

· PART 1 ·

THE INITIAL IDEAS

.1.

SLEEP, PRISON, ESCAPE

When I wake up in the morning and look at myself in the mirror, out of 365 days, how many times am I aware of myself? How many times am I there? What do I mean by “am I there?” I mean not only do I look at myself in the mirror, not only do I brush my hair and carry out all types of daily actions, but I am also aware in doing them that they have a substance, a depth.

How many people drive, for example, from Rome to Milan without being aware of it and then they say, “How lovely, it is Milan. I am here already”? People sleep, dream and in dreaming they believe anything. This is what they do: they sleep with their eyes wide open and believe unconditionally. In this state of sleep, there is no ‘I am’. In this state there is only a machine that works poorly, that does not get out of bed, that forgets things or that does things when it is not supposed to do them. It is important to define the point of departure where to begin ‘to do’, because if I say, “I am used to doing this or that” or “I am accustomed to be like this or that” I have not even begun. Instead, I am only using a ‘buffer.’

Whether I say, “Why bother getting out of bed?” or “Let’s get out of bed right away. Let’s get going, get washed and clean shaven!” in both cases, it is a mechanical action. However, mechanical does not necessarily mean always doing the same thing. There could be an anarchic group of I’s who takes control of the carriage and does not obey any other command other than those established by the anarchic group itself. In either of the above cases, a groove has been created which will be very difficult to eliminate. Therefore our entire life becomes the path between a house (symbolically speaking) and what nourishes us, i.e., the supermarket where we buy our food. I am talking about our usual habits, the usual mental routes we take. We always feed ourselves on the same ideas and the quality of our life does not change. If I have only three products, there will only be a limited number of possible combinations and after ten to fifteen different recipes I will be bored. It would be sufficient to have just one extra ingredient to change everything. However, if I do not ask for this new ingredient, because the people around me tell me that my food is excellent as it is, my life will be enclosed within this prison and I will not be able to escape from it.

I often say that the biggest problem with the prison is not in developing the desire to escape, but realizing that one is in prison in the first place. This is because a prisoner has artistic talent with which he or she paints scenes of the sea or mountains on the walls of the prison cell. After a while, this person might become nervous because outside circumstances and a will totally independent of his own cause him friction leading him to say, "Enough of this sea!" A new painting will then appear and, with it, a new deception, which makes him believe that his life has changed.

The prison can be represented as:

Multiplicity of I's - Impression - Distortion - Inadequate Response,

In this representation it is our multiple I's that generate the tortuous path of the prison.

How many people exist and function on the Earth as they should?, i.e.

Unitary I - Impression - Comprehension - Adequate Response?

A person with a Unitary I does not interpret the question, does not transform it but simply answers it.

For a period of eighty years people make their heart beat every day throughout their entire life; such a vast number of times, almost an infinite amount, producing a wonderful energy. People, however, are also capable of giving life to a series of strange phenomena, like dreaming with their eyes wide open. If I dream of a famous person, but do nothing to try and meet this person, or if I do not do my job properly, if I go into my imagination saying, "I will do all my tasks in half a day" when I have two months' worth of work already overdue, this process will consume me, sapping energy away from my life. Once again I am not in a real time.

Fundamental

Every time I do not answer the questions that life puts to me in a correct way,
I am robbing myself of life itself.

What can be done about it?

First of all I must discover that I am in a prison, and I must look at it more and more carefully with all the lucidity and clarity I am capable of because I cannot start anywhere but from myself.

In the beginning of our work, who can we trust if not ourselves? Can a blind person guide another blind person? We must therefore evaluate everything with our own means.

Even if I am in a prison, even if I am sleeping, I will certainly have a cell, a place in this prison. I can begin to move myself in it. This is the idea of observation.

To do this I must identify and then get rid all of the rubbish, which is all of my prepackaged ideas, and use only those few things I am able to verify on a daily basis as a sextant to trace my route. How often does the past possess us?

All those times we say, “He did this to me, I suffered very much. I wasn’t good enough.” These preconceived ideas, these grooves, are nothing but rubbish. All of it happened yesterday. And if today I am still in my yesterday, I am harming myself.

When we were being taught how to behave, we were told, maybe in softer terms, “You must take revenge.” “Did they hit you? You must hit back.” It is true when someone is trying to hit me, I must move to try and receive the fewest blows possible, but once the battle is over, it is over. It no longer exists. However, I put this battle along with all the others in a bag and I keep on hauling this increasingly heavy bag along with me. This kind of bag is not the procedural memory of the machine, which does not cause any damage, and is, in fact, extremely useful: imagine if every day we had to tell to our feet “learn to walk!”.

After having identified which forms of imprisonment are familiar to me, the next step is to realize that I am going nowhere on my own. When I discover that I am in a cell, even if the walls are painted like murals and even if I discover that I have a series of recorded reels of tape, I must find someone who has already escaped. To escape I need someone who has already escaped just like I need a mirror to look at myself.

What does finding someone who has escaped mean?

Let us make a simple example. If I want to learn to forge iron, when I ask the blacksmith to teach me, he will surely place me at the bellows even if I believe it is a nasty and mechanical job and that my aspiration is to work the iron so as to create. But if I observe humbly, I will have the possibility of learning.

My master possesses an art, which is the knowledge, and it is necessary to possess this art to escape. To forge a certain kind of iron, it will be necessary to use the bellows three times a minute, for another kind only once, for a third kind, ten times. Even if I have yet to hold the iron in my hands, I am already forging because I am learning how much air is required to attain the correct temperature to work that particular iron, to give it a particular shape. Someone who has escaped is a trainer. This person will lead you through all the stages, those steps that will allow you to eliminate those grooves, to wipe the slate clean as much as possible. Then it may be possible to choose what to write on the slate instead of letting something be written on it accidentally. Someone who has escaped is also represented by a ‘working group,’ which acts like a mirror and which can, in a moment, give me ten, a hundred, a thousand different pieces of information. The mirror has rules. They are: playing in a team, which means reciprocal commitment. It is important, in the beginning, that there is a common agreement, a common treasure. This marks the starting point for escape. The treasure is the agreement. I observe myself and share every discovery, every result I obtain with you, and it must be so for every person in the group. In this way, I will have lived not just my own twenty-four hours.

In order to escape, a map is needed and hence the help of someone who has already escaped; someone who has already gone along the route and possesses a plan of escape.

For twenty-four hours a day, you are enclosed within your body. In the System we talk about the imprisonment of the body when our outer frame performs its vital functions in an improper way. It is like owning a car with dirty spark plugs, which is not able to rev up and hence does not function correctly. Just a small problem can prevent a complex machine from working correctly. The same occurs with our body.

The map allows us to locate our position. If we do not know where we are and what we are in that place we will not be able to establish our point of departure. We have located ourselves as being on a planet called Earth. This planet carries out a function and exists in relation to a larger body: the solar system. Hence it is not sufficient to have a map. We need to locate our position in relation to the whole. What relationship do we have with our planet? What relationship does our planet have with the solar system? What relationship do our organs have with the body and the cells with our organs? Comprehending that the force expressed by the whole is greater than the simple sum of its parts is essential in order to begin our study. When we have located ourselves, it will be possible to understand the sense and the aim of life, and so will it be possible to understand the idea of developing a Self.

All that people do in the course of their ordinary lives is of almost no relevance if they do not have a direction. I need help from someone who has escaped, who can give me a map. This will serve to locate the place where I am, and according to it, I can begin to move, oriented on my way.

Indication

In the 'work,' a school is formed by those who have located themselves.

In a metaphor of teaching, man is considered as a ship. What are the parts that make up a ship? A hull, oars, the sails, the rudder. What are the sails for? To catch the wind and so to move the ship. The oars are also required to move the ship. The oars represent the moving centre. The sails and their relationship to the wind, represent the emotions and the rudder the intellectual center.

It is the emotions, which swell and make me swell up. If someone involves you, you go where this person wants to lead you. The ship has, therefore, the following structure: an instinctive dimension, an emotional dimension and an intellectual or rational dimension. These are the first three dimensions that we are able to see in ourselves. The System defines these parts as centers or intelligences and studies them in relation to the functions they manifest. The functions within people are the same for everyone and yet they are potentially different.

Do you all recognize yourselves within this machine? It is simple. All of you possess an instinct: your heart beats, you breathe and all this takes place beyond your will. Heartbeat

happens, digestion happens, and you realize all this only when a problem arises.

You also feel you have emotions. What are emotions? We can summarize this as: I like it / I do not like it; I like him / I do not like him. So emotions are nothing but the field of plus or minus. On the contrary, the rational center compares with memory. In order to compare, a memory is needed. A memory is also needed to say "I like it" or "I do not like it," just like a memory is necessary to digest. Here I am saying that the machine person has three memories, three brains: reptile, limbic and cortical, corresponding to the three ages of humanity. These brains have three different memories; each one remembers events differently from the others.

The system of ideas we study states that, in an ordinary person, the different centers do not collaborate, they do not communicate, they know nothing of one another. Yet we can observe that every stimulus, in the teaching termed as 'impression', involves our entire being. Is it not the case that every single event causes a comparison within you (a function of the rational center), a siding with or against something (a function of the emotional center) and a need (a function of the instinctive center)? Do you always feel hungry around a certain time? It is not the case if you are absorbed by a man or a woman, by the building of a sailboat or by the reading of some important papers. In these cases that function is suspended and what causes it to be suspended is either emotion, exemplified by "I like you," or reason. In truth "I like you" is not only emotion, but emotion and instinct, where instinct eliminates a part of itself in favor of another. The "I like you," that is, you are compatible with me (instinct of reproduction) makes me forget that I am hungry, that I am tired. The machine favors one instinctive function over another thanks to the added value provided by the emotion.

I will give a further example. I must study, I do not feel like it, but I know that if I do not carry out the work I shall not be rewarded and therefore even though I may be hungry, I carry on studying. In this case instinct and reason are involved. This time the instinct has been calmed in favor of a stronger instinct: you can go without food today, but you cannot go without food forever. This is the process.

Hence I, the body, go without food now because I know that if you, intellect, produce the required work, I will receive economic benefit, and tomorrow I shall eat, and not only tomorrow, but the day after too. The stimulus of hunger is suspended in favor of a greater instinctive perception. Does this always happen? No, if it were always so we would not be in a prison. What happens is this: I have to take an exam, an important step in my life. A beautiful woman calls me and I go out with her instead. This is absolutely irrational; it is absolutely beyond instinct, or more precisely one instinct prevails over another. What happens is that a part of the emotional center steals energy from another center, the sexual one, and with this energy it silences reason. This is what happens in our ordinary life. Our centers do not function in a balanced and harmonious way.

An Italian proverb says that between saying and doing lies the sea, which means that saying and doing are two different things. Reason=Say, Instinct=Do, Emotion=Sea. When all is in

harmony the sea is calm. What happens when the sea is calm? It reflects the sky, and we can even mirror ourselves in a beautifully tranquil sea. To mirror oneself means that what I say is exactly what I do because the mirror reflects it. There is no double image. There is no confused image. Everything is clear, simple. This is the map. A person who has escaped is one in whom the parts do not steal energy, one from the other, but function in harmony. The prisoner, on the other hand, in total confusion, receives an external impression and agrees to a duty but, with the arrival of a new impression, forgets his or her agreed duty and excludes it in favor of the new one and the rest of the machine becomes paralyzed. I will give a simple example: to curse, to speak ill, to think badly of others. For the System, to speak ill, to curse (malediction) means to say things in an incorrect order. When do you curse? Every time you communicate in an unintelligible way or you talk about things you know absolutely nothing about.

So what is the difference between cursing (malediction) and speaking well (benediction)? The order, the sequencing of data. In a person who speaks well, all the factors which make them up function in a coordinated and harmonious way: emotion is a mirror between reason, will and action. 'Self remembering' requires that the senses transfer information at their disposal and that this data goes across the sea of emotions. Presence manifests itself only through the calmness of the sea.

Indication

There will be no results if you do not make your machine function as it should.

The problem is that we do not even apply ourselves to a good maintenance of the situation, because we often remain within a territory of the prison called the solitary confinement cell, which are negative emotions. Do you ever get angry? Does it ever happen that you do not give someone a second, or third, or fourth chance? Do you ever simply say "I could cut his head off?" And above all, beyond what you say and what you think, which is really the least important thing, do you ever find yourself in that internal attitude, in that territory, where everything is dead, where in that moment even the sweetest of things seems bitter?

The first thing to do, if there be anything to be done, is to try and move away from solitary confinement, because this attitude takes away all possibility.

What produces a negative emotion?

Closure: In this case the world is deficient and only you know how things really are.

Rancor: You always have a problem with someone. There are two kinds of people: those who take it out on the external world, and those who take it out on themselves. One is no better than the other; the condition is identical.

Tiredness: Does negative emotion not exhaust you? Does it not consume you? Do you not feel that it creates debt, fatigue? In your opinion, is negative emotion life?

Fundamental

In order to maintain life, the first training to carry out is not to have negative emotions so as to be able to direct the machine towards our objective.

The words of St. Paul can help us, "Everything is allowed, but not everything is useful." A deeper comprehension of the idea in this well-known quote is certainly to understand that St. Paul is speaking about a correct functioning of the machine. The phrase "all is allowed" means that you can do anything with the machine, but not everything is useful to make it function properly. It follows that we should do what is useful for allowing the machine to function correctly and not simply doing what is allowed.

The machine can work in thousands of ways or not work at all. If I do not know how the machine functions I will be more likely to break it. If, on the other hand, I know how it functions I will be able to use it at its best.

At this point a further element is introduced because along with the importance of 'doing,' I must comprehend that it is necessary to do in the direction of my aim. Direction is not to be determined by the various I's that follow each other in driving the machine, but by the group of I's that we call 'Working I's,' the only ones that move with us in the direction of the aim.

It is from the awareness of our state of sleep, and by the precise study of the effect this state produces, that we may proceed to something else, to the Self, to the seed. The Self is called the seed because its functions are still not manifested.

Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a mustard seed, the smallest of seeds on Earth, which, although tiny, when it falls to the ground, becomes alive transforming itself into a plant big enough to shelter the birds of the sky in its branches.

If we want to give a psychological interpretation of the above parable, we could say that it includes the explanation of the process of the development of the functions and what happens in one's life when this is produced.

Something very precise happens. If I am a good cobbler, people will start to bring me their shoes. If I am a good doctor, people will come to me to be cured. When we train our body, the result is obvious because the muscles, which have been developed, are measurable. The same thing will happen to our feelings and to our thoughts if we put effort into it.

Indication

The Self nourishes itself on the interruption of automatic mechanisms.

We have defined a person by saying that he or she is a machine that does not function as it could. This machine must transform itself in order to function at its best. In order to transform and function at its best, it is necessary to observe and to observe one's self.

When the waters were changed

Once upon a time Khidr, the Teacher of Moses, called upon mankind with a warning. At a certain date, he said, all the water in the world, which had not been specially hoarded, would disappear. It would then be renewed, with different water, which would drive men mad.

Only one man listened to the meaning of his advice. He collected water and went to a secure place where he stored it, and waited for the water to change its character.

On the appointed date the streams stopped running, the wells went dry, and the man who had listened, seeing this happening, went to his retreat and drank his preserved water.

When he saw, from his refuge, the waterfalls again beginning to flow, this man descended among the other sons of man. He found that they were thinking and talking in an entirely different way from before; yet they had neither memory of what had happened, nor of having been warned. When he tried to talk to them, he realized that they thought that he was mad, and they showed hostility or compassion, not understanding.

At first he drank none of the new water, but went back to his hiding place, to draw on his supplies, every day. Finally, however, he took the decision to drink the new water because he could not bear the loneliness of living, behaving and thinking in a different way from everyone else. He drank the new water, and became like the rest. Then he forgot all about his own store of special water, and his fellows began to look upon him as a madman who had miraculously been restored to sanity.

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