

# Silo

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## Collected Works

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*Humanize the Earth*  
*Guided Experiences*  
*Contributions to Thought*  
*Universal Root Myths*  
*Day of the Winged Lion*  
*Letters to My Friends*  
*Silo Speaks*

Volume I

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This edition contains the complete unabridged text of each work.  
Translated from the Spanish. New Humanism Translation Committee. Daniel Zuckerbrot and Paul Tooby.

*Humanize the Earth: The Inner Look, The Internal Landscape, The Human Landscape*

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## Introduction

The writings of Silo have reached the public only in fragmentary form to this point, so that interested readers have been unable to follow these works in an orderly and complete way. The publication of these *Collected Works* aims to correct this problem, presenting these diverse works in the order in which they initially appeared. Nonetheless, because the author has followed a thematic rather than chronological order in his extensive and continuing literary production, this ordering could give rise in the future to some confusion regarding the overall continuity of the works.

The publication of these *Collected Works* also faces practical problems owing to the size of the collection, which cannot be solved through such expedients as simply resorting to smaller type or thinner paper. It has thus become necessary to add additional volumes to keep the collection manageable, and to this end the second volume will soon make its appearance.

This initial volume contains Silo's first seven works: *Humanize the Earth*, *Guided Experiences*, *Contributions to Thought*, *Universal Root Myths*, *Day of the Winged Lion*, *Letters to My Friends*, and *Silo Speaks*. While the introductions and the talks by the author about these books that have accompanied earlier editions of many of these works are not part of the present volume, some of this material has been included in *Silo Speaks*. And in an attempt to fill this void, we provide below brief commentaries to give the reader a general framework for the subject matter of each of the works.

1. *Humanize the Earth* is a collection of three writings that have in common their style of poetic prose, an exhortative turn of phrase, and numbered passages. The first work, *The Inner Look*, was completed in 1972 and revised in 1988; the second, *The Internal Landscape*, was written in 1981 and subsequently revised in 1988; and finally, *The Human Landscape* was completed in 1988. Between the initial publication of *The Inner Look* and its revision sixteen years elapsed, during which time the book circulated in many languages of both East and West, giving rise to personal communication and correspondence between the author and readers from many latitudes. That exchange surely contributed to the author's revisions of several chapters as he observed how the different cultural substrata in which the work was circulating gave rise to many differences in interpretation of the texts. Certain words in particular presented serious difficulties in translation, and readers would frequently misunderstand the sense in which they were used.

Much the same took place with *The Internal Landscape*, although in that case seven years elapsed between the original publication and the author's revisions to the text. The revisions of the first two books were finished in the same year the third book was completed, fulfilling the author's intention to revise and update the first two books as he wrote the third and to compile all of them into a single volume.

*The Human Landscape*, while maintaining the basic stylistic qualities of the preceding two works, unlike them emphasizes particularities of the cultural and social world. This forces a turn in the treatment of these themes that inevitably involves all aspects of this literary work.

Regarding content, we can say that *The Inner Look* focuses on meaning in life. The principal theme of its discourse is the psychological state of *contradiction*. It makes explicit that suffering is the register that one has of contradiction, and that surpassing mental suffering is possible in the measure that one's life is oriented toward non-contradictory actions in general and non-contradictory actions in relation to other people in particular. *The Internal Landscape* studies non-meaning in life in relation to the struggle against nihilism within each human being and in social life, exhorting readers to transform their lives into activity and militancy at the service of humanizing the world. Finally, *The Human Landscape* treats the question of establishing a foundation for action in the world, realigning meanings and interpretations of values and



## Introduction

institutions that had seemed beyond question and accepted as established once and for all.

The three writings that comprise *Humanize the Earth* are in fact three moments that follow in a sequence running from the most profound internal world—the world of dreams and symbols—toward the external and human landscapes. They involve a journey, a movement in point of view that begins in the most intimate and personal and ends in opening toward the interpersonal, social, and historical world.

2. The *Guided Experiences* were originally written in 1980 and revised in 1988. The work consists of two parts. The first, “Tales,” is a collection of thirteen stories that comprise the more dense and complex part of the work. The second part, “Playing with Images,” includes nine descriptions that are simpler than those of the first part.

This material may be viewed in various ways. From a superficial point of view, it may be seen as a series of short stories with happy endings. Another focus, however, reveals this work as a series of psychological practices based on literary forms. While all the stories are written in the first person, it should be noted that this “first person” is not the one habitually found in other writings. Rather than that of the author, the first person in this work is that of the reader—each story provides a different setting that serves as a frame for the reader to fill with his or her own life and concerns.

As an aid, asterisks (\*) appear at intervals throughout the text to mark pauses at key points that can help the reader—or listener—introduce, mentally, the images that transform a passive reader into an actor in and coauthor of each description. This original form also allows one person to read aloud (observing the aforementioned pauses), while each listener imagines his or her own literary “knot.” This approach—the hallmark of these writings—would in more conventional stories destroy all plot sequence.

It should be noted that in every literary piece, the reader—or spectator in the case of plays, films, or television programs—can identify more or less fully with the characters, while recognizing, either at the time or later on, differences between the actor playing the role in the piece and the observer, who is “outside” the production and is none other than the spectator him or herself. However, in these writings quite the opposite occurs: The main character is at once the observer, agent, and recipient of the actions and emotions.

3. *Contributions to Thought* consists of two essays. The first, “Psychology of the Image,” was written in 1988, and the second, “Historiological Discussions,” was completed in 1989. While they pertain to distinct fields, the two works are closely related—and in a sense mutually clarifying—and their publication under the inclusive title *Contributions to Thought* seems entirely appropriate. The approach used in both essays is characteristic of philosophical reflection, and does not come from either psychology or historiography, with each work addressing its respective discipline with the intention of providing a foundation.

In “Psychology of the Image” the author sets forth a novel theory for what he terms the “space of representation”—the “space” that arises when objects of re-presentation (not simply of perception) are present and without which it is not possible to understand how it is that the consciousness is able to direct itself toward and distinguish between the so-called “external world” and “internal world.” At the same time, if perception gives the perceiver an awareness of the phenomena, where does the perceiver locate him or herself with respect to these phenomena? For if we say that the one perceiving locates him or herself in the external spatiality, in accordance with the externality of the perceived phenomenon, then how is it that the perceiver is able to move his or her body “from inside,” guiding it in that externality? It is possible to explain the arrival of data to the consciousness by means of perception, but one cannot in this way account for the movement that the consciousness imprints on the body. Can the body act in the external world without the existence of a representation of both terms? Obviously not. And that representation must therefore occur in some “place” of the consciousness. But in what sense can we speak of “place” or “color” or “extension” in the consciousness?

These are some of the difficulties that the author successfully overcomes in the present essay, whose objective is to support the following thesis: a) the image is an active mode of the

consciousness-being-in-the-world, and not simple passivity as maintained by previous theories; b) this active mode cannot be independent of an internal “spatiality”; and c) the numerous functions fulfilled by the image depend on the placement of the image in this “spatiality.”

If what the author maintains is correct, the action of the human being must be reinterpreted. No longer is it the “idea,” or some supposed “will,” or “objective need” itself that moves the body toward things—it is, rather, the image, and the emplacement of the image in the space of representation. The “idea” or “objective need” can orient activity in the measure that they are emplaced as an image—and in a perspective of representation—in an appropriate internal landscape. And it is not only needs or ideas that have this possibility—beliefs and even emotions converted into images have this capacity as well. The consequences that derive from this are enormous, as the author seems to suggest in the close of the work with these words: “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.”

In “Historiological Discussions” the author reviews the various conceptions of history, grouping them under the designation “history without temporality.” Why, until now, has human history been told considering humankind as an epiphenomenon, or a simple transmission gear that fulfills the function of being the subject of extrinsic factors? What is the reason for this lack of a sufficient explanation of temporality and its nature? The author explains that Historiology will become a science only in the measure that it can answer these questions and clarify the necessary pre-requisites for all historical discourse—that is, of what historicity and what temporality are we speaking?

In the introduction to “Historiological Discussions” the author says: “My objective in this work is to clarify the prerequisites for a foundation of historiology. It is clear that knowledge of the dates of historical events will not, in itself, even when supported by the latest research techniques, be sufficient to establish a claim that such knowledge is scientific.” Historiology cannot do without an understanding of the structure of human life, since the historiologist—even when he or she wishes to carry out simple, natural history—will find him or herself compelled to structure history from an optic and an interpretation that are *human*. Human life is precisely historicity—temporality—and in understanding that temporality lies the key to all historical construction.

But how is it that human events unfold, how is it that some events become others? The generations in their temporal accumulation are the agents of every historical process, and even when they coexist in the same moment, the landscape of formation, development, and struggle of one generation differs from those of other generations, because some are born prior to others. While child and elder apparently live in the same historical time, even though they coexist they represent distinct landscapes and temporal accumulations. Successive generations are born one following the other in a biological continuum, but what characterizes them is their constitution, which is social and temporal.

4. *Universal Root Myths* was written in 1990. This work has been conceived with the interest of comparing the basic systems of tensions in which the peoples who have produced the great myths of humankind have lived. The author also provides a brief Introduction to the book, which the reader may consult to understand the approach and method used in this treatment of the principal myths of ten cultures.

5. *Day of the Winged Lion* includes some brief writings, longer stories with more complex plots, and several fantasies that resemble science fiction, with the work taking its title from the final story, “Day of the Winged Lion.” The author, traveling new roads of literary experience, provides us with stories of thought-provoking originality, among which “Salt in the Eyes, Ice on the Feet” stands out. For those acquainted with these *Collected Works*, in particular the essay “Psychology of the Image,” the aforementioned story can be recognized as a clear application of the author’s theory of the consciousness in this description of a most surprising event. Other writings in this work touch upon such things as the moving situation of an African leader with no

## Introduction

way out, and the activities of a superman who, in developing his gymnastic abilities, ultimately succeeds in overcoming the law of gravity.

6. The *Letters to My Friends* were published individually as the author wrote them. From the time the first was completed on February 21, 1991 until the tenth and final one was written on December 15, 1993, almost three years elapsed. During this time, major global transformations took place in almost all fields of human endeavor. If the speed of change continues to increase as it has over this period, a reader in decades to come will encounter serious problems in understanding the world context to which the author continually makes reference, and may as a consequence only with difficulty grasp many of the ideas expressed in these writings. For this reason, we recommend to those hypothetical readers of the future that they would do well to have at hand a summary of the events that took place in the years from 1991 to 1994. We suggest that they seek a broad understanding of the economic and technological developments of the period, of the famines and conflicts, of the trends in mass media and fashion. We would ask that they listen to the music, review images of the architecture and urban design, consider the overcrowding of the megacities, the massive migrations, the environmental deterioration, and the way of life of that curious historical moment. Above all, we would urge them to delve into the squabbings of those formers of opinion—the philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists of that cruel and stupid age. While these letters speak of a certain present, they were most definitely written with an eye to the future, and we believe it is there that they will have to be confirmed or refuted.

The work does not follow a general plan, but is, rather, a series of occasional commentaries that may be read in any order. Nevertheless, the following classification could be attempted: a) the first three letters emphasize the experiences that touch the life of the individual, immersed in a global situation that becomes more complicated day-by-day; b) the fourth letter presents the general structure of the ideas on which all the letters are based; c) the subsequent letters outline the socio-political thought of the author; and d) the tenth letter addresses tactical action in light of the global process.

Next we will highlight some of the themes in the letters. *First letter*: The situation in which we find ourselves living. The disintegration of institutions and the crisis of solidarity. The new sensibilities and behavior taking shape in the world today. Criteria for action. *Second letter*: The factors of change in today's world and the positions habitually taken in facing this change. *Third letter*: The characteristics of change and the crisis in relation to the immediate environment in which we live. *Fourth letter*: The foundations of the opinions expressed by the author on the most general questions of human life, humanity's needs, and basic projects. The natural and social worlds. The concentration of power; violence; the State. *Fifth letter*: Human liberty, intention, and action. The ethical meaning of social practice and militancy, and their most habitual defects. *Sixth letter*: An exposition of the thought of New Humanism. *Seventh letter*: Social revolution. *Eighth letter*: The armed forces. *Ninth letter*: Human rights. *Tenth letter*: The generalized process of de-structuring. Applying global understanding to minimum concrete action.

The fourth letter, of central importance in the ideological justification of the entire book, can be understood in greater depth by reading another of the author's works, *Contributions to Thought* (particularly the essay "Historiological Discussions"), as well as the talk "Humanism and the Crisis of Civilization" in *Silo Speaks*, the final book of this volume.

The sixth letter expresses the ideas of contemporary or New Humanism. The conceptual compactness of this letter recalls certain political and cultural productions, for example, the manifestos of the middle of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries such as the Communist or Surrealist Manifestos. The use of the word Statement in lieu of manifesto is due to a careful choice of words intended to distance this writing from the naturalism expressed in the Humanist Manifesto of 1933, inspired by Dewey, and from the social-liberalism of the Humanist Manifesto II of 1974, signed by Sakharov and strongly imbued with the thought of Lamont. While there are points of agreement between the present Statement and this second Humanist Manifesto in regard to the need for a framework for economic and environmental planning that does not

destroy personal liberties, there are radical differences in political vision and in the conception of the human being.

With its extreme brevity in relation to the scope of the material it addresses, the sixth letter demands some further considerations. In this letter the author acknowledges the contributions of the many different cultures along the trajectory of humanism, as can clearly be observed in Jewish, Arab, and Eastern thought. In this sense, the Statement of the Humanist Movement cannot be placed in the Ciceronian tradition, as has so often been the case with Western humanisms. In his recognition of historical Humanism, the author revives themes that had been expressed as early as the twelfth century. This refers to the Goliard poets, who, like Hugo of Orleans and Peter of Blois, came to write the celebrated *In terra summus* of the *Codex Buranus* (or Beuern Codex, known in Latin as *Carmina Burana*). While Silo does not quote them directly, he echoes their words: “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.” It is difficult to overlook the reflection of *In terra summus*: “The abbot keeps his Money in his prisoner’s cell,” when the author says, “Even peaceful solitude depends on money.” Or here, “Money loves itself, and without it no one is loved...” when the author says: “There are no personal relationships without money, there is no intimacy without money.” The generalization of the Goliard poet, “Money, it is true, makes the fool seem eloquent,” appears in the letter as, “...but more than this it is art, it is philosophy, it is religion.” And regarding the latter, the venerable poem says, “Money is adored because it works miracles... it causes the deaf to hear and the lame to leap.” and so on. In this poem of the *Codex Buranus* that Silo takes as given we can see the implicit antecedents that are later to inspire the humanists of the sixteenth century, particularly Erasmus and Rabelais.

This letter presents the ideas of contemporary or New Humanism. For a more complete treatment of this theme, there is nothing better than to consult the talk by the author, “A Contemporary View of Humanism,” in *Silo Speaks*.

The tenth and final letter explores the limits of the process of de-structuring, and highlights three fields out of the many possible ones in which this phenomenon takes on special importance: politics, religion, and the generations, warning against the rise of neo-irrationalist facisms of authoritarian and violent character.

To illustrate the theme of global understanding and applying action to the minimum point of one’s “immediate environment,” the author makes this phenomenal jump in scale—in which we now find ourselves with our neighbor, our coworker, our friend. It is clear that every militant must now forget the mirage of superstructural political power, which lies mortally wounded at the hands of the growing de-structuring. In the future, it will make no difference who the president is, who the prime minister, senator, representative, or deputy are. Political parties, unions, and syndicates will continue to move further away from their human bases. As the State suffers a thousand transformations, it will be only the largest corporations and international financial capital that continue to concentrate decision-making power worldwide—until overtaken by the collapse of the Parastate.

Of what use, then, will a militancy be that tries to occupy the empty shell of formal democracy? Without doubt, action must be proposed in one’s minimum immediate environment, and it is only from there, based on concrete conflicts, that a real political representation can be constructed.

The existential problems of the social base are not expressed solely as economic and political difficulties, however, and while a party that espouses humanist ideas and instrumentally occupies parliamentary space will have institutional meaning, it will be unable to respond to the needs of the people. New power will be constructed from the social base as a broad Movement, decentralized and federative. And the question that all militants must ask is not, “Who will be the prime minister, representative, or deputy?” but instead, “How can we form our centers of direct

## Introduction

communication and our networks of neighborhood councils? How can we open participation to all the smallest organizations of the base, through which people express issues related to work and sports as well as popular art, culture, and religion?" This Movement cannot be thought of in formal political terms, but rather in terms of a convergence of diversity. Neither can the growth of this Movement be conceived in the mold of a gradualism that will progressively gain space and social strata. Rather, it must be proposed in terms of a "demonstration effect," characteristic of a multi-connected planetary society given to reproducing and adapting the successes of a new model in collectivities that are widespread and very different from one another. In sum, this final letter outlines a minimal type of organization and strategy of action that corresponds to the present state of things.

In these notes we have focused particularly on letters four, six, and ten because we believe it is in these letters that readers will most be aided by the brief recommendations, citations, and complementary commentaries provided above.

7. *Silo Speaks*. This book recounts Silo's spoken words over the course of almost three decades. It is a compilation of major speeches, opinions, and commentaries presented by this thinker between 1969 and 1995, but does not include interviews with the news media. The texts are based on transcriptions of written notes as well as audio and video recordings.

*The Editors*

## Note to the Translation

The translation of this first volume of Silo's collected works is related to the growing movement for social and personal change known as New Humanism. Accompanying this movement's development and revisions by the author, the translation of the present collection of seven works has been a cumulative effort spanning nearly thirty years, which has presented a number of challenges. In these works, the range of subject matter, genre, and voice is very broad, and we have attempted to strike a balance in rendering Silo's words that is both faithful to the originals and accessible, while doing justice to the author's poetic and provocative turn of phrase. The span of time over which these works were written and revised and the resulting wide range of treatment in their various translations has led to a lack of uniformity, with some books having been translated relatively quickly and others having decades-long histories of multiple translations. In light of the urgency of the times and the demand for these books, we are circulating this volume at the earliest possible date, recognizing that these translations are part of a dynamic process and that the uses and understandings of these works will continue to advance.

A great many people have participated over the years in making these translations possible, and among them the translators would like acknowledge the author's generous availability for correspondence regarding the translations. Some of these works have been translated or retranslated for this edition, and although the long history of the works and their various translations precludes a full account here, we wish to acknowledge the valuable assistance of many with early drafts, including Andrew Hurley with *Humanize the Earth* and *Silo Speaks*; Daniel Lemesoff with *Guided Experiences*; Adolfo Carpio with *Contributions to Thought*; Roberto Verdecchia with *Universal Root Myths*, *Day of the Winged Lion* and throughout; John Incledon with an earlier translation of *Day of the Winged Lion*; Jorge von Schouwen with *Letters to My Friends*, and Salvatore Puledda for invaluable assistance throughout. The talents and dedication of these and many others have brought these seven works to life in the English language, collected here in this volume.

Daniel Zuckerbrot and Paul Tooby  
January, 2003

# Humanize the Earth

*The Inner Look*

*The Internal Landscape*

*The Human Landscape*

## *The Inner Look*



## I. Meditation

1. Here it tells how the non-meaning of life can be converted into meaning and fulfillment.
2. Here are joy, love of the body, of nature, of humanity, and of the spirit.
3. Here sacrifices, feelings of guilt, and threats from the beyond are rejected.
4. Here the worldly is not opposed to the eternal.
5. Here it tells of the inner revelation at which all arrive who carefully meditate in humble search.

## II. Disposition to Comprehend

1. I know how you feel because I can experience your state, but you do not know how to experience the things I am speaking of. Therefore, if I speak to you without self-interest of that which makes the human being happy and free, it is worth your while to try to comprehend.

2. Do not think that you will arrive at understanding by arguing with me. You may argue if you believe that through opposition your understanding will become clearer, but it is not the appropriate path in this case.

3. If you ask me what attitude is appropriate, I will tell you that it is to meditate profoundly and without haste on what is explained here.

4. If you reply that you are busy with more urgent things, I will answer that since your wish is to sleep or to die, I will do nothing to oppose it.

5. Nor should you argue that you dislike my way of presenting things, for you do not criticize the peel when you like the fruit.

6. I state things in the way I consider appropriate, not as might be desired by those who aspire to things remote from inner truth.

### III. Non-Meaning

*After many days I discovered this great paradox: Those who bore failure in their hearts were able to illuminate the final victory, while those who felt triumphant were left by the wayside like vegetation whose life is muted and diffuse. After many days, coming from the darkest of darkness, I arrived at the light, guided not by teachings but by meditation.*

*Thus, I told myself on the first day:*

1. There is no meaning in life if everything ends with death.
2. All justification for actions, whether these actions are despicable or admirable, is always a new dream that leaves only emptiness ahead.
3. God is something uncertain.
4. Faith is something as variable as reason and dreams.
5. "What one should do" may be thoroughly discussed, but in the end there is nothing that definitively supports any position.
6. The "responsibility" of those who commit themselves to something is no greater than the responsibility of those who do not.
7. I move according to my interests, and this makes me neither a coward nor a hero.
8. "My interests" neither justify nor discredit anything.
9. "My reasons" are no better than the reasons of others, nor are they worse.
10. Cruelty horrifies me, but neither because of this nor in itself is it better or worse than kindness.
11. What I or others say today is of no value tomorrow.
12. To die is not better than to live or never to have been born, but neither is it worse.
13. I discovered, not through teachings but through experience and meditation, that there is no meaning in life if everything ends with death.

## IV. Dependence

*The second day:*

1. Nothing that I do, feel, or think depends on me.
2. I am mutable and depend on the action of my surroundings.

When I want to change my environment or my "I," it is my environment that ends up changing me. Then I seek the city or nature, social redemption or a new struggle in order to justify my existence. In every case it is my environment that leads me to choose one attitude or another. In this way, my interests and my surroundings leave me here.

3. I say, then, that it does not matter who or what decides. I say on these occasions that I have to live since I am in the situation of living. I say all this, but there is nothing that justifies it. I can make a decision, hesitate, or remain where I am. In any case, one thing is only provisionally better than another; ultimately there is no better or worse.

4. If someone tells me that those who do not eat die, I will answer that this is indeed so, and that, spurred by their needs, they are compelled to eat. But I will not add that the struggle to eat justifies one's existence—nor will I say that this struggle is bad. I will simply say that all of this concerns an individual or collective fact related to the need for subsistence, but that it has no meaning in the moment that the last battle is lost.

5. I will say, moreover, that I feel solidarity with the struggle of the poor, the exploited, and the persecuted. I will say that I feel "fulfilled" in this identification, but I understand that these feelings do not justify anything.

## V. Intimation of Meaning

*The third day:*

1. At times I have anticipated events that later took place.
2. At times I have grasped a distant thought.
3. At times I have described places I have never been.
4. At times I have recounted exactly what took place in my  
absence.
5. At times an immense joy has surprised me.
6. At times total comprehension has overwhelmed me.
7. At times a perfect communion with everything has filled me with  
ecstasy.
8. At times I have broken through my reveries and seen reality in a  
new way.
9. At times I have seen something for the first time yet recognized  
it as though I had seen it before.

*And all this has made me think.*

*It is clear to me that without these experiences I could not have emerged from the non-meaning.*

## VI. Sleep and Awakening

*The fourth day:*

1. 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.

2. 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 realize that what I normally see resembles sleep or semi-sleep.

*There is a real way of being awake, and it has led me to meditate profoundly on all that has been said so far. It has, moreover, opened the door for me to discover the meaning of all that exists.*

## VII. Presence of the Force

*The fifth day:*

1. When I was truly awake I scaled from comprehension to comprehension.
2. When I was truly awake yet lacked the strength to continue the ascent, I was able to draw the Force from within myself. This Force was present throughout my body. All of the energy was present even in the smallest cells of my body, and it circulated more rapidly and more intensely than my blood.
3. I discovered that the energy concentrated in certain points of my body when they were active and was absent when they were not.
4. During illness the energy was either lacking or it accumulated precisely in the affected areas of my body. But if I was able to reestablish the normal flow of the energy, many illnesses began to recede.

*Some peoples knew this, and through various procedures that seem strange to us today, they were able to reestablish the flow of the energy.*

*Some peoples knew this, and they were able to communicate this energy to others, producing "illuminations" of comprehension and even physical "miracles."*

## VIII. Control of the Force

*The sixth day:*

1. There is a way of directing and concentrating the Force that circulates through the body.
2. In the body are points of control on which depend what we know as movement, emotion, and idea. When the energy acts in these points, it gives rise to motor, emotional, and intellectual manifestations.
3. Depending on whether the energy acts more internally or superficially in the body, the states of deep sleep, semi-sleep, or wakefulness arise. Surely the halos that surround the bodies or heads of the saints (or the great awakened ones) in religious paintings allude to this phenomenon of the energy which, on occasion, manifests more externally.
4. There is a point of control of *being-truly-awake*, and there is a way of bringing the Force to this point.
5. When the energy is led to this point, all the other points of control move in a new way.

*Upon understanding this and hurling the Force to this superior point, my entire body felt the impact of an immense energy. This energy struck powerfully within my consciousness, and I ascended from comprehension to comprehension. But I also observed that if I lost control of the energy, I could descend to the depths of the mind. Then I remembered the legends of "heavens" and "hells," and I saw the dividing line between these mental states.*



## IX. Manifestations of the Energy

*The seventh day:*

1. This energy in motion could become “independent” of the body yet still maintain its unity.
2. This unified energy was really a sort of “double” of the body, corresponding to the coenesthetic representation of one’s own body within the space of representation. The sciences that deal with mental phenomena have not paid sufficient attention to the existence of this space or to the representations that correspond to the internal sensations of the body.
3. The energy duplicated in this way—that is imagined as if “outside” of the body or “separated” from its material base—either dissolved as an image or was represented correctly, depending on the internal unity of the one carrying out this work.
4. I was able to confirm that the “exteriorization” of this energy—which represented one’s body as “outside” of one’s body—could be produced even from the lowest levels of the mind. In these cases, a threat to the most basic unity of the living being provoked this response in order to safeguard the one who was in danger. That is why, in the trances of some mediums whose level of consciousness was low and whose internal unity was imperiled, these responses occurred involuntarily and were not recognized as being self-produced, but were attributed to other entities.

*The “ghosts” of certain peoples, like the “spirits” of some fortunetellers, were nothing but the “doubles” (the self-representations) of those who felt themselves possessed. Having lost control of the Force, their mental state was darkened in trance, and they felt controlled by strange beings who at times produced remarkable phenomena. Doubtless this was the case of many who were said to be “possessed.” What was decisive, then, was control of the Force.*

*All this changed completely my conception of both daily life and of life after death. Through these thoughts and experiences I began to lose faith in death, and now I no longer believe in it, just as I no longer believe in the non-meaning of life.*

## X. Evidence of Meaning

*The eighth day:*

1. The real importance of an awakened life became evident to me.
2. The real importance of eliminating internal contradictions convinced me.
3. The real importance of mastering the Force in order to achieve unity and continuity filled me with joyful meaning.

## XI. The Luminous Center

*The ninth day:*

1. In the Force was “the light” that came from a “center.”
2. In withdrawal from the center there was a dissolution of the energy, while in the unification and evolution of the energy that luminous center was at work.

*It did not strike me as strange to find a devotion to the Sun-god among various ancient peoples. And I saw that while some worshipped this heavenly object because it gave life to the earth and to nature, others recognized in that majestic body the symbol of a greater reality.*

*There were those who went still further and received innumerable gifts from this center, gifts that at times “descended” as tongues of fire over the inspired ones, at times arrived as luminous spheres, and at times appeared as burning bushes before the fearful believer.*

## XII. The Discoveries

*The tenth day:*

*Few but important were my discoveries, which I summarize this way:*

1. Though the Force circulates through the body involuntarily, it can be directed through conscious effort. Achieving an intentional change in the level of consciousness grants the human being an important glimpse of liberation from those “natural” conditions that seem to impose themselves on the consciousness.
2. Within the body are points that control its diverse activities.
3. There are differences between the state of being truly awake and other levels of consciousness.
4. The Force can be led to the point of true awakening (understanding by “Force” the mental energy that accompanies particular images and by “point” the location of such an image in a certain “place” in the space of representation).

*These conclusions led me to recognize in the prayers of ancient peoples the seed of a great truth—a truth later obscured by external rites and practices, making it impossible for them to develop that internal work which, realized with perfection, puts human beings in contact with their luminous source.*

*Finally, I observed that my “discoveries” were not discoveries at all but arose from the inner revelation at which all arrive who, without contradictions, search for the light in their own hearts.*

### XIII. The Principles

*Different is the attitude toward life and things when inner revelation strikes like lightning. Following the steps slowly, meditating on what has been said and what has yet to be said, you may convert the non-meaning into meaning.*

*It is not indifferent what you do with your life. Your life, subject to laws, is open to possibilities among which you can choose.*

*I do not speak to you of liberty. I speak to you of liberation, of movement, of process. I do not speak to you of liberty as something static, but of liberating yourself step by step, as those who approach their city become liberated from the road already traveled. Thus, what-one-must-do does not depend upon distant, incomprehensible, and conventional morals, but upon laws: laws of life, of light, of evolution.*

*Here are the aforementioned "Principles" that can help you in your search for internal unity:*

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

*You will be like a force of Nature when it finds no resistance in its path. Learn to distinguish a difficulty, a problem, an obstacle, from a contradiction. While those may move you or spur you on, contradiction traps you in a closed circle with no way out.*

*Whenever you find great strength, joy, and kindness in your heart, or when you feel free and without contradictions, immediately be internally thankful. When you find yourself in opposite circumstances, ask with faith, and the gratitude you have accumulated will return to you transformed and amplified in benefit.*



## XIV. Guide to the Inner Road

*If you understand what I have explained so far, you can, through a simple exercise, readily experience the manifestation of the Force.*

*It is not the same, however, to search for the correct mental position (as if this were a question of approaching a technical task) as it is to enter the kind of emotional tone and openness that poetry inspires.*

*The language used to transmit these truths, then, is intended to facilitate an attitude that makes it easier to be in the presence of internal perception rather than in the presence of an idea of "internal perception."*

*Now follow attentively what I will explain to you, because it concerns the inner landscape you may encounter when working with the Force and the directions you can imprint on your mental movements.*

*On the inner road you may walk darkened or luminous. Attend to the two roads that open before you.*

*If you let your being cast itself toward dark regions, your body wins the battle and it dominates. Then, sensations and appearances of spirits, of forces, of memories will arise. On this road you descend further and further. Here dwell Hatred, Vengeance, Strangeness, Possession, Jealousy, and the Desire to Remain. Should you descend even further you will be invaded by Frustration, Resentment, and all those dreams and desires that have brought ruin and death upon humanity.*

*If you impel your being in a luminous direction, you will find resistance and fatigue at every step. There are things to blame for this fatigue in the ascent. Your life weighs; your memories weigh; your previous actions impede the ascent. The climb is made difficult by the action of your body, which tends to dominate.*

*In the steps of the ascent you will find strange regions of pure colors and unknown sounds.*

*Do not flee purification, which acts like fire and horrifies with its phantoms.*

*Reject startling fears and disheartenment.*

*Reject the desire to flee toward low and dark regions.*

*Reject the attachment to memories.*

*Remain in internal liberty, indifferent toward the dream of the landscape, with resolution in the ascent.*

*The pure light dawns in the summits of the great mountain chains, and the waters-of-a-thousand-colors flow amid unrecognizable melodies toward crystalline plateaus and prairies.*

*Do not fear the pressure of the light that pushes against you with increasing strength the closer you draw to its center. Absorb it as though it were a liquid or a wind—certainly, in it is life.*

*When you find the hidden city in the great mountain chain, you must know the entrance—and you will know it in the moment your life is transformed. Its enormous walls are written in figures, are written in colors, are "sensed." In this city are kept the*

*done and the yet-to-be-done. But for your inner eye, the transparent is opaque. Yes,  
the walls are impenetrable for you!  
Take the Force of the hidden city. Return to the world of dense life with your brow and  
your hands luminous.*



## XV. The Experience of Peace and the Passage of the Force

1. Completely relax your body and quiet your mind. Then, imagine a transparent and luminous sphere that descends toward you until it comes to rest in your heart. In that moment you will recognize that the sphere ceases to appear as an image and transforms into a sensation within your chest.

2. Observe how the sensation of the sphere slowly expands from your heart toward the outside of your body, while your breathing becomes fuller and deeper. When the sensation reaches the limits of your body, you may stop there and register the experience of internal peace. You may remain there as long as you feel is appropriate. To conclude the exercise, calm and renewed, reverse the previous expansion until arriving, as in the beginning, at your heart, and finally releasing the sphere. This work is called the *experience of peace*.

3. Should you instead wish to experience the *passage of the Force*, you must increase the expansion rather than reversing it, allowing your emotions and your whole being to follow along. Do not try to pay attention to your breathing; let it act by itself while you follow the expansion outward from your body.

4. Let me repeat: Your attention at such moments must be on the sensation of the expanding sphere. If you are unable to achieve this, it is advisable that you stop and try again another time. In any case, even if you do not produce the passage of the Force, you will be able to experience an interesting sensation of peace.

5. If, however, you go further, you will begin to experience the passage of the Force. The sensations from your hands and other areas of your body will have a different tone than usual. Later you may notice increasing undulations, and in a short while vivid images and powerful emotions may arise. Allow the passage to take place...

6. Upon receiving the Force you will, depending upon your habitual mode of representation, perceive the light or strange sounds. In any case, what is important is that you experience an amplification of consciousness, among whose indicators are a greater lucidity and disposition to understand what is taking place.

7. If this singular state has not faded with the passage of time, you can bring it to an end whenever you wish by imagining or feeling that the sphere contracts and then leaves you in the same way it arrived in the beginning.

8. It is interesting to recognize that many altered states of consciousness have been and are almost always achieved through the use of mechanisms similar to those described. These may be disguised, however, by strange rituals, or at times reinforced by practices involving extreme fatigue, unbridled motor activity, repetition, and postures that alter the breathing and distort the general sensation of the intrabody. In this domain you should also recognize hypnosis, mediumistic activity, and the effects of drugs—all of which, though they act through a different pathway, produce similar alterations. Characteristic of all

these cases is an absence of control and a lack of awareness of what is taking place. Do not trust such manifestations, and consider them nothing more than “trances” such as those through which the dabblers, the ignorant, and (according to legend) even the “saints” have passed.

9. Even if you have followed these recommendations, you may still have been unable to produce the passage of the Force. This should not become a source of concern, however—simply take it as an indicator of a lack of internal “letting go,” which may reflect excessive tensions or problems with the dynamics of the images—in sum, a fragmentation of emotional behavior—something that will, moreover, also be present in your daily life.

## XVI. Projection of the Force

1. If you have experienced the passage of the Force, you will be able to understand how, based on similar experiences but without understanding, various peoples went on to develop rites and cults that later multiplied endlessly. Through experiences like those previously described there were some who felt that their bodies had “doubled,” and the experience of the Force gave them the sensation that they could project this energy outside themselves.

2. The Force could be “projected” to others and also to objects particularly “suited” to receive and conserve it. I trust it will not be difficult for you to understand the function filled by the sacraments of various religions, as well as the significance of those sacred places and priests supposedly “charged” with the Force. When certain objects were surrounded with ceremonies and rites and worshipped with faith in temples, surely they “gave back” to the believers the energy accumulated through repeated prayer. Since fundamental internal experience is essential to understanding in these matters, attempts at understanding based, as is normally the case, solely on externals, reveal a limitation in our knowledge of human realities—no matter that these externals are culture, geography, history, or tradition.

3. “Projecting”, “charging,” and “replenishing” the Force are subjects to which we will return later. For now let me say that this same mechanism continues to operate even in secular societies where leaders and others imbued with prestige are surrounded by a special kind of aura in the eyes of those who would like to “touch” them, acquire a scrap of their clothing, a fragment of their possessions, or even just to see them.

4. This occurs because all representations of the “heights” extend from eye level upward, above the normal line of sight. And the “higher-ups” are those who “possess” kindness, wisdom, and strength. There, in the “heights” above, we also find the hierarchies, the powers that be, and the flags of State. And we, ordinary mortals, must at all costs “ascend” the social ladder in order to draw closer to power. What a sorry state we are in, still governed by these mechanisms, which coincide with our internal representation in which our heads are in the “heights” and our feet stuck on the ground. What an unhappy state we are in, when we believe in these things, and believe in them because they have their own “reality” in our internal representation. What a sorry state we are in, when our *external look* is nothing but an unacknowledged projection of the internal.

## XVII. Loss and Repression of the Force

1. The greatest discharges of energy occur through uncontrolled acts, including unbridled imagination, unchecked curiosity, immoderate small talk, excessive sexuality, and exaggerated perception—looking, listening, tasting, and so on in an aimless and excessive manner. But you should also recognize that many act in these ways because it allows them to discharge tensions that would otherwise be painful. All things considered, and given the function served by these discharges, I am sure you will agree with me that it is not reasonable to repress them but rather to give order to them.

2. As for sexuality, you must interpret this correctly: This function must not be repressed because that will only cause torment and internal contradiction. Sexuality directs itself toward and concludes in the act itself, and it is not useful that it continues affecting the imagination or obsessively searching for a new object of possession.

3. The control of sex by a particular social or religious “morality” has served purposes that had nothing to do with evolution, but the contrary.

4. In repressed societies the Force (the energy of the representation of the sensation of the intrabody) turned back toward the crepuscular. In those societies, cases increased of the “possessed,” of “witches,” of the sacrilegious, and of criminals of all kinds who rejoiced in suffering and the destruction of life and beauty. In some tribes and civilizations the criminals were to be found among both the accusers and the accused. In other cases all that was science and progress was persecuted because it opposed the irrational, the crepuscular, and the repressed.

5. The repression of sex still exists among certain so-called “primitive peoples,” just as it does in other civilizations that some consider “advanced.” It is evident that although the origins of these two situations may differ, both are marked by great destructiveness.

6. If you ask me to explain further, I will tell you that in reality sex is sacred, and it is the center from which all life and creativity springs, just as it is from there that all destruction arises when issues about its functioning are not resolved.

7. Never believe the lies of the poisoners of life when they refer to sex as despicable. On the contrary, in it is beauty, and not in vain is it related to the best feelings of love.

8. Be careful, then, and consider sex a great wonder, which must be treated with care, without turning it into a source of contradiction or a disintegrator of vital energy.

## XVIII. Action and Reaction of the Force

*Earlier I explained to you: “Whenever you find great strength, joy, and kindness in your heart, or when you feel free and without contradictions, immediately be internally thankful.”*

1. “To be thankful” means to concentrate these positive moods and associate them with an image, with a representation. If you have previously linked positive states in this way, you can, upon finding yourself in a difficult situation, evoke that representation, and along with it will arise the positive quality that accompanied it earlier. Furthermore, since this mental “charge” has been increased through previous repetitions, it is capable of displacing the negative emotions that certain situations impose.

2. Thus, whatever you ask for will return from within you amplified in benefit—as long as you have accumulated within yourself numerous positive states. By now it should be unnecessary to repeat that this mechanism has long been used (though in confused ways) to “charge” external objects or persons or to externalize internal entities, believing that they would respond to prayers and supplication.

## XIX. The Internal States

*You must now gain sufficient insight into the various internal states you may find yourself in throughout the course of your life, and particularly in the course of your evolutionary work. I have no way to describe these states except by using images, in this case allegorical ones. These seem to me to have the virtue of “visually” concentrating complex states and moods. The unusual approach of linking these states to one another as if they were distinct moments in a single process introduces a departure from the typically fragmented descriptions we have become accustomed to from those who normally deal with such things.*

1. As I mentioned earlier, in the first state, known as *Diffuse Vitality*, non-meaning prevails. Here, everything is oriented by physical needs, though these are often confused with contradictory images and desires. Here, both motives and all that is done are shrouded in darkness. In this state you simply vegetate, lost among changing forms. From this point you can evolve only by following one of two paths: the way of *Death* or the way of *Mutation*.

2. The path of Death puts you in the presence of a dark and chaotic landscape. The ancients knew this passage and almost always located it “underground” or in the depths of the abyss. There are those who visited this kingdom, to later “resurrect” in luminous levels. Understand well that “below” Death lies Diffuse Vitality. Perhaps the human mind relates mortal disintegration to subsequent phenomena of transformation; perhaps it associates this diffuse movement with what takes place before birth. If your direction is that of ascent, Death signifies a break with your former stage. By taking the path of Death you ascend to another state.

3. Arriving here you find yourself at the refuge of *Regression*. Two ways open from here: One is the road of *Repentance*; the other, which you used for the ascent, is the road of Death. If you take the first road it is because your decision tends to break with your past life. If you go back along the road of Death you will fall again into the depths, with the sensation of being trapped in a closed circle.

4. Earlier I told you that there is another path you might take to escape from the abyss of Vitality: it is the path of Mutation. If you choose this road it is because you wish to emerge from your unhappy state, but are unwilling to abandon some of its apparent benefits. It is, then, a false road known as the “Twisted Hand.” Many are the monsters who have emerged from the depths through this tortuous passageway. They have wanted to storm the heavens without abandoning the hells, and consequently have projected infinite contradiction into the middle world.

5. Let us suppose that by ascending from the kingdom of Death and through your conscious *Repentance*, you have now reached the dwelling of *Tendency*. Two narrow supports, *Conservation* and *Frustration*, maintain your dwelling. Conservation is false and unstable; walking along this path you delude

## The Internal States

yourself with the idea of permanence, but in reality you descend rapidly. Should you take the path of Frustration, your ascent is arduous, but this path is the *only-one-not-false*.

6. After failure upon failure you can reach the next resting place, called the dwelling of *Deviation*. Take care in choosing between the two roads now before you. Either you take the road of *Resolution*, which carries you to *Generation*, or you take that of Resentment, which causes you to descend once more toward Regression. Here you face another dilemma: Either you choose the labyrinth of conscious life with Resolution, or you return to your previous life through Resentment. There are many who, at this point, unable to surpass themselves, cut off their own possibilities.

7. But you who have ascended with Resolution now find yourselves at the dwelling known as Generation. Here you face three doors: one called the *Fall*, another known as *Intent*, and the third called *Degradation*. The Fall carries you directly to the depths, and only an external accident can push you toward it; it is unlikely that you would choose that door. The door of Degradation, however, carries you indirectly to the abyss. On this path you retrace your steps in a sort of turbulent spiral in which you continually reconsider all that you have lost and all that you have sacrificed. This examination of consciousness that leads you to Degradation is surely a false examination in which you underestimate and evaluate disproportionately some of what you are comparing. You compare the effort of the ascent with those "benefits" you have left behind. But if you examine things more closely, you will see that you have not abandoned anything for the ascent, but rather for other reasons. Degradation begins, then, when you misrepresent those motives that were not really related to the ascent. I ask you now: What betrays the mind? Perhaps it is the false motives of initial enthusiasm? Perhaps it is the difficulty of the undertaking? Perhaps it is the false memories of sacrifices that never were, or that were made for other reasons? Saying this I ask you now: Some time ago your house burned down, and because it did you chose the ascent; or do you now think that because of this ascent, your house burned down? Have you perhaps noticed what has happened to the houses around you? There is no doubt that you must choose the middle door, that of Intent.

8. Climbing the stairway of Intent you will reach an unstable dome. From there, take the narrow, winding passageway known as *Volubility* until you reach a vast and empty space like a platform, which bears the name *Open-Space-of-the-Energy*.

9. In that open space you may be frightened by the immense, deserted landscape and the terrifying silence of this night, transfigured by enormous and immobile stars. There, directly over your head, you will see set in the firmament the suggestive form of the *Black Moon*, a strange, eclipsed moon located exactly opposite the Sun. Here you must await the dawn patiently and with faith, for nothing bad can happen if you remain calm.

10. You may, upon finding yourself in this situation, want to arrange an immediate way out. However, should you try to leave instead of prudently awaiting the day, you could end up blindly groping your way anywhere. Remember that all movement here (in the darkness) is false and is generically called

*Improvisation.* If, forgetting what I tell you now, you begin to improvise movements, be certain that you will be dragged by a whirlwind down paths and past dwellings to the darkest depths of Dissolution.

11. How difficult it is to comprehend that the internal states are linked one to another! If you could see what inflexible logic the consciousness has, you would recognize that those who blindly improvise in this situation inevitably begin to degrade themselves and others. Then, feelings of Frustration arise in them, and later they fall into Resentment and finally into Death—forgetting all that they had at one moment managed to perceive.

12. If, in that open space, you manage to reach the day, the radiant Sun will rise before your eyes, illuminating reality for the first time. Then you will see that in everything that exists there lives a *Plan*.

13. It is unlikely that you will fall from here unless you should voluntarily choose to descend to obscure regions in order to carry the light into the darkness.

*It would not be useful to develop these subjects further, because without experience they can only mislead by transferring to the field of the imaginary something that can actually be achieved.*

*May what has been said here be of service to you. If you do not find what has been explained here useful, to what could you object, since for skepticism nothing has any basis or reason—it is like the image in a mirror, the sound of an echo, the shadow of a shadow.*



## XX. Internal Reality

1. Take note of my considerations. In them you will not only intuit allegorical phenomena and landscapes of the external world, but you will also find true descriptions of the mental world.

2. Nor should you believe that the “places” through which you pass in your journey have some sort of independent existence. Such confusion has often obscured profound teachings, and even today there are some who believe that the heavens, hells, angels, devils, monsters, enchanted castles, distant cities, and the rest have visible reality for the “enlightened.” The same prejudice, but with the opposite interpretation, has been maintained by skeptics without wisdom who take these things to be simply “illusions” or “hallucinations” suffered by feverish minds.

3. I must repeat, then: You should understand that all this deals with real mental states, even though they are symbolized here by objects that correspond to the external world.

4. Remember what I have said, and learn to dis-cover the truth behind the allegories, which on occasion lead the mind astray, but at other times translate realities that would be impossible to grasp without such representation.

*When they spoke of a city of the gods, which the heroes of many peoples strove to reach; when they spoke of a paradise where gods and humankind lived together in transfigured original nature; when they spoke of falls and floods, great internal truth was told.*

*Later, the redeemers brought their messages and came to us in double nature to reestablish that lost unity for which we yearned. Then, too, great inner truth was told.*

*But when all this was spoken of but set outside the mind, it was an error or a lie.*

*Conversely, the fusing of the inner look with the external world forces this look to travel new paths.*

*The heroes of this age fly through regions previously unknown toward the stars.*

*The heroes of this age fly outward from their world and, without knowing it, they are impelled toward the internal and luminous center.*

## *The Internal Landscape*

## I. The Question

1. Here is my question: As life goes by, is it happiness or suffering that grows within you? Do not ask that I define these words; answer instead according to what you feel...

2. Though you may be wise and powerful, if happiness and liberty do not grow in you and in those around you, I will reject your example.

3. Accept, instead, my proposal: Follow the model of that which is being born, not that which takes the path toward death. Leap over your suffering, and it will not be the abyss but life that grows within you.

4. There is no passion, idea, or human deed that is not linked to the abyss. Therefore, let us turn to the only thing that deserves our attention: the abyss and that which overcomes it.

## II. Reality

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 center 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 to 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!”

### III. The External 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 gray 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 oriented 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 humanize, 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!"

## IV. The Human 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 recognize it in the landscape, I recognize 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 realizing that even if you change your location, you carry your internal landscape with you.*

## V. 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 behavior 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.

## VI. Center and Reflection

*“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 it is by this vision that we orient ourselves in one direction or another.*

1. Yet it is clear that as you go forward your vision is modified.
2. There is no learning, however small, that you achieve through contemplation alone. You learn because you do something with that which you contemplate. And the more you do the more you learn, for as you go forward your vision continues to change.
3. What have you learned of the world? You have learned what you have done. What is it that you want of the world? You have come to want according to what has happened to you. What is it that you do not want from the world? What you do not want also follows from what has happened to you.
4. Hear me, rider galloping astride time: There are three paths by which you can reach your most profound landscape. And what will you find within? Place yourself in the center of your internal landscape and you will see that every direction reflects this center.
5. Surrounded by a triangular wall of mirrors, your landscape is reflected infinitely in infinite hues. There, depending on how you orient your vision on the path of images that you have chosen, all movement is transformed and then restored, time and again. You can come to see your own back in front of you, and when you move your hand to the right, it will respond to the left.
6. If you aspire to reach something in the mirror of the future, you will see how, in the mirror of today or of the past, it runs in the opposite direction.
7. O rider galloping astride time, what is your body but time itself?



## VII. Pain, Suffering, and Meaning in Life

1. Hunger, thirst, sickness, and all bodily injury are pain. Fear, frustration, despair, and all mental hurt are suffering. Physical pain recedes in the measure that society and science advance. Mental suffering recedes in the measure that faith in life advances, in the measure that life gains meaning.

2. 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 labor the steps that allow you to continue the ascent.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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!"

6. 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.

## VIII. The Rider and His Shadow

*As the sun tinted the path red and the shadow of the rider lengthened along the rocks and thick underbrush, he slowed his pace until at last he stopped by a newly lit fire. An old man, rubbing his hands at the flames, greeted him. The rider dismounted and they spoke together for a time. Then the rider continued on his way.*

*When the shadow of the rider shortened and fell beneath the horse's hooves, he halted for a moment to speak with a man who hailed him from the side of the road.*

*The rider did not slow his pace as the shadow grew long behind him, and a young man who wanted to stop him was only able to shout, "You're going the wrong way!"*

*Finally, nightfall caused the rider to dismount, and he saw the shadow only in his soul.*

*Then, sighing to himself and to the stars, he said:*

*"On a single day an old man spoke to me of loneliness, sickness, and death. A middle-aged man spoke to me of the way things are and the realities of life. And finally, I came upon a youth who did not even speak to me but only shouted out, trying to alter my course to an unknown direction.*

*"The old man feared losing his things and his life. The middle-aged man feared he would not be able to gain what he believed were his things and his life. The youth feared being unable to escape from his things and his life.*

*"Strange encounters these, where the old man suffers for his short future, seeking refuge in his long past; the middle-aged man suffers for his present situation, seeking refuge in what has happened or what will happen, depending on whether he grasps before or behind him; and the youth suffers because his short past nips at his heels, spurring on his flight toward a long future.*

*"And yet I recognize my own face in the faces of all three, and it seems to me that all human beings, whatever their age, can move through these times and see in them phantoms that do not exist. Or does that offense of my youth still exist today? Does my coming old age exist today? Does my death already dwell here today in this darkness?"*

*"All suffering steals in through memory, imagination, or perception. But it is thanks to these same three pathways that thoughts, affections, and human deeds exist. So it is that even while these pathways are necessary for life, if suffering contaminates them they also become channels of destruction.*

*"Yet is not suffering the warning that life gives us when its flow is inverted?"*

*"Life can be inverted by something that is done with it, perhaps unwittingly. And so it is that the old man, the middle-aged man, and the youth must have done something with their lives for them to have become 'inverted.'"*

*Then the rider, meditating in the darkness of the night, fell asleep. And upon sleeping he dreamt, and in his dreams the landscape became illuminated.*

*He found himself in the center of a triangular space walled with mirrors. The mirrors reflected his image, multiplying it. Choosing one direction he saw himself as an old man. Choosing another his face was that of a middle-aged man, and in a third that of a youth. But in the center of himself, he felt like a child.*

## The Rider and His Shadow

*Then everything began to grow dark, and when he could distinguish nothing but a heavy darkness, he awoke.*

*On opening his eyes he saw the light of the sun. Then he mounted his horse, and seeing his shadow growing longer, he said to himself, "Contradiction inverts life and generates suffering... The sun hides itself so that day becomes night, but the day will be according to what I do with it."*

## IX. Contradiction and Unity

1. Contradiction inverts life. The inversion of the growing stream of life is experienced as suffering. Thus, suffering is the signal that warns us of the need to change the direction of the opposing forces.
2. Those who through repeated frustration find themselves detained on their way only appear to be detained; in reality, they regress. Time and again their past failures close off their future. Those who feel frustrated see the future as a repetition of the past, even as they experience the need to distance themselves from that past.
3. Those who seize the future a prey to resentment, what intricate retaliation will they not attempt in order to avenge their past?
4. And in their frustration and resentment they do violence to the future, until it bends its back in suffering return.
5. At times, wise men have recommended love as a protective shield against the blows of suffering. But this deceptive word "love," what does it mean to you? Does it mean getting even for the past, or instead a fresh, new, untainted adventure launched toward an unknown future?
6. Just as I have seen solemnity grotesquely cloak the ridiculous, just as I have seen an empty seriousness cast its pall over the grace of talent, so have I recognized in many loves a vindictive self-affirmation.
7. What image have you of the wise? Is it not true that you conceive of them as solemn beings, slow of gesture; as beings who have suffered enormously and with this merit beckon you from on high with gentle phrases in which they repeat the word "love?"
8. I have seen in all the truly wise a child running playfully through the world of ideas and things, creating generous and brilliant bubbles, only to burst them. In the sparkling eyes of all who are truly wise I have seen "the light feet of joy, dancing toward the future." And very seldom have I heard them utter the word "love," for the truly wise never promise in vain.
3.
  9. Do not believe that you will purify your suffering past through revenge, or by using "love" as an incantation or as the bait for a new trap.
  10. You will truly love only when you build with your gaze fixed on the future. And if you remember a great love that is no more, let the memory be accompanied by a soft and silent nostalgia, with gratitude for all it has taught you until today.
  11. You will not break with your past suffering by falsifying or degrading the future. You will break with it only by changing the direction of the forces that provoke contradiction in you.
  12. I believe you will know how to distinguish a difficulty, which is welcome for you can leap over it, from a contradiction, that lonely labyrinth that has no exit.
  13. Every contradictory action that you have done in your life,

## Contradiction and Unity

whatever the circumstances, has the unequivocal flavor of internal violence and betrayal of yourself. Why you found yourself in that situation will not matter, but only how—at that precise moment—you organized your reality, your landscape. Something shattered then, and changed your direction. And this, in turn, predisposed you to a new rupture. In this way, all contradictory actions orient you toward repeating them, just as all unitive actions seek to reemerge later on.

14. In daily actions difficulties are overcome, small objectives are achieved, little failures reaped. Whether pleasant or unpleasant, these acts accompany daily life like scaffolding accompanies a great building; it is not the structure itself, but it is necessary if it is to be built. It does not matter what material this scaffolding is made of, as long as it is suitable for its purpose.

15. As for the building itself, where you put defective material, the defect will grow; where you put solid material, you increase the structure's solidity.

16. The essential construction of your life is built of contradictory or unifying actions. You must make no mistake at the moment you find yourself faced with your actions, for if you do you will jeopardize your future and invert the stream of your life—and how then will you end your suffering?

17. But it happens that at this very moment your contradictory actions are already many. And if everything from the foundation up is false, what can be done? Would you pull your whole life apart to begin anew? Let me tell you that I do not believe that everything you have built is false, and you should abandon any such drastic thoughts. They will only bring you greater misfortune than is already yours today.

18. A new life is not based upon destroying previous “sins” but upon recognizing them, so that from now on it will be clear how ill-advised are these mistakes.

19. A life begins when unifying actions start to multiply, so that by their virtue they compensate and finally favorably overbalance the previous relationship of forces.

20. You must be very clear about this: You are not at war with yourself. Rather, you must begin treating yourself like an old friend with whom you must now reconcile, for ignorance and life itself have driven you apart.

21. You must begin by making a decision to reconcile with yourself and to understand your previous contradictions. Then you need to make another decision—that you want to overcome these contradictions. Finally, you need to decide to build your life with acts of unity, rejecting those materials that until now have brought so much harm down upon your head.

22. Indeed, it is advisable that you clarify—in both your past and present situations—those contradictory acts that truly imprison you. To recognize them, you can rely on the suffering that is accompanied by internal violence and the sensation that you have betrayed yourself. These actions give clear signals.

23. I am not saying that you should mortify yourself in exhaustively recounting the present and the past. I am simply recommending that you consider everything that has changed your course in an unhappy direction and everything that keeps you fettered and tightly bound. Do not fool yourself once more by saying, “I have overcome these problems!” Nothing has been overcome or

sufficiently understood that has not been weighed against a new force that compensates for and overcomes the previous influence.

24. All these suggestions will be of value if you are prepared to create a new landscape in your internal world. But you will be able to do nothing for yourself if you think only of yourself. If you want to move forward, you will one day have to accept that your mission is to humanize the world around you.

25. If you want to build a new life, free of contradictions, a life that increasingly overcomes suffering, you must be aware of two false arguments. The first holds that "I need to solve my personal problems before I can undertake any constructive action in the world." The second leads you to declare "I am committed to the world!" while forgetting yourself completely.

26. You may agree with me or not, but in any case I will affirm that this is the only way forward: If you want to grow, you will help those around you to grow.

## X. Valid Action

1. Contradiction is not the only source of mental harm; any reversal of the growing stream of life is experienced as suffering. Yet while the empire of circumstance may allow many forms of suffering to be overcome, contradiction persists, weaving its dark web of shadows.

2. Who has not suffered the loss of affection, of images, of objects? Who has not feared, been desperate, felt pity, or become agitated in angry rebellion against people, against nature, against all those unwanted but inevitable endings? But what was feared in darkness faded with the coming of day, and much of what was lost was forgotten. Yet that innermost betrayal of oneself continues in the past and poisons the future.

3. That which is most important in human life is constructed with materials of unity or contradiction. And this is the deep memory that either continues projecting existence beyond all apparent limit or causes it to disintegrate precisely at this threshold. May all human beings in their final review find remembrance of their internal unity!

4. And what is the flavor of an act of unity? If you would recognize it, rely on that profound peace which, accompanied by a gentle joy, leads you into agreement with yourself. This act bears the sign of the most integral truth, for in it, thought, feeling, and action in the world are united in the most intimate friendship. Yes, valid action is unmistakable; you would affirm it a thousand times over should you live as many lives!

5. Every phenomenon that makes suffering recede in others is registered as a valid action, as an act of unity, in the one who carries it out.

6. All action is bounded by two tendencies: There is the abyss, which grows through contradiction, and the flight above that allows you to overcome it through valid action.

7. And the cord of life takes on its singular modulation as it loosens or tightens, until reaching the note aspired to. There must be one note and one adjustment and one special procedure so that the vibration builds and resounds in a suitable way.

8. Babbling at human beings as they came to stand erect in their landscape, the moralities of the nations indicated the "yes" and the "no" of actions, upholding the "good" and persecuting the "bad." But will this "good" continue to be good in a landscape that is so diverse? If an immutable God affirms it, it will be so; but if for many God has disappeared, who is left to judge? For the law changes with the opinion of the times.

9. Here is the point: Will those *principles of valid action* that allow all human beings to live in internal unity be static images that must be obeyed, or will they correspond instead to what one experiences when one rejects or follows those principles?

10. We will not discuss here the nature of those principles of valid action; we will simply take into account the need for their existence.





## XI. Projection of the Internal Landscape

*We have spoken of landscapes, of suffering, of contradiction, and of those actions that give unity to the stream of life. One could believe that all of this remains enclosed in the interior of each human being, or if it has any external expression, it is only in the form of individual actions that have no further consequences. However, things are precisely the opposite.*

1. Contradiction inverts life, jeopardizing not only the future of the one who suffers it but also of all those in contact with this person, who has now become a transmitter of misfortune. All personal contradiction contaminates the immediate human landscape like an invisible sickness, detectable only through its effects.

2. Long ago, the plagues that befell a region were blamed on witches and demons. But over time, the advance of science did more for both the persecutors and the persecuted than all the millennia of irresponsible clamor. To which faction would you have given your support? Whether on the side of the pure or the wicked, you would only have increased your folly.

3. Even today, when you search for culprits on whom to blame your misfortunes, you simply add to the long chain of superstition. Reflect, therefore, before pointing your finger, for perhaps it was accident or the projection of your own contradictions that has provoked these unhappy endings.

4. That your children orient themselves in a direction opposed to your designs has more to do with you than with your neighbor, and more to do with you, certainly, than with an earthquake in some distant latitude.

5. Should your influence, then, reach an entire people, take great care to overcome your own contradiction so as not to poison with it the air that all others must breathe. You will be responsible for yourself and for all those you gather around you.

6. Thus, if your mission is to humanize the earth, strengthen your hands, hands of a noble laborer.

## XII. Compensation, Reflection, and the Future

1. Hunger dreams of satiety, the imprisoned yearn for freedom, pain longs for pleasure, and pleasure wearies of itself. Could it be that life is nothing more than action and reaction?
2. If life is but pursuit of security for those who fear the future, self-affirmation for the disoriented, the desire for revenge for those frustrated with the past—what liberty, what responsibility, what commitment can be held aloft as an unvanquished banner?
3. And if life is but a mirror that reflects a landscape, how will it ever change that which it reflects?
4. Between the cold mechanics of pendulums and the phantasmal optics of mirrors, what do you affirm that you can affirm without denying? What do you affirm without regressing or with more than arithmetic repetition?
5. If you affirm that which searches for itself and whose nature is to transform itself, that which is never complete in itself and whose essence opens to the future, then you love the reality you build. This, then, is your life: the reality that you build!
6. And there will be action and reaction, as there will be reflection and accident. But if you have opened the future, there will be nothing that can detain you.
7. May life speak through your mouth, and may it say, "There is nothing that can detain me!"
8. Oh useless and wicked prophecy that proclaims the end of the world. I affirm that the human being shall not only continue to live but shall grow without limit. And I say, moreover, that the deniers of life wish to steal all hope—that beating heart of human action.
9. In the darkest moments, may your future joy remind you of these words: "Life searches for growth, not for the compensation of nothingness!"

### XIII. Provisional Meanings

1. When moved by the pendulum of compensation, I search for meanings to justify my existence, directing myself toward what I need or what I believe I need. In either case, and whether I reach my objective or not, how will that affect the meaning of my life, inasmuch as it is movement in a given direction?

2. If I define myself by a particular situation, what will happen when, through some accident, that situation falls apart? These provisional meanings, though necessary for the development of human activities, cannot serve as the foundation for my existence.

3. Unless you wish to reduce existence to nothing more than exhaustion or frustration, you will need to discover a meaning that not even death—were that the accident—could exhaust or frustrate.

4. You will not be able to justify existence if you place as its end the absurdity of death.

Until now, you and I have been companions in the struggle. Neither you nor I wished to kneel before any god, and that is how I would like to remember you always. Why, then, do you abandon me, even as I set forth to defy inexorable death? How is it possible that we have said, “Not even the gods are above life!”—and now you kneel before the denial of life? Do as you see fit, but I will bow my head before no idol, even when it is supposedly “justified” by faith in reason.

5. If reason is to be at the service of life, it will help us leap over death. Let reason, then, produce a meaning exempt from all frustration, all exhaustion, all accident.

6. I want no one at my side who projects transcendence out of fear, but only those who rise up in rebellion against the inevitability of death.

7. I want those saints who do not fear but truly love. I want those who day by day seek to conquer pain and suffering with their science and their reason. And in truth I see no difference between the saints and those who, through their science, encourage life. What better examples could there be, what guides superior to these?

8. A meaning that seeks to go beyond the provisional will not accept death as the end of life, but will instead affirm transcendence as the maximum disobedience to this apparent Destiny. As for those who affirm that their actions unleash events that continue in others, they hold in their hands a strand of eternity's thread.

## XIV. Faith

1. Whenever I hear the word “faith,” I feel suspicion grow within me.
2. Every time someone speaks of “faith,” I wonder about the purpose of what they are saying.
3. I have seen the difference between naive faith (also known as “credulity”), and the violent and unjustified faith that gives rise to fanaticism. Neither is acceptable, for the first opens the door to accident, while the second imposes its feverish landscape.
4. But something important must lie in this tremendous force that is capable of mobilizing the best of causes. Let faith, then, be a belief whose foundation rests on its usefulness for life!
5. If it is said that faith and science oppose each other, I will reply that I accept science as long as it does not oppose life.
6. Nothing prevents faith and science from progressing, as long as they have the same direction and enthusiasm to help sustain the effort.
7. And those who would humanize, let them help raise our spirits by pointing out the possibilities that the future holds. Or is the skeptic’s anticipation of defeat useful for life? Could even science be sustained without faith?
8. There is a type of faith that goes against life. It is a faith that proclaims “Science will destroy our world!” How much better to put our faith in working day by day to humanize science, so that the direction it was endowed with from its birth may triumph!
9. The usefulness of faith is evident if it is a faith that opens the future and gives meaning to life, orienting it away from suffering and contradiction and toward everything that is valid action.
10. That faith, like faith placed in oneself, in others, and in the world around us, is useful for life.
11. In saying “Faith is useful” you will doubtless offend some particularly sensitive ears. But do not worry, for if those musicians simply examine themselves a little they will recognize how faith is also useful to them, though their faith may flow from a different instrument than the one you play.
12. All those problems that until now have seemed insurmountable will begin to diminish if you are able to achieve faith in yourself and the best in those around you, faith in our world and in a life that is always open to the future.

## XV. To Give and To Receive

1. Let us look at the relationship you establish with your external landscape. It may be that you consider all objects, people, values, and affections as things presented for you to choose among and devour according to your own particular appetites. It is likely that this centripetal vision of the world denotes a contraction that reaches from your thoughts to your muscles.

2. If this is the case, it is certain that you will have the highest regard for everything that is related to you—your sufferings as much as your pleasures. It is doubtful that you will even want to surpass your personal problems, because in them you will recognize a tone that is, above all, your own. From your thoughts to your muscles, everything has been taught to contract, not to let go. Hence, even when you act with generosity, calculation motivates your apparent disinterestedness.

3. Everything enters and nothing leaves, and from your thoughts down to your muscles everything becomes intoxicated.

4. And having contaminated all those around you, how can you later reproach them for their “ingratitude” toward you?

5. If we speak of “giving” and “helping,” you think of what others can give you, of how they can help you. But the best help that could be given you would consist of teaching you to let go of your contraction.

6. I tell you that your selfishness is not a sin but rather the fundamental error in your calculation, for you have naively believed that to receive is better than to give.

7. Remember the best moments in your life and you will recognize that they were invariably accompanied by a disinterested giving. Reflecting on this should by itself be enough to change the direction of your existence—but it will not suffice.

8. Let us hope I have been speaking of someone else and not of you, since surely you have understood such sayings as “humanize the earth,” “open the future,” and “overcome suffering in the world around you,” all of which are based on the capacity to give.

9. “To love the reality that you are building” does not mean to place the solution to your own problems as the key to the world.

10. Let me end by saying: If you want to overcome your profound contradiction, you must produce valid actions. If these actions are valid, it is because they help those around you.

## XVI. Models

1. In your internal landscape there is an ideal man or woman that you search for in the external landscape. Through so many relationships your ideal remains always just out of reach—like two fragments of flint that do not quite strike except for that brief moment when perfect love dazzles us with its spark.

2. All human beings, in their own ways, launch their lives toward the external landscape, seeking to complete their hidden models.

3. But the external landscape continues imposing its own laws, and as time goes by, your once most cherished dream becomes only an image before which you now experience shame or even less, as this dream is reduced to a faded memory. Nevertheless, within the human species profound models exist, sleeping, biding their time. These models are the translation of impulses that your body sends to the space of representation.

4. We are not discussing the origin or consistency of these models, or the complexity of the world in which they are found. We are simply noting that they exist and pointing out that their function is to compensate needs and aspirations which, in turn, motivate human activities toward the external landscape.

5. Entire peoples and cultures also have their own particular ways of responding to the external landscape, responses always colored by internal models, which history and their own bodies continue to define.

6. Wise are those who know their profound models, and wiser still are those who can place them at the service of the best of causes.

## XVII. The Internal Guide

1. Who do you so admire that you would like to have been that person?
2. Let me ask you in a more gentle fashion: Whom do you consider so exemplary that you wish you could find some of that person's virtues in yourself?
3. Perhaps there have been moments when in sorrow or confusion you have appealed to the memory of someone who, whether existing or not, came to your aid as a comforting image?
4. I am speaking of those particular models that we could call internal "guides," which at times coincide with real people.
5. Those models, which you have wanted to follow from the time you were very young, have changed only in the most external layers of your daily awareness.
6. I have seen how children talk and play with their imaginary companions and guides. I have seen people of all ages connect with these guides in prayers offered in sincere devotion.
7. The more strongly these guides were called, the further away they responded from and the better the signal they sent. Because of this I knew that the most profound guides are the most powerful. But only a great need can awaken them from their millennia of lethargy.
8. Such a model "possesses" three important attributes: strength, wisdom, and kindness.
9. If you want to know yourself better, observe the characteristics of the men and women you admire. Notice how the qualities you most value in them are also at work in the configuration of your own internal guides. Consider that even though your initial references may have disappeared with the passage of time, they have left "traces" within you that continue to motivate you toward the external landscape.
10. And if you want to understand how diverse cultures interact with each other, in addition to studying their modes of producing objects, study as well the methods by which they transmit their models.
11. It is important, then, to direct your attention to the best qualities in others, because you will project into the world those qualities you have managed to configure in yourself.

## XVIII. The Change

*Let us look back for a moment.*

*We have considered the human being as integrally connected to the world, influencing it and influenced by it. We have said that human actions are made manifest in the external landscape according to how their internal landscapes are formed. These actions will vary, but what ultimately defines a life are its contradictory and unifying actions. While contradiction inverts life, contaminating the world with the suffering it produces, unitive actions open the future, causing suffering to recede in oneself and in the world.*

*“To humanize the earth” is the same as “to give” in unifying actions. Any purpose that ends in receiving can only have a provisional meaning; it is destined to lead toward contradiction.*

*Faith is an enormous energy that can be mobilized in the service of life. And there are other forces that also operate in the internal landscape, motivating human activity toward the external landscape. These are the models.*

1. Definitely the question is this: Do you want to surpass the abyss?
2. Perhaps you do, but how will you take a new direction if the avalanche has already been unleashed, dragging with it everything in its path?
3. Whatever your decision, you must know what resources and what energy you can count on to produce this change.
4. While your decision is very much your own, I would like to point out that you will not be able to change the direction of your life by relying only on the resources of internal work. Rather, you will need to act decisively in the world, modifying behaviors.
5. And how will you carry out this task and also add to it your immediate environment, which decisively influences you, and which you, in turn, influence? Only by awakening the faith that it is possible to convert this inverted life.
6. I will leave you at this point, but if you are prepared to change your life, you will transform the world—and then it will not be the abyss that triumphs but that which overcomes it.



## *The Human Landscape*

## I. Looks and Landscapes

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 multicolored 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 emphasize, too, that these landscapes correspond to acts of perception that I call *looks* (encroaching, perhaps illegitimately, on fields unrelated to visualization). These looks are active and complex acts that organize 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, apperceptions).

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*

## Looks and Landscapes

and *internal landscape*, between *nature* and *external landscape*, between *society* and *human landscape*. What I am trying to emphasize 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.

## II. The External Look and That Which Is Human

1. Nothing substantial is being said when we are told that “Human beings are constituted by their environment.” Nor when it is said that “thanks to the environment (environment being understood by some as natural, by others as social, and by still others as both natural and social) the human being is constituted.” This idea appears all the more inconsistent when we focus on the relationship implied by the word “constituted”—assuming, of course, that we already understand the terms “human being” and “environment.” Presumably, “environment” is that which surrounds the human being, or better, that in which the human being is immersed, and the “human being” is that which is within or immersed in that “environment.”

We find ourselves, then, as at the beginning, in a circle of vacuities. Though the two terms being related point to separate entities, we can observe an intention to unite them in a deceptive relationship through the use of the word “constitute”—a word that has implications of genesis, that is to say, of explaining something by means of its origins.

2. This assertion would be of no particular interest were it not for the fact that it is presented as a paradigm of similar assertions that for millennia have offered an image of the human being as seen from the *outside*. That is, looking at the human being from the standpoint of things and not from the standpoint of the look that looks at things. To say “the human being is a social animal” or “man is made in the image of God” is to make society or God into the entity that looks at the human being, while in reality it is only from the *human look* that society and God are conceived, and accepted or denied.

3. And so, in a world where an inhuman look has long been established, there have also been established behaviors and institutions that annihilate our humanity. So it was that one of the questions that arose in the observation of nature concerned the “nature” of the human being, and the responses that were given were like those that might be given about any natural object.

4. Even those currents of thought that have presented the human being as subject to continuing transformation have considered *what is human* from within one of the several perspectives of historical naturalism—that is, from an external look.

5. The underlying idea of “human nature” corresponds to an external look directed at that which is human. But human beings are historical beings whose mode of social action transforms their own nature. Knowing this subordinates the concept of “human nature” to existence and its tasks—making it subject to the transformations and revelations directed by this existence. Thus, the body, as the prosthesis of intention, extends its potentialities through humanizing the world—a world that can no longer be seen as simple externality

## The External Look and That Which Is Human

but instead as a *landscape*, natural or human, that is subject to present or possible transformations. And it is through this activity that the human being also transforms itself.

5.

### III. The Human Body as the Object of Intention

1. The body, as a natural object, is subject to natural modifications, and thanks to human intention is, of course, susceptible to transformation—not only in its most external expressions but also in its innermost functioning. One's own body takes on its greatest significance when viewed in this way—as the *prosthesis of intention*. However, a social process intervenes between the immediate (unmediated) governance of one's own body and the adaptation of the body to the needs and purposes of others. This process does not depend on the isolated individual but entails others as well.

2. Ownership of my psychophysical structure is given by my intentionality, while external objects present themselves to me as only indirectly subject to my control (through the action of my body) and outside of my immediate ownership. There is a particular type of object, however, that I intuit as the property of a foreign intention, and that is the body of the other. That *otherness* puts me in the position of being “seen from outside,” seen from someone else's intention. My vision of the other is, therefore, an interpretation—a landscape extending to every object that carries the mark of human intention, whether produced or used today or in the past.

In that human landscape I can obliterate the intention of others by considering them prostheses of my own body, in which case I must “empty” them of their subjectivity, at least in those areas of thought, feeling, or action that I wish to control directly. But this objectification of others necessarily dehumanizes me as well, and so I justify this situation by claiming that it is the consequence of “Passion,” “God,” “A Cause,” “Natural Inequity,” “Fate,” “Society,” and so forth.

## IV. Memory and the Human Landscape

1. When faced with an unfamiliar landscape, I appeal to my memory and notice as “new” that which I “recognize” as absent in myself. The same thing occurs in a human landscape, where today’s language, clothing, and customs contrast sharply with that landscape in which my memories were formed. In a society where change is slow, however, my previous landscape tends to overwhelm these novel aspects, and I dismiss them as “irrelevant.”

2. If I live in a society in which change occurs very swiftly, I tend not to recognize the value of change or to consider it “superficial,” without realizing that the inner loss I experience is the loss of that social landscape in which my memory was formed.

3. Thanks to all of this I understand that when a generation comes to power, it tends to give external expression to the myths and theories, the desires, appetites, and values of its formative landscapes—landscapes that no longer exist yet still live and act in the social memory of the landscape in which this group was formed. It also happens that the landscape that children assimilate as the human landscape is seen by their parents as “irrelevant” or a “diversion.”

However fiercely the generations may struggle between themselves, when a new generation comes to power it immediately becomes obstructionist, attempting to impose its own landscape of formation on a human landscape that has already changed—and which that generation itself may even have helped to change. Thus, in those transformations instituted by the group that is in power there are, dragged along from its formative years, the obstructions against which the newer group that is forming will clash.

*When I have spoken of the “power” that a generation acquires, I trust that I have been correctly understood as referring to power in all its forms: political, social, cultural, and so forth.*

## V. The Distance Imposed by the Human Landscape

1. Every generation has its own particular cunning and will not hesitate to institute the most sophisticated of “reforms” if it can thereby increase its power. But this leads to countless difficulties as the transformations each generation sets in motion drag society toward a future that, in the present dynamic, is already in contradiction with the inner social landscape that it strives to maintain. This is why I say that every generation has not only its own particular cunning but also its own particular trap.

2. Which human landscape do these unwarranted longings confront? To begin with, it is a *perceived* human landscape that is different from the landscape that is *remembered*. It is also a human landscape that does not correspond to the emotional tone, the general emotional climate of our memories of people, buildings, streets, occupations, and institutions. And it is this “strangeness” or “estrangement” that most clearly shows that, even when we are dealing with everyday or familiar matters, every perceived landscape is a distinct and all-encompassing reality different from the one remembered. So it is that one’s appetites, which have for so long yearned to possess certain objects (things, persons, situations), are disappointed in their fulfillment. And this is the distance that the dynamic of the human landscape imposes upon every memory, whether individual or collective, whether held by one, by many, or by an entire generation whose members coexist in a single social space, surrounded by a similar emotional background. How much greater becomes the distance, then, when *different* generations—representatives of distinct times coexisting within a single space—try to reach agreement about something! And if it seems that we are speaking of enemies, I must stress that these gulfs open even between those who would appear to share similar interests.

3. Never do I touch the same object twice in the same way, nor feel the same intention twice. And that which I believe I perceive as intention in others is only a distance, which I interpret differently each time. Thus, the human landscape, whose distinguishing characteristic is *intention*, throws into sharp relief the estrangement that many have thought a result of the objective conditions of a society devoid of solidarity, a society that casts the dispossessed consciousness into exile.

Having erred in their appraisal of the essence of human intention, they found that as the human landscape accelerated, the society they had built with such effort was divided by generational chasms and had become estranged from itself. Other societies, developing along different paths, suffered precisely the same shock—all of which by now has demonstrated that the fundamental problems of the human being can be resolved only by focusing on the intention that transcends objects, the intention for which the social object is simply the dwelling. In the same way, all of nature, including the human body, should be understood as the dwelling of the



## The Distance Imposed by the Human Landscape

transformative intention.

4. The perception of the human landscape brings me face to face with myself—it is an emotional engagement, a thing that negates me or propels me forward. Even as I continue to accumulate memories, I am drawn forward from my “today” by future intention. This future, which conditions the present; this image; this feeling, confused or desired; this action, freely chosen or imposed, also marks my past, because it changes what I consider to have been my past.

## VI. Education

1. In the first place, the perception of and action of the external landscape involves the body and an emotional way of *being-in-the-world*. Of course, as I have previously mentioned, it also commits one to a particular vision of reality. That is why I believe that to educate is fundamentally to prepare the new generations to exercise a non-naïve vision of reality, so that their look takes the world into account not as some supposed objective *reality-in-itself* but rather as the object of transformative human actions.

I am speaking here not of information about the world but rather of the intellectual exercise of a particular unbiased vision of landscapes and of an attentive practice turned to one's own *look*. A basic education should bear in mind the practice of coherent thinking. In this case, we are not speaking of knowledge in the strict sense but rather of contact with one's own registers of thinking.

2. In the second place, education should provide the stimulus for emotional comprehension and development. Therefore, in planning an integrated education one should consider exercises in both theatrical performance and other kinds of self-expression, along with the development of skills in harmony and rhythm. The objective of all this is not, however, procedures that claim to "produce" artistic talents, but rather to enable individuals to make emotional contact with themselves and others, thereby avoiding the disorders that are produced by an education based on isolation and inhibition.

3. In the third place, we should include a practice that will put into harmonious play all of a person's corporal resources. Sports can lead to a one-sided rather than integrated development, and the discipline we propose more closely resembles gymnastics practiced as an art rather than a sport, because it involves getting in touch with one's body and managing it with ease. For all these reasons sports would not be considered a developmental activity, though the cultivation of sports could be important if based on the discipline referred to above.

4. I have spoken so far about education from the point of view of the human being's formative activities in the human landscape, but I have not spoken about the relationship between information and knowledge, or about the incorporation of data through study, or about practice as a way of acquiring knowledge.

4.

## VII. History

1. As long as one continues to think about the historical process from an external look, it is pointless to try to explain it as the progressive unfolding of human intentionality in its struggle to overcome pain (physical) and suffering (mental). And so it is that while there are those concerned with unveiling the innermost laws of human events on the basis of matter, or spirit, or a certain line of reasoning, in truth they always see the internal mechanism they seek from "outside" the human being.

2. Of course, the historical process will continue to be understood as the development of a form that is, when all is said and done, nothing but the mental form of those who view things in that particular way. And it does not matter what sort of dogma is appealed to, the background that dictates one's adherence to that position will always be *that-which-one-wants-to-see*.

## VIII. Ideologies

1. The ideologies that prevailed during certain historical moments showed their usefulness in orienting human action and interpreting the world in which the lives of both individuals and human groups unfolded. Those ideologies have now been displaced by others, whose greatest achievement lies in appearing to be reality itself—supremely concrete and immediate, exempt from all “ideology.”

2. Thus, the opportunists of the past, whose hallmark was their betrayal of every commitment, appear in these times of the crisis of ideologies, calling themselves “pragmatists” or “realists” without the vaguest idea of the origins of these terms. In any case, they brazenly espouse their false schematicism, presenting it as the pinnacle of intelligence and virtue.

3. As social change accelerated, the gulf between successive generations rapidly widened, while the human landscape in which they were formed grew ever more distant from the human landscape in which they were required to act, leaving them orphaned, bereft of any theory or model of conduct. Thus they were obliged to give ever more rapid and increasingly improvised responses, becoming “situationalist,” limited to only a short-term approach to action. And with that, any idea of process and all notion of historicity began to wane, and in their place appeared a look that was increasingly analytical and fragmented.

4. It turns out that these pragmatic cynics are the shameful grandchildren of those hard-working builders of “unhappy consciousness” and the children of those who denounced ideologies as the “masking” of reality. And so it is that all pragmatism bears the familial stamp of absolutism. Thus we hear them say, “We must rely on reality and not on theories.” This, however, has only brought them innumerable difficulties, as when irrationalist currents emerged declaring, “We must rely on *our* reality and not on your theories.”

## IX. Violence

1. When people speak of the *methodology of action* in the context of social and political struggle, the subject of violence frequently arises. There are, however, prior issues that bear on this topic.

2. Violence will continue to color all social activity as long as the human being does not fully realize a human society—a society in which power is in the hands of the social whole and not some part of it that subordinates and objectifies the whole. Therefore, when we speak of violence we must talk of the established world. And if one opposes that world in nonviolent struggle, one must begin by stressing that what characterizes a nonviolent attitude is that *it does not tolerate violence*. Then it is not a question of justifying any particular type of struggle but of defining the conditions of violence imposed by this inhuman system.

3. At the same time, many errors result from confusing nonviolence with pacifism. While nonviolence needs no justification as a methodology of action, pacifism, which considers peace to be a state of nonbelligerence, must carefully consider what conditions bring us closer to or take us further from that peace. And so while pacifism approaches issues such as disarmament as the essential social priorities, in fact armamentism is but one particular case of the threat of physical violence under the direction of the power established by that minority of people which manipulates the State.

The issue of disarmament is of utmost importance, and it is all to the good that pacifism raises this urgent question. However, even were it successful in its demands it would not thereby be able to modify the context of this violence or, except in the most artificial fashion, to extend its proposals to include modifying the social structure itself. There are, of course, a number of models of pacifism and various theoretical foundations within this current, but none of them can provide a more comprehensive model. If, however, this vision of the world were broader, we would certainly be in the presence of a doctrine that would include pacifism. And in this case we would need to discuss the foundations of that broader doctrine before supporting or rejecting the type of pacifism that derives from it.

## X. Law

1. “Your rights end where the rights of others begin.” Therefore: “The rights of others end where your rights begin.” However, since it is generally the first and not the second phrase that is emphasized, we are led to suspect that those who maintain this position see themselves as “the others”—that is, as the representatives of all other people, as the representatives of an established system that needs no justification.

2. There has been no lack of those who would derive the law from some purported “human nature,” but as this has already been discussed it would add nothing to the subject at hand.

3. Practical people who have not lost themselves in theorizing have concluded simply that the law is necessary if people are to coexist within a society. It has also been said that the laws are made in order to defend the interests of those who impose them.

4. It would appear that it is a preexisting situation of power that establishes any given law, and that law in turn legitimates power. So it is power, as the imposition of an intention, whether accepted or not, that is our central theme. It is said that “might does not make right,” but this nonsense can be accepted only if one thinks of “might” simply as brute physical force. In reality, however, force (economic, political, and so on) does not need to be expressed perceptually in order to make its presence felt and to command respect. Moreover, the naked threat of physical force (the force of arms, for example) is used to impose situations that the law is used to justify. Nor should we overlook the fact that the use of arms in a given direction depends on human intention and not on laws.

5. Those who violate the law ignore a situation imposed in the present and expose their temporality (their future) to the decisions of others. But it is clear that this “present” in which the law is in force has its roots in the past. Custom, morality, religion, and social consensus are the sources generally invoked to justify the existence of law. Each of these in turn depends on the power that imposed it. And these purported sources are reconsidered whenever the power that gave them origin has declined or transformed to such a degree that maintaining the prior juridical order begins to conflict with “what is reasonable,” with “common sense,” and so forth.

Apparently the law is not broken, at least not when the legislature modifies a law or the people’s representatives change the country’s constitution. And this is so because those who take these actions are not exposed to the decisions of others—that is, they either hold power themselves or act as the representatives of some power. These situations make it clear that power generates laws and obligations, and not the reverse.

6. Human rights are not in universal effect as we would wish, and that is because there is not a universal power of humanity, but instead these rights depend on the power that one part of humankind holds over the whole. Since we

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find in every latitude that even the most elementary demands for control over one's own body are trampled upon, we can speak only of aspirations that have yet to be transformed into rights. Human rights do not belong to the past, they are there in the future, calling to our intentionality and fueling a struggle that is reborn with every new infringement upon human destiny. Thus, every demand made, every voice raised on behalf of human rights is meaningful because it shows the powers-that-be that they are not omnipotent, nor do they control the future.

## XI. The State

1. It has been said that a nation is a legal entity formed of the totality of the inhabitants of a country under the rule of a given government. Subsequently, this idea was extended to include a country's territory. In truth, however, a nation can exist for millennia without being ruled by a given government, without being limited to a single territory, and without being legally recognized by any state.

What defines a nation is the mutual recognition established between people who identify with similar values and aspire to a common future. And this has nothing to do with race or language—or with history understood as “a lengthy period of time with its roots in a mythic past.” A nation can be formed today, can grow toward the future, or founder tomorrow, just as it can incorporate into its project other people or groups. In this sense, one could speak of the formation of a *human nation* which has yet to take shape as such and has suffered countless persecutions and failures—above all the failure of the future landscape.

2. To the State, an entity that in fact has to do with certain forms of government regulated by law, is often attributed the mysterious ability to form nationalities and to be, itself, the nation. But this recent fiction of the nation-state is suffering the onslaught of a rapidly transforming human landscape. Thus, the powers that formed the present-day State and endowed it with simple attributes of intermediation now find themselves in a position to move beyond the present form of that apparatus, an apparatus that apparently concentrates in itself the power of the nation.

3. The “powers” of the State are not the real powers, the powers that generate rights and obligations and that administer or enforce certain rules. Rather, as the monopoly of this apparatus grew, it became transformed into the successive (or permanent) spoils of the warring factions. In the end it came to benefit only an increasingly irrelevant bureaucracy, hobbling the freedom of action of the true powers and hindering the activity of the people. Thus, none but the most obstructionist elements of society benefit from the form of the present-day State.

The point is that, along with the progressive decentralization and decrease of State power, there must be a corresponding growth in the power of the social whole. The only guarantee that today's grotesque State will not simply be replaced by the unrestrained power of those same interests that created it (and which today strive to dispense with it), is to be found in those factors that the people themselves manage and supervise with solidarity, free from the paternalism of any faction.

4. A people that is in a position to increase its real power (unmediated by the State or by the power held by some part of the whole) will best be able to project itself toward the future as the vanguard of the *universal human nation*.

5. Do not believe that when empires annexed territories and nations they granted greater decision-making power to the conquered peoples;



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rather they imposed the homogeneous dominion of their own narrow interests. In the same way, people's decision-making powers will not increase through artificial union in supranational entities.

6. While many now anticipate a regional unification of wealth (or poverty) in dialectic with extra-regional powers, any temporary benefits that may result from this arrangement will not imply that the fundamental problem of realizing a fully human society has been resolved. Any society, of whatever form, that is not fully human will be subject to unexpected pitfalls and catastrophes resulting from surrendering its decisions to the will of special interests.

7. As a consequence of regional unification there may emerge either a monstrous super-State or the unrestrained domination of the (now totally homogenized) special interests of earlier times. Imposing, in either case, their power in the most sophisticated fashion on the whole of society, they will give rise to innumerable conflicts, which will shake the very basis of such unions and unleash devastating centrifugal forces. If, on the other hand, the *people's* decision-making power increases, then the integration of diverse communities will herald the emergence of the developing human nation.

## XII. Religion

1. That which is said about things and events is not the things and the events themselves, but rather “figures” that have a certain structure in common with them. Thanks to that common structure, it is possible to talk about things and events. That structure, however, cannot in turn be talked about in the same way that things are talked about because it is the structure of that which is being said as well as of things and events. Thus, language can point to, but not speak of, that which “includes” everything (even language itself). Such is the case of “God.”

2. Much has been said about God, but all of that appears, then, to be a contradiction in terms, to the extent that we notice what is being said, what one claims to be saying.

3. We can say nothing about God. We can speak only of what has been said about God. Many things have been said about God, and much can be said about all this that has been said, but not because of this are we making any progress on the theme of God insofar as it refers to God *per se*.

4. This kind of tongue twister aside, religions can be of profound interest only when they attempt to *point to* God rather than to *talk about* God.

5. Religions, however, express that which exists in their respective landscapes, and consequently a religion is neither true nor false, because its value is not logical. Its value lies in the type of internal register that it evokes, in the agreement between the landscapes one wishes to express and what is really being demonstrated.

6. Religious literature is often linked to landscapes, both external and human, and the characteristics and attributes of their gods are not independent of those landscapes. Nevertheless, even when these external and human landscapes change, this religious literature may endure into new times. And that is hardly surprising, given that nonreligious literature of various kinds also finds a following and awakens emotions in distant eras. Nor does a cult’s persistence through time say much about its “truth,” since legal formalities and social ceremonies often pass from culture to culture and continue to be observed even when knowledge of their original significance has been lost.

7. A religion bursts onto a human landscape in a particular historical period, and so it is often said that at that moment God “reveals” himself to the human being. But in order for that revelation to be accepted in a given historical moment, something must take place in the internal landscape of the human being. That change has generally been interpreted as if “outside” the human being, placing it in the external or social world, and there are certain benefits to be gained in doing so. But something is lost as well—the ability to understand the religious phenomenon as an internal register.

8. But religions have also portrayed themselves as something external, and in so doing they have prepared the ground for the above-mentioned interpretations.

## Religion

9. When I speak of “external religion,” I am not referring to the projection of psychological images as icons, paintings, statues, buildings, or relics (things proper to visual perception). Nor am I referring to projections in the form of chanting and prayer (proper to auditory perception), nor to their projection as gestures, postures, or the turning of the body in certain directions (proper to kinesthetic and coenesthetic perceptions). Finally, I do not say that a religion is external because it has its sacred books, sacraments, and so on. I do not even call it external because to its liturgy it adds a church, an organization, or holy days, or because it requires of its followers a certain physical state or age in order to carry out specific operations. No, that is the way the followers of the various religions struggle among themselves, each accusing the other faction of various degrees of idolatry because of a preference for working with certain types of images. Rather than dealing with anything substantial, however, this only demonstrates the complete psychological ignorance of the contending parties.

10. When I speak of “external religion” I am referring to any religion that claims to talk about God and the will of God instead of speaking about the religious sentiment and the innermost register of the human being. Even seeking support in externalized worship could be meaningful if through such practices the believers were able to awaken in themselves (were able to reveal) the presence of God.

11. The fact that until now religions have been external corresponds to the type of human landscape in which they were born and developed. Nevertheless, the birth of an inner religion is possible, or in order to survive contemporary religions may convert to an internal religiosity. However, this will only occur to the extent that the internal landscape is ready to accept a new revelation. We are now beginning to catch glimpses of this in those societies in which the human landscape is undergoing such drastic change that the need for internal references is becoming a matter of extreme urgency.

12. None of what has been said about religions can remain standing today, however, for both religion’s apologists and its critics have failed to notice the change that is taking place within the human being. If in the past some people have thought of religions as soporifics to political or social action, today they oppose them for their powerful influence in those fields. Where others once imagined religions imposing their message, now they find that this message has changed. And those who once believed that religions would last forever, today doubt their eternity, while those who assumed that religions were soon to disappear are now surprised to witness the irruption of new forms that are manifestly or latently mystical.

13. There are few in this field who can intuit what the future holds, because there are so few concerned with trying to understand in what direction human intentionality, which definitively transcends the individual human being, is heading. If humanity desires something new to “make itself known,” it is because that which tends to make itself known is already operating in humankind’s internal landscape. But it is not by claiming to be the representative of some god that the internal register of the human being is converted into the dwelling-place or the landscape of a transcendent look, a transcendent intention.

### XIII. Open Roads

1. And what of work, money, love, death, and the many other aspects of the human landscape barely touched on in these commentaries? Certainly there is much more to say for anyone who wishes to, as long as it is done bearing in mind this way of approaching the issues: referring looks to landscapes and understanding that landscapes change looks.

2. Since this is the case, there is no need to speak of other subjects. If someone is interested in these ideas and the way we have spoken about them up to now, they can speak in the same way that we would. On the other hand, it would make no sense to continue to speak for others if we are talking about things that are of no interest to anyone or with a form of expression that does not allow things to be brought to light.

## Notes to Humanize the Earth

### *The Inner Look*

*The Inner Look* is divided into twenty chapters, which are subdivided into numbered passages. The principal themes can be grouped as follows:

- The first two chapters are introductory, presenting the author's intentions, the reader's attitude, and how this relationship can best be carried forward.
- Chapters III through XII develop the more general topics, presenting them in ten "days" of reflection.
- Chapter XIII marks a turning point, moving from more general topics to consider questions of conduct and attitudes in facing life.
- The remaining chapters contain explanations about internal work.

The topics appear in the following order:

- I. *Meditation*—The objective of the book: to convert non-meaning into meaning.
- II. *Disposition to Comprehend*—The mental posture needed in order to understand these themes.
- III. *Non-Meaning*—Death and the meaning of life.
- IV. *Dependence*—The influence of the environment on the human being.
- V. *Intimation of Meaning*—Some non-habitual mental phenomena.
- VI. *Sleep and Awakening*—Distinguishes between various levels of consciousness—sleep, semi-sleep, vigil with reverie, and full vigil—and their relationship to the perception of reality. External and internal senses as well as memory.
- VII. *Presence of the Force*—The growth of comprehension in vigil. The energy or Force that is rooted in and moves through the body.
- VIII. *Control of the Force*—Relates the depth or superficiality of the energy to the levels of consciousness.
- IX. *Manifestations of the Energy*—Control and loss of control of the energy.
- X. *Evidence of Meaning*—Continuity and internal unity or contradiction.
- XI. *The Luminous Center*—Relates the energy to the inner allegory of the "luminous center." Phenomena of internal integration as "ascent toward the light." Phenomena of internal dissolution registered as "withdrawal from the light."
- XII. *The Discoveries*—Circulation of the energy. Levels. The nature of the Force represented as "light." Examples from diverse peoples.
- XIII. *The Principles*—The Principles as references for internal unity.
- XIV. *Guide to the Inner Road*—Representations of the phenomena that accompany the directions of "descent" and "ascent."
- XV. *The Experience of Peace and the Passage of the Force*—Procedures.
- XVI. *Projection of the Force*—Projection and meaning.
- XVII. *Loss and Repression of the Force*—Discharges of the energy. Sex as the center that produces energy.
- XVIII. *Action and Reaction of the Force*—Associating representations with emotional charges. Evoking an image that has previously been linked to emotional states, which then elicits or returns the associated states. "Being thankful" as a technique useful in daily life to associate images with positive emotional states.
- XIX. *The Internal States*—The various mental situations in which those interested in internal work may find themselves.

XX. *Internal Reality*—The link between mental processes and allegorical representations of the external world.

### *The Internal Landscape*

*The Internal Landscape* is divided into eighteen chapters, which are subdivided into numbered passages. The principal themes can be grouped as follows:

- Chapters I and II are introductory and direct questions to the reader about his or her happiness, suffering, and interests in life.
- Chapters III through VI examine the different types of landscapes—external, human, and internal—and their interaction.
- Chapter VII touches on the themes of pain, suffering, and meaning in life. These points, and others related to valid action in the world, are further developed through Chapter XIII.
- In Chapters XIV through XVIII the central themes are the motives and direction of human actions, along with proposals for change in the meaning of life.

The topics appear in the following order:

- I. *The Question*—Queries the reader about happiness and suffering. Proposes a direction toward overcoming suffering.
- II. *Reality*—Discusses the nature of the “real,” relating what one perceives to the conformation of the human being.
- III. *The External Landscape*—Points out that every external landscape varies according to what is happening within the one who is perceiving it.
- IV. *The Human Landscape*—Shows how the human landscape involves the interior of the person. Denies the right of factions or special interests to demand that others must adopt their answers to the problems that individuals and societies currently face. Affirms the need to define action toward the human world.
- V. *The Internal Landscape*—Explains that at the base of all human activity lie beliefs. Emphasizes, however, that the internal landscape is not only a field of beliefs but of memories, perceptions, and images as well. Observes that the relation *internal-external landscape* is a structure in which both terms are correlates and can alternately be taken as acts or objects.
- VI. *Center and Reflection*—Indicates the possibility of placing oneself in the center of the internal landscape, from which any direction chosen is a reflection of this center. Shows that the path to learning lies through action and not solely through contemplation.
- VII. *Pain, Suffering, and Meaning in Life*—Distinguishes between physical pain and mental suffering. Introduces the phrase “Humanize the Earth” as the key to meaning in life, emphasizing the primacy of the future over the present or the past.
- VIII. *The Rider and His Shadow*—Breaks the monotony of previous chapters with a shift in style. Nevertheless, again considers the problems of the different times in human life (past, present, and future), seeking in them the root of memory, perception, and imagination. These three pathways are later considered “the three pathways of suffering” to the extent that contradiction inverts the times of consciousness.
- IX. *Contradiction and Unity*—Continues to explore the interplay of the various times in human life. Emphasizes the differences between everyday problems or difficulties on the one hand, and contradiction on the other, presenting the defining characteristics of contradiction. Proposes changes in the organization of the internal landscape.
- X. *Valid Action*—Explains that not only contradiction but all inversion in the

## Notes to Humanize the Earth

growing current of life generates suffering. Emphasizes the importance of *valid actions* as unifying acts that are capable of overcoming contradiction. Presents an implicit critique of the foundations of morality when not developed based on the need to give unity to the human being, to provide references for surpassing contradiction and suffering.

XI. *Projection of the Internal Landscape*—Emphasizes that both contradictory and unifying acts commit the future of those who produce them, as well as the future of all who are in contact with them. In this sense, individual contradiction “contaminates” others, while individual unity also affects others.

XII. *Compensation, Reflection, and the Future*—The background of this chapter is the age-old debate between determinism and freedom. Concisely reviews the mechanics of human actions as the interplay of compensatory actions as well as the reflection of the external landscape, without overlooking accidents as another phenomenon capable of undoing all human projects. Finally, emphasizes the search for the growth of life without limit as a leap over determining conditions.

XIII. *Provisional Meanings*—Outlines the dialectic between “provisional meanings” and “meaning in life.” Places affirmation of life as the highest value, suggesting that it is the rebellion against death that drives all progress.

XIV. *Faith*—Notes the feeling of suspicion experienced upon hearing the word “faith.” Distinguishes between naive faith, fanatical faith, and faith applied in the service of life. Gives faith maximum importance as the energy that mobilizes all enthusiasm in life.

XV. *To Give and To Receive*—Establishes that the act of giving opens the future, and that all valid actions go in this direction. Receiving, in contrast, is centripetal, and dies in the individual. It is through giving that one can change the direction of a contradictory life.

XVI. *Models*—Explains “models” as the internal images that motivate human activities toward the external world, while noting that such images are modified with changes in the internal landscape.

XVII. *The Internal Guide*—Refers to the existence of models in the internal landscape that are examples of how to act. Such models can be called “internal guides.”

XVIII. *The Change*—Studies the possibility of voluntary change in human conduct.

### *The Human Landscape*

*The Human Landscape* is divided into thirteen chapters, which are subdivided into numbered passages. The principal themes can be grouped as follows:

- The first five chapters are dedicated to clarifying the meaning of the human landscape and the *look* that is related to that landscape.
- The following seven chapters address central questions that arise in the human landscape.
- Chapter thirteen concludes the themes developed, inviting the reader to continue the study of important issues that have been treated only in passing in this work.

The topics appear in the following order:

- I. *Looks and Landscapes*—Establishes the difference between internal, external, and human landscapes. Introduces distinctions between *looks* of different types.
- II. *The External Look and That Which Is Human*—Reviews what has been said about the human being from an “external look.”
- III. *The Human Body as the Object of Intention*—Intentionality and the governing of one’s own body without intermediation. The objectification of others’ bodies

and the “emptying” of their subjectivity.

IV. *Memory and the Human Landscape*—The lack of correspondence between the human landscape perceived in the present and the human landscape deriving from the period of formation of the one perceiving.

V. *The Distance Imposed by the Human Landscape*—The distance between the perceived human landscape and the represented human landscape arises not only from the difference in times but also from *ways of being-in-the-world* that depend on the emotions and the presence of one’s own body.

VI. *Education*—Recommends that an integral education embody coherent thinking as contact with one’s own registers of thinking; that it should consider awareness and emotional development as contact with oneself and others; and that it should not overlook practices that bring into play the full range of each person’s corporal resources. Distinguishes between education as formation, information as the integration of data through study, and practice as a form of study.

VII. *History*—Until now history has been looked at from the “outside,” without taking human intentionality into account.

VIII. *Ideologies*—In times when ideologies are in crisis there arise “ideologemas” that claim to represent reality itself. Such is the case with so-called “pragmatism.”

IX. *Violence*—Non-violence as a methodology of social and political struggle does not require justification. It is a system in which violence predominates that needs justification in order to impose itself. Distinguishes between pacifism and non-violence.

X. *Law*—Considers both the origin of law and the theme of power as a precondition for any law.

XI. *The State*—The State as an apparatus of intermediation between the real power held by a part of society and the social whole.

XII. *Religion*—Religions as “externality” inasmuch as they attempt to speak about God and not about the inner register of God in the human being.

XIII. *Open Roads*—Concludes by inviting the reader to study and further develop important themes of the human landscape that have not been addressed in this work.



# Guided Experiences

*Part One: Tales*

## I. The Child

It is early in the morning as I walk through the countryside, and I feel happy and at peace. Up ahead, I see a stone building that seems to be very old. Its ancient roof is also made of stone, and along the front stand large marble columns.

As I near the building, I can see it has a massive metal door. Suddenly, I'm surprised when two ferocious beasts charge toward me from one side of the building. Fortunately they're held back by strong chains, which stop them just out of reach.

I can't approach the door without being attacked by the animals, so I throw them a sack of food. The beasts eagerly devour the food, and soon fall fast asleep.

Approaching the door, I inspect it carefully, but cannot find a door handle or any way to open it. Nevertheless I push gently, and the door swings open with an ancient creaking sound.

A long, softly lit room opens before me. I cannot see to the end, but on the left and right are life-size paintings that reach nearly to the floor. Each portrays a different scene. The first, on my left, depicts a magician seated behind a table spread with cards, dice, and other games of chance. My gaze is drawn to this character's curious hat.

I try to run my finger over the hat in the painting, but feel no resistance to my touch—instead my arm enters right into the picture. So I go ahead and put one leg, and then my whole body into the painting.

Raising a hand, the magician exclaims, "Not so fast, you can't come in unless you pay admission!"

Searching through my pockets, I pull out a small crystalline sphere, which I give to this trickster. The colorful character nods, and I enter.

It is night, and I find myself in an amusement park. Everywhere I see mechanical rides, filled with light and movement—but I do not see any people.

Then I discover a child about ten years old, who is facing away from me. As I move closer, the youngster turns to look at me, and I realize it is myself when I was that age. (\*)

"What are you doing here?" I ask. The child tells me something about an injustice that has happened, and then begins to cry. To console the child, I promise that we'll go on some rides, but the youngster insists on talking about the injustice. In order to understand the child better, I try to recall what happened to me at that age that was so unfair. (\*)

Now I remember that injustice. And somehow I realize it's like a situation I'm experiencing in my life right now. I reflect on this, but the child continues to cry. (\*)

So I say, "All right then, I'm going to straighten out this injustice that seems to keep happening to me. To begin with, I'll be friendly toward the people who are creating this situation for me." (\*)

I notice that the youngster is laughing now. With an affectionate pat I say that we'll be seeing each other again. Saying good-bye, the child goes away very happy.

I leave the amusement park, passing beside the magician, who gives me a quick, sidelong glance. As I go by, I brush against his hat, prompting a playful wink from this extraordinary character.

I emerge from the painting, and once again find myself in the long room. Walking slowly, I cross the room and go through the door.

Outside, the animals remain fast asleep, and I pass between them without fear.

The magnificent day greets me. I make my way back across the open fields, whistling and singing, with the sensation that at last I understand a situation that has been a burden to me for a very long time. (\*)



## II. An Enemy

I am downtown at the height of rush hour, walking hurriedly amid the bustling people and traffic. All at once everything stops as if paralyzed, and I realize that I alone can still move. I begin looking at people, staring at a woman and then at a man. Walking around them several times, I examine them very closely.

Climbing up onto the roof of a car, I look all around and notice that everything has fallen silent. Reflecting for a moment, I realize that I can do anything I please with the people, the cars, and everything else. Immediately I set about doing all the things that strike my fancy, and carry on at such a frantic rate that soon I'm left exhausted.

While resting, I think of new things to do, and again throw myself into carrying out my every whim, without any inhibition.

But who do I see there? It's none other than the very person with whom I have a number of scores to settle. In fact, I feel this person has done me greater harm than anyone else in my entire life.

Since things won't remain motionless for long, I hurry over to my enemy, who can barely move. Realizing the situation, my adversary looks at me in horror, but is still paralyzed and defenseless. I begin to tell this despicable character everything I've been wanting to say, promising my immediate revenge.

Knowing that my adversary feels everything but cannot respond, I begin to bring up all the situations in which this person treated me so terribly. (\*)

As I reproach my enemy, several people walk past. Hearing my accusations, they stop and begin to harshly criticize this character, who responds between sobs, expressing deep remorse for these past misdeeds. Kneeling on the ground, my adversary begs forgiveness, but more people arrive and continue the interrogation. (\*)

After a while, the crowd declares that so vile a person cannot be allowed to live, and they condemn my enemy to death.

Just as they're about to lynch the terrified person, who keeps pleading for mercy, I tell them that I forgive my enemy. The crowd unanimously accepts my decision, and the people go on their way. Once again I'm left alone with my adversary, and I take advantage of this to finish getting even. Sensing my enemy's growing desperation, I say and do everything else that I feel is called for. (\*)

The sky darkens threateningly, and a driving rain begins to fall. I take refuge behind a storefront window and watch as the city returns to life. Pedestrians run, and cars crawl cautiously through sheets of wind-whipped rain. Continuous flashes of lightning and sharp thunderclaps frame the scene, as I gaze out through the rain-streaked glass.

I feel completely relaxed, as though empty, while I observe almost without thinking.

Suddenly I see my adversary approaching, seeking shelter from the rain. On seeing me, the person exclaims, "How lucky that we're together in this storm!"

As my rain-soaked enemy looks at me sheepishly, I offer a comforting pat on the shoulder, while all the poor soul can do is shrug. (\*)

In my mind I begin to consider all the problems that beset this character. I see the difficulties, the failures in life, this person's enormous frustrations and weakness. (\*)

I feel the loneliness of the wet and trembling human being who is taking refuge at my side, and see how dirty and pathetically unkempt this person is. (\*)

Suddenly, I'm moved by a strong feeling of solidarity with my companion and declare, "I'm going to help you." The person does not say a word, and growing misty-eyed, can only gaze down at both hands. (\*)

The rain has stopped. Going out onto the street, I take a deep breath of the fresh air and

leave at once.

### III. My Greatest Mistake

I am standing before some sort of court. Every seat in the silent courtroom is filled, and I'm surrounded by a sea of stern faces. The court clerk adjusts his glasses and picks up a long document. Breaking the tremendous tension that fills the room, he solemnly pronounces, "It is the sentence of this court that the accused shall be put to death."

Immediately there is an uproar—some people applaud while others boo, and I see a woman faint. Finally an official manages to restore order in the courtroom.

Staring at me darkly, the clerk demands, "Does the accused have anything to say?" When I answer that I do, everyone sits down. I ask for a glass of water, and after a brief commotion they bring me one. Raising the glass, I take a sip, and finishing with a loud and prolonged gargle, I exclaim, "That's it!"

Someone from the jury harshly demands, "What do you mean, 'That's it'?"

"That's it," I repeat. But to satisfy the juror, I say that the water here does taste excellent, much better than I expected, and continue with two or three other pleasantries of this sort.

The court clerk finishes reading the document with these words: "Accordingly, the sentence shall be carried out today: You will be abandoned in the desert without food or water—above all, without water. I have spoken!"

"What do you mean, you have spoken?" I demand. Arching his eyebrows, the clerk only reaffirms, "What I have spoken, I have spoken!"

Soon I find myself riding in a fire truck through the middle of the desert, escorted by two firemen. We stop, and one of them says, "Get out!" As soon as I step down from the truck, the vehicle turns around and heads back the way it came. I watch it grow smaller and smaller as it moves off across the dunes.

The sun is setting, but the heat is still intense. I begin to feel very thirsty. Taking off my jacket and putting it over my head, I look around, and discover nearby a hollow beside a sand dune. I walk over and sit down in the meager patch of shade cast by the dune.

The wind begins to blow in strong gusts, raising a sandstorm that blots out the sun. Fearing I'll be buried if the wind grows any stronger, I leave the hollow. Staccato bursts of blowing sand sting my skin, and soon the force of the wind pushes me to the ground.

Now the storm has passed and the sun has set. In the twilight I see before me a whitish dome several stories high. Although I think it must be a mirage, I get to my feet and make my way toward it. As I draw closer, I see that the structure is made of a smooth material, a shiny plastic that seems to be inflated with air.

A man dressed in Bedouin garb greets me, and we enter the dome through a carpeted passageway. A door slides open, and I feel a refreshing rush of cool air. Once inside, I notice that everything is upside down—the ceiling is like a smooth floor from which things are suspended. I see round tables above us with their legs pointing up toward the ceiling. I see water falling downward in streams that curve and return upward, and high overhead there are human forms seated upside down.

Noticing my astonishment, the Bedouin hands me a pair of glasses saying, "Try these on!" When I put on the glasses, everything is restored to its normal appearance—in front of me I see a large fountain shooting streams of water high into the air. The tables and other objects are right side up, and everything is exquisitely coordinated in color and form.

I see the court clerk coming toward me, crawling on all fours. He says he feels terribly dizzy, so I explain to him that he's seeing reality upside down and needs to remove his glasses. Taking them off, he stands up and says with a sigh, "Indeed, now everything is fine—except that I'm so nearsighted." He goes on to say he has been searching for me in order to explain that there has

## My Greatest Mistake

been a most deplorable mistake, and I'm not the person who should have been put on trial at all. Immediately he leaves through a side door.

Walking a few steps, I find myself with a group of people seated in a circle on cushions. They are elders of both sexes, with varied racial features and attire. All of them have beautiful faces. Each time one of them begins to speak, I hear the sound of faraway gears, of gigantic machinery, of immense clocks. I hear intermittent thunder, the cracking of rocks, icebergs splitting off, the rhythmic roaring of volcanoes, the light impact of a gentle rain, the muffled beating of hearts—the motor, muscle, life—and everything in perfect harmony, a masterful symphony of sounds.

The Bedouin hands me a pair of headphones, saying, "Try these on, they translate." Putting them on, I clearly hear a human voice. I realize it is the same symphony of one of the elders, now translated for my clumsy ear. This time as he opens his mouth I hear, "We are the hours, we are the minutes, we are the seconds. We are the various forms of time. Because a mistake was made with you, we will give you the opportunity to begin your life anew. But from what point do you wish to start again? Perhaps from your birth, or perhaps from just before your first failure. Reflect on this." (\*)

I try to determine exactly when it was that I lost control of my life, and I tell the elder what happened. (\*)

"Very well," he says, "and what are you going to do, if you return to that moment, in order to follow a different course this time? Bear in mind that you still won't have any way of knowing what lies in your future.

"There is another alternative," he adds. "You can return to the moment of the greatest mistake in your life, and without changing the events themselves, you can nevertheless change their meanings. In this way you can make a new life for yourself."

As the elder falls silent, I see everything around me reversing in light and color, as if changing into the negative of a film. Then everything returns to normal, except that now I find myself back in time at the moment of the greatest mistake of my life. (\*)

Here I am, driven to make this mistake. But what is compelling me to do it? (\*)

Aren't there other factors influencing this, which I do not wish to see? What things are steering me toward this fundamental mistake? What should I try to do instead? If I don't commit this error, will this change the pattern of my life? And will the change be for better or for worse? (\*)

I try to understand that the circumstances surrounding this moment cannot be changed, and I accept everything that happened as if it were a natural disaster, like an earthquake or a flood that destroys people's homes and livelihoods. (\*)

I strive to accept that in such accidents, no one is to blame. My weaknesses, my excesses, the intentions of others—in this case none of these can be changed. (\*)

I know that if I don't make peace now by reconciling with this mistake, my future life will only be filled with more of the same frustration. And so, with all my being, I forgive the others involved, and I forgive myself. I accept everything that happened as something beyond my control, and beyond the control of others. (\*)

The scene begins to transform, light and dark again reversing as in the negative of a photograph. At the same time I hear a voice say, "If you can make peace with yourself, reconciling with your greatest mistake, your frustration will die and you will be able to change your destiny."

Now I'm standing in the middle of the desert again, and see a car approaching. "Taxi!" I shout, and soon find myself seated comfortably in the back seat. Looking at the driver, who is dressed as a fireman, I say, "Please drive me home, and take your time, so I can think about everything that has happened." Putting on my jacket again, I say to myself, "Who hasn't experienced some kind of accident? Now I realize I am better than I thought I was, and best of all, I have a future in which to prove it."





## IV. Nostalgia

The colored lights pulse to the rhythm of the music, as I stand face-to-face with the one who was my greatest love. We dance slowly, and each flash of the lights reveals some detail of my love's face, or body. (\*)

What went wrong between us? Perhaps it was money. (\*)

Perhaps it was those other relationships. (\*)

Perhaps it was having different goals. (\*)

Perhaps it was destiny, or something impossible to grasp then. (\*)

Again I dance slowly, but now with another great love. Each flash of the lights reveals some detail of my love's face, or body. (\*)

What went wrong between us? Perhaps it was money. (\*)

Perhaps it was those other relationships. (\*)

Perhaps it was having different goals. (\*)

Perhaps it was destiny, or something impossible to grasp then. (\*)

I forgive you and I forgive myself, for if we dance and the world dances around us, what can we do with those rock-solid promises that turned out to be butterflies of changing colors?

I rescue what is good and beautiful from my yesterdays with you. (\*)

And from my yesterdays with you. (\*)

And from my yesterdays with all who have dazzled my eyes. (\*)

Ah—the pain, the suspicion, the parting, and then the wounded pride and endless sadness—these are the excuses. But how small they seem beside those beguiling eyes.

Because the great wrongs I remember are errors made in dancing, and not the dance itself. I'm thankful to you for your tender smile.

And I'm thankful to you for your softly-whispered words.

And to all of you, I'm thankful for the hope of an everlasting love.

At peace with yesterday, my heart is open to the memories of those beautiful moments. (\*)

## V. My Ideal

I am walking through a fairground filled with exhibition halls and displays, and I see many children playing on high-tech mechanical rides.

I come upon a giant figure made of some solid material. It stands upright, and its large head is painted in bright colors. There is a ladder extending up to its mouth, which the little ones climb to reach the enormous opening. Whenever one enters, the mouth gently closes, and soon the child pops out the back of the giant, coming down a slide and landing in the sand below. One by one the children go in and come out, as a song flows from the giant:

*See Gargantua gobble up the children,  
With great care, not harming a hair,  
Tra la la, tra la la,  
With great care, not harming a hair!*

I decide to climb up the short ladder. As I enter the huge mouth, I meet an attendant who tells me, "Children go down the slide, but grownups use the elevator."

The attendant continues the explanation as our elevator descends through a transparent tube. Soon I say that I think we're probably at ground level by now.

"That's right," replies the attendant, "although we're still only passing through the esophagus. The rest of the giant's body is below ground, unlike the children's giant, which is completely on the surface. You see," my guide informs me, "there are actually two Gargantuas in one—one for children, and another one for grownups."

After a while the attendant announces, "Now we're well below ground. We've already passed the diaphragm, and soon we'll stop at a very pleasant place—look, the elevator door is opening and I can show you the stomach. Would you like to get out here? As you can see, this modern restaurant serves delicious foods from all over the world." But I tell the attendant that I'm curious about the rest of the body, and we continue going down.

"Now we've reached the lowest part of the abdomen," announces my guide as the elevator door opens. "The decor here is quite unique, and the walls of changing colors form delicately lined caverns. In the middle of the lounge is the central fire, the generator that provides energy to the whole giant. There are seats for visitors to rest, and the columns scattered here and there are great for playing hide-and-seek—it's easy to hide and then suddenly reappear. And the more visitors who play, the more fun it is. Now I'll leave you here, if you wish. To return to the surface, all you need to do is approach the elevator and the door will open and take you back up. Everything is automatic—amazing, isn't it?"

The elevator door closes, and I'm left alone in the lounge.

At first it seems as though I'm under the ocean. Then a large fish swims right through me, and I realize that the coral, the seaweed, and all the different species of living things are incredibly realistic three-dimensional projections. I sit down to watch this relaxing spectacle at my leisure.

Suddenly I see emerging from the central fire a human figure, its face covered. Approaching me slowly, the figure stops nearby and says, "Hello there, I'm a hologram. Everyone tries to find in me that special someone, their ideal match. I'm programmed to take on any appearance you wish. So tell me, what does your ideal look like?"

"Before I can begin to look like your ideal, it will take just a little effort on your part. If you try this, your brain waves will be deciphered. Then they'll be amplified, transmitted, and recoded again in the main computer, and as the computer rearranges the hologram, you'll see my identity take shape."

"What should I do?" I ask.

"I suggest that you follow these steps," the figure says. "First, begin to think of the different people you've been emotionally involved with, and recall which features they've had in common. I don't mean only their bodies or faces, but also their characters. For example, were they protective, or did they inspire you to be protective of them? (\*)

"Were they brave or timid? Were they dreamers? Were they ambitious, deceitful, or perhaps cruel? (\*)

"And now, what unpleasant or negative trait did they have in common? (\*)

"What were their positive qualities? (\*)

"How were the beginnings of all these relationships similar? (\*)

"How were the endings similar? (\*)

"Try to remember the people you've wanted to have relationships with, but things didn't work out—and why didn't they work out? (\*)

"Now, give me your attention, and I'll begin to take on the appearance you most desire. Just say the word, and I'll become the person who is, for you, perfect. I'm ready, so go ahead and let yourself imagine. How should I walk? How am I dressed? Just what am I doing? How do I speak? Where are we, and what are we doing?

"Look into my face, just as it is! (\*)

"Look deeply into my eyes, for now I'm no longer just a hologram, I've become real. Gaze deeply into my eyes, and tell me tenderly what you see in them." (\*)

I stand up to touch the figure, but it eludes me, disappearing behind a column. When I reach the spot, I find that the figure has vanished. But then I feel a hand resting softly on my shoulder as a voice says, "Do not look behind you. It should be enough for you just to know we've been so close to one another, and this experience can bring you greater clarity in searching for your ideal."

As the voice finishes speaking, I turn to see who is behind me, but glimpse only a fleeting shadow. At the same time, the central fire roars and flares brightly, dazzling me.

I know that this setting and the hologram have created a favorable atmosphere for my ideal to appear. But through an impatience I do not understand, my ideal, which is within me and has softly brushed against me, my ideal has slipped through my fingers, only to disappear. Still I know that we've been near each other, and this is enough for me—I realize that the main computer could never have projected a tactile sensation like the touch I felt on my shoulder.

I approach the elevator, and as the door opens, I hear a children's song:

*See Gargantua gobble down the grownups,  
With great care, not harming a hair,  
Tra la la, tra la la,  
With great care, not harming a hair!*

## VI. Resentment

It is night, and I am in an old city crisscrossed by canals that pass beneath timeworn bridges. Leaning on a railing, I gaze at the slow movement of the murky liquid mass below. Through the fog I can make out a group of people on another bridge, and I can faintly hear musical instruments that accompany voices sadly out of tune. Faraway bells toll to me in haunting waves of sorrow.

Now the group has gone and the bells have fallen silent. Down a narrow diagonal street, colored neon lights emit a sickly glow.

I move on, once again entering the fog. After wandering aimlessly down side streets and over bridges, I come out into the open space of an old square paved with tiles. The square seems empty, and the tiled surface draws me toward one end that is submerged in still water.

Ahead, a boat that looks like a hearse awaits me. But to reach it, I must first pass between two long lines of women dressed in black tunics and holding torches overhead. As I pass, they say in chorus:

*Oh Death! Whose unlimited domain  
Reaches the living wherever they may be,  
On you depends the span allotted to our life.  
Your endless sleep annihilates the multitudes,  
For no one escapes your powerful presence.  
You alone have the judgment that absolves,  
And no art can prevail upon your fury,  
Nor plea revoke your design.*

I step into the boat, aided by the boatman, who remains standing behind me. Settling into the spacious seat, I notice that the craft rises slightly until we're just above the water. Then we begin to move, suspended above an open and immobile sea that is like an endless mirror reflecting the moon.

We arrive at an island, and in the dim light I can see a long road bordered by cypress trees. The boat rests on the water, rocking gently, and I step out while the boatman remains behind, impassive.

I walk down the road between the trees, which sigh in the wind. I feel that I'm being observed, and I stop, sensing something or someone hidden up ahead. From behind a tree a shadowy figure beckons me with slow gestures. I begin to approach, and just as I reach it, a grave whisper like the sigh of death brushes against my face.

"Help me!" the shadow moans, "I know you have come to free me from this confusing prison. Only you can do this—help me!"

The shadowy figure tells me it is someone toward whom I bear a deep resentment. (\*)

As though reading my thoughts, the voice adds, "It does not matter whether the person to whom you are bound by this most profound resentment is dead or alive, for the domain of dark memory respects no borders.

"Nor does it matter," the shadow continues, "whether the hatred and desire for revenge have been knotted in your heart since childhood, or began only yesterday. Here, time is immobile. This is why we are always lurking in the shadows, only to emerge again at any opportunity, transformed into your various fears. And these fears are our revenge for the poison we must continually taste."

Just as I ask what I should do, a ray of moonlight faintly illuminates the figure's cloaked head. Then the specter allows me to see it clearly, and I recognize the features of the person who has wounded me most deeply. (\*)

I tell the specter all about my resentment, expressing things I've never told anyone—I speak as frankly as I can. (\*)

The apparition asks me to consider the problem once again, and to communicate everything that is important, even if my words are insulting. The shadow insists that I not fail to express any bitterness I feel, lest it remain imprisoned forever. So I go ahead and follow these instructions. (\*)

The specter shows me a strong chain that binds it to a cypress tree. Without hesitating, I break the chain with a single sharp jerk. The cloak collapses and lies spread out on the ground, as the shadow vanishes into thin air and the voice recedes toward the heights, repeating these familiar words: "I must be gone, for the firefly's fading glow shows that dawn is near. Farewell, farewell. Remember me!"

Realizing that daybreak will soon arrive, I turn to go back to the boat, but first I pick up the cloak, which is lying at my feet. Draping it over my shoulders I hurriedly retrace my steps. On my way back to the sea, several furtive shadows ask me if I'll return someday to free other resentments.

Near the shore I see a group of women dressed in white tunics and holding torches overhead. When I reach the boat, I hand the cloak to the boatman. He in turn passes it to the women, and one of them sets it afire. The cloak flares up and is quickly consumed by the flames, without leaving a trace. At this moment I feel a tremendous relief, as though I've sincerely forgiven an enormous wrong. (\*)

I step into the boat, which now looks like a modern speedboat. As we push off from the shore, not yet starting the motor, I hear the chorus of women say:

*You have the power to awaken us from our stupor,  
Uniting heart with head,  
Freeing our minds from emptiness,  
Removing darkness and forgetfulness from inner sight.  
Come, beneficial power: True memory  
That straightens life into its rightful meaning.*

The motor comes to life just as the sun appears above the ocean's horizon. The boat accelerates, and I look at the young driver, his strong, clear face smiling toward the sea.

We approach the city swiftly, bouncing lightly on the smooth swells. The sun's golden rays gild the magnificent domes of the city, while bright flocks of doves circle overhead.

## VII. The Protector of Life

I am floating on my back in a lagoon. The water feels very pleasant, and effortlessly looking on either side, I discover that I can see the bottom through the crystalline water.

The sky is a brilliant blue. Close by, washed by the waters of the sea, is a beach of soft, almost white sand that forms a quiet inlet without waves.

I feel my body floating gently, becoming more and more relaxed, filling me with an extraordinary sensation of well-being.

I decide to turn over, and begin to swim with smooth strokes until I reach the beach, where I slowly emerge from the water.

The landscape is tropical. I see date and coconut palms, and feel the warmth of the sun and the soft breeze on my skin.

To my surprise, on my right I discover the entrance to a grotto with a stream of clear water flowing nearby. As I approach the grotto, I see a woman standing inside. A crown of flowers adorns her head and I can see her beautiful eyes, but I cannot tell her age. Yet behind her face, which radiates kindness and understanding, I sense there lies a great wisdom. As I gaze at her, all of nature falls silent.

"I am the Protector of Life," she says. Hesitantly I answer that I do not understand what she means. At this moment a fawn approaches and licks her hand.

She invites me to enter the grotto and has me sit on the sand facing a smooth rock wall. I cannot see her now, but I hear her say, "Breathe gently, and tell me what you see." I begin to breathe slowly and deeply, and immediately a clear image of the ocean appears before me on the rock. As I breathe in, the waves roll onto the beach. As I breathe out, the waves recede.

Then she tells me, "Everything in your body is rhythm and beauty. So many times you have despised your body, without comprehending this marvelous instrument you have for expressing yourself in the world." At this moment many scenes from my life begin to appear on the rock wall—I see myself feeling shame, fear, and horror about certain aspects of my body. These images follow one after another. (\*)

I feel uncomfortable when I realize that she is watching these scenes, but immediately calm myself. Then she adds, "Even in sickness and old age, your body will be like a faithful dog that accompanies you until the final moment. Do not despise your body when it cannot fulfill all your whims. Meanwhile make it strong and healthy. Take care of your body so that it can serve you well, and be guided in this only by the opinions of those who are wise. I who have passed through all the ages know well that the idea of beauty is ever-changing. If you do not regard your body as your closest friend, it will become sad and ill—therefore you must accept it completely. It is your instrument for expressing yourself in the world.

"I want you to see now the part of your body that is weakest and least healthy." At once the image of this part of my body appears. (\*)

The Protector of Life rests her hand on this area, and I feel a life-giving warmth. I sense waves of energy expanding in this area, and I experience a profound acceptance of my body, just as it is. (\*)

"Take care of your body, following only the opinions of those who are wise, and do not harm it with illnesses that exist only in your imagination. Now go, filled with vitality and at peace with yourself."

Upon emerging from the grotto, strengthened and healthy, I drink the crystalline water of the stream and feel completely renewed.

The sun and the wind caress my body as I cross the white sand toward the lagoon. When I reach the water, for an instant I glimpse in the depths the kind reflection of the Protector of Life.

As I enter the water, I give thanks within myself for my body, this marvelous instrument I have

received from nature. (\*)

## VIII. The Rescue

I am in a car that is speeding down a large highway. In the strange half-light I'm unsure whether it is dawn or dusk. The driver beside me is someone I've never seen before. In the back seat are two women and a man, who are also strangers to me. The car races onward, surrounded by other cars that are driving recklessly, as if their drivers are drunk or crazy.

I ask my companion what is happening. Looking at me furtively, he answers in a strange language, "Rex voluntas!"

Turning on the radio, which blares noisy static, I can faintly hear a weak metallic voice monotonously repeating, "Rex voluntas... rex voluntas... rex voluntas..."

The traffic slows, and by the roadside I see wrecked and overturned cars with fire spreading among them. We stop, and abandoning the car, join a sea of terrified people rushing toward the fields.

Looking back through the smoke and flames, I see many hapless souls who are trapped and doomed, but I'm forced to keep running by the human stampede that pushes me along. Some of the people stumble to the ground, and amid this delirium I struggle in vain to reach a woman trying to shield her child as the mob tramples over them.

The chaos and violence are spreading everywhere, so I make up my mind to move in a slightly diagonal direction that will let me escape the crowd; I aim toward some higher ground that diverts this mindless stampede. Many of the fallen clutch at my clothes, tearing them to shreds. But I notice that the crush of people around me is growing less.

Finally I manage to break free of the crowd, and almost out of breath continue to climb. Stopping for a moment, I notice that the mob is now going in a direction opposite to mine—they must be thinking that running downhill will carry them more quickly out of this crisis.

I realize with horror that the path they are following ends in a cliff. Shouting with all my might, I try to warn the people of this imminent catastrophe, though I fear that only those nearest me will hear the warning.

One man does break free of the mob and comes running toward me. His clothes are in tatters and his body is covered with wounds, yet I feel a great joy that he's been saved. On reaching me he clutches my arm, and yelling like a madman points frantically down the hill. He's speaking a language I do not understand, but I think he wants me to help rescue someone. I tell him to wait for a while—that right now it's impossible. I know he cannot understand me, and his desperation is tearing me apart. Then he tries to go back down, but just as he's leaving I trip him and he falls headlong. He lies sprawled on the ground, sobbing bitterly. For my part I realize that I've saved both his life and his conscience—his conscience because he did try to rescue someone, and his life by preventing his doomed attempt.

Climbing higher, I reach a freshly plowed field. The earth is loose and furrowed. In the distance I hear gunfire, and think I know what is happening—hurriedly I leave. After a while, everything is silent and I stop once more. Looking back toward the city, I see a sinister glow.

I feel the ground begin to shake beneath my feet, and a rumbling from the depths warns me of an imminent earthquake. Within moments I've lost my balance and find myself lying on the ground. Curled on my side and gazing up at the sky, I'm overcome by waves of dizziness.

The earthquake passes, and I look up to see an enormous, blood-red moon.

The heat is unbearable and the air is filled with an acrid odor. Meanwhile, I'm still uncertain whether the day is just beginning or night is falling.

Sitting down, I hear a growing roar. Soon hundreds of aircraft fill the sky, passing overhead like deadly insects and disappearing toward some unknown destiny.

Nearby I come upon a large dog that is staring up at the moon. It begins to howl, almost like a



## The Rescue

wolf. I call out to it, and the animal approaches me timidly. When it reaches my side, I gently pet its bristling fur and see shivers running down its body.

The dog pulls away from me and begins to leave. I get to my feet and follow it, and we cross a rocky area until we reach a small stream. The thirsty animal rushes forward and eagerly begins to drink, but all at once draws back and falls over. Approaching the dog I touch it, and realize that it's dead.

I feel a new earthquake, which threatens to knock me over, but it subsides.

Turning around, I behold far off in the sky four enormous clouds advancing toward me with the muffled rumbling of thunder. The first cloud is white, the second is red, the third is black, and the fourth is yellow. And these clouds are like four armed horsemen riding on the storm, traveling across the heavens and laying waste to all life upon the earth.

I begin running to escape the approaching clouds, for I realize that if their rain touches me I'll be contaminated. As I run toward the highway, suddenly my path is blocked by a gigantic figure—towering over me I see a huge robot swinging a sword of fire in a menacing arc. I shout that I must keep going because the radioactive clouds are approaching, but the robot replies that it has been stationed here to prevent destructive people from entering; adding that it's armed with lasers, it warns me not to come any closer. I see that the robot stands on the dividing line between two distinct areas—the one I'm coming from, barren and dying, and the one ahead, filled with vegetation and life.

So I shout to the robot, "You must let me pass because I've done a good deed!"

"What is a good deed?" the robot asks.

"A constructive action, something that builds and contributes to life," I answer.

"Then tell me what you've done that's so good," the robot demands.

"I've saved a human being from certain death, and what's more, I've saved his conscience as well."

At once the giant robot stands aside, and I leap into the protected area just as the first drops of poisoned rain begin to fall.

Ahead of me is a farm, and a soft light glows through the windows of the nearby farmhouse. Only now do I realize that the day is just beginning.

When I reach the farmhouse, a rugged yet kindly-looking man invites me to come in. Inside, a large family is preparing for the activities of the day. They seat me at the table, which is set with simple and hearty food. Soon I find myself drinking pure spring water, as children play around me.

"This time," says my host, "you have escaped. But when once again you must cross the border between life and death, what coherent behavior will you be able to show in your life?"

I ask him to explain, because his words sound strange to me. He says, "Try to remember the truly unselfish things you've done in your life, which we might call 'good deeds' to give them a name. Of course, I don't mean those so-called 'good deeds' people do when they're expecting something in return. Think only of the things you have done that left a clear sensation in you that the way you treated others was best for them—it's just as simple as that.

"Now I'll give you three minutes to review your life and see what inner poverty there is within you, my good friend. And one final suggestion: If you have children or loved ones, do not confuse what *you want* for them with what is best for *them*." Having said this, he leaves the house along with all of his family. I'm left alone to meditate on his suggestions. (\*)

Returning a short time later, he says to me, "Now you see how empty you are within, and if you aren't empty, it's only because you are confused. That is, in either case you are empty. Let me give you some advice, and heed it carefully, for it is the only thing that will help you in what is to come: From now on, do not let a single day pass without filling your life with an unselfish act."

We say farewell, and in the distance I hear him shout to me, "Tell the people what you have discovered!"

I set off from the farm in the direction of my city.

Today I have learned this: When human beings think only of their own self-interest and their

own problems, they carry death in their hearts, and everything they touch dies with them.

## IX. False Hopes

I have arrived outside the office of the doctor who was recommended to me, and I notice a small plaque that warns: “You who enter here, abandon all hope.”

When I ring the bell, the door opens and a nurse shows me into the waiting room. She points to a chair and I take a seat, as she sits down facing me behind her desk. Picking up a form, she inserts it in her typewriter and asks, “Name?” I answer her. “Age? Profession? Marital status? Blood type?”

The nurse continues filling in the form with my family’s medical history.

Then I answer her questions about my own medical history. (\*)

I describe for her all the accidents I have had since my childhood. (\*)

With a piercing stare, the nurse slowly inquires, “What is your criminal record?” I answer her with a certain uneasiness.

Then she asks, “What are your hopes and dreams?” Abruptly I stop my obedient answers to her questions and demand an explanation. Unperturbed, and staring at me coldly as if I were an insect, she replies, “Hopes and dreams are merely hopes and dreams! So you’d better start telling me yours, and be quick about it, because I have to go meet my boyfriend.”

Rising out of my chair, with one swipe I rip the form from her typewriter. Tearing it to pieces, I throw it in the wastebasket. Then I turn and cross the room to the door through which I entered, but now it won’t open. Exasperated, I yell at the nurse to open it, and when she doesn’t answer I turn and see that the room—is empty!

Striding to the other door, which leads to the examination room, I feel sure that the doctor will be there and I’ll tell him all of my complaints. “This must be how that wonderful nurse escaped,” I mutter as I open the door—and manage to stop myself just short of a wall. “A door with a wall behind it, what a great idea!” I exclaim. Then I rush back to the first door. This time it opens, but again I run into a wall that blocks my way. I realize that I’m trapped.

Over a loudspeaker I hear the doctor’s voice say, “Tell me about your hopes and dreams.” Regaining my composure, I testily reply that we’re all adults here, and obviously my greatest hope is simply to get out of this ridiculous predicament. But he says, “The plaque on the wall at the entrance warns anyone who enters here to abandon all hope.”

The situation now seems to be some kind of grotesque joke, so I sit down to see how it will turn out.

“Let’s begin again,” says the voice. “Remember how your childhood was filled with hopes and dreams. As time passed, however, you realized that many of them were never going come true. So you abandoned those beautiful projects. Remember? (\*)

“Later on,” the voice continues, “other hopes and dreams followed, and again you had to resign yourself to the fact that many of your desires would not come true. Remember? (\*)

“Even at this very moment, you have certain hopes and dreams. I don’t mean your hope of escaping this confinement, for the illusion we’ve staged here is already over. I’m speaking of something else. I am speaking about your hopes and dreams for the future. (\*)

“Which of your hopes do you secretly know will never come true? Go ahead, think this over honestly. (\*)

“Without hopes and dreams, we cannot live. But once we know that certain hopes are false, we can’t hold on to them forever, because sooner or later they’ll end in crisis and failure. If you can search deep within yourself and find the hopes you realize will never come true, and if you make the effort to abandon these hopes here forever, you will gain a greater sense of reality.

“So let’s return to our task. Seek out among your fondest hopes and dreams those you sense will never come true. But don’t be confused, for there are many things that do seem possible! Do not focus on these—choose only those hopes and dreams that will never be

realized. Go ahead now, search out your false hopes. Be completely honest with yourself, even if it's a bit painful. (\*)

“Resolve that when you leave this room, you will leave your false hopes behind forever. (\*)

“And now, let's finish this task. Let's study those other important hopes—the hopes and dreams you do consider possible. I'll give you some help: Guide your life only by what you believe is possible, or what you genuinely feel will come true. And it doesn't matter if later on some of these things don't work out, because they have, after all, given direction to your actions. (\*)

“And so, we have finished. You can leave now by the way you came in—and be quick about it, because I have to go meet my secretary.”

I get up. Walking the few steps to the door, I open it and leave the doctor's office. Looking at the plaque near the entrance, I see that it now reads, “You who leave, abandon here all false hopes.”

## X. Repetitions

It is night, and I'm walking down a dark, narrow alley. I don't see anyone, but through the fog I can make out the faint glow of a distant streetlight. My footsteps resound with an ominous echo. I quicken my pace, intent on reaching the streetlight ahead.

As I approach the light, a few steps away I see a human silhouette. It is an old hag, her face half-covered. Abruptly, in a raspy voice, she asks me the time. Peering at my watch, I answer, "It's three in the morning."

I walk away quickly, once more entering the fog and darkness, anxious to reach the next streetlight, which I see in the distance.

But there, once again, is the old hag. Looking at my watch, I see it now says two-thirty. I begin running toward the next streetlight, looking back over my shoulder and making sure I'm leaving the old woman behind, as she stands motionless in the distance. But when I rush up to the next streetlight, again I see her dark shape awaiting me. I look at my watch—it says two o'clock.

I begin running frantically, passing streetlights and old women until, exhausted, I can go no farther and stop midway between two glowing lights. Looking at my watch, I see in its crystal the face of the old woman. I realize that the end has come.

In spite of everything, I try to understand my predicament. I ask myself over and over again, "What am I running away from? What am I running away from?" The raspy voice answers me, "I am behind you and I am ahead of you. What has been, will be. But you are most fortunate, for you have been able to stop yourself and think for a moment. If you find the answer to this riddle, you will be able to escape from your own trap." (\*)

I feel dazed and weary. Still, I think there must be a way out. Something makes me begin to remember various failures in my life. I recall the first disappointments of my childhood. (\*)

Then I remember the failures of my youth. (\*)

Now I recall my more recent failures. (\*)

I realize that my defeats will keep repeating in the future, failure upon failure. (\*)

All of my defeats have had something similar about them—there was no agreement among the things I wanted to do. They were confused desires that wound up at odds with each other. (\*)

I discover that even now many of the things I desire to achieve in the future are contradictory. (\*)

I don't know what to do with my life, yet in my confusion I still want many things.

But I fear the future and worry that my previous failures will happen again.

Here in the fog of this narrow alley, my life is paralyzed between dying glimmers of light.

Suddenly a light goes on in a window and a voice calls out to me, "Is there something you need?"

"Yes!" I answer, "I need to get out of here!"

"Oh no—by yourself you cannot get out!"

"Then tell me, how do I get out of here?"

"I can't tell you. Besides, if we keep on shouting we're going to wake up all the neighbors. And we can't take chances with the neighbors' sleep! So good night."

The light goes out, and then I'm filled with one overwhelming desire—I must get out of this trap. I realize that my life will change only if I find a way out of here. This narrow alley appears to have direction and meaning, but is really only a repetition from birth to death—a false meaning. I will end up running from streetlight to streetlight until, at some moment, my strength becomes exhausted forever.

To my left I see a signpost with three arrows. The arrow for this alley bears the name, "Repetitions in Life." The second arrow points toward "Denial of Life," and the third marks the

direction of "Building Life." For a moment I reflect on this choice. (\*)

I choose the direction of the third arrow, "Building Life." As I leave the dark alley and emerge onto a broad and brightly lit avenue, I have the strong sense that I'm about to discover something of decisive importance.

