

## Interview with Silo on Channel 11 in Mexico

Journalist: We had Silo here a long time ago on the National Polytechnic Institute's Channel 11. And here we have one of his covers. This is ... let me put on my glasses. Okay. "Contributions to Thought." This is one of his books. And here we find another one called "Guided Experiences." And this is "Humanize the Earth" - the main topic that we will be dealing with here tonight on "Enlace" with Mario Luis Rodriguez Cobos, better known as Silo, who has done us the favor of coming to our studio this Saturday despite having just arrived today from Argentina.

Well, Silo, good evening and thank you very much for having accepted the invitation to talk with us here on Enlace.

Silo: Good evening, and thank you.

Journalist: I remember exactly one year ago you came to Mexico and we talked on the program, "Today in Culture," about this desirable process of humanizing the Earth.

Since that time, there have been very important changes that perhaps back then neither you nor I could have imagined.

Where is this process of the humanization of the Earth - or its dehumanization - heading? How are things today with this proposal that you make in your book about the need to humanize the Earth?

Silo: Well, this book addresses this issue more from a literary, poetic-prose point of view, more than it intends to give descriptions or solutions to these problems. It is an invitation and a call for a common reflection, in any case. But as to your question, in these times we find ourselves in a moment of great confusion. Because, of course, there are problems in Latin America, where we live. There are... many economic problems, problems in the interaction with other cultures, in the very vigorous economic exchanges with other economic blocks, or with different cultural blocks. Basically, we are in a state of transition. And in this state of transition I think there are also many alarmist voices that over-dramatize things.

You know very well that in its time Europe underwent a somewhat similar process to what Mexico or other countries may be facing. The Europeans eventually formed a kind of block that may have been for the best. But in the case of Latin America and Mexico, the formation of a new economic block has other implications. There is an undercurrent of cultural clash and all of that, which should be studied more carefully.

Journalist: Well, it is perfectly clear in everything you say that it is the economy that is leading the way. This is so much the case that some politicians who hold the reins of the economic integration process in Latin America have not valued sufficiently the role of culture. They have not analyzed it, but other countries like Canada, for example, are giving high priority to their culture as an identity.

In that sense I would like ask you, Silo, what will happen to the nationalisms in this process of globalization? Will nationalisms get stronger or weaker?

Silo: I think that having national feelings, being nationalist, is really more a temperament than a clear idea. That is, everybody has their emotions, everybody wants to cheer on their own, the environment in which they were born, the values in which they were formed. But that is something very different from what is happening in this very energetic process of transformation that we are experiencing. Today the national state - which has undergone many changes in its past 200 years - finds itself besieged.

Journalist: You mean, the nation state?

Silo: Yes.

Journalist: Or are you including the people as such within it?

Silo: No, I make a very big distinction between the state and the people. The old concept of the nation state is suffering tremendous blows. From above, so to speak, there are the big economic blocks and groups that transcend nations. The multinationals and all of that. And from below, there are the centrifugal currents that within the block express themselves with great intensity. That is the case in Europe where many local interests are energetic and have great strength. Faced with this situation, the nation state is increasingly losing its importance. And so nationalisms are also losing strength. Because imagine what would happen if each of the countries of the European Economic Community tried to reaffirm its values in such a way that they could not establish economic links among themselves. That is not what is happening. What is happening is that each of them is making their cultural contribution to this enormous cauldron that is the community, the European Economic Community - which besides being an economic community is also a new cultural entity. I

think that these are cultural entities that go beyond nationalisms. And in our case, in the case of Latin America, the thing is a bit more complicated because within this new block there exist other cultures, or let's say, subcultures.

Journalist: And what are they?

Silo: Well for example, North American culture, which has a very clear profile and which is based above all on its great economic power and technological development. Faced with the formation of a future multinational block, so to speak, Latin America may feel a bit handicapped, or a little weak in its proposals, compared to that force and that development. I don't think we need to be too afraid of that. Because if we think about Latin America, there is a real cultural force here, and so the fact of having new technical elements, new technology available, means the message will go both ways. It's like being afraid that the telephone will allow the person on the other end to take you over. But that fact is, in a phone conversation, you also reach the other person.

Journalist: So in this case what you're saying is that Latin America - and Mexico, within this project of the North American Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Canada - might have weapons, might have an ace up its sleeve to respond and to maintain its identity.

Silo: Yes. And I wouldn't present it so much as having weapons, but rather as a collaboration to the growth of the culture which the US and other places of the world need very much. I believe that the cultural contribution that Latin America and particularly Mexico can make to this entire block is very great.

Journalist: Well, Silo, Lidia also wants to ask you something related to this theme. Go ahead, Lidia.

Journalist: In front of this new era of changes and of constant technological development, would you say that humanization suffers somewhat when man is subordinated to machines? How can humanization be saved, or what would a humanizing rescue plan look like?

Silo: There's no doubt that there has been a great process of deterioration of the traditional ideologies that emphasized the value of man over the value of technology or machines. The emergence of new ideologies like pragmatism and all that, which claim not to be ideologies, is primarily due to the fall of the great systems of thought. Vigorous philosophies and viewpoints that were valid until only recently have lost force.

Journalist: So you agree that ideologies have died.

Silo: Not at all. No, I think that the ideology that claims such a thing is not sufficiently rigorous. What's happened is that the great systems of thought, those of the last century, have gone out of fashion, so to speak. But that does not mean that new ideologies and new images of the world are not being forged right now. I think that the very idea of the end of ideologies is completely ideological and serves a vision of the world that started in Chicago in 1840, in the Metaphysical Club of Chicago, with pragmatists such as William James and others. It is ideological, certainly.

Journalist: Well, we have some questions from our audience and they are asking what is the reason for your visit to Mexico. I have some info about that, but perhaps you could tell our audience the reason for your visit.

Silo: Yes, basically it is to launch a collection of my books that a Mexican publisher, Plaza y Valdez, has just released. I will give a lecture on this work on the 4<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, at the Palace of Fine Arts. So basically it is to meet my readers and of course to meet the editors and discuss with them the possibility of publishing new books. "Universal Root Myths" is about to be published. I give great value to the theme of myths, because sometimes it is believed that it's ideas that are being talked about, when really they are myths. So that will come out soon. And I think some other things like short stories, tales and some science fiction, too.

Journalist: So this is the reason for Silo's visit. But in these final minutes of our program, and if you also agree Lidia, I would like to come back and ask about the title of this book that I have had the opportunity to read, "Humanize the Earth". Are you optimistic, really optimistic, that the minds, the brains - especially the brains of those who have the ability to make decisions that affect millions of people on planet Earth, all those out in front and those behind the scenes - are you optimistic about a true humanization? And in any case, what would it mean to Humanize the Earth?

Silo: This question has various facets. But I think yes, that there is enough intelligence, even in those who have the possibility to make decisions that affect large human groups. I think that they have enough

intelligence to understand the peoples' demands, and the demands that people are making. In this moment, when we're experiencing a kind of crisis of insensitivity, when they believe that with some tweaking everyone's problems will be solved, when we are suffering from this new myth - which I think won't last long - there are also many intelligent people who know that these things go deeper and must be addressed more carefully. I think that these leaders are intelligent enough not to lose their popularity, and to meet the demands of the people as they grow. There are many concerns, and we could make a long list. It is not for nothing that drug addiction is growing, that suicide is growing, everything we might call a cultural malaise. A response has to be given to all of this, and those responses cannot be simply repressive - new alternatives have to be given. These leaders are encountering this problem. And they will not be able to solve these problems simply by barrelling along, saying that with time and within 200 years these problems will probably be solved.

Journalist: Well, here on Channel 11, we will be watching out for your activities. In fact, I respect very much this book, the contents of this book. It is the only one of yours that I have read, but I'll continue with the others. I'd like to quickly thank those who called in: Carlos Mariscal, Bachelor of Law - we don't have any more time to respond - and Francisco Ramirez as well. Leticia Linares asks about the Channel 11 music. It is by the composer Eric Satie. And Fabiola Mendoza Guerrero here as well, and some other questions we've received for Silo that unfortunately we do not have time for. Thank you very much for having been with us.

Silo: Thank you.

Journalist: And the invitation to...