

To Humanize the Earth (scandinavian centre, Reykjavik, 13/11/89)

This work, *To Humanize the Earth*, is in reality a whole formed by three books. The first of them, *The Inner Look* was finished in 1972 and was revised in 1988. The second one, *The Internal Landscape* was finished in 1981 and underwent some modifications in 1988. Finally, *The Human Landscape* was written in 1988. It is about three productions of different epochs. Notwithstanding this, they keep different types of relations among themselves as we will see later. And, besides, they have a continuity in their development. They are placed as a sequence. For the time being, I would like you to allow me to consider this work from the formal point of view.

They are three books written in poetic prose, divided into chapters which in turn are subdivided into paragraphs. This segmentation into paragraphs added to the appellative style so frequently used, and some of the themes dealt with has made some critics locate the work within the genre of mystical literature. Of course, I don't dislike such classification, but I think that the elements mentioned are not enough for that.

The first criterion employed by the critics is that of the segmentation into paragraphs, that of the numbered sentences.

This is in common with numerous works of mystical literature. And thus we see it in the Biblical verses or in the Koranic surahs or in the yasnas and fargards of the Avesta or, finally, in the Upanishads. But we should agree on the fact that just as other productions of the genre are alien to that ordering, many other of a legal character do present such characteristics. Indeed, civil and penal codes, codes of proceedings, etc., are written in the form of sections, headings, articles, clauses, and so on. The same happens nowadays with productions coming from the field of Mathematics and Logic. Whoever consults the "Principia" of Russel, or the "Tractatus" of Wittgstein, will agree with us on their not being mystical works precisely.

Let's examine the second criterion: that of the appellative function of the discourse formalized as imperative sentences (differing from declarative ones) that cannot be submitted to the test of truth. This frequently happens in many works of the religious literature, but also in many others which are not. On the other hand, the sentences are not only treated in an imperative way, but rather frequently there are reasonings and readers are given the opportunity to compare the validity of what is enunciated with their own experience. I mean to say with this that if, elliptically, this work is being classified as "mystical," meaning to say, in reality, that it is a dogmatic work, the criteria used for this are not adequate.

The third criterion, the one regarding some of the themes dealt with, seems to establish links with religion. Indeed, matters like "faith," "meditation," "meaning of life," have been dealt with by religions. But they also were by thinkers and poets concerned with fundamental matters of the human being in the measure that he comes across problems in his daily existence.

It was also said that this production has a philosophical character. But anybody who delves into its pages will see that it does not resemble a text of that type at all; and much less a treatise with systematic rigour. *The Human Landscape*, third book of this work, is the one that induces more greatly this mistake of classification. Also, a psychological or sociological work was seen in it, when in reality all this was very remote from the author's intention. What we cannot deny is that, along the whole work, appreciations which fall within the field of these disciplines slip into it. It could not be otherwise when one is trying to present situations in which human life develops. Hence, to say that some themes are treated with a psychological, a sociological, a philosophical or even a mystical view would be totally acceptable and I admit it right now. But to classify the work as specific of whichever the forms mentioned does not seem correct.

Finally, I would feel comforted if simply it were said that this work is done without thinking in straight frameworks and that it stresses the most general, the broadest themes, which a person comes across in the course of life. And if I were demanded a sort of definition, I would say that it is all a work of thought on human life treated in the style of poetic prose. Having finished this brief discussion about formal matters, we will enter into the subject matter.

The first book, titled *The Inner Look* deals with the meaning of life. The main subject studied is the state of contradiction and it is made clear that suffering is the experience of contradiction in life one has; that surpassing mental suffering is possible to the extent that one's own life is oriented towards non-contradictory actions, and these actions are those which go beyond the personal sphere and that address other persons positively. In sum: *The Inner Look* speaks about surpassing mental suffering as launched towards the social world, the world of other people, always provided this action is experienced as non-contradictory.

The text of this book becomes somewhat obscure due to the great amount of allegories and symbols which appear in the form of paths, dwellings and strange landscapes through which a person passes according to the situation he/she happens to live in his/her life. One of the most important allegories is that of the "tree," that old "Tree of Life" that appears in the Kabbala or in the legends of Creation of the Makiritare aborigines who profess the Yekuana cult in the Amazon jungles. It is the "Tree of the World" that connects heaven and earth and that in your Icelandic Voluspa is the Yggdrasill...Thus, in this book there is a sort of plan, of a map of the internal states in which a person finds himself in a given moment of his life. The state of confusion, of vengeance, of despair, appear allegorised in the positions of paths and dwellings that are trodden in the

"Yggdr sill" of "The Inner Look," but there are also the exits of the contradictory situations, the hope, the future, the joy, in sum, the state of unity or non-contradiction.

In this book we also find a part dedicated to "The Principles of The Valid Action." These are a group of recommendations or sayings meant to remind us of certain laws of behaviour which contribute to achieve a life with unity and meaning. Whereas they do not escape from the allegorical style of this book, the 'Principles' take a metaphorical character of which I quote some examples: "If day and night, summer and winter are fine with you, you have surpassed the contradictions.", "Do not oppose a great force. Retreat until it weakens, then advance with resolution." Recommendations of this type we find, for example, in the Havamal, when it is said: "The tactful man should know how to measure his strength; whenever there are valiant ones, one cannot overcome everybody "...The 'Principles' are, in reality, a sort of laws of behaviour, but which are not thought of as prescriptions of a moral, but rather as constants of forces that act in action or reaction according to the location of the one who acts.

In the second book, *The Internal Landscape* the style of the previous one is continued, putting already less stress on the allegories and the symbols. The description goes on becoming more external towards each time more definitive references regarding the social field. At the beginning of this second book, one reads: "...Leap over your suffering and then it will not be the abyss but the life that is within you that will grow. There is no passion, nor idea, nor human act unrelated to the abyss. Therefore, let us deal with the only thing that deserves to be dealt with: the abyss and that which surpasses it." This proposal, apparently dualistic, points out the fundamental concerns regarding "the growth of life" and the annihilation of life. The annihilation seems to take a certain substantiality upon designating it as "abyss," but it is nothing but a poetic licence in which the sole mention of "nihilize-ation" of the being or "cancellation" of the being -- as Heidegger would propose-would provoke an irreparable fracture of style.

We are not talking about "abyss" in terms of substance, but of overwhelming or obscuration of meaning in human life. It remains clear that the first dualistic effect disappears upon comprehending the concept of 'abyss' as non-being, as non-life, and not as an entity in itself. The concept of 'abyss' was chosen due to the psychological implications it has, since it elicits internal registers of a type such as those of vertigo, associated to a contradictory sensation of attraction and rejection -this attraction of nothingness that wins over in suicide or in the inebriating destructive fury and which mobilizes the nihilism of an individual, of a group or of a civilization. Herein, anguish is not dealt with as in Kierkegaard's case, or the nausea as in Sartre's, in the sense of a passive disintegration of the meaning or as a crossroads of a choice, but the vertigo and the attraction of nothingness as an activity towards destruction. As a sort of motor of personal and social happenings which dispute pre-eminence and power with life. Thus, then, if freedom of choice exists in the human being, it is possible to modify those conditions that preannounce themselves as catastrophic in their mechanical development. If, conversely, human freedom is just a compassionate myth, it does not matter what individuals and peoples may decide since happenings will unfold towards the growth of life, simply and mechanically, or else everything will go towards catastrophe, towards nothingness, towards non-meaning. In this book, the freedom of human life is asserted, freedom among conditions but freedom at last. Moreover, it is said that life's meaning is in essence freedom and that this freedom rejects absurdity and "the given" even though "the given" is Nature itself. It is this struggle against "the given," against pain and suffering, against adversities that Nature has pitted against the human being that has enabled the development of society and civilization. Hence human life has not grown thanks to pain and suffering but, on the contrary, it has equipped itself in order to overcome it. The decision to enlarge freedom does not already remain limited to the individual since the latter does not have a fixed nature, but a historic and social dynamics. And due to this, the individual should assume responsibility and act for society and for all human beings.

For all the above mentioned, it is said in Chapter 7: "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 meteor, but a brilliant comet that flies towards the skies. 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." And further on, "I will tell you what is the meaning of your life here: To humanize the earth. What is it to humanize the earth? It is to overcome pain and suffering, it is to learn without limit, it is to love the reality that you build. You will not fulfil your mission if you do not put all your strength into vanquishing pain and suffering in those around you. And if you achieve that they, in their turn, embark on the task of humanizing the world, you will open up their destiny towards a new life."

Summarizing, *The Internal Landscape* deals with the meaning of life with reference to the struggle against nihilism in the interior of every human being and in social life, and exhorts to convert this life into one of service and militancy at the service of the humanization of the world.

As it may be understood, simply personal solutions are not spoken of in this book, since these do not exist in a social and historic world. Those who think that the solution to their personal problems can be solved with a sort of introspection or psychological technique commit a great mistake, since it is the action towards the world and other persons -of course, the meaningful action- which enables one to come out towards all solutions. And should it be told that a psychological technique can be of utility, it seems to be replied in the

book by stating that its benefit can only be measured in the perspective of the action towards the world, in the perspective of considering it an ancillary instrument of the coherent action.

Finally, this writing deals with the problem of time and it does it in an allegorized way. Time is that which appears in its real temporality, acting simultaneously and not as a naive perception pretends or as numerous philosophical theories do in which past, present and future do not have structure, but are a sequence of instants that flow "backwards" and "forwards" in an infinity without touching themselves, being regarded as instants. In the book, experiential (i.e. lived) time is presented as a structure in which everything that happened to me in life acts simultaneously, as much as that which happens to me in this instant, and also that which will happen to me as a possibility, as a project, in a more or less foreseeable period of time. Even though this future appears to me as "not yet," it is determining my present according to the project I launch from my "now," from my "in this moment." The idea of time as structure and not as a simple sequence of independent instants, is an intuition that the human being has had from ancient times although he has developed it on the basis of myths and legends. Thus we read, in your Greater Edda in "The Soothsayer's Vision," paragraphs 19 and 20: "...I know that a sacred ash is watered, the high Yggdrasill, with white slime...very wise women came from there, three, from the waters that are below the tree: one was called Urd, Verandi the other -its tablet wrote-, Skuld the third one. The destinies ruled the human beings, gave men their fate." Thus, the past, the present and the future are not sequences of instants but rather structural determinants of situation. Well, in *The Internal Landscape* we read: "Strange encounters these, where the old man suffers for the short future and takes refuge in his long past; the man suffers for his present situation, seeking refuge in what has happened or will happen according to whether he is pressed from the front or from behind and the young one suffers because his short past snaps at his heels, impelling his escape towards a long future. Nevertheless, I recognize in the faces of the three my own face and I seem to realize that all human beings, whatever their age, can journey through those times and in them see phantoms that do not exist. Or does that offence of my youth exist today? Or does my old age exist today? Or is my death nested, today, in this darkness? All suffering slides through remembrance, through imagination or through that which is perceived. Nevertheless, thanks to those three pathways, thought, affection and human endeavour exist. Therefore, even though these pathways are necessary, they are also channels of destruction if suffering contaminates them."

The third book, *The Human Landscape* is dedicated in its first chapters to clarify the meanings of "landscape" and the "look" referred to that "landscape," questioning the way of looking at the world and of appreciating the established values. There is, in this work, a revision of the meaning of one's own body and of others' bodies, of subjectivity and the curious phenomenon of appropriation of the other's subjectivity. Consequently, a study on intention fragmented into chapters is developed: the intention in education; in the narration made of History; in the ideologies; in violence; in Law; in the State and in Religion. This book is not, as it was told, a simple rebuttal since it proposes new models with respect to every model it criticizes. *The Human Landscape* tries to give foundation to the action in the world, reorienting meanings and interpretations regarding values and institutions that seemed to be definitely accepted. With respect to the concept of "landscape," I would say that it constitutes itself into the fundamental piece of our system of thought as was seen later in other productions such as *The Psychology of the Image* and also in *Historiological Discussions*. However, in this book the idea of "landscape" appears more humbly explained and within the context of the work that appears without the pretensions of rigorous thinking. Thus, it is said: "...External landscape is what we perceive of things; internal landscape is what we sift from them with the sieve of our internal world. These landscapes are one and constitute our indissoluble vision of reality."

Nobody better than you, Icelanders, to understand these ideas. Even though the human being always finds himself in a landscape, not because of this he has consciousness of such a thing. But when the world one lives in presents itself as the maximum contrast, as the contradiction that is impossible to bear, as the unstable equilibrium par excellence, the landscape becomes a live data of reality. The inhabitants of the immense deserts or of the infinite plains have in common the fact that their horizon communicates there, in the distance, the earth with the heavens, in a sequence in which finally one does not know which is the earth and which are the heavens...only the empty continuity appears in front of the eyes. But there are other places where the maximum ice clashes with the maximum fire, the glacier with the volcano, the island with the sea that surrounds it. Where the waters, moreover, furiously erupt in the land impelled in the geyser towards the sky. Where everything is a contrast, everything is finitude, the eye directs itself to consult the immobile stars searching for its rest. And, then, the skies themselves start moving, the gods dance and change their form and colour in huge aurorae borealis. The finite eye withdraws over itself, generating dreams of harmonious worlds, eternal dreams, dreams that sing stories of gone worlds in the hope of the world to come. Thus I think that these places are landscapes in which every inhabitant is a poet who does not recognize each one as such; in which every inhabitant is a traveller who carries his vision to other places. Thus, in other measure and in other conformation, every human being has something of the islander, since its original landscape always gets imposed over his perceptual vision, since all of us see not just what is there before us, but we do our comparisons and even the discovery of the new from what we already knew before. In this way, we dream upon seeing things and we later take them as though they were reality itself.

But the concept has more amplitude since landscape is not just the natural that appears before the eyes but above all the human, the social. Indeed, each person interprets the others from his own biography, and places in what is not his own more than what he perceives. According to this, we never see from the other's reality what the other is in himself but we have a scheme of the other, an interpretation born out of our internal landscape. The internal landscape superimposes the external one which is not just natural but social and human. It clearly happens that society changes and that generations succeed each other and, then, when the time for a generation to act comes, it does it by trying to impose values and interpretations formed in another epoch. Things go relatively well in stable historical moments, but in moments like the present one, of a great dynamics, the generational distance accentuates at the same time that the world changes under our feet. Where will our look go? What should we learn to see? The fact that the idea of "directing ourselves to a new way of thinking" is becoming popular in these days is not something strange. Today we must think fast since everything goes faster and whatever we believed to be an immutable reality until yesterday is no longer so today. Thus, friends, we can no longer think from our landscape if this does not become dynamic and universal, if it does not become valid for all human beings. We have to comprehend that the concepts of "landscape" and "look" can be useful to us for advancing towards this announced "new way of thinking" that this growingly accelerated process of "world-ization" is demanding.

But coming back to the third book, *The Human Landscape*, we will say that the themes of the institutions, the Law and the State, stand out; and that, in the formation of the human landscape, the education received, the ideologies in force, and the conception of the historical moment one lives in are factors worth the while being taken into account. All of these are discussed in this third book not simply in order to criticize its harmful aspects, but, above all, to propose a special way of observing them, to help the look search for other objects, to learn to see in a new way.

Concluding with these commentaries, I will add that the three books which constitute the body of *To Humanize the Earth* are three moments placed in a sequence that go from the most profound interiority, from the world of the dreams and the symbols towards the external and human landscapes. It is all about a course, a sliding of the point of view that, starting from the most intimate and personal, concludes in an opening to the interpersonal, social and historical world.

Nothing else. Thank you very much.