

Transcendence

**There is no meaning in life
if everything ends with death.”**

From The Inner Look by Silo

1. “Provisional Meanings” Chapter XIII in The Internal Landscape

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.

2. Fragment from “Commentaries on Silo’s Message.”

“... In almost all of these ceremonies there are two realities present that, whether treated explicitly or not, show their importance through the profound significance that they have for life. We know these realities, which allow for different interpretations, by the designations “Immortality” and “the Sacred.” The Message gives the greatest importance to these themes, and explains that one must have the full right to believe or not to believe in immortality and the Sacred, because the orientation of a person’s life will depend on how they place themselves in relation to these themes. The Message acknowledges the difficulties of openly examining these fundamental beliefs, confronting the censorship and self-censorship that inhibit free thought and good conscience. In the context of free interpretation that The Message favors, it is accepted that for some, immortality refers to actions carried out in life, but whose effects continue in the physical world despite physical death. For others, it is the memories retained by loved ones, by groups, or even society, that ensure continuation after physical death. For still others, immortality is accepted as personal continuity on another level, in another “landscape” of existence.

Continuing with the subject of freedom of interpretation, some sense the Sacred as the engine of their deepest affection. For them, their children or other loved ones represent the Sacred and bear the highest value, something that should not be disparaged for any reason. Some consider human beings and their universal rights as Sacred. Others experience divinity as the essence of the Sacred. In the communities that are formed around the Message, it is assumed that the different positions in facing Immortality and the Sacred should not merely be “tolerated,” but genuinely respected.

The sacred manifests from the depths of the human being, hence the importance of the experience of the Force, as an extraordinary phenomenon that we can cause to erupt into the everyday world. Without experience everything is doubtful; with the experience of the Force we have profound evidence. We do not need faith to recognize the Sacred. The Force is obtained in ceremonies such as the Service and Laying on of Hands, and in the ceremonies of Well-being and Assistance we can also perceive the effects of the Force. Contact with the Force causes an acceleration of and increase in psychophysical energy; this is especially true if coherent acts are realized daily, something which on the other hand creates internal unity oriented toward spiritual growth.”

3. From the talk “Meaning of Life,” October 10, 1980, México City

“...As human beings grow and develop, they continually encounter resistances in much the same way. And in encountering and overcoming these resistances they become stronger; and as they become stronger they integrate difficulties; and as they integrate these difficulties, they surpass them. Thus, all the suffering that has arisen in the course of human development has also helped the human being to become stronger than that suffering. So it is that past suffering has contributed to human development, in the sense that it has helped to create precisely the conditions to surpass that suffering.

We do not aspire to suffering. Moreover, we wish to reconcile with our species, which has endured so much suffering, thanks to which humankind has been able to achieve new advances. The suffering of primitive humankind has not been in vain; the suffering of generation upon generation – limited by the conditions of their times – has not been in vain. Our gratitude goes out to those who have preceded us, because despite their suffering it is thanks to them that we can now attempt new liberations.

The point is that suffering did not appear all at once, but rather with the development and expansion of humankind. And clearly, as human beings we do not wish to continue suffering but rather to move on, to break through these resistances, to integrate them, and to forge a new path in the continuing process of our human development.

We have said that it is through meaning in life that we will discover the solution to the problem of suffering, and we have defined this meaning as one's direction toward the future, a direction that gives coherence, that provides a framework for one's activities and fully justifies existence. This direction toward the future is of the greatest importance, because if, as we have noted, the path of imagination, of project, of future, is cut off, then human existence loses direction, and this becomes an inexhaustible source of suffering.

It is clear that for everyone death looms as the greatest future suffering. From this perspective, people can see that life has the character of something provisional, and therefore in this context that all human construction is useless, leading only to nothingness. This is why, perhaps, that turning their gaze away from the fact of death has made it possible to "change" life and to make it as if death did not exist... Those who believe that everything will end with death can make themselves feel better by thinking that they will be remembered for their splendid good works, or that their loved ones, or even future generations, will never forget them. But even should that be true, we all march finally toward an absurd nothingness that will interrupt all memory.

There are also those who think that all one does in life is to respond to needs as best one can. Well, soon enough those needs will end in death, and the struggle to escape the rule of necessity will have lost all meaning. Some might say that an individual's personal life lacks importance in the life of all humankind, and that therefore an individual death has no significance. If that were the case, then neither one's life nor one's individual actions would have any significance, any meaning. There would be no justification for any law or any commitment, and there would be, in essence, no great difference between good actions and bad ones.

Nothing has any meaning if everything ends with death. And if everything ends with death, the only recourse for making it through life is to seek solace in provisional meanings, provisional directions to which we can apply our energy and our action. That is in fact what generally occurs; but in order for that to happen, one must constantly negate the fact of death – one must act as if death did not exist.

If you ask people what meaning life has for them, they will probably tell you that meaning in life is related to their families, or other people, or humanity, or some cause that, according to them, justifies their existence. And those provisional meanings will give them a direction and enable them to face life. But when problems arise with their loved ones, when they become disillusioned with that cause they embraced, when something changes with respect to that meaning they have chosen, then absurdity and disorientation will return to claim their prey.

Lastly, the problem with those provisional meanings in life, those provisional directions, is that if they are achieved they are lost as references, they lose their value for the future. And if they are not achieved, in that case, too, they lose their value as references. Of course, after the failure of one provisional meaning, there always remains the alternative of adopting a new provisional meaning, perhaps one opposite to the one that failed. As the years go by, then, people go from meaning to meaning, all traces of coherence obliterated, and in doing so they increase their contradictions and thus their suffering.

Life has no meaning if everything ends with death. But is it true that everything ends with death? Is it true that one cannot achieve a definitive direction in one's life, a direction that will not be turned aside by the accidents of life? How can human beings position themselves to face the problem of everything ending with death?

We observe five states associated with the problem of death and transcendence. Every person can be found in one of these five states.

There is a state in which a person has indisputable evidence of transcendence, arrived at not through education or surroundings, but through the person's own experience. For such people, it is completely clear that life is only a transition and death the merest accident.

Others believe that the human being will go on to a state of transcendence of some kind, and this belief comes from their education and their surroundings, and not from something that they feel or have experienced. This is not something evident to them, but rather they believe it because it is what they have been taught and have accepted without any experiential basis.

There is a third way of locating oneself with respect to meaning in life, and it is present in those people who want to have an experience of faith or certainty of meaning. You must have encountered those who say, "If only I could believe in something, have that certainty, it would change my life." We can find many examples of this – of people who have suffered misfortunes and have overcome them, either because they have faith or because they have a register that these difficulties, because they are transitory or provisional, are not all there is to life but instead are simply a test, a resistance or obstacle, that in some way makes them grow in knowledge. You can even find people who accept suffering as a tool for learning. It is not that they seek out suffering – unlike those who seem to have a special taste for suffering. We are talking about people who, simply, when something bad happens, take the best from it, not people who go around looking for ways to suffer, but rather those who, finding themselves in a situation of suffering, assimilate it, integrate it, and surpass it.

Very well, so there are people who locate themselves in this state: They have no faith, they have no belief, but they have a desire to believe – they wish they had something to encourage them and give direction to their lives. Yes, these people exist.

There are still others who suspect, intellectually, that there may, perhaps, be a future beyond death, that some sort of transcendence could exist. They believe that this is possible, although they have had no experience of transcendence nor do they have any sort of faith, nor do they aspire to have that experience or that faith. You will also encounter people in this state.

There is, finally, a fifth state, which corresponds to those who deny any possibility of transcendence. You will also find people in this state, and even among you it is possible that many think in this way.

So we see that, with variations, each person can locate him or herself among those who have evidence of transcendence and for whom it is indisputable; or among those who have faith because they were taught to have faith when they were young; among those who wish they had that experience or that faith; or among still others who consider it to be an intellectual possibility but don't give it much further thought; or finally among those who deny any possibility whatever of transcendence.

But we have not yet come to the end of this point regarding how one locates oneself with respect to the problem of transcendence. Clearly, there are also different depths in this matter of locating oneself regarding continuity or transcendence. There are those who say that they have faith, who affirm this, but what they say does not really correspond with what they experience. We are not saying that these people are lying; we simply mean that they say this superficially. Today they say that they have faith, but tomorrow they may no longer have it. And so we observe different degrees of profundity in these five positions, and thus in the shakiness or firmness of people's convictions with respect to what they affirm. We have known people who were devout, who were believers in a faith, but then, when a family member died, when a loved one died, all the faith that they said they had disappeared, and they fell into the most profound state of non-meaning. That faith was a superficial faith, a peripheral faith, the vestiges of faith. On the other hand, quite the opposite occurs for those who suffer terrible catastrophes, and yet continue to affirm and even strengthen their faith.

And then we have known other people who were absolutely convinced that transcendence did not exist. You die and you disappear and that's it. In a manner of speaking, these people had faith that everything ends with death. Of course, once in a while, walking past a cemetery on a dark night, some may have walked a little faster and felt a little uneasy... and how is this compatible with their absolute conviction that everything ends with death? So there are people who, even in their negation of transcendence, are superficial, are not firmly in this state.

One can find oneself in any of these states, and also at various depths within a state. At certain times in our lives, we may have believed one thing about transcendence, and at another time something else. Our belief may have changed not only at various times in our lives but also in response to different situations – it is something mobile, not something static. Our belief with respect to the problem of transcendence can change; it can even change from one day to the next. Sometimes in the morning I believe one thing, but by the afternoon I believe something else. And this is clearly of the greatest importance, because it means that the orientation of human life is excessively variable. And in the end, it brings confusion and disharmony to our daily lives.

Thus, the human being can be located in one or another degree of one of these five states. But what is the correct location? Does one exist, or are we simply describing problems without giving a solution? Are we able to suggest what is the best position from which to face this problem?

Some people say that we either have faith or we don't; that faith either arises in us or it doesn't. But let's look more closely at that state of consciousness. Someone can have absolutely no faith at all, yet at the same time can want to attain it. This person can even understand, intellectually, that such a thing would be interesting, that it might be worthwhile to orient him or herself in the direction of having faith. Well, then, when that begins to happen, it is because something within the person is already moving, already expressing itself in that new direction.

Those who achieve that faith or that transcendent experience – even if they cannot define it in precise terms, as one cannot precisely define love – will recognize the need to orient others toward meaning in life, though never do they try to impose their own landscape on those who do not recognize it.

And so, coherently with everything that has been said, I declare before all of you my faith and my certainty of experience that death does not stop the future, that death on the contrary modifies the provisional state of our existence to launch it toward immortal transcendence. And I do not impose my certainty or my faith upon anyone, and I live in harmony with those who find themselves in different states with respect to meaning in life. But I am obliged in solidarity to offer this message – a message that I recognize makes the human being happy and free. For no reason will I evade my responsibility to express my truths, though they may seem doubtful to those who experience the provisional nature of life and the absurdity of death.

Furthermore, though I clearly define my own position with respect to this point, I never ask others about their personal beliefs. And I proclaim the freedom of all human beings to believe or not to believe in God and the freedom to believe or not to believe in immortality.

And so, among the thousands upon thousands of men and women who, shoulder to shoulder, work with us in solidarity, there are atheists and believers, people with doubts and people with certainties, and none of them are asked about their faith. Instead, everything is given as an orientation that may help each of them decide for themselves the path that best makes clear the meaning of their lives.

It is less than courageous to refrain from proclaiming one's truths, but it is unworthy of true solidarity to try to impose them upon others."

Bibliography

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