

Comments on Silo's Message - Based on Point 3 of Chapter I from the Book

This document is a compilation of notes made over a period of almost two years. These notes correspond to a need I felt to clarify myself about behavioral mechanisms related to Silo's Message, specifically within the framework of the Principles of Valid Action. However, I inevitably ended up reflecting upon all of Chapter I.

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 meditates in humble search.

Point 3 says: "Here sacrifices, feelings of guilt, and threats from the beyond are rejected." This sentence was my main object of reflection when I started studying Silo's Message¹ a while back. I had never really considered the importance of this chapter, let alone the personal meaning that this phrase had for me.

The desire to go deeper in this reflection arose spontaneously within me. I thought that Silo, known for his universal approach, would not put anything superfluous in this chapter. I realized that this sentence not only "spoke" to me, but to everyone. I realized that "guilt" was not just the product of my education, but something deeper and more socially widespread. I had the intuition that guilt was part of a broader perspective in which suffering was socially accepted as a behavior and a way of being.

For several months I kept the issue of "guilt" copresent most of the time, and occasionally worked on it directly. By being aware of the topic, I realized that it was acting in my co-presence and found myself repeatedly noticing how guilt operated within me. This understanding manifested not only as thought, but most importantly in my behavior in general and within specific situations. In the way I relate to the world I could see more clearly how those mechanisms operate and how my responses are conditioned by guilt. For me feeling guilty has a distinct and familiar flavor, closely linked to fear. Examples of fears that affect my behavior are: fear of "not keeping up," fear of "being criticized," fear of being unable to meet the imagined expectations of others. These fears

¹ Silo's Message. Published by Latitude Press. Copyright 2002, 2007 Silo.

essentially have to do with death.

Feeling guilty opens the inner door to a widespread fear. It is not loving myself. It is not accepting the way I am. Feeling guilty is a way to degrade and censor myself.

I noticed that when I feel guilty I register a lack of freedom, and it was this that made me recognize the importance of the Principle of Freedom.

The Principle of Freedom has two parts. The first part works with the idea of not harming others, and the second part works with the idea of being free to do whatever I want.

Initially I found this Principle quite easy to understand. It seemed reasonable and morally correct that it is important not to harm anyone, and that this would leave me free to do whatever I want.

The first part of the principle makes sense because it is not possible to evolve harming others. Not so the second part, which says, "I can freely do whatever I want." To do whatever I want did not present itself as something easy, but quite the opposite. For example, if I wanted to watch five films one after another, I would feel no qualms about doing so because it wouldn't harm anyone. But what if I wanted to watch 10 movies at a sitting? In theory, that should also be fine because it wouldn't harm anyone either; but for some reason it seemed like something "one must not do." Noticing that kind of censorship was what gave me the opportunity to see how guilt operates.

Taking the example of the films, it is clear that it is not a very interesting activity when measured in hours and time spent. But what if those movies had to do with an investigation I was doing? Would watching so many then be more "justifiable"? And if it were, then what was it that would justify this action? This kind of justification or moral judgment does not fit with the Principles or with Silo's Message.

To do freely whatever one wants implies precisely that there is no censorship or justification. Censorship and justification are only relevant if guilt inhibits ones actions, thoughts and/or feelings.

I realized that the inhibition generated by guilt was subtle, that it sometimes went almost unnoticed, but that nevertheless it was restricting my freedom and stalling my actions.

A lifelong friend and companion in the Message invited me to work with him on the Principles of Valid Action. That project did not materialize, but it did inspire me to write a short story interpreting the Principle of Freedom. I included a brief explanation at the end of the story.

9. PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM

"When you harm others you remain enchained. But if you do not harm others, you can freely do whatever you want."

When they reached the village he immediately began hearing all kinds of stories about the sage. The sage was considered such because his answers to the toughest questions were almost always given promptly, with love and simplicity.

Loahmar wanted to deeply understand the meaning of freedom. He wanted to understand beyond what seemed apparent. He knew that when you harm others you are enchained to that act. He understood very well that all the damage you do to others is permanent damage to yourself. But when there was apparently no harm done, how could the wise affirm that we could do whatever we really wanted? That implied almost unlimited freedom... The idea was simply revolutionary. The words "whatever you want" floated in his imagination with a mixture of longing and deep apprehension.

Loahmar looked into the sage's eyes and asked: "What is the correct behavior?"

The wise man looked back and said, "You already know the answer."

Loahmar did not need to say anything in reply because he knew that his own freedom began and ended exactly where the freedom of others began.

Smiling, the sage said, "I guess you want to know how to recognize the things that prevent us from doing what we want."

Loahmar felt that the wise man could read his thoughts, and silently nodded in affirmation.

"You will recognize them by their form of aggression," said the sage. "If you can name the things that hold you back in your actions, then you can learn to avoid them."

Loahmar didn't understand very clearly what the sage meant and quietly asked him to clarify.

"Just observe nature," said the wise man.

Loahmar thanked him without words for his attention. Going back down the mountain that afternoon, he sat to meditate on the words of that extraordinary person. After much deliberation he concluded that the wise man's words were not at all clear, and decided simply to pay attention to his natural surroundings, with the intuition that the meaning of the wise man's words would be revealed.

It was a hot day and a little gadfly bit him on the arm. Annoyed at the intrusion, Loahmar took the gadfly by the wing and asked, "Why do you attack me?" And the gadfly said, "I just need to eat. Aren't you supposed to learn from this experience?" The answer surprised Loahmar, and he realized that this sting was the sign he was waiting for.

Without hesitation he named the gadfly "Sacrifice," seeing how every sacrifice punctured and attacked his mind. He understood that he could not be free if avoiding that discomfort were the motivator for his actions.

As dusk fell, other insects began to bite his face. Again he recognized that pain as exactly the same he had so often felt internally when guilt seized and detained him in his acts or forced him to act without conviction. Without a doubt, the best name he could find for the mosquito was "Guilt."

In the long hours of the night that followed he awoke several times to feel that his legs had been bitten again. It was a distinct bite, dark, cold and unforgiving. He opened his eyes in the dim light and felt the poison entering his blood from a huge spider. As fear enveloped him with its network of ghosts, he named the spider "Fear."

Dreams took over the rest of the night and Loahmar dreamed he was with the wise man describing his experience and naming the internal enemies of freedom. He felt that his questions had been answered. Very calmly he awoke and realized in the silence of dawn the need to learn to act without fear, without guilt and without sacrifice, and that this was the path of righteous action.

The taste of freedom filled all his senses.

The sage winked at him and said:

"We hope that in the future, the word NORMAL is released from the faction of the irresponsible and is used with all the dignity it deserves.

"Then we will say:

It is normal for me to help you when you need me.

It is normal for me to forget that I have helped you.

It is normal to think that you are not guilty but that I made a mistake.

It is normal for me to become responsible without feeling any guilt.

It is normal for me not to forgive or be forgiven, because you and I are reconciled."

A Brief Explanation:

In common usage, "normal" has no meaning anymore. From a poetic perspective, however, the word "normal" excludes guilt. At least in the first three points one can act out of guilt or one can act from another perspective that includes working with all the Principles as a coherent structured behavior. Therefore, internal unity excludes guilt in spite of many positive actions carried out in the name of guilt that appear as ethical and apparently correct. These seemingly positive actions are not unitive because the register is one of suffering and not of liberation.

Then...

I can help you when you need me – in a twisted world I do so because I feel guilty, but in a normal world I do so because it is unitive...

I can forget that I helped you – in a twisted world I only pretend to forget, but am really waiting for you to reciprocate; in a normal world I really do forget, because helping you is nothing out of the ordinary...

I can think that you are not guilty but that I made a mistake – in a twisted world, I feel guilty about my mistake; in a normal world I simply accept it and do what I can to correct it...

From the outside there is no way to distinguish what motivates these actions. From the inside one experiences this very differently when there is guilt and when guilt is not present.

Returning to Point 3:

The way I understand it, the Spanish word “reniega” means “deny.” In the English version it is translated as “reject” and that is fine too. In Spanish, however, “renegar” means to deny twice or deny vigorously. This is not as easy as it sounds, nor is it as difficult as we might think. It's a matter of recognizing feelings of guilt. We need to look into ourselves, to reflect on our own behavior, our fears, our apprehensions, our doubts. Denying or rejecting our feelings of guilt means gradually learning to generate a different attitude. I think that it is not a matter of declaring: "I now reject my guilt," but that one needs a more internal proposal in order to begin to understand how that guilt is constructed and how to disarm it. This is a step-by-step process that must be undertaken without forcing and without internal or external criticism. One's intention is to understand guilt rather than to get rid of it. Learning to see the guilt in oneself, in others and in society is important because it provides an internal perspective that allows for behavioral changes. Sometimes I find myself without a response in front of certain situations and I'm beginning to understand that this is a good thing. It is not as negative as I thought; rather it is a good thing not to have answers.

In the past my guilt determined my responses without me ever recognizing that it was doing so. Now I'm not sure of my answers but they create less suffering, less criticism, and they are more connected to the situations themselves.

To feel free about not giving a response is an attitude of NOT FORCING, NOT DEFENDING, AND NOT IMPOSING anything. In a more positive way, one works with an attitude of flexibility, with "indifference toward the dream of the landscape" and with respect and care for others. Somehow this attitude returns to benefit me and I start to feel that same attitude toward myself.

Many people assume that guilt is a product of religious education and this is probably true in some cases. However I have also met many people who did not grow up within the context of a religious education and whose feelings of guilt are the same. I think feelings of guilt are rooted in social behavior that is conditioned by the environment as well as by faith or religion. The environment has a powerful influence on us, and it is not so easy to see or to dismiss this influence. This conditioning makes us suffer because of the background of guilt at the social level. I have no idea how that can be solved by religion or without religion since religions and non-religions do not speak of suffering, do not talk about internal violence, do not speak of coherence or internal unity. These experiences of peace, unity and coherence are internal registers of the process of freeing ourselves little by little, step by step. Without registers, without experience, anything said is just good advice. In any case, to reject feelings of guilt, sacrifices and threats from beyond is good for both believers and non-believers.

I tried to be brief in this interpretation and I have left out the issues of "sacrifice" and “threats from beyond (the grave)” although they are contained in Point 3. At the moment

I am inclined only to cite what was written in "The Book of the Community"² and in the material known as "The Instructors' Book"³ regarding the theme of sacrifice.

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Portland, Oregon - May 2013

² The Book of The Community. Published by the Synthesis Foundation. Copyright 1980

In the first edition the book contained a chapter called Themes on Valid Action. Following is the text with the explanation:

"This section deals with the formative themes referred to as the twelve Principles of Valid Action. Each theme is accompanied by a brief story, fable, or legend that forms an allegory to the Principle underlying the Formative Theme.

Just as the Principles have been taken from The Look Within, the "stories" that accompany them have also been extracted from different texts (sometimes with substantial changes) produced through the creative genius of many different cultures."

And on the Principle # 9 - The Principle of Liberty, here is the story that accompanied the Principle:

Jesus said: "Do not judge so that you also will not be judged. Because with the judgment with which you judge, you also will be judged, and with the measure you measure, you also will be measured in turn"

And with this he showed that the harm done to one's neighbor is also harmful for he who has done it.

And it happened that when Jesus was eating, many publicans and sinners also sat at his side, because they were many who followed him.

And his enemies, seeing him eat with publicans and sinners, said to his disciples: "How is this that your master eats and drinks with publicans and sinners?"

Hearing this, Jesus told them, "It is not the healthy who have need of doctors, but those who are sick."

And it happened that when he passed through sown ground on a Sabbath, his disciples began to pluck ears of corn. So his enemies told him, "Why do you do that which is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

And he said to them, "Sabbath is made for man, and not man for Sabbath."

And he explained many things, saying, "Go, but learn beforehand what this means: It is mercy I want, not sacrifice"

³ Recommendation: Remember situations in which through prejudice we impede others (or ourselves) from working freely. Consider present situations in which one is wronging others and also situations in which one acts with unnecessary restrictions. Carefully clarify others about the problem of mercy with one's neighbor and with oneself, stressing the idea of "sacrifice" as a source of conflict.