because you're attentive to the object and you're emplaced in a perspective that registers, that feels. And so, yes, it's like that.

That's all that we wanted to discuss about the theme of reflective action, and how it can't be reflective if you don't know what you're doing... To know what you're doing you have to be minimally attentive to it. In some parts that whole thing about reflective action seems to be something very big, but no, it's nothing – reflective action has to do with a kind of attention.

So many screw-ups are produced through lack of attention, instead of by other motives! By errors of that kind! By a lack of attention...

So we don't know much more than this, so we'll just transmit this. But yes it is genuine what we're saying. That there exists a different register when you have made a value out of that mental conduct where he who looks, or who does, has himself as a reference, even if it's for perspective, he knows what he's doing, what he's saying, what he's hearing...

It's an apperceptive form. But I should always add to these considerations, always the same thing: don't convert it into a practice! If you want to convert it into something, convert it into a value of an interesting conduct for your mental attitude. It's not a forced kind of practice.

And really, when you're very tired and so on, this is going to diminish. That power and that thing, it's going to decrease. But when you're awake, well then you're awake. When you're awake, you should really be awake. We're not really adding much to what we already know... In any case we are re-focusing it. Going over the theme again, given the experience we have with it, no? We've done many things... So we look at the theme again, going over this theme of attention.

Why not? It is the fundamental theme of mental conduct. To do what with that attention? To do what you like. I don't know about your projects, your things... your activities, your interests... You'll see for yourself.

But I'll say this: there is a very valuable mental conduct, much more valuable than the normal one, the one I have. This is the reflection we wanted to leave on the theme of attention.

We have been working with other friends, very good, and we insisted on this theme of attention, of reversible attention, of de-hypnotized attention, of attention with this great disposition behind it, of critical attention, of attention related to distance, of the problem of the suggestiveness of what one says, what one sees, of attention placed on what one is doing, of reflective action.

We put emphasis on the fact that that conduct is mental and we consider it, perhaps mistakenly, to be something very valuable. And we don't know much more about the theme. Also that there are registers – surely if you look over your past at some point, you'll find very powerful registers, with lots of force, connected to this thing of attention.

It seems that if you achieve good results, you don't have to worry about anything because you like it and want it. Once you get some good results, you'll see you like going around like this. Like pelicans who like going around with a rock. Because they feel this little weight here... If they don't have a fish, at least they have a rock. You'll always find a little rock if you open their beaks (laughter). And so you'll like going around like this. Well, so discussing this theme hasn't taken too long. Half an hour, an hour. But it seems correct to me to make this final suggestion. Because by the little that we have seen, this is of great interest. It's good, because it seems to make us strong, with greater reversibility, critical, it makes us pretty reflective.

It's a mental conduct that can end up becoming a daily mental conduct. And it isn't the conduct that you normally see around you. Well, that's their problem, we're not going to cry about that... And forcing things isn't good for us, it doesn't give us any results, it'll deceive us, it will make us lose force and in a short time we'll end up dropping the whole thing.

I'd leave the theme there. We call it directed attention, not forced, soft, understood by different experiments and perhaps accompanied by favourable registers, not proposed as a practice. We say that among other things, it is apperceptive attention. And we put it all under the theme of conduct. It's a conduct. There are conducts that are rather twisted, aren't there? Of course there are mental conducts! Aren't there people who are trained, for whatever reason, to see the bad in everything? Aren't there people whose look is always negative? Of course there are – there are people who live with that kind of mental behaviour!

This is interesting, if you're interested in liberty.

I don't think this is really going to help you with other mental functions, but I do think that it can give you much critical ability, and much ability to take your eye where you want it to go. It's not going to improve your memory, it won't make your thinking more agile, those are personal characteristics. But it will give you reversibility. And all that about reflective action, we have to take this to that theme. And that climate, and that thing that you notice you get sometimes, those things also diminish with attention. They tend not to take you as much. It can't be that you're in a theme, moving ideas and things around that have to be crystal clear, and then all of a sudden this climate comes and fogs everything up. What is that? That can't

be, how can that be? Put your head on right! It's not good. Don't do that. You can notice this, I think everyone notices it, we're very trained, we're all very psychologistic, I think that we notice the guy who gets all climatic a lot, we're very good at that. And it seems like something pretty disproportionate to us – he's not doing anything good with his head. Pay a bit of attention!

This conduct can become an habitual mental conduct, one's regular mental conduct. It's a different kind of mental conduct.

There are people who suffer, who divagate, who get climatic. What's that good for? Who benefits from that? Not that person, and not the others either. What logic is there in that? Those are unacceptable mental conducts (laughter).

Okay, imagine, some guy comes along with that unacceptable mental conduct: go away! Think differently the next time you come around here! Of course, he comes to me with some problem, some vaporous thing... enough to fill a puddle... Don't contaminate everything! Before he even speaks... What manners! How inconsiderate, no? The guy arrives, he does something to you, he's very inconsiderate, he's lost in his thing... You can't be there with him..."beep beep beep", no problem.

Sometimes, in these dialogues between us, we reach those very neutral things, very in theme. Those moments are great. We're very simply into what we're into. And like that the world falls to pieces. You have your disasters that you've left over there... but you're interested in the theme, and it could be something silly, but it is very gratifying. But if you're in that, and then all of a sudden everything gets screwed, everything gets fogged up because of some climate... But wait, you're here, not over there. And anyway you're not going to be able to resolve what is happening over there. And instead what's happening over there is screwing you over here.

You don't know, you don't study...



## SEMINAR ON VIRTUES

Arriving to the Centre of Work in the morning, arranging of the ambit.

Explanations on the plan of the seminar, the friendly tone, without haste, and with good humour.

(Free time)

### Introduction

Our lives are changing, so we need to act in a new way, and adapt in a growing way to the new situations of a world that has changed. We need to overcome limits, open ourselves more and more to other people and with increasingly more force... Faced with these challenges, will we focus on the Yes or the No?

And what can we do to be more permanent with the Yes?

It is clear that the system of values in which we happen to live does not help us to choose – quite the opposite... It is very difficult to even imagine overcoming small problems if we feel like ants, like useless numbers, simple biological machines, voters, consumers, users, customers and other pseudo-sociological nonsense of that kind.

In order to not become asphyxiated by this stifling anti-humanist vision, we humanists do two things above all: we take care of others (actions towards the world) and take care of ourselves (personal work).

### Recognizing our own virtues

We have all worked with Self-Liberation. Many works have been taken from this book: autobiography, psychophysics, circles of personality and prestige, and so on. We have also worked with that historical vision of ourselves: the formative landscape (which allegorically and ironically makes you feel like you have glue on your shoes and have stepped on papers which stick to you...). But we have not only studied tangible objects in this theme, we have also studied values, those uncertain things, intangible things...

So far, in all those works, we've put the emphasis quite a bit on the difficulties. It has been said that we have to fight against the difficulties in order to overcome them. That's all right, it's a way of knowing yourself. But now we're going to emphasize a work that is a little bit the inverse (inverse in the procedure) of what we have done so far. This will be very difficult...

We will seek to recognize in ourselves the things that are interesting. We are going to try to detect those aspects that are interesting and positive. We will try to salvage and recognize everything that is interesting in us, whether they can be measured or not.

You have to have a certain lack of modesty in the recognition of your virtues.

### Written personal work (in groups of 4).

What are the most interesting things that I recognize in myself?

This could even be put on a scale from the most interesting to the least ... In an extreme case, if you can't think of anything, you can consult with someone else and this person could externally signal to you what he sees in you that is the most interesting... Better if you do

this with a few people. We're going to try to recognize not what turned out well, but what is interesting within us.

Group interchange

(Free time)

### **Maximizing our virtues in terms of action**

In various psychological works such as the Guided Experiences, the works of Operative, etc., the emphasis is put on certain allegorical images. For example, *"Your life weighs, your actions weigh, your viscera are being weighed..."*, and you can create many allegories around this.

With regard to the psychology of the impulse, in which we can observe the formation, translation and transformation of the impulse, when looking for difficulties you find quite a lot of raw material in the tensions associated with those problems. Those tensions do not fall from the sky – they send their pulses and signals.

Virtues, however, have no handle, no charge, and are light as a feather. On the other hand, problems are easily recognizable. Interesting things and virtues have no pulse and don't feel real. That's why it's easy to recognize problems and tensions, but when it comes to recognizing your virtues, it gets difficult, because it's as if they were not real. *"Those tense knots in your stomach are real, but the ones that are relaxed, don't exist."* This is what the System is based on. The system as a whole works with this mechanism and then tells you that you are insignificant, your opinion is not worth expressing, you're just a number, etc.

We want to maximize our virtues in terms of action. How can we convert our virtues in terms of action? I read or write good books and what do I do with that...?

How can we convert these abilities or advantages into actions? How can we get the most from them? If you we don't get anything out of them, they're of no use. If I can get them to serve my actions, great. If not, they're not interesting. Let's develop a life strategy relying on the qualities we've seen over time. We have to give this some weight. May our virtues deliver at the moment of action.

We can organize a minimal strategy to give those virtues some weight (for example, to communicate openly, always be encouraging, to move with freedom, transmit optimism, clarify projects, not take anything for granted, etc.).

If we are not taking full advantage of our qualities, if we are distracted, we are not taking full advantage of our power, our output is low. Let's have a look at this raw material and with it, organize a behavioural strategy. Let us use the qualities we have.

We need to use a project of action in order to have some kind of reference. I cannot propose to you the meaning of your life, but I can propose the project of the Movement, which is a proposal for action.

### **Personal written work** (divided in groups of 4).

We'll now organize a set of tactics and maximize it.

What are the behaviours that multiply and maximize our virtues in the direction of the project of the Movement?

## Comments

When we speak of behaviours we refer to things that are done – physical acts that could be recorded with a videocamera – and not to nice proposals. So, for example, if my virtue is to be thoughtful, the point isn't to reflect all the time, but rather to go to all those people around me and share my reflections with them, so that new images are created and of course, new actions too, about what needs to be done following the direction of the project of the Movement at this time.

## Lunch

(Free time)

## 6-month Project

The best way to support the project of the Movement is by taking charge. What would that be? What does taking charge mean? In order to take charge you have to discover what you will take charge with.

You have to take charge with the best of yourself and that is what you have to maximize. What is the best of yourself? If you have a negative view of yourself, you have to discover what is best in yourself. And what will you take charge with? With the best of what you have. You are going to maximize it. If secondary things distract us, personally and as a group, these things will block us from obtaining our full potential. Distractions keep us from giving our utmost.

To take charge is to put the best of what you have in the direction of the project. Arrange the best elements you have in that direction. Our output is low, is that the way to go on living? One could go on living and die without taking charge, looking for ways to pass the time, distractions. It all ends up being something strange, something grey. If you don't take charge, others will take charge of you.

## Personal written work (in groups of 4).

Outline a 6-month project by asking yourself:

What can I do with my strengths so that the project will work?

Imagine these qualities in a period of 6 months, and ask yourself:

How can I get the most out of this?

How can I eliminate distractions and secondary things?

What changes will I make within myself, what am I going to strengthen and what will I keep?

How will I emplace myself internally?

Do I have to make any kind of change in my head?

With what kind of personal disposition? Am I proposing it as a way to keep on living, as a pastime?

## Comments

For the 6-month project, a slightly crazy one is better than something reasonable. It will serve as a guiding image, whether you achieve it or not.

## **Interchange in Groups**

Sharing of the 6-month project with the others.

## **Comments on style**

Style is part of the planning that we are going to carry out. It implies the best registers and a positive attitude.

The orientor is there to give direction and make the orientees understand that it's possible to overcome their problems. The orientor is not there to solve those problems.

She does it with a certain style, a spirit. Not with just any style, or in any old way. It is a positive style, one that takes charge of things.

Negativity is out of style. This is not about "going on living". That is very boring, it's really a "going on dying". We have to encourage and enthuse. Part of planning is the style, and the style is enthusiastic.

Launch yourself in these 6 months and use the best virtues you have. Do it from there, from the best personal attitude possible.

The structures will form on their own if we take care of having many groups at the base.

Your interest in the other person, if you see her positively or negatively, it's very different.

It's very different to look at people with that interest of open possibilities than with another look.

Let's plan the activities and also the style.

How are we going to sustain that style? The style of the line is part of the planning.

When should we start with this style of positivizing the best of ourselves and transmitting it on to others?

Now.

Start with the positive, now.

There is no reason to delay, since it is a style that we are implementing and practicing as of right now.

We are talking about a change in attitude, a change in behaviour, a change to improve our way of relating. With this seminar the circuit of self-knowledge is complete.

**Conclusion of the seminar with a friendly, shared meal.**

## Module 4

### SEMINAR ON RELAXATION EXERCISES

(lessons 1-9 from the Self-Liberation book)

This is a seminar on the study and practice of the works of Relaxation found in the book *Self-Liberation*.

#### **Work Plan**

Arrival to the Centre of Work in the morning. Preparing of the ambit.

The plan of the seminar, including the friendly tone, working without haste and in good humour, is explained.

Approximate time for the exercises: the ones in the morning can be 30-40 minutes per lesson; the ones in the afternoon, 40-60 minutes each. The periods of free time can be between 30-60 minutes.

(Free time)

#### **Exercise 1**

Whole group: Relax, Lesson 1 (external relax based on the lessons from Self-Liberation).

Take notes (impediments, discoveries, comprehensions).

#### **Exercise 2**

Whole group: Relax, Lesson 2 (external and internal relax.)

Take notes.

Whole group: Relax, Lesson 3 (external, internal and mental relax.)

Take notes.

(Free time)

#### **Exercise 3**

Reading of the terms *Relax* and *Steps of the relax*, from the Glossary of Self-Liberation.

Whole group: the complete relax is repeated a few times (external, twice; internal, twice; mental, three times) with the interest in overcoming limits and experiencing the entry into active semisleep. Take notes.

#### **Exercise 4**

Interchange on impediments, discoveries, and comprehensions.

Lunch.

(Free time)

### **Exercise 5**

Whole group: Relax, lesson 4 (experience of peace)

Take notes.

Whole group: Relax, lessons 5 and 6 (free images, directed images).

Take notes.

Whole group: Relax, lesson 7 (conversion of tense daily images). Take notes.

(Free time)

### **Exercise 6**

Whole group: Relax, lesson 8 (conversion of tense biographical images).

Comments before doing the exercise for those who have not done their autobiography (works of self-knowledge). It will suffice to go over your memory to detect the difficult situations of your life, as these will still be a strong source of tension and discomfort.

Take notes.

(Free time)

### **Exercise 7**

Whole group: Relax, lesson 9 (unified relax technique).

Take notes.

### **Personal Synthesis**

Each participant summarizes and synthesizes the two retreat days in terms of what was learned, impediments, discoveries, comprehensions, projections.

Open reading of some of the syntheses to the others.

**Conclusion of the seminar with a friendly, shared meal.**

### **Bibliography**

Luis Ammann, Self-Liberation

Silo, Collected Works, Volume I

## SEMINAR ON APHORISMS

### Work Plan

The work consists of the text of the aphorisms and guided reflections.

This seminar is organized to help us work with each of the three Aphorisms included in the text of this seminar, in order to experience the differences between them and to learn how to apply them.

The best way of working together is to be relaxed, in theme, and applied to what is to be done. An appropriate attitude is that of a "researcher" who is trying to understand, pay attention, and not have expectations. This is a simple work that will hopefully be done with great liking.

### Part 1: Study of the texts

What are "the Aphorisms"?

The aphorisms were introduced into the personal work of the Humanist Movement through The Community for Human Development. The Community is one of the many organisms of the Movement, so surely there are many people who are not familiar with this work.

Why are we working with the Aphorisms?

We know that when we are going to do something that is important to us, we need to have clarity in our thoughts and images, and faith and conviction that what we are going to do will turn out well, as well as carrying out the tasks that are necessary to achieve what we want. That important "something" could be internal, it could be to find a job, or to help another person; it could be a project that includes others, like social or structural projects; it could be the general construction of my life. Whatever it is, we need the maximum coherence between our thoughts, feelings and actions. The Aphorisms work precisely on these points.

## READING: THE APHORISMS

Reading and interchange as a whole group (approx. 1 hour).

We are going to develop a few ideas that are synthesized in brief phrases that we call "aphorisms".

The first one says, "**Thoughts produce and attract actions.**" What does it mean that thoughts "produce actions"? It means that I act according to the things I feel, or remember, or imagine. It is clear that whatever activity I carry out will depend on what I have done before and is more likely to be achieved if it is clear what I have to do. If my thoughts are confused it is very possible that my actions will also be confused. In relation to "thoughts attract actions" it is clear that if I have produced confused actions it will create confusion in my activities and in the persons towards whom my actions are directed. Then, as a consequence, I will receive equally confused actions in return. If I think in a resentful way and act in this manner, surely I will create resentment and attract resentment from others in return. All people have to do to create "bad luck" is to believe in it and then their actions and those of the people around them will wind up producing the "unlucky situations" in which they believe.

The second aphorism says, "**Thoughts with faith produce and attract stronger actions**". By "faith" we mean conviction, a strong feeling or confidence that something is the way a person believes it is. It is not at all the same to think something with doubts, as it is to think something with a strong emotional feeling and belief. When you realize how much a strong feeling like love can do, you will understand what we are saying.

The third aphorism is as follows: "**Thoughts repeated with faith produce and attract the maximum strength in one's actions.**" The more you repeat something, the more it is engraved in your memory, the stronger your habits will be and the more they will predispose you to repeat similar actions in the future. If a person continuously thinks with a strong faith and belief that they are sick, there is a greater probability that they will actually become sick than if they think this weakly and without conviction. The same holds true for the projects that I have in my life. I must think about them clearly and with faith, and I must think about them over and over again. Then, my actions will go in this direction and I will create responses in my environment and in the persons around me that go in the direction I am interested in.

**Individual Work:** The Aphorisms in your life. Reflect on personal experiences in which your thoughts have acted as aphorisms and conditioned your behaviour, both negatively and positively.

**Work in Groups:** Interchange on what was observed in the individual work. (approx. 2 hours).

Each group writes down its reflections and conclusions.

**Reading of what each group wrote and interchange as a whole.**

Lunch

**Reading and interchange in groups based on Chapter XIV of the Human Landscape ("Faith" from the book, Humanize the Earth, Silo). (1 hour, approx.)**

**Personal Reflection:** Try to distinguish between naïve faith, fanatical faith, and useful faith, looking for examples in your own life experience. Interchange in groups.

Also, look for examples in your life of situations in which you acted with faith in yourself, faith in the best in others, and faith in a life always open to the future. Interchange in groups.

**Exercise: Reflections**

Personal work and group interchange (1 hour, approx.)

Each participant defines a theme, project, or objective to which they will apply the Aphorisms in their daily life. The coordinator of the seminar then reads each aphorism, giving time for the participants to carry out the corresponding exercises.

**Guided Reflections:**

- 1 *Thoughts produce and attract actions:* I relax... I think of my project... I imagine myself in my daily life, carrying out my project... I see myself clarifying the images of what I want to achieve...



Take notes.

- 2 *Thoughts with faith produce and attract stronger actions*: I relax... I imagine myself in my daily life, carrying out my project... and putting faith in what I want to achieve... I feel this faith placed in the project that I have proposed... I see my actions... I see the actions in my environment...

Take notes.

- 3 *"Thoughts repeated with faith produce and attract the maximum strength in one's actions"*: I relax... I imagine myself in my daily life, carrying out my project... clarifying every day the images of what I want to achieve.... I feel a great faith and conviction that it is possible... I see my actions.

Take notes.

### **Final comments of the participants**

**Conclusion of the seminar with a friendly, shared meal.**

## SEMINAR ON EXPERIENCE

### Framing

The work of today consists of the study and discussion of the theme presented by Silo in the video on Experience, transmitted in all the Parks on May 31, 2008. First, we will watch the video and then proceed to dealing with the themes. The participants may take notes on the points in the video they consider important, in order to summarize and synthesize them.

This seminar frames the theme of work around two possible realities, the psychological and the spiritual, and goes over and develops every topic in the video. The final reflection is on the internal condition that, either by certainty of experience or by intuition, defines what each participant can understand of these themes, or any confusion they may have, or any doubts that detain them.

Whoever is leading the seminar can stop the reading of the themes for any question by the participants in order to open dialogue and facilitate clarification.

*Requirements: Computer with speakers, projector, and the video of "Experience" by Silo. One copy of the seminar per participant.*

### Exercise 1 — Individual Work

Written summary and synthesis of the video.

### Development of the themes

#### I. A sense of reality

There is a sense of reality, or of what has the characteristic of something real, which is based primarily on immediate sensory experience: what I see, hear, taste, smell or touch, when it has to do with the external senses. Or, what I experience with my body through my internal senses which deliver essential information about the state of my body in its development and interaction with the environment.

Also, my memory has allowed me to store over time huge amounts of data and my consciousness always helps to coordinate all that information from the external and internal environments so that it may provide specialized responses (from the body itself, motor, emotion or intellect), depending on the type of stimuli to which it must respond and according to the experience accumulated through trial and error.

So, this psychism we have is incredible, highly equipped to involve us in the world and transform it. Especially to transform it, as is clear from the historical experience of the human being. In turn, this transformation of the environment affects the human being, provoking significant changes in its whole psychophysical structure.

So, as was said initially, there is a sense of reality that comes from our immediate psychophysical experience that our psychism gives rise to by the (apparently) simple fact of living in the natural, social and historical environment.

#### II. Another sense of reality

The history of humanity also shows that there is another possible reality of an intangible character, in that it is not experienced in such a sensory way as the case noted above. It is a reality of a mental kind that comes out of deep and ancestral searches for "something" higher, for something that could provide answers to questions such as the meaning of everything that exists, including my life. What are we doing alone, with so many galaxies all around us, in this part of the universe? It is not easy to answer questions like that from the mental positioning of everyday life. Furthermore, when we really see the magnitude of these questions, it becomes very clear how disproportionate it is to be so immersed in the habitual.

So, when a person generates that kind of deep inner call that cries out for something that can transcend their immediate reality, their known reality (often so full of suffering), then we are in the presence of other very hidden needs which we might quite simply call, spiritual. And it is entirely feasible that that spiritual need becomes a reality for your existence.

### **III. Suffering**

Existentially speaking, suffering is manifested as the main obstacle to internal growth, to deep searches for meaning, to joy as an entrenched internal state, to learning to see the signs of the sacred in you and around you. And generally speaking, this can be explained by our distancing from that path of intangible reality, that path of profound spiritual experiences.

Contradictions and fears accumulate within us when, driven by desires, beliefs and illusions, we divagate and try to build through fantasies the thing that would resolve our anguish and suffering within the everyday reality which we believe is the only one possible. We then notice that suffering does not recede by the rather magical act of simply wanting to overcome it. Suffering recedes only when we humbly and genuinely seek those revealing experiences of that other intangible reality that is beyond the world of the everyday, when we treat others as we would like to be treated, and when we fight against all forms of violence within us and in the world around us.

### **IV. Illusions**

Illusions can be best detected when we see them as those things that we imagine in our daydreams in order to compensate personal shortcomings and deficiencies accumulated very early in our lives, or to compensate for situations of conflict, be they personal or social. This kind of compensatory mechanism of unfulfilled desires or of various alterations that occurred in connection with the natural environment (including our own body), and the social and historical environment, results in dreams or illusions that are presented as "ideal responses" to my inability to resolve these shortcomings and deficiencies.

The "raw material" to configure illusions comes not only from oneself but is often also imposed by the social environment or the economic, political, religious centres of power which, through the mass media and other traditional forms of influence, control the subjectivity of people and induce – through simple or elaborate images of "happy paradises" – personal and social behaviours that are useful to their interests.

Illusions are a source of suffering in that they distance us from experiences of profound change and submerge us in the world of the seeming, circumstantial and irrelevant.

### **V. Beliefs**

These are essentially subjective desires or conceptions of reality that tend to become cemented on the basis of a religious, racial, ethnic, cultural, ideological, social or family tradition. Their basis can be rationally developed, or very irrational, or simply taken on as

cultural patterns and habits, without questioning. That is, I do not ask myself how I ended up having this or that belief, it simply became installed within me, through the influence of the environment or living with others, as a way of seeing and living life. But the common denominator in all cases is that beliefs have the certainty of "irrefutable facts" for those who support them.

The crucial thing, essentially, is to determine whether or not they are in favour of life, whether or not they lead to violence and discrimination.

Like illusions, many of them are imposed by the centres of power referred to previously, in order that the status quo may be maintained. For example, that Biblical passage that says, "*You will earn your bread by the sweat of your brow,*" can be seen as a moral punishment that ends up psychologically subjecting poor mortals who come to believe that subsistence slavery is the only way of life. *After all* – pontificates the voice of power of the moment – *we are here to suffer and only after death will we attain eternal life. But meanwhile, here on Earth, you will suffer quietly and in fear, do everything we say and don't try to change anything ... amen!*

Beliefs, together with ideologies, are part of the old clothing that now no longer fits the human being who is outgrowing them.

## **VI. God is something uncertain**

If we consider that our central theme is suffering, we prefer to leave the question of God as supreme reference aside because we have no certainty that it allows us to overcome suffering. For us, the search for the profound is a path of ascent towards the sacred that develops within us in the measure that we overcome our anxieties, contradictions and fears, and help others in the same direction.

## **VII. Finality, death**

The inevitability of physical death can generate anguish due to the idea of disappearing completely. As an internal state, it is an intense existential anxiety, strengthened in proportion to the lack of deep spiritual experiences, since the lack of such experiences and viewpoints strengthens the belief that only one kind of reality exists – the one I can see, hear, touch – and that beyond that, there is nothing else... In other words, once the senses, memory and consciousness (or what we feel, think and remember) disappear, all tangible presence in this time and space disappears, since there exists no way of conceiving of something beyond current physical reality.

Conversely, calm and sincere reflecting on your own finality as an inescapable challenge in the search for or strengthening of meaning, puts us in the presence of a mental emplacement different to the here and now. This reflection helps us to accept (not reject); to integrate finality as an essential part of the spiritual reality to which we aspire.

## **VIII. Experiences of change**

As might be understood from all the above, experiences of change derive from the kind of reality one seeks, from rebellion against suffering; from the certainty of my proposal for an awakened life and from the struggle for nonviolence in the world around me.

### **Exercise 2 — Individual work**

Reflect on each one of the themes presented, trying to elucidate through intuition or conviction of registers what your internal state is. That is, your state of comprehension,

confusion or doubt regarding these themes. Also, try to reach a specific conclusion for each theme, regardless of depth, because in any case your study does not end here and can be deepened on another occasion. Take notes.

### **Exercise 3 — Group work**

Interchange on the individual work. Take notes.

### **Exercise 4 — Individual summary and synthesis**

### **Exercise 5 — Work with all participants**

Voluntary sharing of the experiences of comprehension attained in the individual and group work.

**Conclusion of the seminar with a friendly, shared meal.**

## SEMINAR ON VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENCE

The following work is designed to be carried out without fixed time periods for each of the themes to be studied and reflected upon; the times can be determined by the participants.

### Framing

Nonviolence is a moral value that provides a valid reference to personal and social behaviour, and that is based on the golden rule as old as it is universal, which states: "Treat others as you would have them treat you."

This ethical principle, and the rejection of all forms of violence, serve many people as a paradigm which in the future needs to become installed in societies worldwide as a profound cultural conquest, as a qualitative leap in social harmony.

### Nonviolence, Active Nonviolence and Violence, according to the Dictionary of New Humanism

**Exercise 1** — Reading and interchange in groups of three. Take notes.

### NONVIOLENCE

Generally refers to some or all of the following: a system of moral concepts that disavows violence; the mass movement led by Mahatma Gandhi in India in the first part of the twentieth century; the struggle for civil rights by African-Americans in the United States under the leadership of Martin Luther King; and the activities carried out by Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. The activities of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov, S. Kovalev, and other famous dissidents opposed to Soviet totalitarianism are often included as well.

The idea of **nv.** is expounded in the Bible and the writings of other religions in the exhortation not to kill. This idea has been developed by numerous thinkers and philosophers; Russian authors Leo Tolstoy and Feodor Dostoevski expressed it in profound formulations. Tolstoy's formula proclaiming the supremacy of love and the "non-use of violence against evil," or better, the impossibility of fighting one evil with another, found worldwide resonance, inspiring a somewhat singular sect of "Tolstoyists."

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) formulated the ethic of **nv.** in his own way, basing it on the principle of *ahimsa* (the refusal to use any form of violence against the individual, nature, even insects or plants) and on the "law of passive resistance." Gandhi was able to organize an anti-colonial movement uniting many millions of people, which employed Satyagraha, a method of nonviolence. This was expressed in massive and sustained civil disobedience against and noncooperation with the British authorities, reaffirming Indian identity and freedom, but without recourse to violent methods. The people called Gandhi *Mahatma* ("Great Soul") for his courage and unyielding adherence to the principle of **nv.** This non-violent movement prepared the ground for Great Britain to renounce its supremacy in India, though Gandhi himself was killed by a paid assassin. Unfortunately, following this the principle of *ahimsa* was completely forgotten, and the subsequent political process in India and Pakistan was accompanied by great bloodshed and unrestrained violence.

The struggle of Martin Luther King also ended without fully achieving its objectives, as he, too, was assassinated while preparing to speak at a mass meeting.

Nonetheless, the concept of **nv.**, including nonviolent forms of protest, continues to be a vital, evolving force in the world. Daily mass actions by lower strata of workers, meetings and protest demonstrations, strikes, womens' and student movements, farmworker and peasant demonstrations, leaflets, neighbourhood newspapers and periodicals, appearances on radio and TV, all these constitute the contemporary forms of the ethic and practice of **nv.**

New Humanism strives to reduce violence to the greatest extent possible, to move completely beyond it in perspective, and to set in motion all methods and forms of bringing resolution to conflicts and opposing sides along the path of *creative nv.*

**NV.** is frequently equated with *pacifism* (\*), when in reality the latter is neither a method of action nor a style of life but rather a sustained protest against war and the arms race.

### **ACTIVE NONVIOLENCE.**

The strategy for struggle of New Humanism, which consists of the systematic denunciation of all forms of violence exercised by the System. Also, a tactic for struggle applied in specific situations in which discrimination of any type is occurring.

**VIOLENCE.** (L. *violentia*, from *violens* (-*entis*), violent).

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, **v.** is "the midwife of history," i.e., all of human history, even progress, is the result of **v.** – 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 **v.**, denying the advantages of evolution without **v.** Neither is he correct when he justifies **v.** with some noble end (although he himself on many occasions expressed reservations about **v.**, saying that no good end can excuse the use of evil means to attain it). Advocates of **v.** 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 **v.** and the rejection of nonviolent means.

It is customary to categorize **v.** as *direct*, as *individualized* (authority of father over child), or as *indirect* (permutational), "codified," usually corresponding to social institutions and official policies (wars, power of a dictator, single-party power, religious monopoly). There are also other ways of categorizing **v.**: as physical or psychological; as open or concealed. In society, other more precise gradations of **v.** can be observed: at the level of the family, of the nation, of world politics, as well as in the relation of the human being with nature, with other animal species, etc. All around we can observe one or more of these elements, manifestations, or states of **v.**, carried out to resolve problems or to achieve desired results, at the cost of harming or inflicting suffering on another group or individual. **V.** 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).

**V.** is multifaceted. In the majority of cases it is viewed as an ethical category, as an evil, or a "lesser evil." Today, **v.** has penetrated all aspects of life: it appears continually and on a daily basis in the economy (exploitation of some human beings by others, coercion by the

State, material *dependency* (\*), *discrimination* (\*) against women in the workplace, child labour, unjust taxes, etc.); in politics (domination by a single or small number of parties, the power of certain leaders, *totalitarianism* (\*), the exclusion of citizens from real participation in decision-making, war, *revolution* (\*), armed struggle for power, etc.); in ideology (the imposing of official viewpoints, the prohibition of free thought, subordination of the communications media to particular interests, the manipulation of public opinion, propaganda for ideas that are inherently violent and discriminatory but convenient to the ruling elite, etc.); in religion (subjection of the interests of the individual to clerical edicts, stringent thought-control, prohibitions against divergent beliefs, persecution of heretics, etc.); in the family (exploitation of women, dictatorial control or stifling of children, etc.); in education (authoritarianism of teachers, corporal punishment, prohibition of diversity in curricula and teaching methods, etc.); in the armed forces (arbitrariness of officers, unthinking obedience of soldiers, punishment, etc.); in culture (censorship, the prohibition of innovative currents and movements, prohibitions against publishing or performing certain works, edicts by the bureaucracy, etc.).

If we analyze the sphere of life of contemporary society, we continually encounter **v.**, which abridges our liberty; for this reason it is practically impossible to determine which classes of prohibitions and overpowering of our will are truly rational and useful, and which have an affected and anti-human character. For those forces that are authentically humanist, it is a task of special importance to overcome the aggressive features of contemporary social life: to build harmony, nonviolence, tolerance, and solidarity.

When people speak of **v.**, generally what they mean is physical **v.**, the most overt expression of corporal *aggression* (\*). Other forms of **v.**, among others, economic, racial, religious, and sexual **v.**, can sometimes take place while their character is hidden, nevertheless resulting in the submerging or enslavement of human intention and liberty. In cases where these forms of **v.** are exercised openly, they are also at times then applied through physical coercion. Every form of **v.** has *discrimination* (\*) as a correlate.

## **Exercise 2 — Individual Work**

Make a summary and synthesis of the themes studied above.

## **Connecting the theme to personal experience**

### **Exercise 3 — Individual Work**

Reflect on the violence that others and society exercise upon you, and the violence that you exercise over those around you. Take notes.

Meditate also on the widely held belief that violence is something inherent, something "natural" in the behaviour of the human being, something that is necessary in order to solve certain kinds of conflicts. Take notes.

Look over your past, your present, and observe the violence that you have suffered and that you have exercised, making a strong effort to truly reconcile with yourself and with those who have done violence to you, in order to overcome the accumulated resentment. Take notes.



**Exercise 4 — Personal Resolution**

Ask yourself in a reflective way and from the heart, if it is vitally necessary for you to overcome all the possible violence and discrimination that you exert. Depending on your reflection, come up with a resolution for a radical change in behaviour which, of course, implies not replying violently to the violence you receive from others. Take notes.

**Exercise 5 — Work in groups of three**

Interchange on the personal work and the possible reach of our culture of Nonviolence in the immediate surroundings. Take notes.

Interchange on the methodology of Active Nonviolence for individual or group action, in order to publicly denounce violence and discrimination (for example, the World March and other projects). Take notes.

**Exercise 6 — Work as a whole**

Comments and interchange on the comprehensions achieved in the personal and group work. Take notes.

**Exercise 7 — Summary and synthesis**

Finally, summarize and synthesize your personal work.

**Conclusion of the seminar with a friendly, shared meal.**

# RETREATS

## RETREAT ON RELAXATION EXERCISES

This is a retreat of two days and two nights on the study and practice of the works of Relaxation contained in the book, Self-Liberation. Whenever possible, it is recommended that this retreat be carried out in the Centre of Work of one of our Parks of Study and Reflection.

### Arrival to Centre of Work

In the afternoon of the previous day; arranging of the ambit.

### Dinner

### Explanations

On the plan of the retreat, the tone, defining of the functions (director, participants).

(Free time)

It is recommended to put your notebook beside your bed when going to sleep, in order to record your dreams. Seven hours of sleep is suggested, and the time of breakfast should be stated.

### Day 1

#### Breakfast

(Free time)

**Exercise:** Relax, lesson 1 (external relax).

Take notes (impediments, discoveries, comprehensions)

**Exercise:** Relax, lesson 2 (external + internal relax). Take notes

**Exercise:** Relax, lesson 3 (external + internal + mental relax). Take notes

#### Lunch

(Free time)

#### Study in groups of three

Psychology I, Silo Collected Works II: each group studies the following paragraphs and later presents them graphically and synthetically to the others (1 hour for studying and 10 minutes to present):

*Group 1: Levels of consciousness. Characteristics of the levels*

*Group 2: Deep sleep. Semisleep. Vigil.*

*Group 3: Relationship between levels. Inertia. Noise. Rebound effect*

### **Exercise**

The complete relax is done several times (externally, two times, internally, two times, and mentally, three times) with the interest in overcoming limits and impediments, and in experiencing the entry to active semisleep. Take notes.

(Free time)

### **Dinner**

### **Exercise**

Relax, lesson 4 (Experience of Peace). Take notes.

### **Synthesis of the first day**

At the end of the day, each participant summarizes and synthesizes the day in terms of what was learned, impediments, discoveries (what I did not know), comprehensions (what I have understood from experience), projections (what I need to do from now on).

### **End of the day**

## **Day 2**

### **Breakfast**

(Free time)

### **Exercise**

Relax, lessons 5 and 6 (free images, directed images). Take notes.

### **Exercise**

Relax, lesson 7 (conversion of tense daily images). Take notes.

### **Lunch**

(Free time)

**Exercise**

Relax, lesson 8 (conversion of tense biographical images).

Comments before doing the exercise for those who have not done their autobiography (works of self-knowledge). It will suffice to review your memory to detect the difficult situations of your life, as these will still be a strong source of tension and discomfort. Take notes.

(Free time)

**Exercise**

Relax, lesson 9 (unified relax technique). Take notes.

**Personal work**

Through different activities (reading, interchange, walking around, etc.), practice the unified relax technique.

**Personal synthesis**

Each participant synthesizes the two retreat days in terms of what was learned, impediments, discoveries, comprehensions, projections.

**Reading:** (voluntary) of each synthesis to the others.

**Conclusion of the retreat with a friendly, shared meal.**

**Bibliography**

Self-Liberation, Luis A. Ammann (Practices of relaxation)

Collected Works, Silo, Volume II, (Psychology Notes I).

## RETREAT ON PSYCHOPHYSICS

This is a retreat of two days and two nights on the study and practice of the works of Psychophysics from the book, *Self-Liberation*. Whenever possible, it is recommended that this retreat be carried out in the Centre of Work of one of our Parks of Study and Reflection.

### Arrival to the Centre of Work

Arrival in the afternoon of the day before; arranging of the ambit.

### Dinner

### Explanations

On the plan of the retreat, the tone, defining of functions (director, participants)

(Free time)

It is recommended to put your notebook beside your bed when going to sleep, in order to record your dreams. Seven hours of sleep is suggested, and the time of breakfast should be stated.

### Day 1

#### Breakfast

#### Individual Work

Reading of "Regarding What is Human", *Collected Works Vol. 1, Silo Speaks I. Opinions, commentaries and speeches*. A proposal is made to act in the presence of the human as a permanent, personal attitude throughout the whole retreat.

(Free time)

**Reading** of Introduction and lesson 1 as a group, and practice of static and dynamic body postures in teams (groups of 4 or 6). Complete breathing; motor centre and its three parts.

**Reading** of Lesson 2 as a group, and guided practice of complete breathing as a group.

**Reading** of Lesson 3 as a group, and practice of motor centre and its three parts in teams (groups of 4 or 6).

## **Lunch**

(Free time)

**Reading** of Lesson 4 as a group, and practice of emotional centre and its three parts in teams (groups of 4 or 6).

**Reading** of Lesson 5 as a group, and practice of intellectual centre and its three parts in teams (groups of 4 or 6).

(Free time)

## **Dinner**

### **Synthesis of the first day**

Before the end of the day, each participant summarizes and synthesizes the work in terms of what was learned, impediments, discoveries (what I didn't know before), comprehensions (what has been understood through experience) and projections (what I need to do from now on).

## **End of Day 1**

## **Day 2**

### **Breakfast**

### **Study in 3 groups**

Each group studies the following chapters and later presents them graphically and synthetically to the others (1 hour for the study; 10 minutes for the presentation):

- Group 1: Collected Works I, Humanize the Earth, The Human Landscape, III. The human body as object of intention.
- Group 2: Collected Works I, Contributions to Thought, Historiological Discussions, Chapter III, History and Temporality, 3. Human History (from "The world is experienced as external to the body..." to "...The surpassing of pain, then, appears as a basic project that guides action.")
- Group 3: Collected Works II, Psychology Notes, Psychology I, *Attention, presence and copresence.*

(Free time)

**Reading** of Lesson 6 as a group, and practice of the exercises of *simple, divided and directed attention*, as a group.

### **Lunch**

(Free time)

**Group Practice** of the exercises of *directed attention*.

### **Personal Synthesis**

Each participant summarizes and synthesizes the two retreat days in terms of what was learned, impediments, discoveries, comprehensions, and projections.

**Reading:** (voluntary) of each synthesis to the others.

**Conclusion of the retreat with a friendly, shared meal.**

### **Bibliography**

Self-Liberation (Psychophysics). Luis Ammann

Collected Works I and II. Silo.



## RETREAT ON GUIDED EXPERIENCES

This is a retreat of two days and two nights on the study and practice of Guided Experiences. Whenever possible, it is recommended that this retreat be carried out in the Centre of Work of one of our Parks of Study and Reflection.

The CD of Guided Experiences in the language or languages of the participants is required. One or more CD players will be needed, and one or more CD-copying devices.

*Suggestion: This kind of practice should be done after having worked on the exercises of relax, in order to have the ability to relax the body and mind well when doing the Guided Experiences.*

### Work Plan

#### Day 1

Arrival in the morning.

After having arranged the ambits and logistical matters, begin with a brief introduction on the plan for the day and highlight the importance of working with a friendly tone, without haste, and with ample time given for interchange.

### Explanation

What are Guided Experiences? Guided experiences are part of what we call, "working with images". We consider images to be an interesting support for varying the point of view; accelerating mental dynamics and ingenuity, to recapture emotions, remember life events, and design projects.

Guided Experiences are short stories in which an asterisk detains the flow of the story so that the one carrying out the experience may emplace, at that very moment, the mental image that is appropriate.

They are divided in two parts in the book:

#### **First part: Tales**

*The Child*

*The Enemy*

*My Greatest Mistake*

*Nostalgia*

*My Ideal*

*Resentment*

*The Protector of Life*

*The Rescue*

*False Hopes*

*Repetitions*

*The Journey*

*The Festival*

*Death*

## **Second part: Playing with images**

*The Creature*

*The Snowmobile*

*The Chimney Sweep*

*Descent*

*Ascent*

*Costumes*

*The Clouds*

*To and Fro*

*The Miner*

### **What is their purpose?**

Experiences Guided allow those who practice them to reconcile with themselves – overcoming past frustrations and resentments, ordering activities of the present, and giving the future a meaning that does away with anxieties, fears and disorientation.

Each Guided Experience aims to convert the images and climates that arise within them through a proposal for reconciliation, or by changing of the point of view on the problem.

It may be that after doing an Experience the desired results are not immediately obtained. In this case, working in a permanent way with that Experience can be a crucial factor for achieving the objective. Moreover, the experiences have a "ripple effect" – even after doing them the images continue operating and producing changes.

This transformation will not remain simply as an internal experience within each person. Rather it will be expressed in behavioural changes, in the analogous situations of daily life. Underlying all of this must be the intention of wanting to change a situation and a behaviour.

Thanks to Guided Experiences, images and points of view are shifted. Later, in daily life, you have to make that new behaviour intentional.

In sum, our Guided Experiences tend to positivize existence, strengthen contact with oneself, and encourage the search for meaning of life.

### **How are they structured?**

There is a basic frame around which all Guided Experiences are structured. First there is an entry to the theme and a general setting of the scene; then an increase in "dramatic" tension, third, a representation of the vital issue; fourth, a denouement as a solution to the problem; fifth, a decrease in the general tension, and sixth, a gradual exit from the experience, usually retracing some of the previous steps of the story.

## How are they used?

To do a Guided Experience, you must let yourself be guided by the images and to make this possible it's a good idea to do a full relax that allows you to leave vigil – where the rational mechanisms are in full effect and you direct and control the activities of the mind and body in the external world – and enter into an active semisleep in which it is possible to follow the thread of the Guided Experience (as an external stimulus) and translate it into the internal images that correspond.

Interchanging with others about the experience done is extremely helpful for every practitioner, whether from the standpoint of opening direct communication or the learning produced through the multiplicity of experiences.

Finally, there can be no pat answer given about how many times a Guided Experience needs to be done in order for the knot being dealt with to be integrated. What is suggested is to work on the basis of necessity, with kindness and internal honesty.

## Reading

In order to have clear what we mean by "image", the entry on *Image and Function of the Image* in the Glossary of Self-Liberation is read.

## Practice

As an example of what has been read, Lesson 5 on "Free Images" from the section on Relaxation in Self-Liberation can be reviewed and practiced.

## Lunch

(Free time)

## Reading

Conference on the Guided Experiences, El Ateneo. Madrid, Spain, 03/11/89, *Collected Works I, Silo Speaks, I. Opinions, comments and speeches*. Read the first half, up to the citations given for "My Greatest Mistake", inclusive.

## Practices

We will now do Guided Experiences.

The interest here is in recording well a way of working, with a lot of interchange and time for the practice, and to go from one experience to the other with calm, kindness, and without compulsions. For this reason, the aim is not to work with all 22 guided experiences but just a few, in order to know them and learn a good method of working with them.

In each practice we will follow the same procedure for the whole retreat (based on the following 7 points):

1. First read the point of interest of each Guided Experience.
2. Carry out a full relax (each time a little faster and looser).
3. Do the Guided Experience (either read by the director or with an audio recording).
4. Each participant takes personal notes on their experience.

5. Interchange in small groups on the central knot of the experience.
6. Recommendations.
7. Take a break before the next practice.

### **Comments**

The suggested themes for interchange are related to the central knot of the experience; suggesting them does not mean to avoid any other kind of discussion that might arise relating to the theme at hand, but rather to focus on what the central theme of the Experience is.

The themes of interchange can often be discussed even if the participants have not done the experience successfully. In this case, the Guided Experience will allow them to define which theme to work on in the future.

We will give priority to the quality of the work, carried out with depth, calmly, with a great deal of interchange. Therefore it is not important to do all the Guided Experiences in the retreat, but instead to learn and register a way of working well.

### **Suggested sequence**

The group chooses and does one of the Guided Experiences having to do with reconciliation with the past, namely: *The Child, The Creature, The Enemy, My Greatest Mistake, Nostalgia, My Ideal, Resentment, or The Chimney Sweep.*

### **Interchange**

After doing the Guided Experience, participants discuss the ease or difficulty they encountered of moving with visual images and whether there are other ways more akin to them personally (touch, cenesthetic, auditory, olfactory, etc.), explaining that each person should base themselves on the way that is best for them.

### **Break**

A second Guided Experience is chosen by everyone, or if there are enough separated spaces, people can work in different groups in separated ambits, and each group can read or listen to the recording of the Experience that they choose. In this case each group should have to have a copy of the seven points above.

### **Interchange**

Once again interchange on the possibility of letting yourself be guided by the images, without criticism or self-criticism, allowing them to flow. Living the experience as much as possible "from the inside", being the main character, considering the emotional charge of the images as an indicator.

(Free time)

### **Dinner**

(Free time)

We proceed in the same way with the Experiences having to do with our emplacement in the present moment: *The Protector of Life, The Miner*.

### **Synthesis of the first day**

Before the end of the day, each participant takes time to synthesize what was done in terms of what was learned, the discoveries (what was not known), comprehension (implies a deeper understanding based on experience), projections (what needs to be done from now on).

Before falling asleep, it is suggested to put your notebook beside your bed in order to make notes of your dreams. Seven hours of sleep and a set time for breakfast is suggested.

### **Day 2**

After breakfast, there is an interchange on the previous day and on the dreams, highlighting connections with the works carried out.

### **Reading**

Conference on Guided Experiences, El Ateneo. Madrid, Spain, 03/11/89, *Collected Works I, Silo Speaks, I. Opinions, Comments and speeches*. Read from, "Let me say a little more about the way the situation presented..." up to the end..

Continue with the form of work of the previous day, always with ample breaks between one Experience and the next.

Experiences on proposals for the future: *The Rescue, False Hopes*.

### **Lunch**

(Free time)

Continue by choosing two experiences on the meaning of life: *Repetitions, The Journey, The Festival, Death*.

(Free time)

Choose two experiences for the exercising of images: *The Snowmobile, Descent, Ascent, The Costumes, The Clouds, To and Fro*

(Free time)

### **Personal synthesis**

Each participant takes time to synthesize the two retreat days in terms of what was learned, impediments, discoveries, comprehensions, projections.

**(Optional) Reading of each synthesis to the group.**

**Conclusion of the retreat with a friendly, shared meal.**

**Bibliography**

Luis Ammann, Self-Liberation

Silo, Collected Works, Volume I, "Guided Experiences"

Silo, Collected Works, Volume I, "Silo Speaks"

Silo, Collected Works, Volume II, "Psychology Notes"

## APPENDIX

### Guided Experiences

#### Interest, themes for interchange and recommendations

The following text seeks to clarify the interest, suggest themes for interchange and give recommendations in order to carry out personal works based on Guided Experiences.<sup>1</sup>

#### First Part: Tales

##### I. The Child

###### Interest

This experience has to do with highlighting the first registers of injustice; therefore, the scene is located in childhood. The current sense of injustice which is also referred to is compared with the first experiences of this kind, in order to find a relationship that allows one to integrate those seemingly separate contents into one system of understanding. The intention is placed on liberating oneself of negative feelings that, through self-pity, limit one's behaviour in the world of relations.

###### Possible Themes of Interchange

What kind of injustice always makes me feel like a victim?

What does it mean to me to treat the person who commits this injustice as a friend?

###### Recommendation

It is important to recognize situations in everyday life in which one is subject to certain injustices. We should ask what kind of injustices do we especially suffer from and furthermore, if the majority of these (especially the ones that feel like the most important) have to do with the same situation or are linked to certain types of people. With these ideas clear, it should not be difficult to find a close connection with childhood experiences. With regard to reconciling with the people that produce such "injustice", this is not easy and such a proposal provokes strong reactions. However, the overcoming of those resistances in daily life or at least in the repetition of this guided experience, can open new possibilities of behaviour and focus on our world of relationships.

##### II. The Enemy

###### Interest

The objective of this experience is to achieve reconciliation with the past, particularly with a person towards which there remains a feeling of resentment. The advantages of such a reconciliation are clear, and will benefit not only our external behaviour but also allow us to integrate and overcome oppressive mental contents.

###### Possible Themes of Interchange

What are the resistances and contradictions that surge between what you'd like to do and say and what you really do and say in the different scenes?

Relation between those resistances and the difficulties in your behaviour in daily life.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Interest* and the *Recommendations* are taken from the first edition of the *The Book of the Community for the equilibrium and development of the human being*.

### **Recommendation**

Highlight the resistances and contradictions that are created between what one would like to do and say and what one ends up doing and saying in the different scenes. Study if the reconciliation produced in the experience modifies the daily behaviour around the problem. If the resistances to reconciliation have not been overcome, it is suggested to repeat the experience.

## **III. My Greatest Mistake**

### **Interest**

The purpose of this experience is to come into contact with that special moment from one's past which everyone normally charges in a very negative way. In this new contact, "culprits" for one's apparent defeat will appear. In the memory of this situation lies one of the sources of one's present frustrations, resentments, guilty conscience, and sometimes, one's self-pity. We focus on this apparent "great mistake," and take a new point of view about it, thus contributing to giving coherence and unity to one's emotional process, and to the process of one's existence in general. This is a good example of a "dynamic meditation" about the past that also proposes a practical formula for reconciliation with oneself.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

What could be the "great mistake" of my life?

What have I learned thanks to that experience, in any case?

What have I managed to avoid, thanks to it?

With the way things were at that time, would it have been possible to avoid it?

### **Recommendation**

Recreate this experience every day, and particularly your return to the situation of your great failure. Examine all the factors that were present at that moment, understanding the accidental quality that pushed you in that direction.

In this practice, at least four different types of resistances may appear: 1. not being able to remember the moment or situation of the "great mistake"; 2. not being able to understand that thanks to this error I have been able to obtain other benefits which have brought me to the present moment; 3. not being able to understand that thanks to the problems detected I have been able to avoid other situations that would have had even more serious results; or 4. not being able to look at these situations as accidents that were beyond my control and beyond the control of other people to whom I attribute guilt.

One should meditate on these resistances outside the Guided Experience, and verify whether there are positive changes of focus or point of view about one's present situation that have been brought about due to this reconciliation with the past.

## **IV. Nostalgia**

### **Interest**

The purpose of this experience is to reconcile the contents or memories of past romantic relationships that are negative because of different events that took place. Being able to



restructure these past events by gaining a new point of view can direct us towards improving our attitude towards people of the opposite sex.

If we work well with this experience, it will contribute to overcoming many frustrations and resentments, prompting a constructive attitude in both the present and the future. This practice will be less useful for very young people if they have few romantic memories.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

The possibility of retaining the good and the beautiful of every one of these past loving relationships.

### **Recommendation**

Observe whether this experience modifies in your everyday life the fears and suspicions you have of the opposite sex. If the resistances that appear were not overcome, work with this experience again.

## **V. My Ideal**

### **Interest**

This experience proposes a review of one's romantic relationships that allows one to understand how one's searches, encounters and fantasies with people to whom one is attracted are all linked to one's own nucleus of the ideal mate. This nucleus is difficult to notice in daily life, but nevertheless it acts upon us, and it orients us in a very definitive direction, sometimes producing tremendous disillusionment when it does not coincide with reality.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

What are the common characteristics of the people with whom you've had loving-sexual relationships?

Looking deeply, what can be seen in them?

### **Recommendation**

Recognize in daily life the themes worked on in this experience.

## **VI. Resentment**

### **Interest**

This experience orients one towards a state of reconciliation with a person one is negatively linked to. If this reconciliation is achieved, the same technique can be used for less crucial reconciliations. Every enemy and resentment inside one limits one's present relationships and obstructs the future. Based upon this, the work of reconciliation with the past is of the greatest importance for personal development and effectiveness in everyday projects.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

What enchainment produces this resentment within me?

What did I feel upon breaking the chains and what registers accompanied the burning of the cloak?

### **Recommendation**

Verify whether your resistances have been overcome in following the suggested images. Especially notice the sensations that accompanied the burning of the cloak. These sensations are the best indicators of whether some transformation of the negative feelings was produced. If the resistances were not overcome, repeat the experience.

## **VII. The Protector of Life**

### **Interest**

This is an experience of getting in touch with the problems one may have with the body. It is also an affirmation of one's body. It is well known that rejecting a part of one's body will result in "anesthesia", making one insensitive to that part. The consequence of this is that everything related to that theme and part of the body is mentally degraded or deformed by one's imagination.

Becoming reconciled with one's own body is an experience that is highly recommended for everyone. To accept one's body, exactly as it is, is the first step of progress to a clear vision of reality.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

What are the problems – be they a matter of image or a health problem – related to your body?

Is it possible to consider your body as your closest friend?

### **Recommendation**

Study how the resistances you have experienced in this exercise coincide with the ones you observe in your daily life. If, while doing this experience, or when repeating it, you overcome the resistances, be sure to notice the ways this shows up in your daily life.

## **VIII. The Rescue**

### **Interest**

The experience, through the use of a dramatic plot, leads us towards communicating and opening up to other people. The theme of "good actions" is introduced in order to frame the ideas of solidarity with others and helping others. Anyone who has even a moderate knowledge of our doctrine will easily understand how important and useful it is to develop and strengthen attitudes that replace selfishness and self-enclosure. However, one may understand the advantages of developing these attitudes very well, but still not be able to bring about such changes. This Guided Experience allows this change to take place if there is a sincere desire to move in that direction.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

A "good action" you have carried out, without confusing what you wish for the other person with what is best for that other person.

### **Recommendation**

Take note of all the resistances that appeared during this experience, and try to overcome them when you repeat it later. Make use of this process of reviewing your "good actions" as a theme of meditation on your own life. Carry this meditation out immediately following the experience. This meditation could also take place for a few minutes before the end of the meeting.

## **IX. False Hopes**

### **Interest**

The purpose of this experience is to resolve problems related to the future by making our projects clear and leaving aside those kinds of images that prevent a clear and sober appraisal of reality.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

The hopes that I feel will never become realized.

The important hopes that I do believe can become realized.

### **Recommendation**

Notice the amount of confusion and lost time that are produced in daily life because of false hopes. Check whether this Guided Experience (or later repetitions of it) has modified your way of approaching and focusing on your projects.

## **X. Repetitions**

### **Interest**

During this experience, you should examine the direction your life has taken from childhood until the present moment; this will enable you to make a projection of this direction into the future. From this projection, you will see that your life may not necessarily ever change its course unless the possibility of a new meaning in life is considered. Meditating on this last point will, in itself, allow a change in direction, even though your new objective may not yet be altogether clear. A meditation of this type is capable of producing profound and positive changes in the mechanical or automatic tendencies that have operated in our lives until now.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

Relate the failures of the past with those contradictory things that you desire to obtain in the future.

Interchange on what you experienced right up to the end, when it talks about discovering something very important.

### **Recommendation**

Resistances you observed in this experience can be considered indicators of blocks to changing the direction that your behaviour has followed until now. When you repeat this experience, especially ponder the feeling, "I am about to discover something of decisive importance." That will be the internal register that precedes the arising of a new meaning in life.

## **XI. The Journey**

### **Interest**

This practice aims towards producing the sensations that accompany the great personal discoveries of internal reality, sensations such as those related to a transcendental meaning of life. This is not an experience that tries to enhance our understanding about a certain subject, situation or about a certain fear. Rather, it is an experiment that will permit us to recognize or to produce important new internal registers.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

Consider if you have been able to represent well the images related to the human-like figure and the sphere. Take into consideration only the sensations described in the scene in which the sphere is placed on your forehead.

### **Recommendation**

Notice whether you adequately reproduced the images that were proposed concerning the human-like figure and the sphere the figure gives you in your experience. The only sensations you need to consider are those described when the sphere is placed against your forehead. The important resistances to overcome are those that prevent this sensation from taking place.

## **XII. The Festival**

### **Interest**

This experience suggests unusual images that can lead us to new phenomena or ways of perception. This unique way of seeing things will be useful to us if it opens the possibility of a new world and new meaning in life, even when we apply this vision to nothing more than everyday objects. What are called "mystical" and psychedelic experiences are characterized by the vigour of a fresh perception of reality. But the usual approach to these phenomena has been limited simply to having faith in the first kind of experience (mystical), and to the use of destructive artificial chemicals in the second.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

Experiences you have lived in which you have perceived reality in a different way, anew – experiences that we would call "mystical" or psychedelic, or simply unusual and inexplicable.

### **Recommendation**

In the first few days following the experience, try to exercise a new and enthusiastic vision of the people and the things around you, things that otherwise would be absolutely commonplace for you. We are not recommending anything beyond this; we are not trying to develop a new way of perceiving.

Doing an experience of this type once is sufficient. Continuously repeating this experience is not useful for daily life because it leads towards a passive kind of contemplation that in turn leads towards mental enclosure and isolation. Hopefully, this experience will help us understand that beyond the flat surface of the commonplace there lies a dimension pregnant with hope.

## **XIII. Death**

### **Interest**

This Guided Experience leads us to an anticipation of transcendence beyond death, making use of images and registers that everyone – even those who are sceptics about these themes – can experience. As a matter of fact, a person who is a non-believer will now have the opportunity to mobilize new and unusual images and feelings, and this will give greater flexibility to their mental mechanics. Those who do believe in transcendence, on the other hand, or those who have had experiences of this type, will find in this experience a comforting theme.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

The experience of reconciliation with the past as an opening of the future.

### **Recommendation**

It is not recommended that you work towards overcoming resistances in this experience, since these resistances may be linked to your particular beliefs, and certainly it is not our business to try to change them.

## **Second Part: Playing with Images**

### **I. The Creature**

#### **Interest**

The purpose of this experience is to reconstruct a situation of conflict from the past by following the thread of a "phobia" or excessive irrationally fear from the present. We base this on the premise that this present fear is linked to the memory of a conflicting situation that one must re-live again in one's imagination in order to remove its oppressive emotional charge. If one does this, and if the conflict is correctly integrated, the phobia disappears or loses its intensity.

#### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

What animal provokes an unmistakable sensation of repugnance and fear?

What conflictive situation of my life do I feel it is related to?

Reaction in front of the possibility of petting this animal.

#### **Recommendation**

First, notice whether the conflicting scene that is linked to the irrational fear has been reconstructed well. Observe whether you have been able to conquer the resistances in the nucleus of the problem. If so, verify this in the positive results you obtain in your daily life. If the resistances were not overcome or the conflict was not reconstructed, we suggest that you repeat the experience.

### **II. The Snowmobile**

#### **Interest**

The problems a person has in moving the image of themselves or other objects in their imagination (which is what this experience is about) generally have to do with difficulties of behaviour in making connections between the person and their environment. Many people who feel they have physical limitations such as poor agility, lack of grace, slowness, etc. have found these same errors will be reproduced in this Guided Experience. Other people, who in everyday life have uncontrolled or impulsive behaviour, may find that they will develop uncontrolled images in this experience, and will feel great impatience when they try to slow the images down or give them the correct velocity that the experience suggests.

#### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

Interchange on the difficulties or ease experienced in carrying out the exercise.

#### **Recommendation**

Observe in your daily behaviour the reflection of the problems of movement that you registered in this experience. Verify whether these everyday problems are positively modified as you overcome the resistances in later repetitions of this experience.

### **III. The Chimney Sweep**

#### **Interest**

The purpose of this practice is to obtain immediate relief from internal tensions that are caused by conflicts that have not been resolved, or by conflicts that we may deny actually exist. This denial generally works through either forgetfulness, or through rationalizations

that displace the conflicts so that we are not able to elaborate them at the level where they belong.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

See if at the end of the experience you register the sensation of relief.

### **Recommendation**

Observe whether you register a sensation of relief once the experience is completed. Observe in your everyday life whether the problems that were discussed during the "catharsis" have lost their strength, and if you have understood them so that they create less conflict.

## **IV. Descent**

### **Interest**

Problems you may have in descending or moving downwards may be related to physical difficulties, particularly in breathing. If you have no physical difficulties of this type, problems in descending may be related to past accidents in which you were locked in, choked, asphyxiated, etc.

If none of this applies in your case, then resistances to descend reveal fear of remembering and reconstructing the past. These resistances may also reveal anxiety that certain impulses may get out of control. These impulses are generally obsessive ideas or feelings and compulsive attitudes that force us to do things we do not want to do.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

Interchange on the difficulties or ease encountered in carrying out the experience.

### **Recommendation**

Observe whether the same resistances that appear in the experience are repeated in your everyday life. If the difficulties have been overcome during this experience or in later repetitions, then face situations in your everyday life in which the old problems would appear to check how much progress has in fact been obtained.

## **V. Ascent**

### **Interest**

The difficulties you have in this exercise of ascent or going upward are related to the fear of falling. This may be due to physical problems, or to accidents you have previously had when climbing. But these difficulties may also reflect some "unstable" situation you are living in at the present time.

Problems you have in the ascents with images can also reflect the anguish of not reaching a desired goal, or anxiety over an uncertain future. By mobilizing these images, we orient our later behaviour in the same direction as these images.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

Interchange on the difficulties or ease encountered in carrying out the experience.

### **Recommendation**

Observe whether the resistances in this experience are the same as some in your daily life. Similarly, if the difficulties have been overcome in the experience or through repeating it, examine the real situations of your life in which these problems have appeared, and verify that changes show up and progress has been made.

## **VI. The Costumes**

### **Interest**

Difficulties in transforming images often reflect problems that one has in one's image of self, and also problems one's self-image experiences upon being confronted with other people.

In this experience you will find exercises of expansion and contraction of images that will be useful for unblocking and giving mobility to your self-image.

This exercise will help improve your relationship with other people by giving greater control to your self-image. In this way, you can work towards overcoming blockages in your self-image that are frequently expressed as: timidity, hypersensitivity, shyness, escape or fugue from certain situations, etc.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

Interchange on the difficulties or ease encountered in carrying out the experience.

### **Recommendation**

Notice your resistances in the different scenes, and relate them to problems you experience in your daily life. Verify that the resistances that have been overcome actually do produce changes in your everyday attitudes. Repeat the experience, concentrating on the crucial resistances you have not yet overcome.

## **VII. The Clouds**

### **Interest**

This experience provides elements for the participant to develop and use images that correspond to free and unrestricted physical movements, and at the same time recognize and appreciate pleasurable and gratifying sensations. It is a simple work that gives one registers of releasing mental tension, and allows one to look at one's everyday problems from a calmer and broader point of view. This allows one to find interesting solutions while in this new, positive, state.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

Interchange on the difficulties or ease encountered in carrying out the experience.

### **Recommendation**

Observe any difficulties in your freedom of movement that occurred during this experience. Compare them with your daily problems of the same type, or with limitations in your bodily expression. Notice whether, in this state you achieved during this experience, you could look at your everyday problems more accurately.

If you repeat the experience and overcome the resistance, notice the corresponding results in your daily life.

## **VIII. To and Fro**

### **Interest**

The difficulties one encounters in this experience reflect a present disorientation in one's life. Very rapid movements reveal a similar impulsiveness and lack of control in everyday life. "Breaks" in the sequences coincide with interruptions or uncompleted activities in daily life. Any disorder in the sequence reflects disorder in one's actions. By mastering this practice you may achieve important positive changes in your behaviour and your everyday activity.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

Interchange on the difficulties or ease encountered in carrying out the experience.

### **Recommendation**

Study the relationship between the resistances you observe in this experience and the kinds of difficulties you encounter in your everyday behaviour. And conversely, as you overcome the resistances in this experience (or when repeating it), compare this change with the corresponding progress in conducting your everyday affairs.

## **IX. The Miner**

### **Interest**

The purpose of this experience is for the participant to become aware of the relationship between thoughts (images in this case), and visceral or internal bodily tensions. This exercise permits deep physical relaxation at the same time that it dramatically transforms in positive ways the negative images that so frequently produce psychosomatic physical problems. One should also become aware of the reversibility of this phenomenon, or in other words, that tensions or profound bodily irritation will also in turn produce negative images and emotional states.

### **Possible Themes of Interchange**

Make relations between the things that are imagined, the way they are imagined and the sensations of visceral tension or relaxation.

Regarding the experience, consider if you have been able to correctly represent the scene relating to the "soft brushing".

### **Recommendation**

Notice whether the scene where the little man moves the soft brush over your body has been represented correctly in your experience. If any resistances have appeared, repeat the experience until they are overcome.

Notice whether the areas of your body that suffer tension or internal irritations in your daily life have modified their state as a consequence of this experience.



## RETREAT ON THE SPACE OF REPRESENTATION

This is a retreat of two days and two nights on the study of the theory of the Space of Representation, complemented by the practice of a few guided experiences. Whenever possible, it is recommended that this retreat be carried out in the Centre of Work of one of our Parks of Study and Reflection.

### Day 1

Arrival in the morning. After having arranged the ambits and logistical issues, begin with a brief introduction on the plan of the day, highlighting the importance of working with a friendly tone, without haste, and with much time devoted to interchange.

### Framing

The aim of this retreat is to explore the theme of the Space of Representation. We will study texts on the subject and carry out some guided experiences that will help us know and understand it in practice.

### Readings

In the conference on Guided Experiences, Silo ends by saying:

*Insofar as we continue to consider the mental image to be only a simple copy of perception; insofar as we continue to believe that consciousness in general maintains a passive attitude before the world (acting only as some sort of reflection of it), we will neither be able to answer the foregoing questions nor others that are truly fundamental.*

*For us, the image is an active form, placing the consciousness (as structure) in-the-world. The image can act on the body and the body-in-the-world because of intentionality, which is directed outside itself and does not simply correspond to a for-itself or some "natural," reflected, and mechanical in-itself. The image acts within a temporal-spatial structure and within an internal "spatiality" that has thus been termed the "space of representation." The various and complex functions that the image carries out depend in general on the position it occupies within that spatiality. A fuller justification of what I am explaining here would, of course, require an understanding of the associated theory of consciousness, and for that I refer you to the essay "The Psychology of the Image" in the book Contributions to Thought.*

In Psychology of the Image (Silo, Collected Works, Volume I, "Contributions to Thought": Psychology of the Image, Chapter I. The problem of space in the study of phenomena of consciousness), the author presents the theme of *The Internal Register Through Which the Image Is Given in Some "Place"* with the help of a few practical examples. Suggestion: In order to better understand what is being said here it is proposed that the participants carry out the operations that are presented in the following text:

*Pressing the keys on the keyboard I have in front of me causes the appearance of graphic characters that I can see on the monitor connected to it. The movements of my fingers are associated with particular letters, and automatically, following my thoughts, the phrases and sentences flow out. Now, suppose that I close my eyes and stop thinking about the previous discussion in order to concentrate on the image of the keyboard. In some way I have the keyboard "right in front of me," represented by a visual image that is almost as if copied from the perception I was experiencing before I closed my eyes.*

*Opening my eyes, I get up from my chair and take a few steps across the room. Again I close my eyes, and upon remembering the keyboard, I imagine it somewhere behind me. If I wanted to observe the image exactly as the keyboard presented itself to my perception, I would have to place it in a position "in front of my eyes." To do that, I must either mentally turn my body around or "move" the machine through the "external space" until it is located in front of me. Now the machine is "in front of my eyes," but this produces a spatial dislocation, because if I open my eyes I will see a window in front of me.*

*In this way, it becomes evident that the location of the object in the representation is placed in a "space" that may not coincide with the space in which the original perception was given.*

*Furthermore, I can go on to imagine the keyboard located in the window in front of me, or I can imagine the whole ensemble closer to or farther away from me. I can even expand or shrink the size of the whole scene or some of its components. I can distort these bodies, and finally, I can even change their colors.*

*But I also discover some impossibilities. I cannot, for example, imagine those objects without color, no matter how hard I try to make them "transparent," since it is precisely color or "shade" that will define the edges or differences of the transparency. Clearly, I am confirming that extension and color are not independent contents, and hence I cannot imagine color without extension. It is precisely this point that makes me reflect that if I am unable to represent color without extension, then the extension of the representation also denotes the "spatiality" in which the represented object is placed. It is this spatiality that interests us.*

## **Break**

## **Comments**

In simple terms we say that the space of representation is a kind of mental three-dimensional display in which are configured images formed from sensory stimuli, the memory and the activity of consciousness itself.

This space of representation is formed by all the internal representations of the cenesthetic sense, which in turn correspond to all the signals of the body. We can therefore say that the space of representation is the sum of all the signals that the body sends to the brain, and in that sense, the space of representation is like a second body.

To briefly describe the structure of the space of representation, we say that it has two levels of depth: one in which the phenomena of the world inside the body are situated, and a second level in which phenomena external to the body are situated. Example: exercise with the sphere in the centre of the chest, and exercise of moving a part of the body to touch an external object.

In the space of representation, moreover, we can distinguish three different planes: high, medium and low.

Finally, this structure of two depths and three planes varies according to the acting level of consciousness.

This can be experienced thanks to the work with images we know as *Guided Experiences*. Moreover, the practice of Operative (*Self-Liberation*), known as Catharsis, Transference and Self-Transference, allows a greater degree of comprehension.

Today we will begin to work with some Guided Experiences known as *Playing with Images*. These experiences allow us to recognize the dynamics of images. Through repetition, overcoming the difficulties and resistances that are gradually encountered, it is possible to

liberate the dynamics of the image. In that sense, we are "testing" our circuits. At the same time, we can recognize through experience how the space of representation is structured.

As always, we will give priority to the quality of work carried out in depth, with time and a lot of interchange; we have enough time to do everything proposed.

## **Practices**

We will now carry out some Guided Experiences.

For each practice the same procedure is followed for the whole retreat (based on the list in the retreat on Guided Experiences):

- first read the point of interest of each Guided Experience.
- carry out a full relax (each time a little faster and looser).
- do the Guided Experience (read by the director or with an audio recording).
- each participant takes personal notes on their experience.
- interchange in small groups on the central knot of the experience

It is recommended to take a break before the next Guided Experience.

## **First sequence**

*The Snowmobile*

*Descent*

*Ascent*

*To and Fro*

## **Lunch**

(Free time)

## **Interchange**

On what has been discovered about the mental dynamics that need to be improved and the structure of the space of representation.

## **Second sequence**

*The Miner*

*The Chimney Sweep*

*The Costumes*

*The Clouds*

## **Dinner**

(Free time)

**Reading:**

On *The Riddle of Perception*

(Silo, Collected Works, Volume I, "Silo Speaks")

**Synthesis of Day 1**

At the end of the day, each participant summarizes and synthesizes the day in terms of what was learned, impediments, discoveries (seeing what was not known), comprehensions (implies a deeper understanding based on experience), projections (what needs to be done from now on).

It is suggested that at the end of the day, participants place their notebooks beside their bed in order to take notes on their dreams. Seven hours of sleep and a set time for breakfast is recommended.

**Day 2**

After breakfast, interchange on the previous day and on the dreams, making connections with the works done.

**Study**

In groups of three or four participants, study and discuss the chapter *Space of Representation of Psychology II* (Silo, Collected Works, Volume II, Psychology Notes).

Then, interchange as a whole group on the questions that arose.

**Lunch**

(Free time)

The afternoon will be devoted to three Guided Experiences on different themes: the first, on reconciliation with the past; the second, emplacement in the present; and the third, on experiences with meaning of life. These three interests guide the practitioner towards three different planes in the space of representation: the low, middle and high, each with their characteristic translations of impulses, different kinds of luminosity, and relations with the three times of the consciousness: past, present and future.

With the same way of working as the day before, today we carry out the following Guided Experiences:

*My Ideal*

*The Protector of Life*

*The Journey*

**Personal Synthesis**

Each participant makes a summary and synthesis of the two retreat days, considering discoveries, comprehensions and projections.

**Reading** (voluntary) of each synthesis to the group.

**Conclusion of the retreat with a friendly, shared meal.**

**Bibliography**

Silo, Collected Works, Volume I, "Guided Experiences"

Silo, Collected Works, Volume I, "Silo Speaks"

Silo, Collected Works, Volume II, "Psychology Notes"

Luis Ammann, Self-Liberation

## RETREAT ON SELF-KNOWLEDGE

This is a three-night and two-day retreat on the study and practice of *Self-Liberation*. Whenever possible, it is recommended that it be carried out in one of our Parks of Study and Reflection.

**Requirements:** A room that can be darkened or some rooms that can be darkened with tables for the work in groups. Candles, lead (various kilos and a 2 litre pot), enough cotton for the group work and a number of sheets of black bristol board.

Arrival to the Centre in the afternoon of the day before beginning the retreat; arranging of the ambit.

### Dinner

Explanations on the plan of the retreat, the tone, defining of functions (director, participants).

(Free time)

It is suggested that at the end of the day, participants place their notebooks beside their bed in order to take notes on their dreams. Seven hours of sleep and a set, stated time for breakfast is recommended.

### Day 1

Breakfast

(Free time)

### Comments on the work to be done

Reading of *tensions, climates and characteristics and origin of climates* (Glossary of Self-Liberation). Read also about *tones, climates, tensions and contents* in Psychology I, Psychology Notes, Collected Works II.

Regarding the work on **Situation Analysis, Tensions and Climates**, the suggestion is to describe carefully what happens to you in the different ambits of your life, including the ambit of the Movement. To describe means to define with internal sincerity what happens to you, without judging or seeking justifications.

After the description, define the climates and tensions; at the end, make a synthesis.

**Work in Groups** (in groups of three; by interchanging on our experiences the work is better understood and moreover, we can understand that problems are not really as "personal" as we normally believe):

**Individual Work of Self-Liberation:** Self-Knowledge, Lesson 1

(Free time)

### **Comments on the work to be done**

Reading of *Roles*, errors and function of *roles*, in the Glossary of Self-Liberation.

Regarding the meaning of the term "role", give examples of their allegorical meaning (costumes, uniforms, etc.) from daily life, history, or literature.

Note that in order to describe a role, an external point of view is required, as if from an ever-present videocamera that records all the behaviours in the different ambits.

Also, in this case we try to not justify what happens to us or explain the internal motivations; we try to describe what appears from the outside.

Finish the two exercises by establishing and making notes on the relations between roles and situation analysis.

**Group Work** (in groups of three; by interchanging on our experiences the work is better understood and moreover, we can understand that problems are not really as "personal" as we normally believe):

**Individual Work of Self-Liberation:** Self-Knowledge, Lesson 3.

### **Lunch**

(Free time)

### **Comments on the work to be done**

In terms of the circles of **Values** (circles of prestige), it is recommended to define them quickly. After a little while, review the order and see if they "fit", and if not, make the necessary adjustments until you feel that the scale of values is coherent. Finish by establishing connections between the values, roles and situation analysis.

In the work with **Self-Image**, don't pay attention to the possible compensatory characteristics of the qualities that you attribute to yourself, because if you do you'll likely censor yourself. It is explained that participants need only put their positive qualities and order them by process of elimination. Finish by establishing connections between self-image, values, roles and situation analysis. If each work is done freely, when the time comes to relate the different exercises to one another, you will be able to discover and understand more deeply what is needed.

**Group work** (in groups of three; by interchanging on our experiences the work is better understood and moreover, we can understand that problems are not really as "personal" as we normally believe):

**Individual Work of Self-Liberation:** Self-Knowledge, Lessons 4 and 5.

(Free time)

## **Dinner**

### **Comments on the work to be done**

The following work starts tonight and continues tomorrow morning, up to lunch.

### **Individual Work**

**Autobiography**, general exposition based on the following parameters: accidents, repetitions, changes of stage.

### **Summary and synthesis of day one**

Before ending the day, each participant takes time to summarize and synthesize what was done in terms of what was learned, impediments, discoveries (what I did not know), comprehensions (what was understood through experience), projections (what I need to do from now on).

**Individual work of Self-Liberation:** Self-Knowledge, Lesson 2.

**End of the Day.**

## **Day 2**

Breakfast

(Free time)

### **Comments and interchange**

Interchange on the work of Autobiography that favours the overcoming of impediments.

Note that this autobiographical study will put some order into the significant recollections of the many events of our lives. Considering the accidents, repetitions and changes of stage that occurred at different times, it is possible to gain an overview of the process of one's own life, but without studying the situation, context, or cultural landscape in which one was formed. This is an issue of great importance, owing to the "dragging" of behaviours that this landscape carries with it, and it is the subject of a retreat dedicated to what we call the *Formative Landscape*, found in the epilogue of Self-Liberation.

Therefore, it is suggested to work with inner calm, kindness and humour. In order to recover these registers, an experience of peace is guided.

### **Individual Work**

Autobiography. Follow the basic scheme based on accidents, repetitions and changes of stage.



## **Lunch**

(Free time)

**Individual Work:** Finish the autobiography.

(Free time)

## **Personal summary and synthesis**

Find the significant relationships between situation analysis (tensions and climates), roles (codified behaviours), values, self-image (qualities) and your own personal history (autobiography), recognizing also the play of compensations.

## **Dinner**

### **Introduction to *reveries* and *reverie nucleus***

Reading of lesson 6 of the Self-Knowledge course, up to and including exercise 6. What is proposed in this exercise is practiced for the remainder of the retreat.

Continue with the melting of the lead: place it in a pot on a hot burner on the stove. Once melted, the volume of the lead will be about the same as one litre of water. Fill a pail of water and pour the lead into the water (not all at once, as you will need a number pieces, one for each table). The lead cools immediately, forming suggestive shapes that are conducive to the exercise.

**Individual work of Self-Liberation:** Self-Knowledge, Lesson 6.

(Free time)

**End of day.**

## **Day 3**

Breakfast

### **Study in groups of three**

Psychology I, Silo, Collected Works II: Each group studies the following sections and later presents them synthetically and graphically to the others (1 hour for the study and 10 minutes for the presentation, approx.):

*Cycles of the psychism*

*Responses to the world as structuring compensations*

*Personality*

## Reading and comments

Psychology II, Collected Works II. Everything related to *Levels of work of the consciousness. Reverie and reverie nucleus.*

## Lunch (light)

(Free time)

## Individual work (in groups of 3 or 4 participants around each table)

*Self-Knowledge*, Lesson 6 (Reverie and reverie nucleus), exercises 7, 8, 9. Do each exercise, taking note of the images that arise, and then write a story.

## Individual work

After reading Lesson 6 of *Self-Knowledge*, each participant studies what is proposed in the three paragraphs that follow the exercises:

*Having carried out the four exercises, note which images are repeated. The repeated images will be the primary permanent reveries. If you do not have any repeated images, you should continue doing the exercises until they appear.*

*The primary reveries that you have managed to identify should be studied in relation to the current situation in which you are living. In this sense, you should ask yourself what these reveries are compensating.*

*Next, compare the stories (not the repeated images). These may be different but they will all point to a common mental climate. This common climate, which will no doubt coincide with the mental climate in which you usually live, will reveal your reverie nucleus.*

## Interchange and comments from whole group

Finish reading Lesson 6 of *Self-Knowledge*.

(Long period of free time)

## Individual work

### Self-Knowledge Synthesis

Each participant establishes relations between *Reveries and Situation Analysis (tensions and climates) Roles, Values, Self-Image*. Also, between *Reverie Nucleus* and *Autobiography*.

The synthesis may be considered complete when the discoveries and comprehensions allow you to define what changes in behaviour and priorities are needed in order to advance in overcoming suffering, for you and those around you.

## Final comments

In these very intense three days we have studied *Situation Analysis (tensions and climates), Roles, Circles of Prestige (Values), Self Image, Autobiography, and Reveries and Reverie Nucleus*. That is, all the tools of self-knowledge included in this retreat.

This work of study enables us to observe an aspect of our life that is strongly influenced by life cycles with their physiological and psychological instances, and by the environment in which we happen to live and in which we are conditioned to give responses. We have observed an aspect of our life that is strongly determined and mechanical, capable of giving direction to entire stages of our life. We have carried out searches on our mechanical tendencies, finding many elements having to do with them.

As strong as all these conditioning factors may be, they do not fully determine the direction, the meaning of our life.

We can recognize the major themes that have guided the stages of our lives, the provisional meanings that arose, reached their climax, and then faded out, but in this study we have not considered our deepest aspirations; we have not thought about what it is that attracts us from the future, beyond and in spite of all the conditioning of the past; we have not examined those non-habitual experiences that, even if they are not understood and are brief and often forgotten, nonetheless are a reference for the meaning of our life.

If carried out with inner sincerity and calm, the studies of *Self-knowledge* and our *Formative Landscape* have the ability to reveal the state of need for a profound change. To make this change, we have practices that range from relaxation and psychophysics, to the work of Operative, in addition to the large field of action that is the world around us – that great "anvil" where we must forge the steel of a growing humanization.

### **Conclusion of retreat with a friendly, shared meal.**

#### **Bibliography**

Luis Ammann, *Self-Liberation*

Silo, *Collected Works, Volumes I and II*

## **RETREAT ON THE FORMATIVE LANDSCAPE**

This is a retreat of two nights and three days (including the day of arrival).

### **Day 1**

Arrival to the Centre in the afternoon; arranging of the ambit.

### **Dinner**

Explanations on the plan of the retreat, the tone, and way of working.

### **Group reading**

Landscape and Looks. The Human Landscape, Humanize the Earth, Collected Works I, Silo. Interchange

(Free time)

### **End of the Day**

It is suggested that at the end of the day, participants place their notebooks beside their bed in order to take notes on their dreams. Seven hours of sleep and a set time for breakfast is recommended.

### **Day 2**

Breakfast

(Free time)

### **Reading as a Whole Group**

#### **A. Formative Landscape (Epilogue of Self-Liberation)**

### **Individual Work**

Summarize and synthesize point A from the reading.

### **Group Work**

#### **Tangible objects of the Formative Landscape**

We know that many objects have changed since we were children. In general, the landscape in which our life unfolded has changed.

Working in small groups, each person does their own written work and then there is an interchange on the observations (groups of 3, to allow time for everyone to express themselves).

### 1.- Personal Written Work

*-Describe in writing, the general formative landscape in which you lived during your childhood and adolescence, from the viewpoint of the tangible objects of those times. Consider fashion, buildings, tools, vehicles, etc. using these objects as support for the landscape being studied.*

Suggestion: Do not criticize anything, try not to judge ... just describe.

### 2.- Interchange

*In the group, discuss the formative landscape with reference to the tangible objects and compare them with how things have changed today.*

### Lunch

### Free Time

## **Group Work**

### **Values and Intangibles in the Formative Landscape**

In small groups, doing the writings individually and then interchanging on the observations (the groups could be of 3 people so that each person has enough time to express themselves).

### 1.- Personal Written Work

*- Describe in writing, the general formative landscape in which you lived in your childhood and adolescence, from the viewpoint of the intangible objects of those times. Base yourself on the accepted values of that time: what was good and what was bad, what happiness was, how were the established hierarchies and roles, who were the heroes of the day (in terms of film, music, sports, politics, economics, culture, morality), what values existed in friendship, family, work, sex and study. What were the aspirations, frustrations, and social traumas of the time?*

Suggestion: Do not criticize anything, try not to judge ... just describe.

**It would be interesting to try to capture the "sensibility", the general emotional tone of that formative landscape. Because today that sensibility has changed, and when two generations sit down to watch the same TV program, the emotional responses are very different. So in fact in our formative landscape there was also an emotional background operating that affected us – one that can even be striking for a younger person today.**

### 2.- Interchange

*In the group, discuss the formative landscape with reference to the intangible objects and values of those times, and compare them with how things have changed today.*

### Free Time

## Reading as a Whole Group

### B. Our Own *Look* and the *Looks* of Others as Determinants of Conduct in Our Formative Landscape (Epilogue, Self-Liberation)

#### Individual Work

Summarize and synthesize point B in the reading.

#### Group Work

##### One's own look and the look of others

In small groups, doing the writings individually and then interchanging on the observations (the groups could be of 3 people so that each person has enough time to express themselves).

##### 1. – Personal Written Work

*Describe in writing the situation in which you lived as a child and an adolescent. Reconstruct the general formative landscape, putting emphasis on the "look" that others had on you and the "look" that you had on others. How were you seen in your family, at work, school, with friends, in other emotional or sexual relations? How did you look at your family, work, school, friends, emotional and sexual relations? Ask yourself: What kind of life did I have to prepare for? (from the point of view of others and from your point of view).*

*Consider how you "looked" at all that and how you in turn were "looked at" by the people of that world. Remember how you judged all that and how you reacted. How was this clash of ours, our flight, our retreat, our agreement? We should respond to that by referring to the behaviours that were formed in us at that time. Describe how we judged and were judged, and what roles we acted with in that landscape.*

*Suggestion: Do not say whether this was right or wrong. Simply describe.*

##### 2. Interchange

*Discuss together the personal and social "look" in that formative landscape, and the behaviours that were forming within you at that time.*

#### Dinner

(Free time)

End of Day

## DAY 3

#### Breakfast

Free Time

## Reading as a Whole Group

### C. “Dragging” Conduct from Our Formative Landscape into Our Present Life (Epilogue, Self-Liberation)

#### Individual Work

Summarize and synthesize the point C that was read.

#### Group Work

##### The “dragging” of the past

In small groups, doing the writings individually and then interchanging on the observations (the groups could be of 3 people so that each person has enough time to express themselves).

##### 1. Personal Written Work

*Describe in writing the situation in which you are now living, in terms of the new technological objects as well as the new values that exist. What is the priority nowadays? What is secondary? What kind of life should one be prepared for? Consider the "dragging" of sensibility from another time and the values of another time that no longer coincide with today's world.*

*We are now in conditions to understand how those behaviours and that general emotional tone have made it to today. Study then, the "dragging" of those times in terms of action and "sensibility". And do not be misled by some surface changes in your behaviour, as many of them will retain the same structure even though they have become considerably more sophisticated over time.*

##### 2.- Interchange

*Discuss together what kind of activities, customs, ideas and sensibilities of another era not suited to the current situation still operate within us.*

Free Time

#### Group Work

##### Changes of Behaviour

In small groups, doing the writings individually and then interchanging on the observations (the groups could be of 3 people so that each person has enough time to express themselves).

##### 1.- Personal Written Work

*Describe in writing the situation in which you live with respect to the contradiction between the values and behaviours that you maintain but that are no longer suited to today's world. Consider what kind of changes would need to occur in you, in terms of values and behaviours.*

You can see this work as an orderly meditation on your own life. From what we've done up to now, you can grasp that we are not trying to modify isolated, undesirable behavioural

tactics, but instead trying to help you to see for yourself the realities of your own relationship with the world. Of course, by this time you are certainly in a condition to understand the roots of numerous compulsions associated with forms of conduct that were initiated in your formative landscape. But it will be difficult for you to change such conduct, linked to values and a particular sensibility, without touching your overall structure of relationship with the world you live in today. Once we have understood the problem, we must decide, if we do not wish to make a structural change in behaviour, what tactics to modify because we consider them deficient. We can reach this goal by applying the various techniques we have already studied. But what is to be gained if we are not prepared to make structural changes? At a minimum we will benefit from this structural approach by broadening our knowledge of ourselves. And as to the need for more radical changes, the situation we live in today will lead us to decide on one direction or the other. Meanwhile, the times continue to change, and the future may, perhaps, present us with challenges of which we are still unaware. Understand also that many of your "tactics" have progressed and become more effective, while others have remained fixed, lacking *growing adaptation*. Study the relationship of those fixed forms of conduct, those tactics, to the sensibilities of that earlier time. Look within yourself honestly to see whether you are ready to give up that sensibility which is, of course, linked to values that you still hold.

Lunch

Free Time

## 2.- Interchange

*As a group, discuss the theme of growing adaptation with reference to the present moment. (approx 1 hour.)*

Free Time

## **Reading as a Whole Group**

### **D. and E. Proposal for Situational Self-Knowledge and, Planning Our Future from an Overall Point of View (Epilogue, Self-Liberation)**

- Reading of Point D from the paragraph that starts, "We come to a moment of profound meditation..." to the end.
- Reading of all of Point E.

## **Individual Work**

Summarize and synthesize points D and E.

## **Personal Work**

1.- *Written*



*Those who wish to undertake this task should develop a small plan of behaviour to be started on as of today. If you have good results, the time will come to carry out works on a larger scale.*

## **2 .- Interchange**

*In a group, discuss this simple plan for personal change, in order to get the points of view of the others. (1 hour approx.)*

### **Reading as a Whole Group**

Reading from the *Third Letter to my friends* (Study Theme No. 8, Change and Crisis of this Manual)

### **Individual Work**

Summarize and synthesize the comprehensions obtained in this retreat.

**Conclusion of the retreat with a friendly, shared meal.**

### **Bibliography**

Luis Ammann. Self-Liberation

Silo. Collected Works I

## RETREAT I ON OPERATIVE: CATHARSIS

Duration: 2 complete days, arriving to the Centre of Work the night before.

### First night:

Arrival and welcome, getting settled in the ambit. Review of the timing of the retreat.

Meal (one hour)

### Reading: Introduction to Operative, from the book *Self-Liberation*

What is the Operative system useful for? It has two major purposes served by two main systems of practices. By means of a system known as "catharsis", Operative eliminates the excessive "charges" in mental contents that create tension and disturb the normal operation of the consciousness, that is, it reduces excessive tensions. Operative also gives greater order and coherence to the functioning of the consciousness by means of a second system known as "transference." And finally, it is useful for those people who wish to convert a particular situation of their life, reorienting its meaning, through a system known as "Self-Transference".

Operative may be defined as the set of techniques directed at normalizing the psychological functions so the consciousness will be in a condition with free energy to significantly amplify its possibilities.

The function of Operative is not a therapeutic one because it does not attempt to solve problems of psychological association or abnormality; these concerns fall into the terrain of Psychiatry.

Operative is based on the fact that in today's world, the human being is not internally integrated. This lack of integration does not lie in the functions of the consciousness; this would be a pathological case outside the interests of Operative. Rather, we are referring to a lack of integration in the *contents* of consciousness; the biographical events, life projects, etc. Integrating all these contents gives coherence to one's internal world and, therefore, also to one's behaviour in the world.

It is not coherent for one to think in one direction, feel in another, and act in still a different direction. And yet this happens each day to everyone. This is not a pathological phenomenon; it is a common, even habitual one. Yet although it is habitual, it is nonetheless painful.

In order to be able to think, feel, and act in the same direction, it is necessary first to balance the charges on the contents of the consciousness, and second to reorganize these contents.

The whole system of Operative aims at coherence, and thus opens possibilities for the evolution of the mind.

### Recommendations

1. Study each of these lessons with other people and carry out pedagogical practices as examples for the group.

2. Once you have studied and discussed each lesson, begin to work on it with only one other person. This is an important point: Study, discuss, and even carry out group pedagogical practices, but never do real and profound practices with more than two people. The two participants will have a relationship of "guide" and "subject."
3. In each practice, alternate the roles of guide and subject so both participants learn to understand and master the proposed techniques.
4. The same two people should work together throughout the whole course as much as possible.
5. Pay attention to your affinity for the other person when you select a guide. One needs to be able to rely on complete mutual discretion with respect to everything that is said and done in the working sessions.
6. Master each lesson perfectly before going onto the following one. This means that the number of working sessions dedicated to each lesson may vary from person to person.

### **Framing of the Retreat**

The meaning of this retreat is to deepen our knowledge about the themes of Operative and also to have more experience in the techniques of Catharsis. For this we shall observe the work plan specified in Self-Liberation, and we'll end each day with an Experience of Peace. Our basic reference material will be Self-Liberation and some selected texts from Psychology I, II and III which will give us a wider perspective concerning certain themes. This retreat places the emphasis on personal experience in relation to the themes we have mentioned, thus that is the objective to follow.

### **Recommendations regarding emplacement**

Here we are not going to talk about structural themes. Our only theme is our personal work in Operative. The appropriate attitude is that of kindness, humour and internal sincerity. Since this is a retreat about Operative, the relations between us are very important, and they should be light, without tensions, open, and above all, of trust. What is important is to enter in direct communication with oneself and to learn from the others.

### **Mental fence**

The mental fence is our form to create a different "mental space" where we can work. This fence produces a limit in the themes, in space and time. This limit concentrates and raises our attentional level. Only with more attention can we learn more about the themes of the retreat and about ourselves, observing our own internal functioning.

### **Explanations on the functioning of the Retreat**

In the retreat, there are no levels, functions, sectors or seniority. We all participate under the same conditions. There are only 2 roles: the participant, and the director. We need to take good care of our ambit (we need to turn off mobile phones during the 2 days). Punctuality is recommended at the beginning of activities, for waking up and going to bed. The plan of work is very tight, but enough time has been considered to carry out specific works and interchange. There is little free time, but if one finishes specific works earlier, one can use the extra time to take walks, interchange with others, finish or review the work. The Director is always available to explain something again, to clarify things, to give examples, for consultation, etc. Although the work to be done is concentrated, there will be enough time to do everything with proper depth and without haste. It is important to centre oneself well in

each of the works, develop them well, interchange with others, to obtain plenty of observations and conclusions. We will do individual work, work with partners, work in teams, and work all together.

### **Explanations on the objective and the plan of work of the retreat**

The objective of this centre of work is to study the theory of the works of catharsis, of Operative, from the point of view of the functioning of the psychism, and also to practice and have personal experience with these techniques. We will also study in teams and present the results of our studies to the whole. And, since we have no other theme, we will dedicate these two days to these things.

Beyond the general explanation about our personal placement, there is another theme to consider: this is a deep and delicate work that should be carried out with kindness and care towards ourselves. Our interest is placed in unveiling more of our internal world. For this, no one should feel obliged to do any particular work. This is very important because any work carried out by forcing, whatever the reason may be, will always provoke a rebound, an internal rejection and obviously this is never interesting.

There is one last point that is obvious, but is worth mentioning. The work in Operative is done with two people and it has to be very clear that trust and confidentiality are the main requisites for a good work and good communication. This means that whatever is said in our work sessions stays only between those two persons. We know that technically our internal landscapes are very similar, that there is very little originality in our tensions and climates, but anyway we are rather "possessive" about our own problems. So, we respect this and even though it may be very healthy for me to communicate my personal experiences to others, I never reveal to others what I have heard in the works of Catharsis and Transference of others. Even though this is a question of common sense, it is good to remember how we want to be treated with our internal work and so we treat others in that same way.

### **Practice**

External, internal and mental relax. Experience of Peace.

Free time

01:00 End of the day

### **Day 1**

08:00 Wake-up. Breakfast

10:00 **Study of Operative, from Self-Liberation**

Individual work: Review of previous works with questions. Annex 1.

Rest

12:00 **Study: The Psychism**

Work as a whole group

Reading and study of Annex 2 with the diagram

Accompany the reading with the PowerPoint presentation, Annex 3

14:00 Lunch

15:30 Study of Catharsis, based on Self-Liberation.  
Group reading: Lesson 1  
Review of the roles of guide and subject.  
Work in pairs: Cathartic Probe 2, (ex. 1, 2, 3, 4)  
First with one guide and subject, then change roles.

Rest

18:00 **Practice: Work of Cathartic Probe**

(In pairs, 4 hours)

After the work with the first person, it's a good idea to take a good break, have a coffee, walk around outside, change the mental atmosphere. Start the probe with the second person only when you've noticed that the mental atmosphere of both people has been "aired out".

22:00 Meal

Practice: Practices of Relaxation, from the book, Self-Liberation  
External, internal, mental Relax. Experience of Peace

Free Time

01:00 End of the day.

## **Day 2**

08:30 Wake up. Breakfast.

10:00 **Study: Deep catharsis, from the book Self-Liberation.**

Work as a whole group: Lesson 3.

Work of deep Catharsis (in pairs, 4 hours)

After the work with the first person, it's a good idea to take a good break, have a coffee, walk around outside, change the mental atmosphere. Start the probe with the second person only when you've noticed that the mental atmosphere of both people has been "aired out".

14:00 Lunch

15:00 **Personal Synthesis**

- Discoveries, comprehensions and conclusions.
- Reading of the synthesis

Brief rest

17:00 **Reading: The Internal Landscape. Chapter VII.**

**Experience:** External, internal and mental relax. Experience of Peace.

**Conclusion of the retreat with a friendly, shared meal.**

### **Bibliography**

Luis Ammann, Self-Liberation

Silo, Collected Works, Volume I, Humanize the Earth: "The Inner Look"

Silo, Collected Works, Volume II, Psychology Notes: "Psychology I and II".



- c) What is the difference between our Self-Knowledge system and other systems, and why is this important?

**3.- Answer the following questions:**

- a) What different kinds of tension are there?

- b) Where does one register tensions and how?

- c) What is the function of images?

- d) What is the relationship between body posture and emotional state?

- e) How are breathing and emotional state related?

- f) What are the centres and how do they work?



- g) How does each part of each centre work?
  
- h) How are the centres related to each other?
  
- i) Why is it important to develop one's attention?
  
- j) What is the difference between a tension and a climate?
  
- k) What are roles?
  
- l) What is a value or "area of prestige?"
  
- m) What is one's self-image?
  
- n) What are reveries and what functions do they have?

o) What are the levels of consciousness?

p) In what ways is the present conditioned by past biographical events?

q) How is the present conditioned by one's future projects and goals?

Consult the materials to verify the accuracy of your answers.

## APPENDIX 2

(to Retreat 1 on Operative: Catharsis)

### **The Psychism – Brief Introduction**

We are going to compile descriptions from various materials that can help us to better understand the psychism according to the interest of this retreat.

### **Psychology Notes I**

#### **The Psychism as a function of Life**

The tendency to go toward the environment—from the search for food supply sources, to flight or concealment from danger—gives direction and mobility to living beings. These specific tendencies in each species form a team of tropisms. The simplest tropism consists of giving a response to a stimulus. This minimal operation, of responding to an element alien to the organism that provokes a disequilibrium in the structure, in order to compensate and re-establish stability, will later manifest itself in a diverse and complex way. All the operations will leave “tracks,” which will be preferential pathways for the new responses (in Time 2 the living being operates on the basis of conditions obtained in Time 1). This possibility of recording is of prime importance for the structure’s permanence in a changing external environment, and a variable internal environment.

As the organism tends to go toward the environment to adapt to it and survive, it will have to do so by overcoming resistances. In the environment there are possibilities but also inconveniences, and to overcome the difficulties and surpass resistances, energy must be invested; work must be done that requires energy. This available energy will be used in that work of overcoming environmental resistances. There will be no energy available again until the difficulties are overcome and the work is completed. The recordings of tracks (memory) will allow responses based on previous experiences, which will leave free energy available for new evolutionary steps. Without energetic availability, it is not possible to carry out more complex tasks of growing adaptation.

On the other hand, the environmental conditions present themselves to the developing organism as alternatives of choice, as well as being the tracks that allow it to decide between the different alternatives of adaptation. In addition, the adaptation is carried out by looking for the path of least resistance in front of the different alternatives, and that will require the least effort. This lesser effort implies less energy expenditure. And so, concomitantly with overcoming resistances, the attempt is made to do so with the least amount of energy possible, so that the free energy available can be invested in new evolutionary steps. In each evolutionary moment there is transformation, both of the environment as well as of the living being. Here is an interesting paradox: the structure, in order to preserve its unity, must transform the environment, and also transform itself.

It would be erroneous to think that living structures change and transform only the surrounding environment, since this environment becomes increasingly more complicated, and it is impossible to adapt while keeping the individuality unchanged, just as it was created in its beginnings. This is the case of man, whose environment, with the passing of time, is no longer just natural, but is social and technical as well. The complex relationships between social groups and the accumulated social and historical experience create an environment and a situation in which man’s internal transformation will be necessary.

Following this roundabout description in which life emerges as organizing itself with functions, tropisms and memory so as to compensate a variable environment and thus

increasingly adapt, we see that a coordination among these factors (however minimal) is also necessary for the opportune orientation toward favorable conditions of development. When this minimal coordination appears, the psychism emerges as a function of life in growing adaptation, in evolution.

The function of the psychism consists of coordinating all the operations of compensation of the living being's instability in its environment. Without coordination, the organisms would respond partially without completing the different compositional parts, without maintaining the necessary relationships; and, finally, without preserving the structure in the dynamic process of adaptation.

## SELF-LIBERATION

Operative. Catharsis. Lesson 3.

Scheme of the consciousness.

Figure 1 shows the most basic scheme in which the stimuli reach the consciousness, which then acts and gives responses.



Figure 2 includes greater detail and shows that the stimuli come from both inside the body as well as from outside it. The stimuli are received by the senses as sensations and are carried to the consciousness as perceptions, that is, as structured sensations. The consciousness then acts and produces images that carry energy or "charge" to the centers of response, producing external or internal responses depending on the type and location of the image.

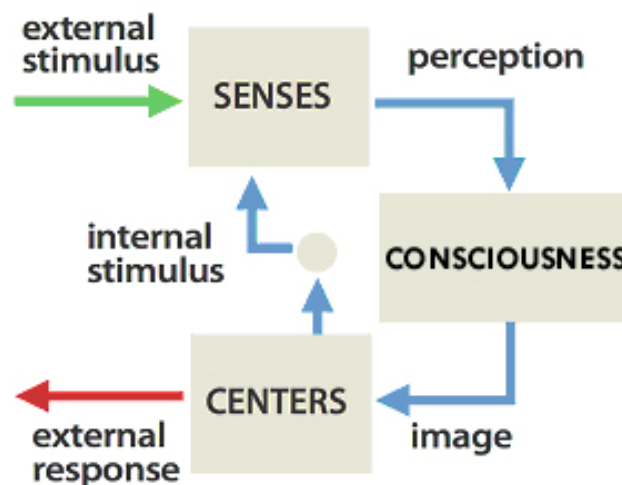
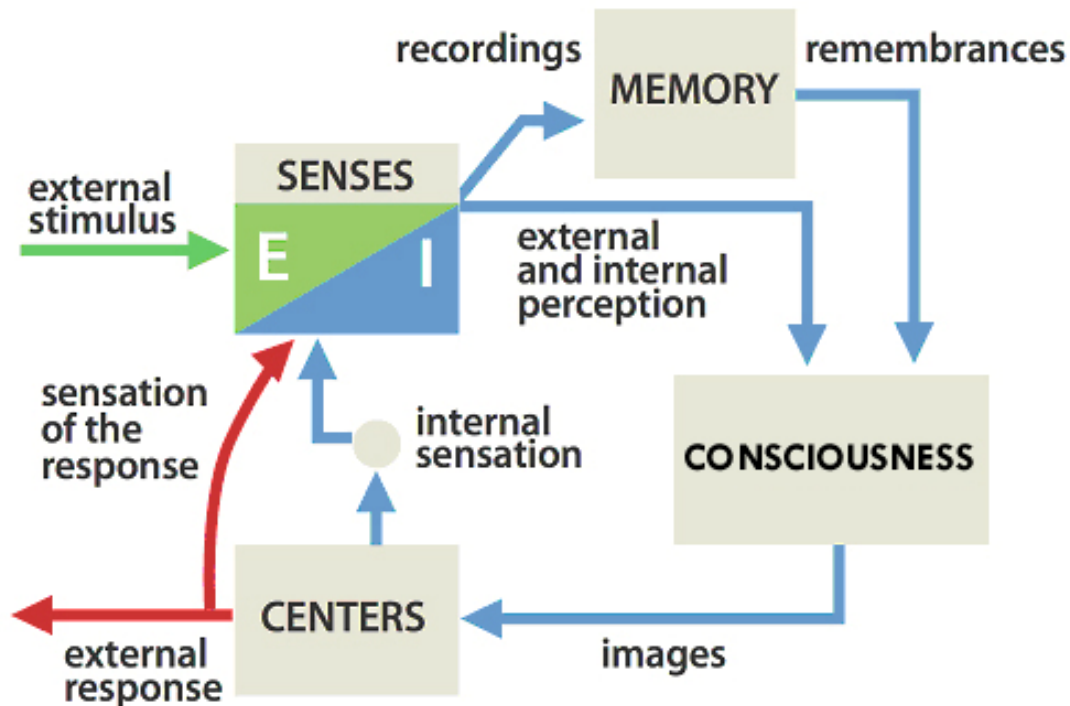


Figure 3 is more complete. Here the senses are differentiated into the external senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) and the internal senses (cenesthesia: pain, temperature, muscular tension, etc. and kinesthesia: bodily position and movement).



Stimuli from both the external and internal environments reach the consciousness structured as perceptions, and are simultaneously recorded in the memory. The memory also carries stimuli to the consciousness as remembrances. The consciousness then transmits images that act upon the centers, and the centers make external (motor) and internal (vegetative) responses.

Each response by a center is then detected by both internal senses and the consciousness. Thanks to this, the consciousness is aware of the operations being carried out. We call this feedback of the response. These responses are also recorded in the memory; this is the basis of learning, which improves as the operations are repeated.

If for any reason there is a blockage of the impulses or signals which should come from the senses, the impulses generated by the response of the centers, or the impulses from the memory, this will perturb the functioning of the consciousness. The consciousness will also be perturbed if excessive impulses reach it.

The signals or impulses that run through this circuit can vary in intensity. The impulses may have normal intensity and be within the usual thresholds; they may have very little energy and be below the thresholds; they may be excessive and exceed the maximum thresholds of tolerance; and finally they may have zero intensity, that is, they may be blocked.

Let us now look at what happens when impulses from the consciousness reach a center, but the center is blocked in its response. This center will then become overcharged with energy, and the overcharge will spill over into other center, giving rise to incorrect responses. For example, inhibited motor responses may over charge the vegetative center, which will then

give incorrect internal responses and create organic malfunctions, somatization, and even illnesses. Similarly, blocked emotional responses may be discharged as motor expressions, for example, in the form of vigorous exercise. The function of catharsis is to help unblock the centers of response, and therefore reduce the overcharges which endanger the circuit.

When doing the Psycho Physical Gymnastics exercises, one will see that sometimes a different center will work instead of the correct one, just as one part of a center may try to replace the correct part. We pointed out that the habitual use or exercise given to each center varies from person to person, and the exercises in the lessons on Psycho Physical Gymnastics especially mobilize those centers and parts with difficulties in functioning, that is, those with the least habitual use.

So, PsychoPhysical Gymnastics is useful not only to detect problems in the responses of the centers, but also to balance and rechannel energy towards the correct centers or points of discharge. This last point shows that there is a cathartic aspect to the PsychoPhysical Gymnastics exercises.

We now mention the important question of what happens when the impulses are blocked internally before they reach the centers. It is clear that to correct such problems we must operate either at the level of the internal senses (in the case of intrabody anesthesia), at the level of the memory (in the case of significant amnesia or memory loss), or at the level of the formation of images (in case of the absence, substitution, or misplacement of the image in the space of representation of the consciousness). These three cases will be dealt with in the lessons on transferences.

We have already worked on the theme of Relaxation. It aims at reducing excessive tension which is otherwise converted into internal sensations that generate new impulses harmful to the correct functioning of the whole circuit. Other sources of tension are far removed from the points where the end results of these tensions show up. For example, a content of the memory may be expressed as an obsessive image that increases both emotional and motor tension. In this case, using the Relaxation techniques reduces the overcharges in the tense parts of the body and also displaces the strong charges from the negative perturbing images towards more controllable images. The displaced charges then need cathartic openings to be discharged and restore equilibrium.

## **Psychology Notes III**

### **1. Catharsis, transference and self-transference. Action in the world as transferential form.**

We should consider two circuits of impulses, which finally give an internal register. One circuit corresponds to perception, representation, new capturing of the representation, and internal sensation. And another circuit shows us that from every action that I launch towards the world, I also have an internal sensation. That intake of feedback is what allows us to learn as we do things. If there were no capturing of feedback taking place within me of the movements that I carried out, I would never be able to perfect them. I learn to type on my keyboard through repetition. That is, I record actions by trial and error. But I can record actions only if I carry them out.

From my doing, I have a register. A great bias exists that at times has invaded the field of pedagogy: a prejudice that says things are learned simply by thinking about them. Of course something is learned, because from thought one also has a reception of the datum. However, the mechanics of the centers tells us that they are mobilized when images reach them, and the mobilization of the centers is an overcharge that triggers their activity toward

the world. There is a feedback intake of this triggering of activity that goes to memory and also goes to consciousness. This feedback intake is what allows us to say, for example, "I hit the wrong key." In this way I register the sensation of accuracy and of error: thus I increasingly perfect the register of accuracy, and from there, the correct action of typing grows more fluid and automatic. We are talking about a second circuit that delivers to me the register of the action I perform.

On another occasion, we saw the differences that exist between acts that are called "cathartic" and "transferential" acts. The first referred, basically, to discharges of tensions. The second allowed the transfer of internal charges, the integration of contents, and the broadening of the possibilities for development of the psychic energy. It is well known that where there are "islands" of mental contents, of contents that do not communicate among themselves, difficulties occur for the consciousness. If for example one thinks in one direction, feels in another and finally acts in still another, there is a register of "things not fitting together", a register that is not one of fullness. It seems that only when we lay down bridges between the internal contents that the psychic functioning is integrated and we can advance a few more steps.

We are familiar with the transferential works among the techniques of Operative. By mobilizing certain images and traveling with said images to the points of resistance, we can overcome those resistances. Upon overcoming the resistances, we provoke distensions and we transfer the charges to new contents. These transferred charges (worked on in post-transferential elaborations), enable a subject to integrate some regions of his internal landscape, of his internal world. We know about these transferential techniques and about others such as the self-transferential ones, in which the action of an external guide is not required; rather, one can guide oneself internally with certain images that are codified beforehand.

We know that action, and not just the work of images that we have been mentioning, can bring about transferential phenomena and self-transferential phenomena. One type of action will not be the same as another type. There will be actions that allow the integration of internal contents, and there will be tremendously disintegrative actions. Certain actions produce such a burden of grief, such regret and internal division, such profound anxiety, that one would wish never to repeat them ever again. And yet such actions have already remained strongly adhered to the past. Even if one were never to repeat such an action in the future, it would continue to pressure from the past without getting resolved, without allowing the consciousness to move, transfer, integrate its contents, and allow the subject that sensation of internal growth that is so stimulating and liberating.

It is clear that it isn't a matter of indifference what actions one carries out in the world. There are actions that give one a register of internal unity, and actions that give a register of disintegration. If one studies this question of acting in the world in the light of what we know about cathartic and transferential procedures, many things regarding the theme of integration and development of the contents of consciousness will be made considerably clearer. We will return to this after taking a quick look at the general scheme of our Psychology.

## **APPENDIX 3**

(to Retreat on Operative I: Catharsis)

### **Presentation of the slides entitled: Scheme of the Psychism.**

If the presentation is not available, you can work with the "Scheme of the Psychism" diagram from the book, Self-Liberation.



## **RETREAT ON OPERATIVE II: TRANSFERENCE**

Duration: 2 complete days, arriving to the Centre of Work the night before.

### **First night:**

Arrival and welcome, getting settled in the ambit.

Coffee or meal.

### **Framing**

The meaning of this retreat is to deepen our knowledge about one of the themes of Operative and also to have more experience in the techniques of Transference. For this we shall observe the work plan specified in Self-Liberation, and we'll end each day with an Experience of Peace. Our basic reference material will be Self-Liberation and some selected texts from Psychology I, II and III which will give us a wider perspective concerning certain themes. This retreat places the emphasis on personal experience in relation to the themes we have mentioned, thus that is the objective to follow. In just a few days we will not be able to do the whole Transference process as it's organized in Self-Liberation, but nonetheless, we can advance in the main work of the explanations and in the practices too. With this, we will have internal references for how to progress in our personal work.

### **Recommendations regarding emplacement**

Here we are not going to talk about structural themes. Our only theme is our personal work in Operative. The appropriate attitude is that of kindness, humor and internal sincerity. Since this is a retreat about Transference, the relations between us are very important, and they should be light, without tensions, open, and above all, of trust. What is important is to enter in direct communication with oneself and to learn from the others.

### **Mental fence**

The mental fence is our form to create a different "mental space" where we can work. This fence produces a limit in the themes, in space and time. This limit concentrates and raises our attentional level. Only with more attention can we learn more about the themes of the retreat and about ourselves, observing our own internal functioning.

### **Explanations on the functioning of the Retreat**

In the retreat, there are no levels, functions, sectors or seniority. We all participate under the same conditions. There are only 2 roles: the participant, and the director. We need to take good care of our ambit and turn off mobile phones during the 3 days. Punctuality is recommended at the beginning of activities, for waking up and going to bed. The plan of work is very tight, but enough time has been planned to carry out specific works and interchange. There is very little free time, but if one finishes specific works earlier, one can use the extra time to take walks, interchange with others, finish or review the work. The

Director is always available to explain something again, to clarify things, to give examples, for consultation, etc. Although the work to be done is concentrated, there will be enough time to do everything with proper depth and without haste. It is important to centre oneself well in each of the works, develop them well, interchange with others, to obtain plenty of observations and conclusions. We will do individual work, work with partners, work in teams, and work all together.

### **Explanations on the objective and the plan of work of the retreat**

The objective of this centre of work is to study and practice Transferences, according to what is explained in the book, *Self-Liberation*. We will do works all together, in teams and individually, and we will present the results of our studies. And, since we have no other theme, we will dedicate these three days to these things.

Beyond the general explanation about our personal placement, there is another theme to consider: this is a deep and delicate work that should be carried out with kindness and care towards ourselves. Our interest is placed in unveiling more of our internal world. For this, no one should feel obliged to do any particular work. This is very important because any work carried out by forcing, whatever the reason may be, will always provoke a rebound, an internal rejection and obviously this is never interesting.

There is one last point that is obvious but worth mentioning. The work in Operative is done with two people and it has to be very clear that trust and confidentiality are the main requisites for a good work and a good communication. Even though this is a question of common sense, it is good to remember how we want to be treated with our internal work and so we treat others in that same way.

### **Study as a whole group: Transference, from the book, *Self-Liberation***

Lesson 1. Introduction to Transference. (The objective is to advance in the reading of the different points of Lesson 1 as much as possible. This study will conclude in the morning of Day 1.)

Comments and interchange.

Brief rest

### **Practice: Relaxation**

External, internal and mental

Experience of Peace

Free Time

01:00 End of the day

### **Day 1**

08:00 Wake-up. Breakfast.

09:30 **Study and Practice: Transference, from the book, *Self-Liberation***

Finish the reading of Lesson 1.

Lesson 1: Exercises 4, 5 and 6

- Exercise 4: Lower, middle and upper levels
- Exercise 5: Back and forth
- Exercise 6: Transformations

Personal notes, including the difficulties. Interchange.

Rest

12:00 **Group study: Transference, from the book Self-Liberation**

Lessons 2, 3 and 4. Glossary.

- Lesson 2. Space of representation and levels of consciousness.
- Lesson 3. Allegories, symbols and signs.
- Lesson 4. Allegory.

13:00 Lunch

14:30 **Study: continuation of the theme.**

Each group makes a brief summary and synthesis of what was studied.  
Reading of each synthesis (not of the summary).

Rest

18:30 **Study as a whole: Transference, from the book Self-Liberation**

Lessons 5 and 6

Lesson 5. I. Indicators and II. Indicators of resistance

Lesson 6. Transference probe. Technique of levels

21:00 Dinner

22:30 **Practice: Pedagogical Transference**

Annex

Comments regarding the roles

24:00 **Practice: Relaxation**

External, internal and mental

Experience of Peace

01:00 **End of the day**

## **Day 2**

09:00 Wake-up. Breakfast

10:30 **Practice: Transferences**

Interchange as a whole group on what was studied the day before and highlighting of the important points in the *Transferential Probe* and the *Technique of Levels*.

### **Comments – Way of Working**

We will work in pairs, with a break in between the changing of roles. We have enough time, 5 hours, to change the roles and give everyone the opportunity to be the external guide as well as the subject.

The idea is that each person advance starting from his or her own experience. If this is my first transference, then I will work with the *Transferential Probe* using the *Technique of Levels* described in Lesson 6. If I've already worked with transferences, then I do not need to do the probe and I explain to the guide what my work has been like up to now, and take advantage of this opportunity to advance. You can continue working with your partner from yesterday or choose another. As we know that others will be working nearby, we will try to not make noise.

If we have time, we'll continue with the Post-transferential elaboration. Otherwise, this can be done at another time. To do this elaboration, we can ask the person who was our external guide to help us, or someone else, but in any case you alone interpret your transference, giving your images and experience your own meaning.

### **Condition**

Work in a quiet room where there are no possibilities of being interrupted. The light should be soft, to help the subject to relax and so that the external guide can write. The subject should be comfortable, whether lying down or reclining. The point is that the body needs to be able to relax. The external guide is seated nearby. The external guide can guide the subject in an internal and mental relax. It needs to be a quiet room where the internal world of the subject becomes primary.

### **Conclusion**

Once the transference is finished and before changing roles, carry out a *vigilic discussion*. This consists of the subject re-telling the guide the whole experience from beginning to end, with the goal being to better identify the main climates and tensions that were registered, as well as the resistances that arose in front of them.

### **Practice: Transferential work (in pairs)**

The members of the pair choose their roles.

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Practice: Transferential work (in pairs)

The roles are changed.

Rest

18:00 **Study as a whole group: Transference, from the book, Self-Liberation**

Reading of Lesson 4 — Introduction to Transference

Review of Appendix II

20:30 Meal

21:30 **Personal Study: Transferential Elaboration**

Appendix II

Personal, and with your transference partner

24:00 **Practice: Relaxation**

External, internal and mental

Experience of Peace

01:00 **End of the Day**

### **Day 3**

09:00 Wake-up. Breakfast

10:30 **Personal Synthesis**

Discoveries, comprehensions and conclusions.

Reading of each synthesis.

### **Final Comments**

In this retreat, we have studied the texts of Operative, we have practiced probes and full transferences. But this work of Operative is much more extensive and has themes which we have not studied, and exercises that we have not practiced. It is highly recommended to do all the lessons of Operative in order to continue deepening your work. For a more in-depth study of catharsis and transference, one can go study the book Psychology Notes (Silo) and Morphology (J. Caballero), all of which are available on [www.silo.net](http://www.silo.net).

During these days, we have worked with our unintegrated contents of consciousness, availing ourselves of the techniques of Transference. We have operated in the space of representation using primarily visual and cenesthetic images with their unique internal landscapes of climates and tensions. We were interested in detecting, unblocking and transferring the excessive charges of specific contents, within the space of representation. Impediments and resistances are our indicators, which point out what we need to work on in order to move forward. Our interest is in overcoming suffering and Operative is a way of working to do just that.

In terms of the internal landscape, our interest is in achieving growing integration and coherence. Our aim is that the contents of the higher spaces, our deepest aspirations, become active in our internal landscape. These deep aspirations may influence our behaviour just as those things that are located in other parts of space can. For example, those contents with tensions and climates we have observed in our works with catharsis and transference. That is why we are interested in reaching those aspirations and having their meanings extend their influence in the configuration of our internal worlds, which in turn radiate their translations in our relations and projects with others.

Short break

**Reading: Humanize the Earth, The Internal Landscape, Chapter XII.**

Experience of Peace

Lunch

**Conclusion of the retreat with a friendly, shared meal.**

### **Bibliography**

Luis Ammann, Self-liberation

Silo, Collected Works, Volume I, "Humanize the Earth": The Inner Look

## APPENDIX I

(for Retreat II on Operative: Transference)

### PEDAGOGIC TRANSFERENCE

I am on a beach, floating on my back in the sea. There is a small island behind me. I swim on my back. There are other people around, I can hear their laughter. I swim away, I feel very good. The sea is turquoise like the sky.

I swim slowly and calmly on my back toward the island. I come to the shore of the island. There are rocks. I come out of the water and walk on the rocks.

There is my guide, standing radiant and luminous. His presence moves me. I feel very good, happy to be accompanied by him. My guide suggests we walk toward the other side of the island. There are rocks to my right and the mountains to my left. In the distance I can barely see the water of the sea. I follow the path. It begins to descend.

Ahead is a small beach by the water. I see a small child swimming in the water. He is very alone there. He is frightened and swims away, diving downwards.

I dive in and follow him. I dive deeper and deeper, and I see the child ahead of me swimming toward a deep place. I go deeper and the child moves further away. I can see the bottom. It's cold. I look for the child, he must be very frightened here.

There is something down there, it's a sandy clearing, a space with white sand. I go there.

The child is there, he's sad, alone.

I see a chest, half-sunken. I approach, the lid is heavy and the lock is rusted but broken, so perhaps it can be opened. I ask the child to help me. He draws near and we push together. We lift the heavy lid up...

Inside there are many things, toys, notebooks, books... There's my school napsack! My paints and pencil crayons! They smell great, and their colours are brilliant!

The child comes close and looks at all these things with me... I give him my paints, he likes them, he's happy, he opens them up and begins painting his fingers... I touch his head and tell him that all these tools, all these things are for him. He looks at me very happy, very thankful.

I see that there are also some photos there, there's one of my grandmother... I keep it and take it with me.

I say goodbye to the child, who continues playing happily with the crayons and books, I smile at him and go.

The water is clearer now and I ascend without difficulty. I can see the beach in the distance, I swim toward the coast. I can see houses on the shore, and there's a yellow one there.

I see fishermen, nets, boats, many people. I swim there. It's a market. A woman comes up to me and places a ring of flowers around my neck, I thank her and smile and go to the yellow house. It's big. I approach.

I go through the door, inside the house there's a big space, there are many people, they are dancing, singing, it's a celebration, they're playing drums, singing. I don't understand the language they're speaking, they're talking a lot and laughing. They're celebrating something good and important that has happened to them. It's a party, they're happy.

Discreetly I move along, I want to leave without them noticing me. I'm going out the back, I can smell the necklace of flowers I'm wearing... The smell produces a strange effect on me,

I'm starting to shrink. I get smaller and smaller, I see the people who are still celebrating, so happy. They don't notice that I'm getting smaller, and so I use this to leave the house, I go into the garden, slowly. The vegetation starts getting more dense. Outside there's a humid smell, it smells fresh, like a forest. I breathe deeply and feel that I'm expanding, growing. I regain my natural height.

The forest around me is very dense. The trees are huge, everything really green. There's a path. I go along it, going upwards.

I get to a mountain, in the distance I can see the sea, I'm high up, I can't see the house anymore, I look up and keep ascending.

I get to the summit which is very luminous and see some giant birds. I climb on to one of them, huge, white, soft, I touch its feathers, they're very soft. I go through the sky, we fly very high, and keep going upwards... It's windy, and very bright, I hold on to the wings and open my arms wide, and breathe deeply. I feel like I'm expanding... I feel a great peace, and the Light is everywhere. There are other white birds, they fly in flocks, they're huge... they're going somewhere, I'm going with them.

Near the sun, my Guide is there. Luminous, radiant, I approach and descend from the bird. I walk with my Guide to the inside of the sphere of Light, it's brilliant, white, very white...

I breathe deeply and feel the Force, the Light.

I exit the sun. I'm going to return. I open my arms, extend them and they become white wings. I'm flying, I've become one of the giant, white birds, and I descend slowly. Below I can see the mountain. I descend slowly. I feel a lot of peace. I see the summit. The people of the house have come to the summit, they are all looking. There are many people. They want to fly. Beyond there is the forest, the houses, the beach, the sea and the island. The birds take them up.

I go back to my people, down to the beach. I descend on to the sand. I rest my feet on the sand and retake my form of my body. I start to walk back. The sea and the island are on the other side. I'm walking on the sand. There are my friends, I hear their laughter....

## **PERSONAL ANALYSIS OF THE THEMES**

**CONTAINERS:** the beach, the island, the ocean, the beach with the market, the yellow house, the forest, the mountain, the sky, the sun

**CONTENTS:** on the beach are my friends; on the island is my Guide and the child; the Guide accompanies me throughout the whole journey; in the sandy clearing is the chest, and in it are childhood toys and the photograph. On the beach there is a market with many people and the woman with the flower necklaces for visitors; inside the yellow house are many people with their drums; in forest there's vegetation; the mountain has a path that goes up, and there are birds above; in the sky are clouds, birds, a light wind; in the sun the presence of my Guide becomes stronger and the image is sharper.

**CONNECTIVES:** facilitators - my Guide, the woman who welcomes me, the ascending path, the bird; impediments - the lid of the chest.

**ATTRIBUTES:** Guide: kindness, wisdom, peace, force. Child: aloneness and helplessness. Chest: old and heavy, difficult to open. Childhood things: interesting, joyful, vivid colors, awaken curiosity. Woman with necklace: warm and welcoming. House people: celebrating, festive, collective joy. Bird: gentle, large, good.

**LEVELS:** the middle plane is marked by beaches, the island, the surface of the ocean, the market, the house, the forest. You change level by going down through the water, down to



the sandy bottom. You go back up to the middle plane and from there begin to ascend via the mountain and the sky until reaching the sun. You return going back down to the middle plane.

**MOMENTS OF PROCESS:** The child (infancy). All the other characters correspond more or less to my own age.

**TEXTURES, COLORS, SOUNDS, SMELLS:** Beach: transparency of the water, turquoise colour, sound of laughter. Island: green vegetation, blue of the sea. The sea: blue which gets darker until it is almost black, increasing sensation of cold. Bright, white sand. Chest: half buried, heavy lid, rusted lock, broken, old. Things in the chest: many bright colors, smell of my leather napsack, textures, very pleasant colours, textures and smells. Ocean, ascending: transparent. Market: many colorful objects. Woman: fragrant flower necklace. House: big and yellow. Sounds of the drums and the songs, clapping that follows the rhythm of the music, their outfits of very vivid colours, tapestries and hangings on the walls. Forest with thick vegetation: moisture, smells of plants and trees, reddish path, earth. Stone mountain. Giant bird, gentle, white, soft. Sky with a breeze, a lot of light, white. Sun: light, radiant, white. Beach: sound of my friends' laughter.

**FUNCTIONS:** Protectors: the Guide who accompanies me on the journey walking sometimes behind, other times ahead, waiting for me in the sun, helping me. Centre of power: the sun and the force.

## PERSONAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLOTS

The first plot is the meeting with the child who is alone and helpless, to whom I give everything in the old half-buried chest (treasure) to comfort him and make him happy. They are books, notebooks, tempera paints and coloured pencils, etc. (learning, knowing, painting). This compensates the child's climate, and I keep only the photo of my grandmother.

The celebration of the native people with their rituals, dance and music, who are celebrating something and later climb the mountain and wait for the birds to take them to the heights; when I see them on the summit I understand that they were celebrating the possibility of being able to fly, the possibility of a future.

When I become a bird, I can carry others to the sun. This is the option I choose when I return to my people.

## ALLEGORICAL ANALYSIS

**MAP:** reducing the journey to a map one moves horizontally toward a centre, descends to an environment and goes back up, continues horizontally toward another environment, ascends and enters an environment above, and then goes back down, ending along the horizontal.

**SYMBOL:** If we see the journey as a sort of circle crossed by its diameter, the symbolic reduction corresponds to a sort of rhombus, or cross, in which the horizontal plane determines the movement upward and downward, returning to the same plane.

**LOWER PLANE:** on the lower plane are the child and the allegorical resolution of his/her climate.

**MIDDLE PLANE:** at the beginning and at the end there are my friends; there, is also a group of people celebrating the possibility of a future. There's a reduction in size and later expansion.

**HIGHER PLANE:** the register of the Force, the light and the Guide. There is a transformation.

**CLIMATES:** loneliness and helplessness; celebration and joy; peace.

### **ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION**

In the three planes there are many images, in general there are no difficulties and the climate is light and joyful.

Descending, there appears the early childhood climate of loneliness and helplessness, which is compensated by the love of learning, by art and study, strongly impelled by the protective figure of my grandmother.

Going back to the middle plane there's the encounter with another culture and I am welcomed (the flower necklace).

They are celebrating the fact that something very valuable has reached them, transforming their future possibilities.

That is why in the upper plane there are so many birds who allegorize the access of many.

Above is the sun, the Guide, registers of the Force.

My transformation into a bird allows me to carry others to the sun, and I make the choice to help my people do that, returning down to the beach where they are.

In synthesis, this journey is an allegory for a basic childhood climate channelled toward the thinking, feeling and acting that comes out of our Doctrine, which opens the future to people and connects with a centre of energy and light.

## **APPENDIX II**

(for Retreat II on Operative: Transference)

### **PERSONAL ANALYSIS OF THEMES**

1. Containers:

2. Contents:

3. Connectives:

4. Attributes:

5. Levels:

6. Moments of process:

7. Textures, colours, sounds, smells:

8. Functions:

## **PERSONAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLOTS**

### **ALLEGORICAL ANALYSIS**

Map:

Symbol:

Lower level:

Middle level:

Upper level:

Climates:

**Allegorical Interpretation.**