

Silo's Talk before a study group.  
06/05/2008 - Grotte  
Vengeance, reconciliation and their foundations.

**Giorgio:** I introduce to you the group that worked in the topic: Bárbara, Anabella, Patricia, Gabriela, the group has worked for 6 months looking for materials on a very specific topic: reconciliation in those situations of dictatorships, terrorism, mafia in which a person has killed a relative, a brother, a father, a friend, and it is not just a person in particular, but a system.

Bárbara's question at that moment after the 3 days in Punta de Vacas, after that very strong experience on the theme of reconciliation, which opened a whole thing: how can one reconcile when a system is doing something... something that destroys your life, not just a person, with whom do you reconcile?

Then we asked some friends that were there, what's this issue?, how do you get on with it, and they gave us a suggestion for a work that we found interesting: why don't you ask people who were in those situations?

**Silo:** That is to say, people whose relatives were killed, who had problems of that type.

**G:** Then we began with the Mothers of May Square<sup>1</sup>, later we met some cases of people killed by the mafia, or some relatives of Atocha's victims, later those from the Palestine-Israel conflict, of different parts, and there we discovered some very interesting things. What we discovered in some cases was that people not only gave a response of reconciliation but a response that we could say was like an inspired consciousness or something very illuminated. Then we asked ourselves: what goes on in that consciousness? Because it does not just reconcile. For example, in Palestine they shot a 12 year-old boy, and his dad in those 3 days he was in hospital he was deciding what to do, because it was not known if he would survive, but in the moment he was told that the boy had died, killed by an Israeli soldier, he decided to donate the organs to 5 Israeli children, saying "in the hope that (in particular the heart, to a girl that was dying in Israel), this girl some day will reach a position of power or where she can make some decisions, and remember that she's not only Israeli but she also has a Palestinian heart ". Then that answer of a very simple person who was not doing any particular work, this answer was for us a big illumination, this opened a possibility to also accelerate the search for other answers.

And a mother from Israel whose soldier son had been killed, when she knew about it she decided with other mothers to organise an activity against the occupation in Lebanon, until they retired the troops from Lebanon, she organized a hospital for Palestinian children in the Gaza strip, and now more than 5.000 Palestinian children have been saved in Israel by this hospital.

Then looking at different materials, we also went to look for the work of the commission of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa. We found many testimonies and accounts of people who arrived to a reconciliation with their son's or their father's or their mother's murderer. We discovered interesting parts of the cultural structure that allowed that process in South Africa. On Mandela's part and the Bantu culture, the Zulu culture also. In Bantu tradition there is the idea of the Ubuntu, they conceive humanity as a network, in which if you kill or destroy a part of it you have to do something to fix it and if you kill another for vengeance it will break that network again. Then that cannot work. This which has old roots, helped us to understand the whole work done in South Africa. More than 7.000 people passed through that process of Reconciliation.

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<sup>1</sup> NT Argentina's Mothers looking for the children of people killed by the military, given to other families to raise

We got much material also from other parts of the world. All that happened in Germany with the theme of Nazism and the processes of social reconciliation.

Well. Then we said, we need more tools, and this work that we are developing will have 3 outcomes:

A, at the meeting of the European Forum of Milan, to which we are inviting many of these people that will recount their personal stories.

We are also planning to carry out a small video, beginning with the words "to reconcile is not to forgive and forget" but there is some other work, and in 10 minutes to tell 1 or 2 of these stories that end in ways different from what one can imagine, the Palestinian doesn't arm him/herself and won't put bombs to kill Israeli soldiers, but rather carries out a different work which makes that transformation in their behaviour.

And the third thing we want to produce is a book that could recount, through this material, a thread that leads people to carry out that work we are always proposing. And not just theoretical work, but based on those experiences that already show different solutions and different responses that were given.

Before doing all this, the conference in October, the video and the book, we wanted to talk to you about it.

We wanted to discuss how this process of reconciliation is. What happens to these people? And what makes it possible in some cases (in other cases they were caught in the mechanism of resentment, of the impossibility to reconcile).

A more general thing we discovered was that in normal life, when this happens, it is as if one gets lost and falls in a very dark hole. And that fall, with all the hatred, the resentment, not knowing what response to give, staying day after day, or even for years, in a deep hole without knowing what response to give. And at some moment some of them gave a different response. So we said, something happened in that person's consciousness that enabled them to leave that dark hole and they were able to give a different response.

We would like to discuss with you what happens there, exactly at that point. We have many questions, but this is the main one.

Then we wanted to see if reconciliation is possible at a social level, or if each one has to carry out their own work. If it is possible also to carry out a work of a social type. In dictatorships, or in those situations, where we discover suffering in huge numbers of people, what the mechanism would be. To see how it could work. Because there is a lot of energy, and the sensation is that a lot of energy keeps them in that triangle, without finding an exit.

That would be the most interesting idea, of being able at the Humanist Forum to give a message and some tools to open this possibility.

**S:** You spoke of months of work. What type of work? Monographic work? Field work?

**G:** All kinds. We went to look for bibliography, on the Internet, we got in touch with people, we interviewed some of those people, we went to find those people. And there were very deep moments, because also for some of these, when we ask them what happened at that moment, not just the situations but rather what happened to them, they were difficult moments, because

didn't know themselves how to explain them. In one case someone told us "I stayed in a sensation of non-meaning for 6 years and then a miracle happened, I felt the need to give response to my life so I began to carry out some actions". But didn't know how to describe what happened inside. It was interesting, because something happened to them, but they were not able to describe it. Then we divided ourselves into groups, some worked more with the theme of the mafia, others with terrorism, others with the theme of dictatorships, and others with the last examples in Burma, Tibet, and other situations seen in Japan, others in historical reconstructions. And we gathered books, videos. We found an important support, for the first time, from the Italian national TV, RAI, with María Cufaro, a journalist who will introduce the Forum, will make a presentation of all these people. They gave us a lot of documentation, for example on the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation of South Africa. We have a lot of visual documentation, of what happened really, and of the difficulties of the victims' families to reconcile until reaching the moment of reconciliation, and also to see these processes. Then each one prepared a part and we saw each other once a week to discuss the materials. We also made some experiences, to see what happened, describing what could happen in that process, in each different situation. At a personal level, I believe that the experiences of each one of the people in the group were very important, we were deepening into the theme which until that moment was important but was not seen from that experiential point of view to see what happens to the person. For some of us it was also about finding our compassion, where we experience that compassion which allows us to enter into the life of the other, to see from that point of view what happens to them.

This is the work of these last 6 months. From Punta de Vacas one year of systematic work, gathering materials, videos.

**S:** This work is a good thing. And then, you want to end up producing some things. Good, first in the Forum of October, later in a video and finally a book, and to show all that giving it the dissemination of the case. Well. That is to say that there is a clear sense of communication and of social communication, as much as possible. Do you speak of governments?

**G:** Yes, governments too.

**S:** Do you? Because it gives the impression that there were people that had been affected by the problem. But what about the situation of a government that assumes a position in front of that?

**G:** The only thing that we found as a very interesting example was that of Mandela, because this process of Truth and Reconciliation allowed them to move away from what could have been a civil war, in 1994 when they got the new parliament and Mandela's government, it could have become a blood bath, 70% of the black population was ready to carry out a revolution of vengeance. There we saw the quite delicate presence of Mandela's government that tried to make this process gathering 20 civil judges, people of the civil society, with particular characteristics, and it formed the commission. That was the only example we had. Also this mixture of the Bantu culture based on not allowing everything to end up in revenge, because the fabric of Ubuntu was broken. It was the most important push. Mandela and his people saw they could not affect the Ubuntu again because a lot was broken already, then they had to do something to repair that part that was broken and to stop damaging the fabric again. That was a mixture of the government's action, an interesting culture and this commission that worked very well. All this solved in an interesting way a possible social deviation.

**Barbara:** A great problem with states terrorism is the secrets that have accompanied all the havoc. The families never knew the truth, unlike the process in South Africa, all that prevented the reconciliations. Because they lack the information.

**G:** Also, the negative part played by governments, for example the Italian government, in the mafia activities and terrorism all more or less covered up in many ways so that people never arrived to the truth. Many situations, unlike what happened in South Africa, many governments; also the Argentinean government didn't tell the truth for many years, this didn't allow the reconciliation process to begin. The issue was that a lot of people need, at least in order to begin that reconciliation process, to know the truth, not the lies, a state truth or from the Justice system. It is not enough truth from the justice, because many times it is not justice, then people perceive it as a real betrayal. It doesn't allow that process. We saw it mainly in Argentina, in Italy, the role of the governments was to impede that process.

**S:** I asked you the question regarding this, from which position you have been studying the theme of reconciliation, of the truth, etc. Because if it is from the population's more popular position, among people without social influence, it is one thing, if, on the other hand, it is done by a government, it is another thing. And what we are seeing in all this is that only governments or situations of power that belonged to other cultures, not the western culture, have been able to promote this. Clearly, this creates many problems, because we are talking about giving up one's own culture which is based, among other things, on vengeance.

If we go there, we go into very deep and very complicated themes. About the mental forms of cultures. You mentioned what happened, for example, with people who have strong social conditions, like Mandela. People with strong social conditions, so strong that they could overthrow governments and colonialisms, like in the case of Gandhi. When you tell me about Ubuntu or Ahimsa, you are speaking of cultural support outside the western culture.

This brings us many problems. Because if the solution to these matters is to base ourselves on other cultures, rather than on elements from our culture or on the Western culture we have a double problem.

First, the western culture has created those situations in all those places. And second, not being able to achieve reconciliation with the ideological patterns of the western culture.

This is doubly problematic.

**Question:** But then in the case of Luther King the civil rights are achieved but not the reconciliation process?

**S:** Luther King in the measure that he connects with Gandhi's thought, some Russian and other pacifists, they can do their thing, but not, it doesn't arise from there. Luther King and the people who accompanied him are not an example of western culture. We are speaking of the black subculture. It has cohesion, and can exercise great pressure or decide situations because of their number, not an isolated black person speaking. Because they have created a subculture, in the United States, with millions of people who do things.

So it seems that the western culture, in these matters, has created problems, honestly.

This thing is a little hard to accept.

Then one has the theme of revenge immediately in front of us. If we speak of reconciliation it is necessary to speak of overcoming revenge.

The theme of revenge begins with the Hammurabi Code and ends in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The theme of revenge is part of a cultural field. So, who knows, we may have to examine

our own mental structure with revenge strongly integrated in us. In the head of those who feel westerners, there it goes. The theme of revenge is strongly integrated.

And then it would be necessary to dismantle, among other things, that mechanism of revenge. That deep belief that I can solve something by making the other one suffer is at the root of the suffering. It seems that the solution, for the side that wants revenge, is to make the other suffer what the other has made me or other people suffer.

The emphasis is in making the other. That is the theme of revenge. And in the West that is very much stressed and very strong.

We will have to study the structure of revenge. It will create for us cultural problems, because revenge is at the base of this culture.

Instead of beginning to take immediate measures, to do this or that, it seems necessary to carry out some reflections about what is revenge and what we experience when we believe that retaliation will solve the problems that hinder reconciliation. That is very strong. A lot of people tell you, they cannot reconcile, because it is as if they are betraying the relatives left behind, they killed my relative, my brother, my father and others, if I reconcile with that murderer it is as if somehow I was agreeing with them. That is the mechanism.

The things already get very complicated there. The very cultural form forces me into revenge. Because otherwise I feel that I am betraying those that have been harmed.

And that is a very extraordinary thing.

So here a study is required on the mechanism of revenge.

**Loredana**: Even in the mafia's codes, for example, the crimes of honour. The crime of honour was in our penal code.

**S**: In the penal code?

**L**: That is to say that they had a reduction in the punishment if it was a crime of honour.

**G**: If you killed as a crime of honour, you had a reduction.

**S**: The Hammurabi Code is the one that brings in this whole area. It all comes from there. It is interesting.

**Alicia**: But did this extend, for example, not only to killing the other, but also to human justice, to prison? To all that, at other levels?

**S**: To all that, at other levels. But it is an entire structure.

Then it is not a question of a testimonial thing that one does to get rid of a certain internal tension we are suffering, like making a kind of catharsis. No, we are speaking of an entire structure.

**G**: Up to ending up accepting the death penalty.

**S**: The death penalty undoubtedly is accepted. Even more, they make a kind of amphitheatre, or theatre for the relatives, so that they see the other getting fried. Now we will have about

20.000 volts, which is always interesting, so that people see what is done to the one that harmed their relatives. And it also serves as an example for others. So, it is not just social punishment, but rather it is an example given so that nobody in future will go that way.

Everything is badly done. The thing is not like that.

But well, this matter is not questioned in depth. They reach certain points but won't go further on, they do not want to move the thing much further on.

It is very complicated, but without any doubt it is necessary to do things. But it is an entire cultural structure and a social structure we need to modify. It is certain that sometimes when things are done, like those mentioned a while ago, they also influence socially, they are things that influence other human groups. But they are not what modify the whole structure.

The system has to change, in that sense. Then to think about overcoming revenge is to think about the overcoming the system. If we speak about ultimate goals.

Otherwise it's just patching up. There are those who make charity to solve the problem of poverty. It is fine if somebody goes to a person in a very complicated situation and supports them economically, but while the structure of the system is not solved, it won't solve the theme of poverty. And it won't be solved with salvation armies and charity nuns. That is fine, nobody says that those people are harmful, but it is not the way to solve the theme of the system.

So, to overcome the theme of revenge is to overcome the very system. The struggle to overcome revenge is the same struggle against the system and its whole structure.

It is very strange that solutions at some moments came from cultural backgrounds other than the West. It is strange. It is highly suspect.

And, of course, if one really speaks of truth and reconciliation, one of the most important elements in the truth is to make clear from where the mechanism of revenge appears in my own consciousness. It is as if in the end I have to put myself against my culture. This creates a problem for me.

To be against the culture from where I arise is, somehow, to universalise myself and to stop being part of a culture, to become part of a universal culture, of the human being, not of those that are in a certain area, and I am identified with those that are in certain areas. Very soon I will see that I am identified with a certain area, I will see the horror that produces in me different clothes, the horror that produces in me a different fashion, different food. Undoubtedly I am aligned with the culture of this area. Absolutely aligned.

This goes a lot beyond the personal thing, of course it has to do with states, governments, and all that. And as facts, they also go a lot beyond individual people. It is supposed that the children carry the guilt of their parents. Is this so? And why? There is much of that entrenched in the western culture.

And that is not solved. It will continue being a problem.

If my grandfather made some disaster, I have to continue to kneel down, bang my chest, and repeat what a barbaric thing my grandfather did, and I have to say it many times.

While that is not solved we won't solve many other things.

Then revenge takes other corners. Like exercising a tribal revenge. All that exists today. So this theme is to be treated very globally. It is a very strong theme, very important. I would say one of the most important themes.

Nietzsche says, before the XX century begins, in the XIX century, the only solution for the human being is to save man from revenge. But I will tend to ignore Nietzsche for Nietzsche was a German author and the Germans are identified, it is supposed, with the mess that happened in the decade of the '40, then while I exclude Nietzsche's thought I eliminate possibilities of interpretation of the phenomena. No, I should not take out that. His contribution was very important

Observe this type of phenomena and you will see the number of obstacles we find on the road.

*Yes, it is fine to save man from revenge, in certain aspects yes, in others no, good!* The one that has done something, well, I can forgive him, but he cannot be forgiven socially because it is necessary to set an example.

This is a very delicate theme that plays very deeply at the root of this culture.

The disasters that the Dutch did, not from Holland, but from South Africa, you don't have be responsible for all that Peter (a friend from Holland present at the talk), believe me.

**Peter:** No, I don't take blame for that. Up to now.

**S:** But if you don't blame yourself, someone may come to you saying: but you... you! Notice the mess there is.

The Spaniards are being blamed for the disasters in South America. Maxi (friend from Spain), if you are not sorry you are not safe.

Do you find that this will be the way to solve problems? No. The problem exists. Undoubtedly the problem is there.

Then, will we have a tribal catharsis? It doesn't sound to me like solving the problem, it sounds to me like a new revenge masquerading as justice. That way goes through very subtle passageways. Revenge happens under the pretence of justice. That is not saving the human being from revenge.

**B:** Anyway, is it worth talking to human groups, also with big associations and to propose a journey of reconciliation, because in the journey toward reconciliation revenge can be at least reduced? Is it worth anyway trying to work with large groups?

**S:** Yes, it is worth it.

But if we want to speak of truth, justice and all those things, it will be necessary to begin to clarify all that. If you will discuss all that at the Forum, if you will carry out an accumulation of materials that end as a movie and a book, that contributes to the dissemination of this work, even more of a reason to clarify these things from the beginning.

There are predialogues (NT presuppositions), pre, previous to the verdicts that will take place in that commission, that have to be clarified. I am trying to talk about that, about the former, rather than assuming that we all agree what revenge is, and how it is necessary to avoid revenge,

when we cannot truly agree at all with all this. So, perhaps we need a very deep reflection before we move onto that Forum and to those publications.

Perhaps we have to carry out a very deep reflection about that. How revenge is born in the social group and in the human mind. Which is the belief at the bottom of our minds; wouldn't it be the belief that making the other suffer compensates that cosmic imbalance that has taken place due to the injustice he/she did?

All that, I believe, admits discussion and admits revision. It is not a point that should not be touched on. When someone begins with that history that there are certain things that should not be touched on, well, we already know it won't be possible to advance. I say it is necessary to deal with everything.

The theme of revenge should be reviewed in depth. Not so much others have done, because what others do... What I will do, or what I shall do, or what I intend to do, to put an end to revenge. And to put an end, finally, to violence.

I believe in this way the social behaviour inspired by going there is fine, to modify those conditions and to publicise it. But if one wants to change things at their root, we should study in depth the theme of revenge.

We have spoken of several things, but I find the theme of revenge the central one. And for that reason I brought in Nietzsche's word. Because revenge is the central theme in all that is going to happen later.

It is necessary to see how the other feels, now we will hang him because he murdered his relative, look how well we hung him, what do you feel? Is the problem solved? Don't speak like that, the problem is not solved in his head. He may be able to tell people: good, justice has been done, but he won't feel that way it. Because there are those registers, but socially it is thought about this way.

It doesn't have a social solution until we reach the root. And the root is the system.

**Loredana:** That is to say there are codes that have another direction with a different intention. I was thinking that these social codes that make revenge the way of solving these conflicts, these sufferings, they have a different intention to solving the conflicts, just the opposite; they are creating another type of suffering, because it is a system, it is not an individual thing. Then there is another intention behind, with those codes you can create something. You don't want people to stop suffering, quite the opposite.

**S:** Now, as Bárbara says, to dynamise things in our direction, making it all clear, it is worthy, undoubtedly it is, and that Forum, movie production, the books, all that dissemination, all that is worthy. Not the smallest doubt. There is nothing to stop that. It is necessary to encourage it.

But pay attention to the root of the problem of revenge which has not been sufficiently studied and sufficiently clarified. But the direction is very good, and the work done is great, that is not what we are discussing, that goes. And all that those ladies of May Square say, and all that they tell those entangled in the mess of the Apartheid, all that is worthy, of course. Also good examples, it also makes sense as examples of all done by them, it is worthy, it goes towards social progress.

But the root is not solved. Of course it goes towards social progress. And one can do a lot. It gives the sensation, that there is a bigger sensibility to this entire theme in the populations. It



seems that a bigger sensibility has awakened which was not there 10 or 20 years ago, But if it is certain, completely certain that a bigger sensibility has awakened in the populations, what are they waiting for to get out to the streets? Now that whole towns are being slaughtered because they are from another culture. How can we fit this in? There are hundred of thousands of people in other cultural areas that are receiving bombs, we are speaking of slaughtered civilian populations, hundreds of thousands.

**Alicia:** That because we do not reach the root of the problem?

**S:** Of course. The root of the problem is not reached.

**A:** Because it changes the sensibility, but it is still sort of peripheral.

**S:** The root of the problem is not reached. Now, anyway there is bigger sensibility, and the more pressure it makes the better. I have no doubts about it. But the root of the problem is not reached.

**A:** The interesting thing in making these productions, would be to show the root of the problem.

**S:** Hopefully we could do a good piece of work that we would show the root of the problem. Apart from illustrating it with all that we know, and with all the compulsions, and all the interviews, of course.

But if we could make a phenomenological description of the theme of revenge, it would be spectacular. What are those roots of revenge and how are they registered in fact internally?

**Question:** Do you think then that these people who have found a different resolution have touched the root of the problem and then they managed to overcome it? Because revenge is there in a lot of the testimonies, but it doesn't fit for them, revenge doesn't correspond to them, right? It can be that for some people it gets out of their scheme, revenge does not correspond to their mechanisms, putting themselves against their own community. Because the Palestinian who gave the organs to the Israelis...

**S:** Certainly, he/she is a traitor for many of them. Good, we will have this excellent cases, exemplary ones, first rate, as those mention there.

But it does not reach the bottom of the theme, the basic structure of the theme of revenge. It doesn't reach it.

And we see a certain social progress, but it also terrifies us... We see the social progress of these last few years in comparison to previous years, but it also terrifies us, all that is happening and the things not being talked out because they are happening in far away places. Highly suspect. We have not advanced much if we are still swamped there. It is monstrous.

**Question:** Does it have to do with a refinement of the mechanisms dehumanisation that the system has developed?

**S:** Yes, of course, it is like that. But I tell you that this theme demands from us a deeper study. And well, will we need some our thinkers, why not? To go to the root of the theme. But all the other direction I find fantastic. Moreover, you have deadlines, procedures, ways of presenting it, it is perfect. It is not any old idea in the air, no, it is very well orientated. October is the time, something like that, good. But it would be good to have a description of the basic element of the structure of vengeance, the element at the root of all that comes derived from it.

**B:** Then more than us carrying out an investigation on people with reconciliation experiences, we should research people with the theme of the vengeance. Not more as a social thing, to begin an investigation on the personal. Could we begin from there?

**S:** Without any doubts. It is worth it.

**G:** Up to now we discarded 99% of the cases for they had vengeance as a matrix, and we worked on the 1 in a 1000, the 1 in a million that did something different. Because that was the discovery: something different exists. But about vengeance, we have a lot of material.

**S:** Because it puts us in conflict with the root of our own culture. That is the theme. It puts us in conflict.

**Question:** And does the root of our own culture have to do with the mental structure that generated that culture?

**S:** I think so. Because there are explicit and implicit values, there are values, there are judgments about what goes first and second, what is better and worse, what should be done and not done, an entire system of judgements.

Good, I don't intend to create a big mess with this, but to stress the necessity to investigate the roots of revenge, while we do other things and we go on with the work we had projected already, because it is very good.

But, we need a presupposition (NT antepredicativo), a thing previous to all this. We lack foundation, because it is not simply the case to draw attention to a tearjerker, kind of a sentimental mush. No, it is not that, it is necessary to understand. Because if they are talking, we should really understand. It is not about tearful sentimentality. We don't understand the problem just because we feel horrified by it. We don't solve it. We are sensitive people who get horrified in front of those atrocities. But that doesn't solve them.

The Internal Look speaks of all that. Of all that horrifies me but it is not clear what is best and what is worst. If you have that chapter of The Internal Look at hand, we will see that it was already working there, all that happens on the first day, I believe, in the first hours of that day, in The Dependence. These are all small sentences that create problems, problems with our cultural roots.

*There is no meaning in life if everything ends with the death.* Here it goes. It means that if all ends with the death nothing we do is worth anything. Well, it's somehow proposed this way.

*All justification for actions, whether these actions are despicable or admirable, is always a new dream that leaves only emptiness ahead.*

*God is something uncertain.* We cannot appeal then to God, has God said that we do this or that...?

*Faith....* "Well, I do it based on my faith, on my convictions..." *Faith is something as variable as reason and dreams.*

*"What one should do" may be thoroughly discussed, ...* "You should do this, the law, states it,

justice states it, common sense..." OK, well, but I say I am completely against it". This is not the theme... *but in the end there is nothing that definitively supports any position.*

Good, but what about social responsibility, due to responsibility we take charge of other people's problems, for example. *The "responsibility" of those who commit themselves to something is no greater than the responsibility of those who do not.* No, the one who makes a commitment has a higher level than the one who doesn't. No, why? We have to discuss this.

It is a mess. OK, if we want to do things seriously we have to reach the root. Let us not stop the machine of the things we are already doing well. But I believe that we need more depth than the way we have working up to now.

*I move according to my interests*, like those say now they throw bombs defending their interests, But what kind of argument is that? How can one speak this way? It is monstrous. *I move according to my interests, and this makes me neither a coward nor a hero.* I has nothing to do with moving according to my interests.

*"My interests" neither justify nor discredit anything.*

*"My reasons" are no better than the reasons of others, nor are they worse.*

*Cruelty horrifies me*, ... Imagine a cruel person, a scoundrel, it even gives you a vegetative (NT bodily) problem, he disgusts you, morally and physically. Hopefully we will arrive to that situation in which the human being can reject violence physically. It's not such a strange thing, it is possible. *Cruelty horrifies me, but neither because of this nor in itself is it better or worse than kindness.* Of course, it does horrify me; of course it creates problems for me. Of course I won't subscribe to such thing, but where is the foundation? What is the basis to say that cruelty is worse than kindness? Then one says, "well, but if it was this way the world would not be..." Good, I don't know, those are consequences, but which is the foundation. We are speaking of foundations, of the root.

If we want to do the things really seriously, in depth, we have to go to the roots.

These times are not very philosophical; it is difficult to go to the roots, but... These themes are putting us under an obligation to go to the roots.

**Question:** But, is not the foundation in the register of kindness or of cruelty?

**S:** Yes but that register won't be enough. Because when you see that others seem not to have such register, you may think: are we only speaking of my register or is it a universal register? A register that happens in all people? As you can see that doesn't resolve the problem. It saves me to have that register, but that doesn't solve the situation. No, the theme is serious.

**Question:** As a question to ask oneself before beginning to study the problem of the root, could the question be: when did all this begin?

**S:** When did all this begin? It began a long time before your birth (laughs). It began many centuries ago. But well, we have to dismantle it. It began a long time ago. And we are still riding it. It didn't begin 10, 20, 30, 100 years ago. This whole badly built thing has been there for a long time and today it is reaching a point where it could explode, today it is reaching the limit, what began such a long time ago, and it has continued growing.

*What I or others say today is of no value tomorrow. What? It's the pits! It is like not paying one's debts. What I or others say today is of no value tomorrow. And if I do it, it is because of compulsions from other things, because of obligations that fall upon me, because of unavoidable things I have in me. That I cannot avoid. Not because it is worthy, but because my focus has changed, then what I committed myself to do today is seen differently. Then if I my hands were free I would not complete it.*

*To die is not better than to live or never to have been born, but neither is it worse. That is encouraging: neither is it worse.*

*I discovered, not through teachings but through experience and meditation, that there is no meaning in life if everything ends with death.*

Good, this chapter highlights some problems. They are problems which demand that we respond from the foundation, they are problems which demand that we respond from the roots. Rather than explanations that have been accumulated through social pressure.

Foundations as an issue sound today as something strange, distant. Philosophers' stuff, but they are the essential thing. Root problems should be studied from their roots, and we should make root descriptions.

We should not lose track of the things we are doing for that reason. It is all well. We continue ahead. The clearer the better.

But why not encourage that search for the foundation? And in this case we are talking about studying the foundation of the act of revenge, how does it take place? How does it happen? How is it manifested? How is it overcome? We will have very good examples, and they come from people who have overcome their situations of conflicts, examples of people who have overcome their contradictions.

But we don't have a kind of an universal law about the way revenge works and how to overcome it.

I insist on this. In going to the roots.

I see that this should not displace the activities we are already launched towards, which are excellent, especially in these times. Is it very well outlined up to now, you are studying the theme robustly, getting material, you want to have a good result to give it ample dissemination so that it reached many more people, it is planned as to organise, so that this is energised more, is it planned to make an appealing thing so that people end up participating of this organisation, how could it be any better? It is well.

And some, few or many, I don't know, will have to study; it is already the moment to study in depth the structure of revenge and the structure of overcoming revenge. Just saying this. Nothing else.

So when confronting ideas and procedures and so on, if you tell me you are doing this, what can I say? That is excellent, because it is. It is very good, there is no contribution in this matter on our part.

We simply highlight the need to go to the roots. To the foundation.

To go to the foundation, for those who get into that, notice that it will create problems. Problems, because one is immersed in a culture, with a certain mind.

But good, having these problems is sometimes worthwhile.

It is worth the pain at least to look for that foundation. Otherwise anything can be replaced by something else. The theme is the foundation. Parmenides.

Not much to add to this. Hopefully people, some people, will begin to have an interest and pleasure to do these works, begin to try to deepen how it is generated in me that act of revenge, of vengeance, in general of violence. How it is that it begins to take place in my head, inside me. Perhaps they can take examples from others who are giving me information, welcome. But I have to end up seeing the nucleus of all that. That nucleus is so heavy, so fundamental that will be necessary to transfer.

It is the transference of an entire culture.

If we have such a tremendous mess transferring a problem with a friend we had when we were little, imagine how it should be to transfer a cultural nucleus! You won't solve it cathartically. There is a difference between a cathartic solution and a transference solution. To transfer the nucleus, the oppressive nucleus of a culture is something serious. And well, somebody will have to work on this.

There we are in that nucleus. Violence, revenge, vengeance. Reconciliation nowhere to be seen.

**Question:** Can myths give clues for this?

**S:** Can give clues. But it is necessary to enter very strongly in this theme. Meaning, to experience it. To experience that theme of revenge inside oneself.

**Question:** I think a monographic investigation will be made but also a field investigation listening to people's responses.

**S:** Yes. And there are things that can be much help too. But sooner or later we will have to give a form to that structure. And that won't be simply about the opinions of some and others. You will have achieved a very big synthesis.

In short, I don't believe that is the moment or the place to mortify ourselves with this theme.

Quite the opposite. We can say that we are working well, we do the best we can, go ahead. And if we notice that we need more depth, good, it will not hamper what we are doing.

And we have not seen, we have not seen in all the books, a large number of books and authors, and we have not seen the theme of revenge, violence, retribution, dismantled from within. We have not seen it dismantled from within. It is a theme that deserves to be studied in depth.

**Question:** An indicator that one is working well to expose the root is when one notices the paradox in that system of beliefs. Because, for example, when one day I saw in the butcher shop all those pieces of meat, I had a paradoxical sensation, like cadavers, no? I never had before. And I understood my beliefs regarding eating animals. It came as a game, while before it was inside. I saw it as paradoxical re: my point of view that before... on the other hand when they are working, I don't see them as paradoxical, I see them as coherent. The register of the

contradictory thing of the system of violence is that I see as paradoxical the fact that the son carries the father's blames. This is paradoxical. Irony, game, like making it lighter, to get rid of the tension.

**S:** Why not, we can have many roads to enter.

Yes, yes. Since you have brought up the theme, imagine the theme of murdering animals, to which we are very accustomed and very happy. People don't want to speak about the theme. But it is a serious theme.

**Question:** Here in Italy there is a law that if you kill a cat they give you a fine, or something like that.

**S:** Yes, but if I eat a cow there is no problem. It is a mess. And I believe that if we have a minimum of sensibility, it should create a problem for us.

**Alicia:** The sensibility in that field, ends with not eating human flesh.

**S:** In not eating human flesh, and what about the meat of the animals. Because yes, there are problems.

**A:** To kill humans or to eat animals is not a problem. In this sensibility.

**Question:** It would be necessary to see how many people can do it, to kill animals for example. To do so is not the same as eating them.

**S:** It is a serious matter. Since we look at a detail, no?

**Question:** Could it be that the problem (she says: can solve the problem to know when everything has begun?). Perhaps the problem is exactly this, that we get stuck on the why and who has done something that has made us suffer, but does that creates only anger, I mean, revenge. On the other hand we don't think about the action. Any man, able or not, when wronged, opens up to the help of other people, then in this sense the pain is deeply human. If I on the other hand, don't think about that, I think about something else, about who shot me, for example, I experience anger, and I justify my revenge saying you shot me because you feel superior, then I can retaliate. Perhaps the problem is that we never think of what happened to us, we think just about the why and the who. Perhaps that's why we are never able to leave this circle, perhaps it is not important who has done something to us. To link the personal with the social, among the Jews still today some hate their pursuers from many years ago, because they are stuck to the why and they never think of the act. None of us is entitled to telling you because you harmed me yesterday that today you are still guilty, that I make you much guiltier and for much longer.

**S:** Could be (laughs).

**G:** You mentioned the Hammurabi Code, would you like to tell us...

**S:** It is the code that gives social and religious norms, because it is organising the social behaviour. The Hammurabi Code says, if you cut my ear I cut yours. It is a compensation way. If I do some harm, I can do you harm proportional to that. If you cut my hand I cut yours. If you kill me I kill you. And so on. There begins a true system of justice, justice that we can discuss or not, but it begins with the Hammurabi Code.

It was very interesting and very intelligent also, in its moment, the power to determine that a harm done by somebody was compensated by doing him the same thing.

**G:** Treat others as you would have them treat you... Cut him what he has cut you...

**S:** Of course, the same system. And it worked very well, so it went on, because things were still very disorganised at that moment, but it took those roots and they were strengthened as time went by.

But the fact was not overcome, if somebody cuts my ear, I reconcile and I overcome the matter. No. I have the code already. So I cut his ear and that's it. It is something very perceptual.

And there is much less the idea that if I am now the one who does the disaster, not someone else, if I am the one that does the disaster, how do I compensate for it. That is another question. They were just thinking how to compensate me when someone has harmed me.

Well. But what do I do when I produce disasters? Because I also produce them. How do I compensate for that. We say, very elementarily, to overcome something that I have done, something not harmful that I have done to someone else, try to compensate twofold. I will have to give him another ear. Full of ears. To compensate what I do but doubly. Because it is supposed that I want to treat the other the way that I want to be treated. If the other has a deficiency because of me, I would have to compensate that deficiency.

But the Hammurabi Code works everything there with that very immediate balance, a very immediate compensation. It was good in its moment.

**G:** In Judaism, an eye for an eye...

**S:** If, but it comes from there. Yes, yes, that's root. It is inspired there. It is not an invention of Judaism, it is an invention that was already in that code.

**Question:** In other cultures that form... is not there

**S:** No, no. It is very interesting, as in its moment it gives some behavioural rules and they made an entire penal code with that. It is fantastic.

**Loredana:** Also the current codes are also based on the concept of retribution, that is to say, the bigger and stronger the screw up, the more years in jail.

**S:** Yes, yes, it is retribution. That introduced in its moment an important advance. There are things that one finds to be monstrous, but one realises they were an advance in that moment.

The other day we talked about the murder of whole populations. Primitive peoples arrived at another town, slaughtered everybody, and took their things. At a later step when human groups begin to be sedentary, they emerge from the troglodyte stage of the caves, of the caverns, so they begin to remain in certain places, they begin to train, to tame the vegetables, to tame the animals, and to tame other people. There appears what was later known as slavery.

Slavery, although a hideous fact, is a step up in social progress, rather than simply killing everybody to take their things. It is a curious thing.

**Question:** They no longer killed, but appropriated.

**S:** Yes, you use their working force, as if he was a donkey. You use the force of other people's work.

**Question:** Today we are only a small step ahead of the Hammurabi Code.

**S:** Very small, hardly any. A little bit ahead on slavery.

When it was discovered that slavery should be abolished it was because the slave did not produce enough. When they saw, in the cultivation of cotton that if they paid a little bit to the one working with the cotton, the quantity of cotton they picked up, their yield went up. Then they said, it is better for business to pay him a little bit if that ends up in a higher yield, than not to pay him, but we have to feed them, they go to sleep any time, they get drunk, they don't work, and all that they say. Then clearly, the liberators appeared in the United States, against the others who wanted to keep black people as slaves in the south. It appeared that the matter was to fight for freedom, but the abolition of slavery happened because it was better business.

For whatever reason, it was good that they abolished slavery. But always so manipulated and so deceitful.

But the abolition of slavery worked this way. It was observed it made more profit when workers were paid a small thing.

Anyway, it's social progresses. Social progress goes like that, with so many difficulties, with so many obstacles.

Slavery was abolished so recently, one cannot believe it. A little more than a century ago. In 1840 slavery was abolishing in many parts of America. It feels like 50.000 year ago –like old things, that he/she goes, just round the corner.

The death penalty is still there. And it is also present socially in those disasters. It is no longer to execute the culprit of a crime in a country. No, it is genocide, for example. Imagine, the death penalty is child play next to genocide.

We should make a small effort to look for those roots that allow us to understand. Because everything is empiric, all empiric, but without foundation.

It is good to set deadlines. If in October you will make that Forum and so on, you will also have a kind of outline of the foundation of non-violence, an outline of the foundation of the way to overcome violence, an outline of the foundation of reconciliation, but we will still be far from the foundation, if it happens that outlining the foundations is not something practical. But it is what allows us to understand and to be able to do things.

Let us set up the bases of the foundations.

**Loredana:** It has a little to do with the difference between truth and opinion, since you have spoken of Parmenides. In his poem, Parmenides speaks of this, of the difference between truth and opinion, among people who think according to socially driven ideas, for example in this case: that it is necessary to retaliate, and, on the other hand, the truth that could be discovered if we went more in depth.

**S:** The opinion, for the Greeks of certain times, was doxa. Today, on the other hand, a “doctor” is the one who knows, who creates a doctrine. And not, it was an opinion, something variable.



**Alicia:** An opinologist.

**S:** Doxa, opinion. There is a great difference between the truth of what is said and the opinion that that has to do with the great public, almost with the Media. The general opinion, is very far from the truth.

Well, but these are other themes.