

Preface

This blog was created to initiate a study and perhaps start a dialogue with others regarding the subject of vengeance and violence. This blog will try to find and go to the foundation and background of the act of violence and it will also try to find the root of the act of vengeance.

Although, when talking about violence, the immediate images that come to most people's mind are that of wars, crimes, guns, murder, gangs, muggings, or somebody stepping on one's toes, etc.; we are going to go beyond physical violence and will include the other forms of violence, i.e., psychological, racial, generational, sexual, economic, religious, moral, etc.

This blog, as with most blogs, will not follow a linear flow, as in writing a book. Rather, it will be jumping from topic to topic - jumping forward and backwards. Later on, these will be ordered in the writing of a book - hopefully, that is.

The blog, therefore, will try to look for answers to the question, what is the foundation and root of violence and vengeance (in the context of the Western culture). Later on, we will try to tackle the issue of reconciliation, and together, perhaps, come up with a sort of resolution on how the problem of violence and vengeance could be overcome individually and socially.

Lastly, we will try to give a more ample definition of active nonviolence and its role in today's world.

Please, note that all these are personal interpretations - nothing more - and that all of these needs to be developed much further.

Note, also, that this book is sort of interactive - meaning, the reader can enhance his/her experience with this book, by going to the web sites mentioned at the end of each chapter, either to see the images that compliments the text or to read the articles that can further the reader's insight on the particular theme.

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Prologue

By Dario Ergas, author of "The Meaning of Nonmeaning" and "The Look of Meaning"

I met with Godi in Caucaia Park, Sao Paulo in September 2008. I hadn't seen him for a few years, from when we had gotten together with several friends to ask ourselves how one goes about integrating the death of someone we love. It had been an unforgettable gathering, in which something transcendent lightly touched us, reconciled us and launched us toward the future, in search of true meaning. Godi was now studying the theme of vengeance, and invited me to reflect together with him once again.

Both of us were very moved by Silo's talk in Rome, when he was asked about social reconciliation. What can those who have suffered wars and genocide do to

reconcile themselves, and what can we ourselves do when we've been harmed by violence in our personal and familial life? Silo said on that occasion that if we want to truly enter into this theme, then let us meditate on Vengeance; he then added that we will be unable to answer the question about social reconciliation if we do not understand how deeply rooted the structure of vengeance is in Western culture. "That profound belief that one can resolve something by making the other person suffer the same thing that they made me, or others suffer."

In his book, Godi investigates the function fulfilled in the psychism by revenge, and gradually reveals it to us as a mode of re-establishing an equilibrium, of compensating a core of conflict in which vengeance is an instinctive reaction, in order to reestablish psychic equilibrium. He delves into our roots, enters into the psychology of Paleolithic man, attempts to show the usefulness of that mechanism when the human being struggled to dominate nature, and how that same mechanism, transferred into historical epochs, is leading us toward self-destruction. He carries out an inquiry, investigating and comparing different cultures, he discovers how, in Eastern cultures, great men arose who were capable of leaping over their violence and proposing nonviolence.

Vengeance (or revenge) consists of doing harm to another who has harmed me. It is a punishment that I inflict on another because of the evil they have caused me. Existentially, punishment and vengeance are synonymous. Revenge is carried out by applying a punishment. It may be that we don't consider ourselves as vengeful, but it is very probable that we administer punishment to our children, friends, subordinates, etc. When it is Justice that metes out the punishment, we don't call it Revenge. Punishment is not determined by

my enraged impulses, but by the codes of a social contract that has been previously conceived, and supposedly with a certain rationality. However, in the background of these judicial codes, discipline and punishment prevail, as does the sentiment of revenge that we have dragged along as a burden since the times of our hominid ancestors.

"I don't want vengeance; I want justice," we say. I don't want to administer the punishment with my own hands; I want society to be the one to restore my dignity, by judging the person who has done me harm and punishing them. I want it to go on record publicly that their action deserves condemnation and is a bad example for all. In other words, I not only want punishment for the guilty - I want my own vindication, my own affirmation through the punishment of the other. The harm I have suffered, besides the injury in and of itself, took away my dignity, stripped me of my humanity. And that dignity, that humanity that was taken away, is what I want to recover through the other's punishment.

Thus, vengeance is not just about seeking harm for the other because of the harm they did to me; it also seeks - and this is what is important - to recover the humanity and dignity stripped from me by the guilty person. And I do this by stripping them of their dignity and their humanity.

"When will the day come when the tables are turned, when the poor will eat bread and the rich, shit?" These are the lyrics of a song from last century. Why didn't people sing: "When will the day come when all of us will eat bread?" Because poverty isn't just poverty - it is human dignity stolen, in this case, by the rich. I don't just want to eat bread; I want my humanity, my place in society, my human dignity.

Thus vengeance appears before us as a psychological mechanism for recovering the humanity of which I believe I have been stripped.

The object of my revenge, the one I consider to be guilty, will experience the same thing and we will continue with the cycle of violence until each faction destroys the other; in other words, until humanity's self-destruction - or at least, until the self-destruction of the culture based on revenge.

We need to consider in this reflection - that the human being is not his past; he is essentially his future, he is projected toward the future. Therefore revenge is not just about something that happened to me - it is projected to the future by the harm that the other will cause me, by the humanity that the other will strip me of, should they ever reach that possibility. Then it will be necessary to dominate that other person, to subjugate, exploit them, impede them by any and all means from having any possibility of harming me in the future. It is vengeance about the future, or to resolve my fear of the future.

Let's move on. We are emphasizing the idea that revenge, though carried out by causing harm to the other that is similar to the harm they caused me, is really about recovering the humanity that was taken away. But what is this "humanity", this thing we so highly value that was taken away from me, and what is it that I recovered in effect, when I consummated my revenge? It is about something important that constitutes my life's essence. With the harm that was done to me, something essential was taken away from me, something of the essence of my life. That thing that was taken from me makes my life lose its reason for being, its meaning. Therefore, with Revenge I seek to recover the essence, and the meaning.

The engine of my revenge is not simply about harming the other; it is about extracting from the other a vital essence that I lost when they caused me harm. An 'eye for an eye' doesn't seek the other's eye; it seeks to extract from the other that essence of my humanity that I lost when I lost my eye.

We will not define that essence...but it is what makes me human, what gives me meaning.

Why is it that I experience the harm done to me as a loss of meaning?

We are now at the heart of the issue. Could it be that at the moment preceding the harm, I was in the presence of that essence, of that meaning? Was I then actually experiencing in myself that "humanity," that "human dignity"? Well, no - meaninglessness is what precedes and succeeds the act of revenge. It is from meaninglessness that revenge is possible. It is from the illusory state of the consciousness that believes it has meaning, that it is possible to believe that revenge will enable it to recover meaning.

Our reflection on Revenge led us to ask about the Meaning of existence.

In that talk of Silo's that I mentioned in the beginning, at Attigliano Park in Rome, he reminded us of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, saying: "Let us save man from revenge! Zarathustra comes down the mountain to visit humanity, and the first thing that attracts his attention is that the people don't know that God is dead. God's death makes Nietzsche presume the possibility of a new human being, and this is the gift that he brings them, from the high mountains. Man is something that must be surpassed, he tells them - I bring you the super-man.

From this perspective, from the look we are employing, God's death is the meaninglessness; not to see it, is the illusion of the consciousness, believing it has a meaning it no longer has: God has died. Nobody listens to Zarathustra and everyone prefers the last man. "Convert us into the last man!" they yell at him, "and keep your super-man." The last man - the one who invents happiness because he doesn't have the experience of happiness. The one who takes drugs and escapes in order to forget God's death and his own death.

Towards the end of the 1800s, the last man had not yet arrived. But today he is among us. It is no longer possible to await him. He is already here. And in the echo of the high mountains, in the murmur of the rivers, the phrase is heard: "Man is something that must be surpassed."

Dario Ergas
Santiago, Summer of 2009

SATURDAY, JUNE 21, 2008

First Word

Are vengeance and violence part of human nature? Is it really part of the human psyche to be vindictive and vengeful? Is the zoological vision* of the human being correct regarding its so-called "survival of the fittest"?

Are we really a violent species?

We think not, and this blog was created to try to prove that indeed the human being is not violent and that vengeance is not part of human's nature. This blog, therefore, will try to search for the foundation of vengeance and violence, and perhaps, discover anew the true meaning of nonviolence.

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**"Sociological school of the late nineteenth century that extended English naturalist Charles Darwin's ideas on the evolution of species through natural selection, to the social evolution of humankind, thus confusing biology with sociology. Positing as an absolute the thesis of the survival of the fittest and extending it to the social life of humankind leads to the negation of another tendency in the evolution of nature: solidarity within the species and mutual aid. -Dictionary of New Humanism*

http://www.silo.net/referenceMaterials/Diccionario_en.rtf

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**"Survival of the fittest" is a phrase which is shorthand for a concept relating to competition for survival or predominance. Originally applied by Herbert Spencer in his Principles of Biology of 1864, Spencer drew parallels to his ideas of economics with Charles Darwin's theories of evolution by what Darwin termed natural selection.*

Although Darwin used the phrase "survival of the fittest" as a synonym for "natural selection", it is a metaphor, not a scientific description. It is not generally used by modern biologists, who use the phrase "natural selection" almost exclusively.

It has been claimed that "the survival of the fittest" theory in biology was interpreted by late 19th century capitalists as "an ethical precept that sanctioned cutthroat economic competition" and led to "social Darwinism" which allegedly glorified laissez-faire economics, war and racism. However these ideas predate and commonly contradict Darwin's ideas, and indeed their proponents rarely invoked Darwin in support, while commonly claiming justification from religion and Horatio Alger mythology. The term "social Darwinism" referring to capitalist ideologies was introduced as a term of

abuse by Richard Hofstadter's Social Darwinism in American Thought published in 1944. When used as a criticism of Darwin's theory of evolution, this claim is also an example of the appeal to consequences fallacy - even if the concept of survival of the fittest was used as a justification for violence in human society, this has no effect on the truth of the theory of evolution by natural selection in the natural world. -Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Survival_of_the_fittest

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Finally, is there even such a thing as “human nature”? Or, is it possible that what we do have are human historicity and human intentions?

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SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2008

Second Word

Okay, I have to admit that violence is all around us - in the news, at school, in politics, in the workplace, on the streets, even at home. But is violence really part of our ethos? If it is, are we doomed as a species, to endless pain and suffering, to endless violence, endless retributions, and endless wars?

How about the other forms of violence, like economic, sexual, generational, religious, racial, psychological, moral, etc.? And what about discrimination? Isn't there a sort of violence somewhere, when one billion children are going hungry everyday - when 40,000 of them die each day from hunger? Isn't there violence present somewhere when women are being treated as second-class citizens in almost all societies? Isn't there violence somewhere when young people are tried as adults under laws that they did not have the privilege of voting for? Isn't there violence somewhere when beliefs and so-called truths are imposed on others? Isn't there some violence somewhere when one is discriminated against,

because of one's race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation? Isn't there violence somewhere when whole peoples are threatened with the horrors of war and terrorized with the threat of nuclear annihilation?

And what about vengeance? What drives people to take revenge? Why is it that up to now, there are still some "advanced" societies that practice institutionalized vengeance disguised as justice in the form of harsh punishments - like the death penalty? Why is it that there are more than two million people - most of them minorities - in American prisons? That is just a little less than the total populations of San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose combined! Is revenge ever justified?

So, are these issues problems that could be resolved? Or are they intrinsic to human nature?

Or, could it be possible that nonviolence is what is inherent in the human being?

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MONDAY, JUNE 23, 2008

The Questions

- How do we go deeper with regards the question of violence and revenge? How do we get to the root of the theme? When did all this begin? What about nonviolence? Where does it come in - in this critical moment in man's history?
- These are the questions that we hope to answer, not with answers but with more questions. Maybe, we can give some answers to the questions together.
- But, as they say, for one to get the right answer, one has to ask the right question.
- If human beings were not born violent or vengeful, where and how did it all begun? Are violent actions and reactions to stimuli learned from our immediate environment, or are they intrinsic to our instinct of self-preservation? Or both?

- If the human being is finally free from want, if all his basic needs are met, will he cease from being violent? Will he finally stop from fighting for his survival?
- Although, all resources are now more than enough for each and every individual need to be met, it seems that man will not share unless he has finally evolved. So, which comes first? The external or the internal change? Or is it simultaneous?
- So, here then is the initial challenge - to come up with the right questions.

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TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2008

More Questions

- The primary mechanisms of the human being are the instincts of individual preservation and of conservation of the species, and the intentional tendencies.
- The first mechanism has a lot to do with trying to preserve the integrity of the body.
- Pain and suffering are indicators that the body is in danger or that something is not right. Pain has to do with the body; suffering, on the other hand, is mental.
- But, although suffering is mental, it is anyway, registered in the body.
- In reality, both are registered as image in the space of representation - where the limit is the body - registered within the body.

- Basically, these suffering follow three pathways: through memory, through sensation and through imagination.
- What do we mean when we say that suffering is mental? Does it mean that these are purely psychological and not real?
- In general, we suffer because of our fears.

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"You must understand that this suffering is always rooted in the violence that exists in your own consciousness. You suffer because you fear losing what you have, or because of what you have already lost, or because of what you desperately long to reach. You suffer because of what you lack, or because you fear in general.

These, then, are the great enemies of humanity: fear of sickness, fear of poverty, fear of death, fear of loneliness. All these forms of suffering pertain to your mind, and all of them reveal your inner violence, the violence that is in your mind. Notice how that violence always stems from desire. The more violent a person is, the more gross are that person's desires." -Silo, Punta de Vacas, 1969

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-speaks.html>

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- Do westernized cultures put more emphasis and adopt the instincts of individual preservation more than the preservation of the species?
- And do non-westernized cultures (eastern culture) put more emphasis and adopt the preservation of the species ahead of preservation of the individual?

- What are the examples of how the West and the East differ with regards the above to bolster this theory?
- Does violence and vengeance have anything to do with a culture's reverie nucleus*?
- Does this nucleus have to do with the "climate of injustice" of the West?
- Does it have anything to do with its mental form?
- Is this mental form exclusive to the west? And since the west has been the dominant culture for the last 5 centuries, is most of the world affected by this form? If this is true; what is the mental form of the east?
- Could it be that in the those early period of man's existence the west and the east went on their separate ways, with the west becoming more individualistic, while the east became more social? With the west becoming more patriarchal, while the east becoming more matriarchal? Even today, there are examples of matriarchal societies still existing - the Minangkabu - a group in West Sumatra, numbering about 4 million. Much smaller are the Mosuo people of Yunnan province in Southern China; the Minicoy Islanders of the Maldives, a society of matrilineal Muslims; and the Nair community in Kerala state, South India. All in the East.
- In general, the vital stage where the human being is in now, is adolescence going to maturity; and his level of consciousness is vacillating between sleep and semi-sleep. Although, he is about to awaken, he is still very much in a daze (he is exhausted from yesterday's shopping spree).
- Is this the reason why all the sages in history were talking about the "awakening" of man - because, of the fact that

man is still asleep? And are we about to experience the dawning of his final awakening?

- The mind believes when it is asleep - it knows when it is awake.
- Finally, at least for now, is it possible that since the general level of consciousness in which the human species find itself is sort of transitory semi-sleep - we have this illusion that we are still in constant danger - so that we have to be always on alert and ready to defend ourselves?
- But, from what?

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**"The consciousness in front of the world tends to compensate it structurally by means of a complex system of responses. Some responses reach the objectal world directly (expressed through the centers), but others remain in the consciousness and reach the world indirectly through some manifestation of behavior. These compensations of the consciousness tend to balance the internal world with respect to the external one. Such connection is established according to exigencies, with the individual finding herself pressed to respond to a complex world that is natural, human, social, cultural, technical, and so on. The "reverie nucleus" arises as an important compensatory response, and the "secondary reveries" as specific responses to the exigencies.*

Reveries can be visualized as images; not so the nucleus, which is perceived as an allusive climate" as it is configured over time, increasing its power to direct a person's tendencies, their personal aspirations. In the stage when the reverie nucleus is wearing out, when it ceases to direct the psychism, the forms and images that it had adopted can be

observed. For this reason the nucleus is easier to register at the beginning as well as at the end of its process, but not in its middle stage, which is when it most strongly directs the psychic activity. The paradox arises that the human being is unable to perceive what most determines its behavior, since the nucleus works as a background that responds in a totalizing way to the multiple demands of daily life.

The reverie nucleus” rules the aspirations, ideals and illusions that change in each vital stage. Following these changes or variations in the nucleus, existence is oriented in other directions and, concomitantly, changes in personality are produced. This nucleus wears out individually, in the same way that epochal reveries that have directed the activities of a whole society wear out. Whereas on one hand the nucleus gives a general response to the environment’s demands, on the other it compensates the personality’s basic deficiencies and lacks, imprinting a certain direction on the behavior. This direction can be weighted depending on whether or not it follows the line of growing adaptation. The reveries and nucleus imprint their powers of suggestion over the consciousness, producing the characteristic blocking of criticism and self-criticism proper to the infravigilic levels. For this reason, any direct confrontation with or opposition to the suggestion of the reverie nucleus” is useless, as it simply ends up reinforcing the compulsion. The possibility of producing a change of direction in an evolutionary line lies in making gradual modifications. The nucleus can regress or become fixed. In the first case, the psychism returns to previous stages, increasing the discords between processes and the situation in the environment. In the second case, when the nucleus becomes fixed, the individual is progressively disconnected from his environment, producing a behavior that does not adjust to the dynamic of events.

The reverie” nucleus launches the human being in the pursuit of mirages, which, when they are not realized,

produce painful states (dis-illusions), while partial fulfillments produce pleasurable situations. We thus discover that the reveries and their nucleus lie at the root of psychological suffering. It is in the great failures—when expectations collapse and mirages fade—when the possibility arises for a new direction in life. In such a situation the “knot of pain” is exposed—the biographical knot that the consciousness suffered from for so long.” -Silo, Psychology I

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silopsychology-i.html>

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2008

Action-reaction

- Vengeance is not just a mechanical action-reaction phenomena.
- Vengeance is more than this. It is actually at the base of all violence.
- Vengeance can be seen as a compensation to a lack; the balancing act to a given imbalance; as the equilibrium to a disequilibrium; as the relief to a frustration; as a panacea to a given pain; as a catharsis to a suffering.
- If one looks at vengeance not just as violence expressed outside, externally - but also as internal violence registered within oneself, then one can see that vengeance is always present - even if subtly - always working in the background. It is always present in the work of the structure act-object, trying to compensate one's inadequacy, one's lacking, one's

fears, one's frustrations; trying to compensate one's reverie nucleus - one's cultural nucleus.

Realize that all "acts" requires an "object" to "act" upon. So, a "victim" or a "recipient" is required to have someone receive the "act" - in this case the violence.

I have to express my frustration, my anger, my internal violence. Sorry, my dear, but I do not have anyone except you to give it to.

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"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?" -Silo, Grotte, Italy, 2008

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-in-grotte.html>

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THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 2008

Violence is Never Personal

- Every time someone gets violent with us and does us harm, we tend to believe that that someone is actually angry with us, personally; that they really meant to harm us. Of course, that someone also believe that they are angry with us - for whatever reason - and that they were violent to us.
- The fact is, more often than not, violence is NEVER personal! You might get the slap on your face; or a blow to your stomach; threatened with getting fired from your job; getting a parking ticket from your neighborhood meter maid, etc. But, even if all these violent acts are indeed registered, either on your face, stomach, your psyche, or your pocketbook - still, all these violence, either physical, psychological, generational, or economical - are not personal. It is never personal.
- I know this statement is a little radical. So, let me try to illustrate this with two examples.

You had a very rough day in the office. Every single thing that could go wrong, went wrong. It is one of those rare days that nothing went right. On top of that, your assistant was promoted ahead of you, and to make matters worse, your boss threatened to fire you. So, you took the subway home with this feeling of great injustice gnawing at your gut. Although, you feel a very strong emotion brewing deep within you, you just can not release your pent-up anger, your inner violence on the old smelly homeless woman sitting next to you, even if you are irritated by her never ending stories - about how her husband left her and took all her savings some 40 odd years ago - with her saliva flying all over your face.

So you got home and are greeted happily by your ever-loving wife. You ask yourself, why is she so happy? Here I am so miserable and she is ecstatic. So, instead of seeing your wife as ever happy and loving that she is, you start to remember all the not-so-nice things she has done to you in the past and all the nice things she did not do for you. You begin to justify the anger and trashing you are about to give her. "Where's my dinner?" "You know how I hate broccoli." "And this chicken soup is cold!" "You're good for nothing!" "Go back to your mother's house!"

"Ah, dear... this IS my mother's house."

Try to remember the anger and violence you have inflicted on others. Now put them on a scale or chart. You will clearly see that the closer your relationship with a person, the greater the violence you have done to them.

It is not because they did you greater wrong, but rather because, they are there, conveniently there for you to express your accumulated frustrations on - conveniently there, close to you.

- Your accumulated frustrations, both recent and old, are also your internal violence, just waiting for an excuse to be expressed externally.

- Upon realizing this - that violence done to me is not personal, I have completely changed the way I look at violence forever. Now, I have comprehended that those loved ones that harmed me in the past did not really meant to do me harm. I also now understand that I really did not mean to harm those that I did wrong in the past. In this sense, I do not forgive, nor do I forget - I comprehend. Now, I am reconciled with my past, I am reconciled with myself.

"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." -Silo, Grotte, Italy, 2008

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-in-grotte.html>

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FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 2008

The Other Example

9/11. The end of communism as enemy number one and the beginning of "terrorism" as the "free" world's new and improved enemy number one. As you know, they have to have enemies. They have to have reasons to vent their frustrations and their internal violence. The greater their frustrations, the greater their violence. The greater their violence, the greater their wars. Meaning, greater destruction and death.

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To view the image, go to:

http://bp2.blogger.com/_w-96i6m1zTs/SIQosQ3rK3I/AAAAAAAAAMk/DrmGHLTW38w/s1600-h/9_11.jpg

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It's the same mechanism working. In the same manner that you have to remember all the not-so-nice things your wife did to you before unleashing your anger and violence on her - Bush, Cheney and the neo-cons with the aid of their propaganda machine, the American media, had to demonize the Taliban and later, Saddam.

The Taliban has to go. Look at how they force their women to wear those horrible facemasks! Never mind that those burqas are a big part of the culture in that part of the world. And that Saddam; he gassed his own people* (never mind that the chemical weapons Saddam used was actually supplied by the CIA when Saddam was still their ally during the Iraq-Iran war). Saddam is a dictator! Saddam is on the verge of producing the bomb! Saddam is producing chemical weapons! "We cannot wait for the smoking gun!" The US has to have a reason to get a resolution passed in the UN, they have to fabricate so called "proofs". They have to lie to the whole world so that they will be justified in bombing Saddam and killing some 100,000 Iraqi people.

It is not because Saddam is evil. It is not because Saddam is a threat to the American people. Certainly, it is not because those 100,000 Iraqi innocents were their enemies. Of course, not! The only reason for them going to war is that these violent US officials have to express their great internal violence - not to mention the need to avenge 9/11 (never mind that Saddam or the Iraqis has nothing to do with 9/11 or the Al Qaeda). It just so happens that a militarily weak Saddam and those 100,000 Iraqi people were conveniently there. Sorry, Saddam - it was nothing personal.

I am just now realizing how - while writing this - just how violent these people are!

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See: Bill Moyer's "Buying the War"

<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/btw/watch.html>

"Violence will continue to color all social activity as long as the human being does not fully realize a human society." - Silo

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/human-landscape.html>

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- As an aside, here, we can see that certainly laws (edicts, resolutions, etc.) are made to justify the violence of the powers-that-be. We will elaborate on this in a later blog.

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SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 2008

Great Internal Violence

- War mongers says going to war is necessary to protect the nation from 'whatever' or 'whoever'.
- War critiques, on the other hand, are saying that it is all about money - that it is all about sustaining a hungry and greedy military-industrial complex.
- Well, both are wrong.
- It is all about a few men with great internal violence that has to be expressed - and where else? if not in the human world of innocents. National interest, defense, terrorism, communism, external threat, religion, democracy, business interests, profit... these are reasons, rationalizations, excuses, to justify their violent and vindictive tendencies, their inhuman acts.

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"Should your influence, then, reach an entire people, take great care to overcome your own contradiction so as not to poison with it the air that all others must breathe." -Silo

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-internal-landscape.html>

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WAR (from OHG. werra, quarrel). Open, armed conflict between tribes, clans, states, large social, religious, or ethnic groups; the strongest form of violence. There have been more than 2,500 wars recorded in world history, among them two world wars. In the First World War, more than 20 million people died; in the Second World War, more than 50 million. Wars are conducted to redistribute social goods by means of armed violence, seizing them from some human beings and delivering them to others. -Dictionary of New Humanism

<http://dictionarynewhumanism.blogspot.com>

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Note: to view the award-winning BBC documentary, "Why We Fight?", go to:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid-9219858826421983682>

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SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 2008

The Framework

Framework of the mechanisms that work with regards the theme of vengeance and its correlate, violence.

Species

Instinct of preservation of the species
Cultural background
Cultural History
Traditions, Beliefs, Illusions
Cultural reverie nucleus
Cultural mental form
Culture

Individual

Instinct of preservation of oneself
Formative landscape
Biographical history
Traditions, Beliefs, Illusions

Reverie nucleus
Mental form
Internal/external behavior

Process

Climate
Frustrations
Fears
Suffering
Repeated Frustrations
Compensations
Internal violence
Dehumanization
External violence
Suffering

Cycle repeats

The above lists are seen in the context of the structure, act-object.

It seems clear to me then, that when the integrity of an individual, a people, or even an entire culture is threatened, a sort of warning signal is registered by the structure under threat - a sort of imbalance is registered - and instinctively, a reaction (balancing) is done (getting even, vengeance, justice, going to war). The only problem here is that in most cases the "threat" is more often than not, illusory - if not made up.

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MONDAY, JUNE 30, 2008

Illusory Equilibrium

The Anatomy of Vengeance • Threat • Violence • Imbalance • Reaction • Vengeance • Illusory Balance • Counter Reaction • Imbalance • Cycle Repeats

Not only does the cycle of vengeance perpetuate violence and repeats ad infinitum, the violence also tends to escalate without end.

- The first image on the top shows a relationship in perfect equilibrium.
- The second image shows one party in the relationship receiving a violent act - creating an imbalance on the structure of the relationship.
- The third image shows the first party reacting with an equal violence on the other party.

- fourth image shows that it does not really matter if the "revenge" is equal or greater violence than what was received, because anyway, more often than not, this violent reaction will be perceived as greater than it actually is.
- And so the cycle of violence continues, as is shown on the fifth image.

With the above rendering, I am trying to illustrate that violence can never be resolved by reacting with another violence (an eye for an eye), because what will happen is that one would only creating a vicious cycle of violence.

With violent reaction (vengeance), a sort of catharsis is affected - a kind of "releasing some steam". Of course, it does not give resolution to the situation at hand, nor does it solve the problem, because, anyway, the water continues to boil.

On the other hand, and this is very important, sometimes an over-reaction happens and we feel guilty, especially, if the other does not retaliate. The more disproportionate our reaction - the worst our feeling of guilt.

...

"You will make your conflicts disappear when you understand them in their ultimate root, not when you want to resolve them." -Silo

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-inner-look.html>

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TUESDAY, JULY 01, 2008

Violence and Nonviolence

But what is violence, really? We received a comment regarding the "survival of the fittest" - as some people would want us to believe. But, it is not like that at all. Sure, sometimes, it is like a "jungle" out there, but people are not the same as the animals in the jungle. No, because people have freedom of choice - people have intentions. That is the main difference between humans and the rest of the other living beings on this planet. Humans have intentionality; they have the freedom to choose. Each individual, each human group have intentionality. And this is exactly where conflicts arise - when people choose to impose their intentionality on others.

When I impose something on another; I am actually choosing for the other. I am therefore negating his fundamental freedom - his freedom to choose. It could be as simple and as innocent as a censure - like stopping

someone from saying their mind or voicing their opinion; or as extreme as choosing someone's death for him (murder) - the extreme case of stopping the other one's intentionality (which is to preserve oneself and to continue living).

Violence then, is the appropriation of the other's choice or intentionality. Put in another way, violence is the imposition of one's intentionality on the intentionality of the other.

I can say then, that as long as one does not impose one's beliefs, one's faith, one's god, one's choice, one's intentionality, especially, one's stupidity, on another, one can freely do whatever one wants.

What about nonviolence - what is it exactly?

It is simple enough. If we know what violence is, then, nonviolence is non-tolerance of violence. In reality, tolerance of violence is violence.

If the human being is intentionality, then, contributing to the enhancement of that intentionality is nonviolence. In other words, if his transformation is hindered by suffering and his basic project is the overcoming of pain and suffering - then, helping him to alleviate that pain, that suffering is nonviolence.

It is life's project par excellence.

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 02, 2008

The Basic Element

"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." -Silo

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-in-grotte.html>

I believe that the basic element of the structure of vengeance (and therefore also of violence) lies in the basic instinct of individual survival - as compensating elements to man's inadequacy, his lacks, his fears, his frustrations. This mechanism that has helped the survival not just of the individual but has helped the survival of the species itself is now at a crossroad. It has helped man survive nature's catastrophic elements. It has helped man advance in his quest for a better life, a better future. It

has helped man advance his knowledge, his science, his technology.

But this same mechanical instinct to preserve himself is now becoming its own liability - almost its own enemy. It is clear that all his concerns and fears of his ancient past are now all mere illusions. He should realize by now, that he does not have to worry about where and how to get his dinner, neither does he have to worry that he will be the next dinner. There is actually more than enough food for every single person in the world - if only the one's who have more start sharing with those who have less. The fact is, there is more than enough of everything for everyone if these are shared equitably. This is the real equilibrium - the real justice. This is the only way to get out of this disequilibrium. Not by acting in compensating violence.

Man should cease trying to protect his body alone. He should also start protecting his soul - by concerning himself with his spirit. He should stop acting mechanically. He should start acting intentionally.

This natural mechanical instinct to survive should be replaced by his intentionality to surpass even his own nature.

This is true for the individual. This is true for the entire species.

...

"If you impel your being in a luminous direction, you will find resistance and fatigue at every step. There are things to blame for this fatigue in the ascent. Your life weighs; your memories weigh; your previous actions

impede the ascent. The climb is made difficult by the action of your body, which tends to dominate." -Silo

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-inner-look.html>

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THURSDAY, JULY 03, 2008

Systems and Laws

- Laws are made by people to protect the same people that made these laws.
- But more than this, laws are formulated, legislated, implemented, and enforced to justify the violence of the people that benefit from these laws.
- Worse than these laws are systems designed to justify covert violence done against the general population by the powers-that-be, people that initiated and established these systems - economic, educational, social, etc.
- A good example of this is the creation of the corporation whose rights are rights not even given to individuals, like the right to declaring bankruptcy - that corporations still benefit from - which was virtually taken away from the individual recently in the US. This corporate monster has now its own life, and it inherited

the mental form from whence it was created, along with its tendency towards greed, violence and vengeance.

...

To view an interview with Noam Chomsky about rights of corporations, go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJjWC1FlA20&eurl>

...

- The present economic system itself is designed with this background; that is why it is violent. The system is designed in a manner that the only way for a company to survive is by utilizing predatory policies. If the stocks of a corporation is losing its value, the first thing that its management does is to lay-off thousands of its employees.
- Not to worry, though, because this system is like a chicken with its head cut off, but still running - without knowing that it is already dead.

...

To view "Believe it or Not" feature on "Mike, the Headless Chicken."

http://www.miketheheadlesschicken.org/mike_on_youtube.php

...

As an aside, just today, in the news, a high school student could be sentenced the maximum sentence of up to 38 years in jail for hacking. If this is not harsh punishment, I do not know what is. What is even worse is

that this young student is going to be punished under a law that he does not have the right to vote for. And for what? To make him an example. To show other young people that hacking will not be tolerated.

...

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

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-human-landscape.html>

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FRIDAY, JULY 04, 2008

The System and the Abyss

The recent entries reminds me of an article I wrote some 24 years ago in that most beautiful city by the bay, San Francisco.

“The system is going to the abyss and it wants to drag the rest of humanity with it.

But who or what exactly is the system? Perhaps to make it easier to understand and unmask this sort of abstract entity, we need to ask a different question. Instead of asking who or what is the system, maybe we should ask: who or what represent the system? Then, maybe this abstraction can become a little less hazy.

Who or what then represents the System? The state, the institutions, the corporations, the banks, the multinationals, the transnationals, the para-states, and

finally, the organizations, governments, politicians, bureaucrats and individuals who not only accept the ideology of the system, but advocate, defend and utilize its principles and methodology that promote the continued negation of what are fundamental to the human being: his freedom and intentionality.

But where is this ideology originating? Its principles, its methodology - where are all these based on, where are all these coming from? The way I see it, these are all based on and coming from an archaic point of view, a point of view regarding "nature", the "natural" and the "nature" of the human being. That bastardly notion that considers the human being as part of the animal kingdom and therefore, part of "nature". The bad news is that this concept of "human nature" is universally accepted.

On this basis, their ideology, principles, laws and methodology - all that institutionalized injustice throughout the world - is therefore only practical, common sensical, logical, rational, pragmatic, natural, and therefore justified. Why not? Isn't it all natural? Aren't all these according to nature?

On top of all of these - and what makes matters even worse - is that they believe that this "nature" of things was granted; it has been given by the highest authority; it was granted by the divinity itself. And since their gods are capable of unbridled violence, doesn't that justify their own violence - at least in their own miniscule brains?

From this background, from this starting point, from this point of view, it is then only reasonable that the fittest survive, the most aggressive succeed, the most competitive win, the rich becomes richer, and corporate CEOs become demigods. Of course, not to forget, they shall all inherit the earth!

Or so, they think.

*Everything is logical, everything is reasonable,
everything is justified -- and why not? it's all "natural"!*

But where do all these lead us?

*Where else but to more concentration of power,
concentration of information, of resources, of goods,
etc. In short, the appropriation of the whole by a small
part of the whole, whose consequence is pain, suffering,
hunger, vengeance, war, violence at home, violence in
the streets, massive unemployment, discrimination,
intolerance, destruction of the environment, the abyss -
and of course, without realizing it - the slow death of
the human spirit!"*

San Francisco, May 1984

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SATURDAY, JULY 05, 2008

Some Keywords

Free interpretation, freedom of choice, intentionality, tolerance, reconciliation, humanize, etc. on the one hand; imposition, human nature, intolerance, punishment, censure, vengeance, dehumanize, etc. on the other. Terms we plan to elaborate on future blogs. In the meantime, let's try to deal with the first term, free interpretation.

Free interpretation, now that is one great and unique concept. It is the antithesis of imposition. It is the grandfather of all freedoms, especially, the most basic of all freedoms, the freedom to choose. Free interpretation; is it as simple as it sounds? Like, so "okay, interpret it as you want". Or is this concept at the root of all freedoms? Is it just about the freedom to interpret a particular phrase, a particular passage, a book or even an event? Or is it an encompassing doctrine - a doctrine about interpreting a written piece, an event, an action, a

gesture, a look, a life, a world, a meaning? It seems to me, free interpretation are all these and much more.

It basically means that one has the right to interpret anything and everything according to one's experience, according to one's history, one's level of understanding, one's level of logic, one's comprehension.

In this sense, from this concept of free interpretation, I understand that my thoughts, feeling and actions are all coming from my interpretation of the world around me. From this point of view, it is now easier for me to comprehend the other's action, or at the very least, understand the other's action, and therefore more tolerant of the other. In this sense, no interpretation is wrong or incorrect - only different.

And what does free interpretation have to do with violence or vengeance?

It's clear, at least to me. How can there be violence or even vengeance when I understand the other - or at the very least, tolerant of the other? How can I judge the other if I know I am not in a position to judge anyone?

Only by being certain of our uncertainties can we start to understand and accept the other's interpretation, his opinions, his actions.

It seems to me, that it is even possible that this concept of free interpretation could be one of the ingredients for experiencing peace within ourselves; one of the ingredients for the practice of nonviolence.

With free interpretation, we begin to learn how to understand the other, comprehend the other, respect the other, and finally, feel the human in the other. The first step towards humanizing the other.

SUNDAY, JULY 06, 2008

Free Interpretation

Imposition, it seems to me, is always present at the outset of violence. And if the opposite of imposition is free interpretation, I believe then, that free interpretation is the seed of nonviolence.

"If the human being is intentionality, then, nonviolence is contributing to the enhancement of that intentionality. To put it simply, if his transformation is hindered by suffering and his basic project is the overcoming of pain and suffering - then, helping him to alleviate his pain, his suffering, is nonviolence." -from the post, Violence and Nonviolence

In other words, letting the other express his intentionality is the basis of that enhancement - by giving him his freedom of interpretation and the understanding of the action that is the consequence of that interpretation.

Still, isn't this stretching it?

I do not think so. And to prove it - to prove it for yourself, that is, try this: the next time you have an argument, especially with someone whose opinion directly opposes your own - try giving him the benefit of his free interpretation, try accepting his position as it is, just another position; not wrong, not necessarily right either. Just a position. Try understanding his opinion. Try comprehending where he is coming from.

To make this easier, try to see that your position is, also, on the other hand, just another position - even if it is exactly the opposite of his. This is the only way you can reconcile two opposing views.

Remember, this is also just my interpretation of free interpretation. It may coincide with your own interpretation, or not. Either way, it doesn't make it right, but it doesn't make it wrong either.

...

“We know that others proclaimed the free interpretation, but then in the practice, they imposed their own interpretation. We want to make it seriously.”
-Silo

...

MONDAY, JULY 07, 2008

Even More Questions

At the beginning of this blog, we asked: "How do we go deep with regards the question of violence and vengeance? How do we get to the root of the theme? When did all this begin?"

And we said: "These are the questions that we hope to answer, not with answers but with more questions."

So, in response to the above questions, here below, are more questions.

When exactly did this took place? When did it all begin? And how? And we'll add, where?

Did it happen when nature stop providing people of the Natufian culture in the Mediterranean region of the Levant with enough resource to sustain them? Or was it the people of this culture who decided that they did not

have to rely on nature to provide for them; when they decided that they can or must already provide for themselves? When they started tending their own flocks and herds, plant and learn to store their food? When they decided to establish more permanent settlements? When they began to show cultural creativity?

Did it begin when they started to depend on agriculture for subsistence? When they began to cultivate wheat and barley? When they started to grow food on farms that resulted in a surplus of food? When they started to use intensive agricultural techniques such as irrigation and crop rotation? When they discovered that grain could be stored for a long time, resulting in food surplus permitting some people (artisans, priests and priestesses, and other people with specialized careers) to do things besides produce food for a living?

Did it all begin when civilization started forming in this region - and from this initial cradle, spreading its influence to Egypt, Mesopotamia, Sumer, and beyond? Did it all begin when it was institutionalized in the Hammurabi code? Later on, this influence reaching the entire Middle East, and much later, Europe when the Roman Empire included Egypt, the Middle East, the whole Mediterranean region?

Is this when the concept of property started? When the word "mine" is given a more salient meaning? When the "I" begin to assert itself more? When the mechanism of the preservation of oneself begin to have more preeminence? When "you" began to separate from "me"? When fear from nature took less importance - and the fear of the other became predominant? Did it occur when the people of these areas became "civilized"?**

Or did it begun much later - when different families and clans formed common communities that became cities and later on, city states? Did it begun when the state became the administrator, law making body, law enforcer, and provider of its citizens' security from external and internal threat? its tax collector?

But it did not stop there. Fear begins to dominate his inner soul.

He began to be more aware of the future, preoccupied with the future. He began to imagine what could happen in the future. He began to discover new ways of doing things. He began to invent. He began to advance science and technology. He began to produce tools and machines to compensate for what was not available to him. But also, he began to be insecure about the same future he had worked long and hard for, to cultivate and manage. He began to fear the future. He began to be fearful. He began to suffer.

...

"If life is but pursuit of security for those who fear the future, self-affirmation for the disoriented, the desire for revenge for those frustrated with the past—what liberty, what responsibility, what commitment can be held aloft as an unvanquished banner?" -Silo

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-internal-landscape.html>

...

***"Economically, civilizations display more complex patterns of ownership and exchange than less organized societies. Living in one place allows people to accumulate more personal possessions than nomadic*

people. Some people also acquire landed property, or private ownership of the land. Because many people in civilizations do not grow their own food, they must trade their goods and services for food in a market system. Early civilizations developed money as a universal medium of exchange for these increasingly complex transactions."

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilization>

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TUESDAY, JULY 08, 2008

An Eye for an Eye

Why is it that there are people who still adhere to a very archaic code (an eye for an eye) carved on two tablets more than 4,000 years ago, when a much later prophet was given an upgrade by God, no less - also in two tablets (in the form of "commandments") which said among other things, "Thou shalt not kill." Period. No ifs, ands, or buts.

The same could be said to the other religion that derived from this one, who up to now, still adhere to the concept of "retribution" masquerading as "justice", when their messiah's main teachings were more advanced, more evolved than this old edict. Ask the followers of this religion what their founder's main teachings are and most will reply the "Ten Commandments", although their founder's main teachings were the "Eight Beatitudes". Also known as "The Sermon of the Mount". Which, by the way, was prefaced by the ethic of reciprocity that says, "Do unto others what you want others do unto you."

It is clear then, that these great historical and moral teachers shared their experience and wisdom according to the level of language, level of logic, and level of comprehension of the people of those regions and its historical moment.

Let's see. Why was the concept "an eye for an eye" formulated, if not to stop people from meting out disproportional punishment. Which, by the way, is also saying, "a life for a life". Why? Because, prior to this edict or law, it was "the whole tribe for one life". Meaning, if you kill a member of my tribe, my tribe will kill every single member of your tribe.*

So every tribe was killing every tribe, until a wise man came along and said, "Hey, if we continue along this path, we all die!" So, the wise man convinced Hammurabi, the king of Babylonia, to include an item in his "How to Live in My Kingdom" user manual that said, among other things, "an eye for an eye". Meaning, if you kill a member of our tribe, we kill you - just you.

So, it went. An eye for an eye. A life for a life. It was much better. It was more just, more equitable. Perfect. At least, for those times.

But, of course, we know about the upgrade version, which was even more improved - that said, "Thou shall not kill". No ifs, ands, or buts. Meaning, no more killing whatsoever. Period.

Still, we know of some so-called advanced secular societies where the death penalty is still very much alive. Not to forget, it is the same in those countries ran as theocracies by "religious" leaders.

...

"When you harm others you remain enchained, but if you do not harm anyone you can freely do whatever you want." -Silo

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-inner-look.html>

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 09, 2008

The West

We have been talking about how do we study the question of violence and vengeance; how to get to its root, and when did it all begin. All in the context of the Western culture.

So, what exactly is Western Culture? Where is the West? Or the Western world? Or the Occident?

Western World

"Some historians believe the West originated in the northern and eastern Mediterranean with ancient Greece and ancient Rome. While other historians such as Carroll Quigley's Evolution of Civilizations contend that Western Civilization was born around 400 AD, after the total collapse of the Western Roman Empire, leaving a vacuum for new ideas to flourish that were impossible in

Classical societies. Over time, their associated empires grew first to the east and south conquering many older civilizations, and later to the north and west to include Central and Western Europe. Between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the Renaissance, the West experienced a period of relative decline, known as the Middle ages, which included the Dark ages and the Crusades. The knowledge of the ancient Western world was preserved and survived during this period due to the concurrent ascendancy of the Islamic Golden Age to the east and south. The term "first world" was also used, but not commonly.

Since the Renaissance, the West evolved beyond the influence of the ancient Greeks and Romans due to the growth of Western European empires, and particularly the globe-spanning British Empire of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since the Age of Discovery and Columbus, the notion of the West expanded to include the Americas, though much of the Americas have considerable pre-Western cultural influence. Australia, New Zealand, and, sometimes, South Africa are considered part of Western culture due to their former status as settler colonies of Western nations. In addition, Israel and Lebanon may be considered part of the West due to their geographic location and late European colonial origins in the early twentieth century. Generally speaking, the current consensus would locate the West, at the very least, in the cultures and peoples of Europe, North America, Australia." -Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_world

...

Western Culture

"Western culture (sometimes equated with Western civilization) are terms which are used to refer to cultures of European origin, in contrast to "Eastern" or "Oriental" culture. This terminology originated as a way of describing what was different about the Greco-Roman culture and its descendants, in contrast to the older civilizations of Western Asia, which in many ways continued to serve as a model of civilization in the "west".

The concept of Western culture is generally linked to the classical definition of the Western world. In this definition, Western culture is the set of literary, scientific, political, artistic and philosophical principles which set it apart from other civilizations. The term has come to apply to countries whose history is strongly marked by Western European immigration or settlement, and is not restricted to Western Europe. Much of this set of traditions and knowledge is collected in the Western canon."

From a cultural and sociological approach the Western world is defined as including all cultures that are (directly derived from) European cultures, i.e. Europe, the Americas (North and South America), Australia and New Zealand. Together these countries constitute Western society. These are generally countries that share similar history, religions, languages, values and traditions. Culturally, many Latin Americans, particularly Argentines, Uruguayans, Chileans, Colombians, Cubans and Brazilians, firmly consider themselves Westerners, especially the ruling classes.

Some countries like Israel, Lebanon, the Philippines and

Turkey may be considered Western because of the blend of Western and non-Western culture”. -Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_culture

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THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2008

East and West

In an earlier blog we posted the question - did the Western culture put more emphasis and adopted the instincts of individual preservation more than the preservation of the species - even if just a tad more? Could it be that in the those early period of man's existence the West and the East went on their separate ways, with the west becoming more individualistic?

Although, I was born and raised in the Far East, I would say that the western culture is very much ingrained in me; what with 400 years of colonization under Spain and 50 years of occupation under the United States. Not to mention that the country is still very much under its social, political, and economic influence. I am therefore blessed or confounded, or both, by having both Western and Eastern culture as the background of my mental form.

I spent the first 40 years of my life in Asia - my place of birth; the next 20 years in North America; and now, I plan to live at least another 20 years in South America. So, one can say that I carry within me both what is "good" and what is "not so good" from both cultures.

Talking about individualism, here is one obvious example regarding what I consider the difference between these two worlds - which by the way, was also my first impression on my first ever trip to the West. Go to any restaurant in the West and you'll find people ordering individual dishes for each individual. In Asia, people will order dishes that will be shared by everyone on the table. Of course, there are always exceptions, like if you eat Big Macs at McDonald's.

Communal Ancestry

But, it didn't start this way. All humans in the past, way past, were communal. They did everything together and shared everything. To survive, the family or the clan were given more importance. Hunting in groups were more efficient. Then, came the period when it was the individual who became more important. I am sure, that in the near future, both society and the individual will be equally important. More than that, I am certain that the human being will be given the highest value. And when that time comes, no human will be above another.

In one of the earlier blogs, we asked, did the Eastern culture put more emphasis and adopt the conservation of the species ahead of preservation of the individual?

I guess the best people to answer this question are the Chinese and the Indians. These two countries' population alone adds up to about 2.5 billion - comprising 40% of the world's total population.

But, when exactly did the separation occur? Did it have anything to do with the separation of the farmers and the herders? Did the ancestors of the western culture opt to be herders, while the ancestors of the eastern culture became farmers? Or vice-versa? Did it begun the same period when the "West" became configured? Is this also the period when man started developing the concept of time in terms of productivity?

To be honest, I really do not know the answers to these questions - but I have faith that the answers will reveal themselves as I go forward on this trip of rediscovering the root of revenge.

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FRIDAY, JULY 11, 2008

Second Best

When I started this blog, my idea was to do a study on the subject of vengeance and violence; how and when it became an important issue - especially in the so-called "Western" culture, and nothing more. But, as I travel along this path, I am finding out that this topic is so encompassing that I am now compelled to go beyond the theme; and to do this, it is necessary that I elaborate on the details of this topic even more so than I originally planned.

I also said in the beginning that the resulting study will be compiled into a sort of monograph or book that I intend to write soon after. But now, I am not so sure about this. I am finding out that it is not so easy writing for this blog - much more, writing a monograph.

Be as it may, this new experience of writing has been giving me insights as well as internal commotions that

seemed to me not only cathartic, but more so, transferential. All in all, I can truly say that I am finding joy in doing this. So, I am going to write this book - no matter what.

If it is true - as it has been said - that the best way to learn is by teaching; I am finding out that the second best way to learn is by writing.

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SATURDAY, JULY 12, 2008

The Balance

The images and sculptures of "Lady Justice" is very diverse and there have been many interpretations of "Justitia" of the Romans or "Themis" of the Greeks. Some are blindfolded, some are bare breasted, some with swords, some with scale, etc. [See photo at...]

<http://violenceandvengeance.blogspot.com/2008/07/balance.html>

...

The consciousness cannot be in perpetual disequilibrium - every time it is out of balance, it has to balance itself; it has to go back to equilibrium.

Vengeance, isn't it the same as getting even. Isn't getting even the same as saying getting the balance back - trying to even the uneven? Isn't it the same as getting back at

someone who has done you harm? Or you think has done you harm? Am I suggesting here that revenge is built-in in man's psyche? Of course, not! And why not? Because one has the choice to act with violence or with nonviolence. Because, one can get back the equilibrium by doing the opposite of vengeance or violence - by comprehending the other, by comprehending the situation, by reconciling with the other, by reconciling with the situation. One can get the balance by humanizing instead of dehumanizing the other.

Comprehension, this is the key to equilibrium, the key to getting the balance back.

The "balance", isn't this also the other word for "weight" or "scale" - which is the symbol of justice itself?

...

Someone asked whether the human being can ever even the uneven?

And we replied that yes, he can "even" the "uneven" by working for nonviolence; by humanizing the other - not by compensating his inadequacies and accumulated frustrations through vengeance and violence.

...

“Balance - A weighing device, especially one consisting of a rigid beam horizontally suspended by a low-friction support at its center, with identical weighing pans hung at either end, one of which holds an unknown weight while the effective weight in the other is increased by known amounts until the beam is level and motionless”. - Heritage Dictionary

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/balance>

<http://violenceandvengeance.blogspot.com/2008/07/balance.html>

...

Side Note: Notice the sword "Lady Justice" is holding in her right hand while holding the "balance" in her other hand? Is she implying that she will use violence if necessary to administer justice? And in this particular statue, notice too, the dead snake on her feet - is that the same snake that is in Mercury's caduceus - the symbol for the tree of life - later used as the symbol of the medical profession? Did Lady Justice use the sword to kill the snake? Did she use "justice" to extinguish "life"?

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Justice,
<http://lib.law.washington.edu/ref/themis.html#Brief>,
<http://members.tripod.com/mdean/justice.html>

...

SUNDAY, JULY 13, 2008

Justice and Injustice

Let us go then, to the crux of the theme of vengeance and violence. I believe that the concept of "eye for eye" became standard in the Levant; later it was adopted in the Hammurabi code, in Mesopotamia, and later, the Hebrews, adopted it then, by the early Christians. Later, spreading throughout the Roman Empire (that included the Arab world). From there it was brought to the Western world through conquest and colonization by European colonizers, except that through the passing of time, the original idea behind it was lost.

The original idea was for people to stop from meting out disproportional punishment. But it became so ingrained in the culture that it is used to justify institutionalized violence. It is so ingrained in people it is used to justify individual violence.

It does seem to me that the reverie nucleus of the West has something to do with the climate of injustice. Is this the reason why they are very obsessed with the concept of justice, and of course, its "just" application? This does not mean that justice is necessarily bad. In reality, justice is a giant step in man's development. The only problem is when people use it to justify vengeance - when people use it to get "even" what was before "uneven".

For sure, this concept of vengeance is universal, but it was originally in the West where it was codified and institutionalized. It was in the West where it became part of the culture.

Now, if the west wants to spread the concept of justice to the rest of the world, what about the "non-west"? What concept did it want to bring to the world? We will try to answer this in the coming blogs.

Note: "Non-west" nations are those nations not considered part of the so-called "west". I am not using the readily available term "East", because it connotes, "Orient" - which is more associated with Asia.

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MONDAY, JULY 14, 2008

The Non-west

In an earlier post, we asked, if the west wants to spread the concept of justice to the rest of the world, what about the "non-west"? What concept did it bring to the world? We also said that we would try to answer this in a later blog. Well, this is that blog.

So, what about the non-west, what does it wants to bring to the world? Could it be the concept of tolerance and nonviolence? Could it be the concept of "Ahimsa"? And what exactly is "Ahimsa"?

Ahimsa

Ahimsa (Sanskrit: means "non-violence", "non-injury" or absence of desire to harm any life forms. Ahimsa is the fundamental principle of Jainism forming cornerstone of its ethics and doctrine. Vegetarianism and other non-

violent practices and rituals of Jains flow from the principle of Ahimsa. According to Adian Rankin, the concept of Ahimsa is so much intertwined with Jainism that it conjures up images of ascetics who cover their mouths and sweep the ground before them with small brushes to avoid injuring the most minuscule forms of life and Jain-owned animal sanctuaries where even the sickest, most deformed birds and beasts are protected and cherished. These overt manifestations of an ancient faith challenge the comfortable - and near-universal - assumption of human precedence over other creatures.

The Jain concept of Ahimsa is quite different from the concept of non-violence found in other philosophies. In other religious traditions, violence is usually associated with causing harm to others. On the other hand, in Jainism, violence refers primarily to injuring one's own self - behavior that inhibits the soul's own ability to attain mokṣa or liberation. At the same time it also means violence to others because it is this tendency to harm others that ultimately harms one's own soul. Furthermore, the Jains have extended the concept of Ahimsa not only to humans but also to all animals, plants, microorganisms and all beings having life or life potential. All life is sacred and everyone has a right to live fearlessly to its maximum potential. The living beings do not have any fear from those who have taken the vow of Ahimsa. According to Jainism, protection of life, also known as abhayadānam, is the supreme charity that a person can make.

Ahimsa does not merely indicate absence of physical violence, but also indicates absence of desire to indulge in any sort of violence. This Jain ideal of Ahimsa profoundly influenced Mahatma Gandhi, through his friendship with the Jain scholar Shrimad Rajchandra that it formed a basis of his satyagraha (truth struggle) against colonial rule and caused him to rethink many

aspects of contemporary Hindu practices. While Jainism is not a proselytizing religion and as such has no organized system of advocating its doctrine, Jains have been forefront in strongly advocating vegetarianism and non-violence through ages. Ahimsa being central to the Jain philosophy, Jain Ācāryas have produced, through ages, quite elaborate and detailed doctrinal materials concerning its various aspects.

The vow of nonviolence

The hand with a wheel on the palm symbolizes the Jain Vow of Ahimsa. The word in the middle is "ahimsa". The wheel represents the dharmacakra which stands for the resolve to halt the cycle of reincarnation through relentless pursuit of truth and non-violence.

Ahimsa is formalized into Jain doctrine as the first major vow of the ascetics and first minor vow of the laity.

The non-violence of mind

Anekantavada is the principle of relativity of truth or the doctrine of multiple aspects. Jains hold that truth is multifaceted and has multiple sides that cannot be completely comprehended by anyone. Anekantavada describes the world as a multifaceted, ever-changing reality with an infinity of viewpoints relative to the time, place, nature and state of one who is the viewer and that which is viewed. What is true from one point of view is open to question from another. Absolute truth cannot be grasped from any particular viewpoint alone, because absolute truth is the sum total of all different viewpoints that make up the universe. Because it is rooted in these doctrines, Jainism cannot exclusively uphold the views of any individual, community, nation, or species. It recognizes inherently that other views are valid for other peoples, and for other life forms. This perception leads to the doctrine of syadvada or sevenfold

predication stating the truth from different viewpoints. Anekantvada is the doctrine and Syadvada is its expression. According to Jaina philosophers' all-important philosophical statements should be expressed in this sevenfold way in order to remove the danger of dogmatism (ekanta) in philosophy.

The concept of syadvada allows the Jains to accept the truth in other philosophies from their perspective and thus inculcating a tolerance for other viewpoints. Anekantvada is non-absolutist and stands firmly against all dogmatisms, even including any assertion that only Jainism is the right religious path. It is thus an intellectual Ahimsa or Ahimsa of mind. In Anekantvada, there is no "battle of ideas", because this is considered to be a form of intellectual himsa or damage, leading quite logically to physical violence and war. In today's world, the limitations of the adversarial, "either with us or against us" forms of argument are increasingly apparent leading to political, religious and social conflicts. Even the mounting ecological crisis is linked to adversarialism, because it arises from a false division between humanity and "the rest" of nature.

Origins and evolution of Ahimsa

Ahimsa, an important tenet of all the religions originating in India, is now considered as an article of faith by the adherents of the Indian religions. However, not much is known about the historical origins of Ahimsa and as to how it became widespread and got deeply entrenched in the Indian philosophy. Scholars speculate that the doctrine of Ahimsa was probably first developed amongst the native non-Aryan people in around third millennium BCE and was adopted by the brahmanas during the later Upanishadic period under the influence of sramanas. The Vedas, the manumriti, the Dharmasutra and Mahabharata contain many references

on killing and slaughter of animals for sacrifices, oblations to dead ancestors, and as well as for various other occasions. However, as the doctrine of karma gained acceptance in the Hindu belief, the tenet of Ahimsa also gained prominence. Later Hindu scriptures condemn the slaughter of animals, upholding ahimsa as one of the highest ideal. Bal Gangadhar Tilak has credited Jainism with cessation of slaughter of animals in the brahmanical religion. Not surprisingly, some scholars have traced the origin of Ahimsa to Jainas and their precursor, the sramanas. According to Thomas McEvilley, a noted Indologist, certain seals of Indus Valley civilization depict a meditative figure surrounded by a multitude of wild animals, providing evidence of proto yoga tradition in India akin to Jainism. This particular image might suggest that all the animals depicted are sacred to this particular practitioner. Consequently, these animals would be protected from harm. This might be the first historical evidence of the practice of Ahimsa. -Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahimsa_in_Jainism

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TUESDAY, JULY 15, 2008

Injustice and Violence

What could be a greater injustice than that of being born only to die? This is a good question, but a better question to ask is: What could be a greater rebellion if not the rebellion against death?

If man's biggest fear is his fear of death; then, his greatest suffering stems from this fear of death. If his biggest concern is the reality of his finiteness; then, his only recourse is to preoccupy himself with the other reality; to concern himself with the intangible reality if he wants to achieve infiniteness. The other reality that could not be sensed, but could be experienced - that anyway, could be registered. He has to follow his heart, his intuition that there must be something more, a meaning - to his existence.

What about violence? Is this internal violence coming from this inherent universal climate of injustice? Is this

internal violence coming from this inherent need to balance this injustice with compensating desire - internal violence that is expressed as external violence in the world of relations - in the world of people?

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 16, 2008

What then, is Nonviolence?

We received a feedback, an inquiry - asking for the meaning of nonviolence.

What about nonviolence - what is it exactly?

- It is simple enough. If we know what violence is, then, nonviolence is non-tolerance of violence. Actually, you can say that tolerance of violence is violence.
- If the human being is intentionality, and violence is going against that intentionality; then, nonviolence is to contribute to the enhancement of that intentionality. To put it simply, if the human being's transformation is hindered by pain and suffering, and his basic project is the overcoming of this pain, this suffering - then, helping him to alleviate his pain, his suffering, is nonviolence.

Helping him in his transformation, then, is the greatest nonviolence act one can do for another - the most valid of all actions!

It is life's project par excellence!

...

- In other words, to humanize is to act with nonviolence.
- The most important nonviolent act: to humanize the other.
- To humanize the other is to humanize the earth.
- To humanize the earth is to humanize yourself.
- Helping the other in his transformation is self-transformation.
- If you take this as your reality, as your mission, then nothing can detain you from your destiny, and you would have opened the other's future, his own destiny.

...

"It is by virtue of the corporal expressions of the other, or by perceiving the situation in which the other appears, that I am able to comprehend the meanings of the other, the intention of the other." -Silo

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-letters-to-my-friends.html>

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THURSDAY, JULY 17, 2008

Free Interpretation Redux

I have done quite a few alterations and additions on these two earlier entries that I decided that perhaps, it is worth posting them again - this time as a single post. I also believe that the subject of free interpretation is of fundamental importance, because it is at the heart of the theme of vengeance, violence, and not to forget, nonviolence.

Some Keywords

Free interpretation, freedom of choice, intentionality, comprehension, tolerance, reconciliation, humanize, etc. on the one hand; imposition, human nature, intolerance, fanaticism, censure, vengeance, punishment, objectification, dehumanize, etc. on the other. Terms we plan to elaborate on future blogs. In the meantime, let's try to deal with the first term, free interpretation.

Free interpretation, now that is one great and unique concept. It is the antithesis of imposition. It is the grandfather of the freedom of choice. Free interpretation; is it as simple as it sounds? Like, so "okay, interpret it as you want". Or is this concept at the root of all freedoms? Is it just about the freedom to interpret a particular phrase, a particular passage, a book or even an event? Or is it an encompassing doctrine - a doctrine about interpreting a written piece, an event, an action, a gesture, a feeling, a look, a world, a life, a meaning?

It seems to me, free interpretation are all these and much more.

It basically means that one has the right to interpret anything and everything according to one's experience, according to one's history, one's level of understanding, one's comprehension. Even my own "truth" is an interpretation. In this sense, from the point of view of this concept of free interpretation, either I comprehend the other's action, or at the very least, I am tolerant of the other's action. In short, no interpretation is wrong, only different. Because, my opinion that a particular interpretation is wrong is just that, an opinion - it is also just an interpretation.

And what does free interpretation have to do with violence or vengeance?

It's clear. How can there be violence or even vengeance when I understand the other - or at least, tolerant of the other? It seems to me, that it is even possible that this concept of free interpretation could be one of the ingredients for experiencing the human in the other.

With free interpretation, we begin to learn how to tolerate the other, understand the other, comprehend the other, feel the human in the other, and perhaps,

even experience love and compassion for the other, and finally, feel one with the other.

...

Free Interpretation

Isn't this a bit stretching it - this interpretation of free interpretation?

In a later blog, we said, "Violence then, is the appropriation of the other's choice or intentionality. Put in another way, violence is the imposition of one's intentionality on the intentionality of the other". In another post, we said, "Free interpretation, now that is one great and unique concept. It is the antithesis of imposition." Further on, we continued, "It basically means that one has the right to interpret anything and everything according to one's experience, according to one's history, one's level of understanding, one's comprehension. In this sense, from the point of view of this concept of free interpretation, either I comprehend the other's action, or at the very least, I am tolerant of the other's action. In this sense, no interpretation is wrong or bad - only different."

Imposition, it seems to me, then, is always present at the outset of violence. And if the opposite of imposition is free interpretation, I believe then, that free interpretation is the seed of nonviolence.

"If the human being is intentionality, then, nonviolence is contributing to the enhancement of that intentionality. To put it simply, if his transformation is hindered by suffering and his basic project is the overcoming of pain and suffering - then, helping him to alleviate his pain, his suffering, is nonviolence." -from the post, "Violence and Nonviolence"

In other words, letting the other express his intentionality is the basis of that enhancement - by giving him his freedom of interpretation and the understanding of the action that is the consequence of that interpretation.

Still, isn't this stretching it?

I do not think so. And if you feel you are up to it, try this little experiment and find out for yourself.

The next time you have an argument, especially with someone whose opinion directly opposes your own - try giving the other the benefit of his free interpretation, try accepting his position as it is, just another position; not wrong, not necessarily right either. Just a position. Try understanding his opinion. Try comprehending where he is coming from. To make this easier, try to see that your position is, also, on the other hand, just another position - even if it is exactly the opposite of his. This is the only way you can reconcile two opposing views.

It is the same when someone is angry with you. Try to understand that they are only acting according to how they interpret the situation. I am not saying that you tolerate or accept their violence; I am saying that it is better for you to understand and comprehend their action, because by doing so, you lessen your suffering.

This is a very important issue to clarify here, right now, regarding what I have been discussing up to this point; that when I said "with free interpretation, no interpretation is wrong or bad", I am not saying this from the philosophical point of view of Amoralism, which is understood as saying that "nothing is good or bad; therefore, one is free to do as one wants." Remember, that we also said in an earlier post that "Tolerance of violence is violence". In short, what I am trying to say is

to understand the other's interpretation and to respect the other's interpretation of things; but on the other hand, that does not necessarily mean tolerating or accepting the other's acts of violence.

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“We know that others proclaimed the free interpretation, but then in the practice, they imposed their own interpretation. We want to make it seriously. - Silo

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-in-manatiales-chile-may-6-2006.html>

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FRIDAY, JULY 18, 2008

To Humanize the Earth

In an earlier post, we said that to act with nonviolence is the same as to humanize the other; and to humanize the other is to humanize the earth. I would like to add here that to humanize the earth is to humanize yourself.

What is it then, to humanize the earth? We can understand what is to humanize - if we know what it is to dehumanize. If we agree that the human being is inherently good - then, to act with violence is to dehumanize; to act with nonviolence is to humanize; to act with vengeance is to dehumanize; to reconcile is to humanize; to objectify the other is to dehumanize; to see the other's potential to be human is to humanize. To act with intolerance is to dehumanize; to act with tolerance is to humanize. To impose one's intentionality on another is to dehumanize; to enhance the other's intentionality is to humanize.

Only by seeing the other as human, can we truly give; can we truly love. Only by treating the other as human can we truly humanize.

...

“Namer of a thousand names, maker of meanings, transformer of the world, your parents and the parents of your parents continue in you. You are not a fallen star but a brilliant arrow flying toward the heavens. You are the meaning of the world, and when you clarify your meaning you illuminate the earth. When you lose your meaning, the earth becomes darkened and the abyss opens.

I will tell you the meaning of your life here: It is to humanize the earth. And what does it mean to humanize the earth? It is to surpass pain and suffering; it is to learn without limits; it is to love the reality you build.

I cannot ask you to go further, but neither should it offend if I declare, “Love the reality you build, and not even death will halt your flight!” -Silo

<http://siloswords.blogspot.com/2009/03/silo-internal-landscape.html>

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SATURDAY, JULY 19, 2008

Giving and Receiving

Is being fair also being just? And being unfair is being unjust? Is to have fairness, also to have justice?

When I give and it is not reciprocated; when I love and it is not returned; is it only natural that I feel injustice? Is it only natural that I suffer?

Why can't I give, truly give? Why can't I love, truly love?

Why must my happiness depend on what the other can give me? Why must my joy depend on the love the other can offer me? Why can't I give, why can't I love without attachment, without possession, without expecting any return.

How joyful it must be to be able to truly give. How exquisite it must feel to be able to truly love.

SUNDAY, JULY 20, 2008

The Ethic of Reciprocity

But, what about reciprocity - you might ask.

Throughout history, numerous wise men, masters, sages, prophets, messengers, philosophers have in one form or another stated their own interpretation of the ethic of reciprocity.

In the Book of the Community, published in 1980 by The Community for the Equilibrium and development of the Human Being, the ethic of reciprocity is called the Principle of Solidarity.

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"When you treat others as you would have them treat you, you liberate yourself.

This principle has great consequences because it leads to an opening, to a positive communication with other human beings. We know that self-enclosure generates more or less serious problems. What is called "selfishness" can be reduced precisely to a problem of self-enclosure and lack of communication. This principle gives importance to the act of going positively towards others, and it complements with the other principle that recommends, "Do not harm others." although there is a great difference between the two.

The teaching on action of solidarity is one of the most ancient teachings of humanity." -From The Book of the Community

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Characteristics of the Golden Rule

"The golden rule has developed independently in different regions and in different cultural contexts. That makes it a principle of universal ethics. Beside its universality, it is an essential aspect of the golden rule, that the reciprocity and the moral responsibility make it possible to build up a relationship with empathy and respect.

Further the golden rule covers two basic aspects of every theory in ethics: In the positive form („Treat others as you like them to treat you.“) contextual benevolence is addressed, in the negative form („Don't treat others as you don't like them to treat you.“) the contractually defined limits of intervention into the autonomic sphere of the individual are mentioned, led by the concept of justice. Justice and benevolence come together in the golden rule, meanwhile they were treated separately in the traditional philosophical debate about deontological

or teleological ethics: The claim that an action is right or wrong independent of the consequences (deontological ethics) favors justice as the central term, the claim that an action is right or wrong on the basis of the consequences (teleological ethics) does so with benevolence.

In addition to this important fact the golden rule manifests a valuable progress of civilizations, from the ius talionis to a principle of desirability. Neglecting the talionist principle of the Old Testament, as it is summed up in the famous verse „And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.“ (Deuteronomy 19, 21), covers the knowledge and the experience that continuing with the wrong does not heal any wounds. Only with the moral implications drawn by the golden rule, one can overcome hate and self-hate, installing a new form of relationship by appealing to the desirable - a relationship in tolerance and appreciation. So even in the challenges, fanaticism and extremism put on the open society, the golden rule proves to be a suitable principle, because the dialogue can only be successful when it strengthens the progressive concept of tolerance and appreciation, which takes into account justice and benevolence.

In spite of all the advantages of the golden rule, the academic philosophical ethics indeed almost ignored it. So the golden rule is not mentioned in the German historical encyclopedia of philosophy. Since the 1960s the interest has been growing both in the continental (e.g. Hans Reiner and Hans-Ulrich Hoche) and the Anglo-Saxon philosophy (e.g. Marcus G. Singer and Richard M. Hare). But before, the most important representatives of academic philosophy had criticized the golden rule sharply. -The Golden Rule as a Global Ethos by Josef Bordat (Berlin)

http://www.philosophia-online.de/mafo/heft2007-1/Bor_gol.htm

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The ethic of reciprocity

“The ethic of reciprocity or the Golden Rule is a fundamental moral value, which simply means, “Treat others as you would like to be treated.” It is arguably the most essential basis for the modern concept of human rights, though it is not without its critics.

Ethical teaching interprets the Golden Rule as mutual respect for one’s neighbor (rather than as a deontological or consequentialist rule). A key element of the golden rule is that a person attempting to live by this rule treats all people, not just members of his or her in-group with consideration. The golden rule, with roots in a wide range of world cultures, is well suited to be a standard to which different cultures could appeal in resolving conflicts. Principal philosophers and religious figures have stated it in different ways.” -Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethic_of_reciprocity#cite_note-5

On the next post, we will enumerate interpretations of the ethic of reciprocity by some of these philosophers and religious figures.

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MONDAY, JULY 21, 2008

The Golden Rule

Some Golden Rule (Ethic of Reciprocity) passages from the religious texts of various religions and secular beliefs:

Bahá'í Faith:

"Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not." "Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself." Baha'u'llah

"And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself."

Brahmanism:

*"This is the sum of Dharma [duty]: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you".
Mahabharata, 5:1517 "*

Buddhism:

"...a state that is not pleasing or delightful to

me, how could I inflict that upon another?" Samyutta Nikaya v. 353

"Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." Udana-Varga 5:18

"Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill." Detachment and Compassion in Early Buddhism by Elizabeth J. Harris

Christianity:

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Matthew 7:12, King James Version.

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Luke 6:31, King James Version.

"...and don't do what you hate...", Gospel of Thomas 6. The Gospel of Thomas is one of about 40 gospels that were widely accepted among early Christians, but which never made it into the Christian Scriptures (New Testament).

Confucianism:

"Tse-kung asked, 'Is there one word that can serve as a principle of conduct for life?' Confucius replied, 'It is the word 'shu' - reciprocity. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.'" Doctrine of the Mean 13.3

"Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you" Analects 15:23

"Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence." Mencius VII.A.4

Ancient Egyptian:

"Do for one who may do for you, that you may cause him thus to do." The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant, 109 - 110 Translated by R.B. Parkinson. The original dates to 1970 to 1640 BCE and may be the earliest version ever written.

Hinduism:

"This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you." Mahabharata 5:1517

"Listen to the essence of Dharma. Having listened, focus on it, and establish it in your mind. Do not do any thing to others which you do not want to be done to yourself" Vedas

Humanism:

"Humanists acknowledge human interdependence, the need for mutual respect and the kinship of all humanity."

"Humanists affirm that individual and social problems can only be resolved by means of human reason, intelligent effort, critical thinking joined with compassion and a spirit of empathy for all living beings. "

"Don't do things you wouldn't want to have done to you, British Humanist Society.

Islam:

"None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." Number 13 of Imam "Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths."

Jainism:

"Therefore, neither does he [a sage] cause violence to others nor does he make others do so." Acarangasutra 5.101-2.

"In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self." Lord Mahavira, 24th

Tirthankara

"A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated." Sutrakritanga 1.11.33

Judaism:

"...thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.", Leviticus 19:18

"What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. This is the law: all the rest is commentary." Talmud, Shabbat 31a.

"And what you hate, do not do to any one." Tobit 4:15

Native American Spirituality:

"Respect for all life is the foundation." The Great Law of Peace.

"All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves. All is really One." Black Elk

"Do not wrong or hate your neighbor. For it is not he who you wrong, but yourself." Pima proverb.

Roman Pagan Religion:

"The law imprinted on the hearts of all men is to love the members of society as themselves."

Shinto:

"The heart of the person before you is a mirror. See there your own form."

"Be charitable to all beings, love is the representative of God." Ko-ji-ki Hachiman Kasuga

Sikhism:

Compassion-mercy and religion are the support of the entire world". Japji Sahib

"Don't create enmity with anyone as God is within everyone." Guru Arjan Devji 259

"No one is my enemy, none a stranger and everyone is my friend." Guru Arjan Dev : AG 1299

Sufism:

*"The basis of Sufism is consideration of the hearts and feelings of others. If you haven't the will to gladden someone's heart, then at least beware lest you hurt someone's heart, for on our path, no sin exists but this."
Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, Master of the Nimatullahi Sufi Order.*

Taoism:

"Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss." T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien.

"The sage has no interest of his own, but takes the interests of the people as his own. He is kind to the kind; he is also kind to the unkind: for Virtue is kind. He is faithful to the faithful; he is also faithful to the unfaithful: for Virtue is faithful." Tao Teh Ching

Unitarian:

"The inherent worth and dignity of every person."

"Justice, equity and compassion in human relations."

"The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all."

"We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." Unitarian principles. 7,8

Wicca:

"A'in it harm no one, do what thou wilt" (i.e. do what ever you will, as long as it harms nobody, including yourself). One's will is to be carefully thought out in advance of action. This is called the Wiccan Rede.

Yoruba: (Nigeria):

"One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts."

Zoroastrianism:

"That nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself".

Dadistan-i-dinik 94:5

"Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others." Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29

Some philosophers' statements are:

Epictetus:

"What you would avoid suffering yourself, seek not to impose on others." (circa 100 CE)

Kant:

"Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a universal law of nature."

Plato:

"May I do to others as I would that they should do unto me." (Greece; 4th century BCE)

Socrates:

"Do not do to others that which would anger you if others did it to you." (Greece; 5th century BCE)

Seneca:

"Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your superiors," Epistle 47:11 (Rome; 1st century CE)

Examples from moral/ethical systems:

Humanism:

"...critical intelligence, infused by a sense of human caring, is the best method that humanity has for resolving problems. Reason should be balanced with compassion and empathy and the whole person fulfilled." Humanist Manifesto II; Ethics section.

Scientology:

"20: Try to treat others as you would want them to treat you." This is one of the 21 moral precepts that form the moral code explained in L. Ron Hubbard's booklet "The Way to Happiness."

Silo's Message:

"When you treat others as you would have them treat you, you liberate yourself." from the book, The Inner Look, by Silo

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If you see the other, consider the other, respect the other, and finally, treat the other as human, then, you can never go wrong. If you give the human being the highest value, then, you can never do wrong.

...

TUESDAY, JULY 22, 2008

What is to Humanize the Other?

I received some comments from the past article titled, "What then, is nonviolence? So, I felt that it is timely to expound a little more on the theme.

We said then, "The most important nonviolent act is to humanize the other." I just wanted to add here that to "humanize the other", does not mean, that the other should strive to become more human. The 'act' here - of 'humanizing' - is not coming from the other; it is coming from me. In a sense, what I am saying is that when I look at the other, consider the other and treat the other as human, then, I am humanizing the other.

If I am not humanizing him, then I am objectifying him. If it is looked at this way, then, I am either humanizing the other, or I am objectifying the other. In short, to see,

consider and treat the other as human - to humanize the other, is the first step to achieving a nonviolent human society, a humanized earth. Only then, can establishing a unitary human nation be talked about.

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2008

Faith and Free Interpretation

Below is a copy of my email to some friends in response to some inquiry about the subject of faith. I am posting it here because I feel that it compliments the entry on "free interpretation".

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Dear Friends...

Indeed, most of us from the "West" like I am (the Philippines is considered part of the west because of its 400 years history under the Spanish rule and another 50 years after that, under the US (see: the entry, The West), were born, raised and educated as Christians - many continued to be believers of the faith, while others became disillusioned and became non-believers; others were "born again" and still others became fanatics; but

most continued to be Christians in name, but not in practice.

Anyway, it reminded me of an anecdote that happened in a public university in Rio de Janeiro back in 2002, and to give you a sort of "climate" of the experience, below is part of my letter to my wife, Emma relating the experience:

"Right after the launching of Silo's Message in Santiago, we went to Sao Paulo and later to Rio to reproduce the experience of the events in Chile - and we were distributing leaflets with text of The Path and the link to silo.net with Carlos, a friend from Rio. While we were giving out flyers, Carlos who was about 15 yards away from me was approach by an elderly man who had been given a copy of the leaflet just some minutes ago. I saw the man talking to Carlos very animatedly.

After some time, Carlos went to me and told me that the man read The Path and was bothered by some of the things he read. He said that he is a Christian and that he believes in Jesus Christ, in heaven, in God and all that. He said that he liked what was written in The Path, but somehow felt that some of the passages conflicts with his faith and beliefs. Carlos wanted to know what he can say to the man. I told Carlos that there is no conflict between The Message and the man's faith. I told him to tell the man whatever his beliefs are - they are the truth and nobody or anything can deny that truth; to tell him that if he wants to be a good Christian, all he has to do is follow Christ's teachings - and nothing can go wrong and that everything will be alright with him.

Carlos went back to talk to the man and I saw the man smile as he left Carlos; as if he has rediscovered and regained a renewed faith in his beliefs.

Carlos told me later that the man went away very happy and content; so joyful that his beliefs were somehow confirmed.

I realized that this "free interpretation" is a most unique concept in terms of the beliefs. It dawned on me that we are not saying this for some "tactical", or "neutrality" reasons. I realized that we are saying this "the right to believe or not to believe" because it is the "truth". In as much that there are different levels of consciousness, there are different levels of logic, different levels of language, and therefore different levels of truth! Whatever one believes in, for that one it is the truth. And no one, can deny that truth. I say, I believe in immortality; but most probably, I am saying this because of my educational and societal background. But, in reality, I too, doesn't really know that for a fact. Yes, I may have the intuition of it, but it is still a belief. How can I impose a belief on another? Even, if I do have the experience of the transcendence, how can I impose this on others? If I do, then I am just initiating and perpetuating another dogma. Mine is the ONLY truth! Therefore, everyone else's is wrong! 'What a boring concept!', I could almost hear Carlos saying.

'Free interpretation', now, that is a most radical and liberating concept!"

I believed it then - and I still believe it now: whatever what one's beliefs are, they are true and no one can deny that truth.

I have one caveat, though; having certainty of one's truth does not necessarily give one the right to impose that truth on others.

As always... Godi

THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2008

Still More Questions

I know. The ways things are going with this blog, there are more questions than answers. But, what can I do? I am realizing that the more I begin to discover things, the more I realize that I am ignorant. In short, the more I know, the more I know I do not know anything. It is also a nice little trick I play on myself every time I can't seem to know what to write. I just ask myself questions - hoping that, maybe, the answers to these questions, sooner or later, will present themselves..

So, on with more questions.

- How does frustrations, especially, accumulated frustrations build up inner violence?
- What happens when these pent-up emotions reach intolerable levels?

- Are they expressed as violence? Remember that we are not just talking of physical violence. Violence can be expressed in so many forms; from the grossest form, like genocide; to the most hidden, like psychological blackmail; to the subtlest, like the simplest of censure.
- Are one's frustrations relative to how violence are expressed in the world of the other?
- Is Making the other feel guilty for some infractions - a form of vengeance? Could it be considered a form of psychological violence?
- Are rules a form of censure? Are they also a form of imposition?
- Which is the better emotion - the emotion one feels after getting revenge or the one after getting reconciled?

More questions tomorrow.

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FRIDAY, JULY 25, 2008

Guilty as Charged

While writing this post, images from one of my favorite French films comes to mind. Amelie, the main character, is in the Metro station while the old 1931 classic song "Guilty" by Al Bowlly is being played on an old portable record player. She put some coins in the old beggar's tin can, but the old man refused the alms telling Amelie that he does not work on Sundays. Anyway, this post is about that nasty feeling when we feel we did something wrong - or for that matter, forgot to do something right - guilt!

...

We think we are perfect. Is this the reason why we could never admit to a mistake or fault? But, on the other hand, why is it that we also almost always have this guilty feeling? Is it because the consciousness think it is perfect? or is it the biographical "I" that has this illusion? Why is it that we are always looking for a "culprit" - somebody else

to blame for our misfortunes, even for our own mistakes? Especially, when something is wrong and we are angry, and we have to justify our anger. At times, even if there is nothing wrong with the situation at hand, but anyway, we are angry, we have to have someone convenient to blame, someone we can vent our frustrations on, our anger, our inner violence.

After venting our anger or revenge, a sort of temporary balance is restored in our inner world, because a sort of catharsis transpires and some of the excessively hot steam is released. But, almost always, as we mentioned in the entry, "Illusory Equilibrium", an over-reaction happens and we feel somewhat guilty, especially, if the other does not retaliate. The more disproportionate our reaction, the worst our feeling of guilt.

On the other hand, we sometimes also use guilt as our way of revenge. If overt retaliation is not possible, we usually resort to covert form of vengeance - making the other feel guilty.

We will continue with this theme of guilt in the next post.

And what about collective guilt? Is there such a thing? Do the people that used the atomic bomb and killed hundreds of thousands of people in the last world war have a guilty feeling hidden below the surface? How do they reconcile with this fact? And even if the decision to use the atomic bomb was not theirs, but their (long dead) leaders' alone - is it possible that they still carry this burden of guilt even after more than 60 years have passed?

How about collective reconciliation - is there such a thing?

SATURDAY, JULY 26, 2008

Pain and Suffering

Pain is to the body - suffering, on the other hand, pertains to the mind; but, what is suffering - really?

Pain is like a warning system that tell us when something is wrong with our body and what to avoid presently or in the future; like eating now, if we feel hunger pangs, or not playing with fire after getting burned by the flame of a candle.

So, what does it mean when we suffer? What is the purpose of suffering? Or, does it even have a purpose? With the classic candle example, the little boy gets burned and he instinctively retreat his hand from the flame, record the experience, and file it in his "bad experience" or "not to do again" mental drawer. But with suffering, we seem not to learn from our own or from other people's experience. Is our mental drawer for

suffering full to capacity or is it just nowhere to be found?

Someone scratched your brand new Benz; why is it that you suffer? It was not your forehead that was scratched. Why does that fact make you suffer? Why does that fact make you so very angry? Is it because, it means that you have to have your car repainted; and that it will cost you a lot of money? But, even if you do not have it repainted and spend hundreds of dollars on it - why is it that you still suffer? Does it have anything to do with the feeling of injustice?

On the other hand, if the vandal is caught and put in jail, why is it that your anger is somehow lessened - your suffering diminished? Does it have anything to do with justice administered? So you got your justice and everything is now fine with the world, right? But, your car still has a big scratch on the driver side door. So, what's wrong with this picture?

When the vandal is punished, does that fact somehow tips the balance in your favor? Like experiencing relief after getting revenge? And why the relief? Are you happy someone is getting punished, and therefore, also made to suffer? An eye for an eye... is this how it works, is this a universal truth?

When I seek vengeance masked as "justice" on the other; is it not my intention to make the other suffer - physically and/or mentally?

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SUNDAY, JULY 27, 2008

Nonviolence

I just had a nice chat with one of the bloggers following this blog. We were talking about free interpretation and its connection to nonviolence. And as is usual, when nonviolence is talked about, Hitler and the Nazis are almost always invoked. Even just for the sake of argument, they would always asked how nonviolence could have been used against Hitler and the Nazis. They say that nonviolence could have never won the war against the likes of Hitler. They would say that nonviolence could have never stop the Nazis.

I told him that nonviolence is not trying to stop Hitler or the likes of Hitler. Nonviolence is trying to stop violence. I continued that, sure, the Allied Forces won the war and stopped Hitler and the Nazis, but certainly, the Allies did not stop violence. You must agree with me that violence is clearly still with us.

I concluded by saying that nonviolence is not just about going against the horrors of war; it is not just about going against all forms of discrimination; it is not just about going against all forms of violence. It is more about working in favor of peace and doing something for peace. It is more about carrying peace within yourself and carrying this peace to others. It is more about reconciling with yourself and reconciling with others. It is about feeling the human in you and feeling the human in others. It is about humanizing yourself. It is about humanizing the other.

Finally, nonviolence is about liberating yourself when you treat others as you want them to treat you.

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MONDAY, JULY 28, 2008

Guilty by Association

We received a comment about the post, titled, "Guilty as Charged". So, let's go back and try to elaborate more on this theme.

When talking about that nasty feeling called, guilt; my tendency is to relate it still to the mechanism of equilibrium and disequilibrium; and its connection to vengeance.

As we said in the post, "Illusory Equilibrium", say, the consciousness receives an external stimulus that put it in disequilibrium, the natural tendency of the consciousness is to react and to try to bring back its "lost" integrity by bringing itself back to equilibrium. It has to get even (vengeance) what was now uneven. But, the reaction is usually an over-reaction (or is perceived as over-reaction); and so either, a greater counter-action is received in return, or if there is none, somehow, the

feeling of guilt is felt, because it satisfies the void created by the absence of the counter-action. In other words, Feeling guilty somehow gives the consciousness the illusion of equilibrium. It is akin to self-punishment. So, if we do not receive the expected "vengeance", we create the "vindication" ourselves by feeling guilty.

It does seem to me that this mechanism of equilibrium and disequilibrium has a lot to do with the act-object structure. All acts made by the consciousness must have an object to complete its act. It also cannot receive an act without it reacting to the said act. It could react externally or internally, or both. It could react instinctively, or it could react intentionally.

Say, as an example, we give our love to someone and it is not returned as deep as our love and/or as deeply as we expected it to be. Somehow, we feel a sort of injustice - because our ACT (which is loving the other really deeply) is not returned. But, without realizing it, maybe, the "return" is already "present" within us. The "return", without knowing it, is actually the joy of feeling the really deep love we feel for the other. The expected "reward" was already awarded as soon as we felt the deep love for the other.

When one gives something - anything, anytime, every time - I say that one need not wait for it to be returned, because the "return" is automatic. The "return" is built-in in the giving. The "return" is in the joy of the giving. The equilibrium has been reestablished already as soon as we made the valid act. All valid acts are coherent acts, and therefore these acts are always balanced. Everything is in total agreement.

Anyway, if what you gave is indeed returned; then, you did not actually give anything, did you?

TUESDAY, JULY 29, 2008

Still Guilty

We said in the post, "Guilty as Charged", that on many occasions we also use this feeling of guilt as our stealth weapon, especially, if overt vengeance is not possible or workable for a given situation. We tell people (usually, a loved one) what we have done for them. We show them the long list of things we have given or done for them and the almost blank list of things they have given or done for us (or we just make our accounting mentally).

Sometimes, we show how pitiable we are, and how miserable they have made our lives. (The problem here is that most times, we do become miserable, as a matter of fact.)

It seems clear to me that if one lost one's self-esteem, and start to feel self-pity; it is the same mechanism of the consciousness working, trying to bring itself back to

equilibrium - by feeling guilty ourselves or by making the other feel guilty.

There are times when we employ our vindication through inaction or through silence.

Of course, one could think of a hundred more examples and a hundred more ways of feeling guilty and how we make others feel guilty. But I am not ashamed to say that I am too lazy to enumerate more. I have no excuse; but nevertheless, I do not feel guilty.

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, 2008

Judgment Day

People are so concerned with justice and its application - they are so obsessed with it, they even invented a god that is "all-just". Why? If not to punish - and get my vengeance in the afterlife - people that have done me, or other people harm. If I am not able to have my revenge in this life, with a god that is all-just, I am assured that those people that harmed me will get what they deserved in the afterlife.

In short, people would rather avoid reconciliation and ignore the principle of solidarity, that says, "Treat others as you want them to treat you" and just go with the principle of justice - which is really masked revenge - that says, "Treat others as they deserved to be treated".

So, they came up with the concept of the final justice, the ultimate justice, or the ultimate application of justice - "Judgment Day"! Where, on the "end of days", all

sinners who will eventually go to eternal damnation in burning hell will be on god's left, and those (I am not so sure who are the people that will stay on god's right since everyone sinned anyway) on the right will go to heaven.

But, can you see the deep-rooted mechanism working here? How whole cultures' psyche is so obsessed with vengeance and revenge? So much so, that they would not only pursue perpetrators to the ends of the earth, but also to the ends of life, and even the afterlife!

...

"In Christian eschatology, the Last Judgment, Final Judgment, Judgment Day, or Day of the Lords is the judgment by God of all nations.[1] It will take place after the resurrection of the dead and the Second Coming (Revelation 20:12-15). This belief has inspired numerous artistic depictions.

The concept of a Last Judgment is also found in all Abrahamic religions and elsewhere (for example, see Duat). In Islam, the Last Judgment is called a number of things, including yaum al-Qiyamah, Allah in Arabic, will judge all Creation." -Wikipedia

http://wikipedia.org/last_judgment/

...

Another problem I can see here - with this concept of a vindictive god that is "all-just" - is that it gives people some sort of justification administering their own revenge on others, because, wouldn't that be merely doing god's work, anyway?

...

THURSDAY, JULY 31, 2008

Synopsis

- At the start of this blog we explained that our interest for creating this blog was to initiate a study and try to search for the root of vengeance and violence in the context of the Western culture. But from the beginning, I already had the intuition that the scope of research and study for the theme will necessarily have to encompass the whole gamut of elements that have to do with not only the subject of vengeance and violence; but will also require delving on the theme of diversity, and most especially, nonviolence. And if we are to go deeper into the study of vengeance and violence, it would be fundamental to also talk about understanding the other and reconciling with the other. It was also clear that the study within the context of the Western Culture alone will not be able to stand on its own; the Eastern Culture necessarily have to be part of it.

- We also said that although, when talking about violence, the immediate images that come to most people's mind are that of wars, crimes, guns, murder, gangs, muggings, or somebody stepping on one's toes, etc.; we are going to go beyond physical violence and will include the other forms of violence, i.e., psychological, racial, generational, sexual, economic, religious, moral, etc.
- We then explained that for us, vengeance and violence are not part of human nature; that we do not believe it is part of the human psyche to be vindictive and vengeful - that the zoological vision of the human being is not correct regarding its so-called "survival of the fittest" premise. We said that we do not think we are a violent species, and that this blog was created to try to prove that indeed the human being is not violent and that vengeance is not part of human's nature.
- So we started by posing questions regarding vengeance and violence. Afterwards, we asked more questions. Later, we posed even more questions. It was clear to me that I am writing this blog, because, I myself want to find the answers to these questions. And that perhaps, through this research and study, I might stumble on some of the answers. Or perhaps, the answers might present themselves as I travel along this path.
- So the fundamental questions were what the words vengeance and violence meant. And are these intrinsic to the human being?
- We then said that vengeance is not a mechanical action-reaction phenomena. That it is actually at the base of all violence. That vengeance is the balancing act to a given imbalance; that it is the equilibrium to disequilibrium. We said that the act of vengeance is always present, even if subtly, always working in the

background. It is always present in the work of the structure, act-object, trying to compensate one's inadequacy, one's lacking, one's fears, one's frustrations; trying to compensate one's reverie nucleus - one's cultural nucleus.

It's clear, that this interpretation of vengeance would seem to the reader a little bit radical. But, I will have to leave at that.

- Then, we came out with another not so usual idea, the notion that violence is never personal. We said that, more often than not, our anger are directed to people closest to us, and that the reasons has nothing to do with what our loved ones did or did not do to us; but rather it has more to do with our own frustrations - with those negative experiences that have accumulated within us. And, that we are really just waiting for a reason - a justification to release our anger, our frustrations, our internal violence.

- It is the same with government leaders; they need a rationale, a justification, a pretext to go to war; they always need a reason to express their inner violence - to express their violence on others, mostly on innocent people.

- Later, we talked about the basis of most laws, especially in the West. This very old and archaic edict from the Hammurabi Code that says, "An eye for an eye". Which we said was formulated to stop people from meting out disproportional punishment. We said that it was a good concept for its moment. But we also said that more advanced and updated upgrades to this old concept have been released throughout the centuries from different messengers and enlightened ones.

- We posit that when the integrity of an individual, a people, or even an entire culture is threatened, a sort of warning signal is registered by the structure under threat - a sort of imbalance is registered - and instinctively, a reaction (balancing) is done (getting even, vengeance, justice, going to war, etc.).
- We were asked by one of the readers of the blog to define nonviolence, and we said that if the human being is intentionality, and violence is going against that intentionality, then, contributing to the enhancement of that intentionality is nonviolence. In other words, if his transformation is hindered by suffering and his basic project is the overcoming of this pain, this suffering - then, helping him to alleviate his pain, his suffering, is nonviolence. Helping him in his transformation, then, is the greatest act of nonviolence one can do for another - the most valid of all actions! It is life's project par excellence!

In short, to humanize is to act with nonviolence, and to humanize is to give in unifying acts.

- We talked about the ethic of reciprocity and later, we enumerated some famous passages from the text of various religious and secular beliefs. These were expressed in different forms, but basically, saying the same, which is: treat others as you want to be treated.
- We theorized that the West is interested in promoting justice to the rest of the world, and that the Non-west (the East) was more interested in spreading the concept of ahimsa or nonviolence.
- We then, talked about free interpretation. We said that free interpretation basically means that one has the right to interpret anything and everything according to one's experience, according to one's level of understanding,

one's comprehension, one's culture, one's personal history. Everybody's "truth" is an interpretation. In this sense, from the point of view of this concept of free interpretation, either I comprehend the other's action, or at the very least, I am understanding of the other's action; because from this point of view, no interpretation is wrong - only different. I am not saying that we tolerate or accept their violence; what I am saying that it is better for us to understand their action, because by doing so, we lessen our suffering.

- Someone asked to elaborate on that nasty feeling called guilt. We said that every time the consciousness receives an external stimulus that puts it in disequilibrium, the natural tendency of the consciousness is to react and to try to bring back its "lost" integrity by bringing itself back to equilibrium. It has to get even (vengeance) what was now uneven. But, the reaction is usually an over-reaction (or is perceived as over-reaction); and so either, a greater counter-action is received in return, or if there is none, somehow, the feeling of guilt is felt, because it satisfies the void created by the absence of the counter-action. In other words, Feeling guilty somehow gives the consciousness the illusion of equilibrium. It is akin to self-punishment. So, if we do not receive the expected "vengeance", we create the "vindication" ourselves by feeling guilty.

- We also talked about the concept of an "all-just" god - how a whole culture's psyche is so obsessed with vengeance and revenge, so much so, that they would not only pursue offenders to the ends of the earth, but also to the ends of life, and with a god that is "all-just" - even the afterlife! The problem with this notion is that it gives people justification to mete their own revenge on others with the conscience-background that they are just doing god's work. And we also said that this obsession with

justice and vengeance is so deep-rooted in the Western culture that it is actually almost a mechanism.

- Later, we went to develop further, our definition of nonviolence. We said that nonviolence is not just about going against the horrors of war; it is not just about going against all forms of discrimination; it is not just going against all forms of violence. It is more about working in favor of peace and doing something for peace. It is more about carrying peace within yourself and carrying this peace to others. It is more about reconciling with yourself and reconciling with others. It is about feeling the human in you and feeling the human in others. It is about humanizing yourself. It is about humanizing the other.

This is the reason why we prefer to call it not just nonviolence, but, active-nonviolence.

- Finally, we said that nonviolence is about liberating yourself when you treat others as you want them to treat you.

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 01, 2008

Violence, in All Its Subtleties

- The problem with violence is that the mere thought, the mere intention of violence, already harm us.
- The mind needs to be still, to be quiet - but also, it has to be without taint - meaning, not having even a hint or intention of violence.
- We can be clearer about this when we realize, not only the meaning of violence, but the meaning of violence in all its forms - in all its subtleties.

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SATURDAY, AUGUST 02, 2008

Second to the Last Word

It is quite obvious; this work is not even halfway done. The theme of vengeance, violence and nonviolence is so ample that I have to break up the book in two or even three installments. I told a good friend about this dilemma and he told me that the only way I can finish this book is by putting a limit to this particular work and just do another one if necessary - if not, I will surely not finish it. So I am finishing it, but it sure is not finish.

Actually, I have started writing the next one, which will be about - among other things - possession, imposition, laws, war, suffering, sacrifice, criticism, self-criticism, freedom of choice, tolerance, intolerance, receiving, giving, forgiving, reconciliation, meaning, cultural and individual diversity, and for some reason, I would like to include the theme of aesthetics.

I just want to reiterate something about our interpretation of free interpretation.

If free interpretation is the antithesis of imposition, and if imposition is for us the beginning of violence - then, free interpretation is the first step towards nonviolence.

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SUNDAY, AUGUST 03, 2008

Last Word

If you realize and begin to accept that your vision of the world is but an interpretation of reality - an interpretation that is permanently filtered through the tinted lenses of your own collective culture and individual history - you will start to respect the other's interpretation of the same reality - and perhaps begin to understand the consequential acts derived from that interpretation.

Then, you will be one step closer to comprehending, respecting, humanizing the other - and on your way to humanizing the earth.

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To learn more about Silo, please, go to:

www.silo.net

To follow the on-going blog on
Vengeance, Violence and Nonviolence,
please, go to:

www.freeinterpretationredux.info



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