

School for Gods

This Book

This book is a map and an escape plan.

Its aim is to show you the path followed by an ordinary man away from a hypnotic view of the world, from an accusing and plaintive interpretation of existence, to escape the rut of a programmed destiny.

This book would never have come to be, nor could I have written a single line, had I not encountered the Dreamer and His teachings.

I owe my infinite gratitude to the Dreamer for having taken me by the hand into the world of the “dream”, into the world of courage and flawlessness, where time and death do not exist and where wealth knows neither “thieves nor decay”.

On this journey back to the Essence, I have had to abandon so much dead weight: mediocre thoughts, negative emotions, second hand beliefs and ideas. I have had to “conquer myself”. I have had to acknowledge and challenge the darkest parts of my being.

All that we see, touch and feel, reality in all its variety, is nothing more than the projection of an invisible universe which exists above our world and which is the true origin of it.

With great difficulty, we can be aware of being surrounded by invisibility, of living in a world which has its source in dreams, where all that counts and is real in a man is invisible.

All our thoughts, feelings and fantasies are invisible. Our hopes, ambitions, secrets, fears and doubts and all our sensations, attractions, desires, aversions, loves and discords belong to the impalpable but very real world of being.

The invisible is not something metaphysical, poetic or mythical, nor is it mysterious, secret or supernatural; it is not a stable part of the world of phenomena and events, of categories of elements of reality. In every epoch, the change of one period to another, of the intellectual climate, the use of increasingly sophisticated instruments, constantly alter its confines making even larger parts of what was invisible in the past the subject of legitimate scientific research today.

This book is the story of the “rebirth” of a common man who is the epitome of a fallen, defeated Humanity. His journey back to the essence is a new exodus in search of lost integrity.

The first thing one needs to be aware of to make this journey is one’s own condition of enslavement.

The root, the primary cause of all the world’s problems, from the endemic poverty of vast regions of the planet to criminality and war, is that Humanity thinks and feels negatively.

Negative emotions rule the world we know. They are unreal and yet they occupy every corner of our life. In order to change man’s destiny, he needs to change his psychology, his system of convictions and beliefs. He needs to eradicate from deep within himself the tyranny of his fragile, mortal, conflictual mentality. The planet’s most terrible illness is not cancer or Aids, but man’s conflictual thinking. This is the foundation upon which the ordinary vision of the world is built: the real planetary killer.

The direction indicated to us by the Dreamer is both terrible and wonderful, difficult and joyful, but as necessary as the journey made by the salmon,

returning upstream against the current.

At first, His philosophy appeared to me to be a transgression of the natural laws that govern all of Humanity; however it showed itself to be envisaged and desired by the universal order of things and represents the highest vision of that order.

The book is the story of years of study and preparation spent alongside an “extraordinary being”. From Him, I received as a gift the most unbelievable task: the creation of a planetary “School”, a University without boundaries.

I’ve dreamed of an Individual Revolution
Capable of overturning the mental paradigms of the old Humanity
And freeing it for ever from its conflictuality,
From doubt, fear, pain.

I’ve dreamed of a School that teaches
A new generation of leaders
To harmonize the old apparent antagonisms:
Economy and ethics, action and contemplation,
Financial power and love.

Growing and changing before my eyes, like a being in gestation, day after day, “The School for Gods” was being built, as I was building myself. To all appearances, I was writing this book, but in fact it had always existed.

The Dreamer’s laws, and His ideas, are always tearing at me from the inside, and still remain, for the most part, misunderstood.

Like Prometheus, I have seized a fragment of the Dreamer’s world and hold it tightly so as to give it one day to men and women who, like me, want to abandon the hellish circles of ordinariness.

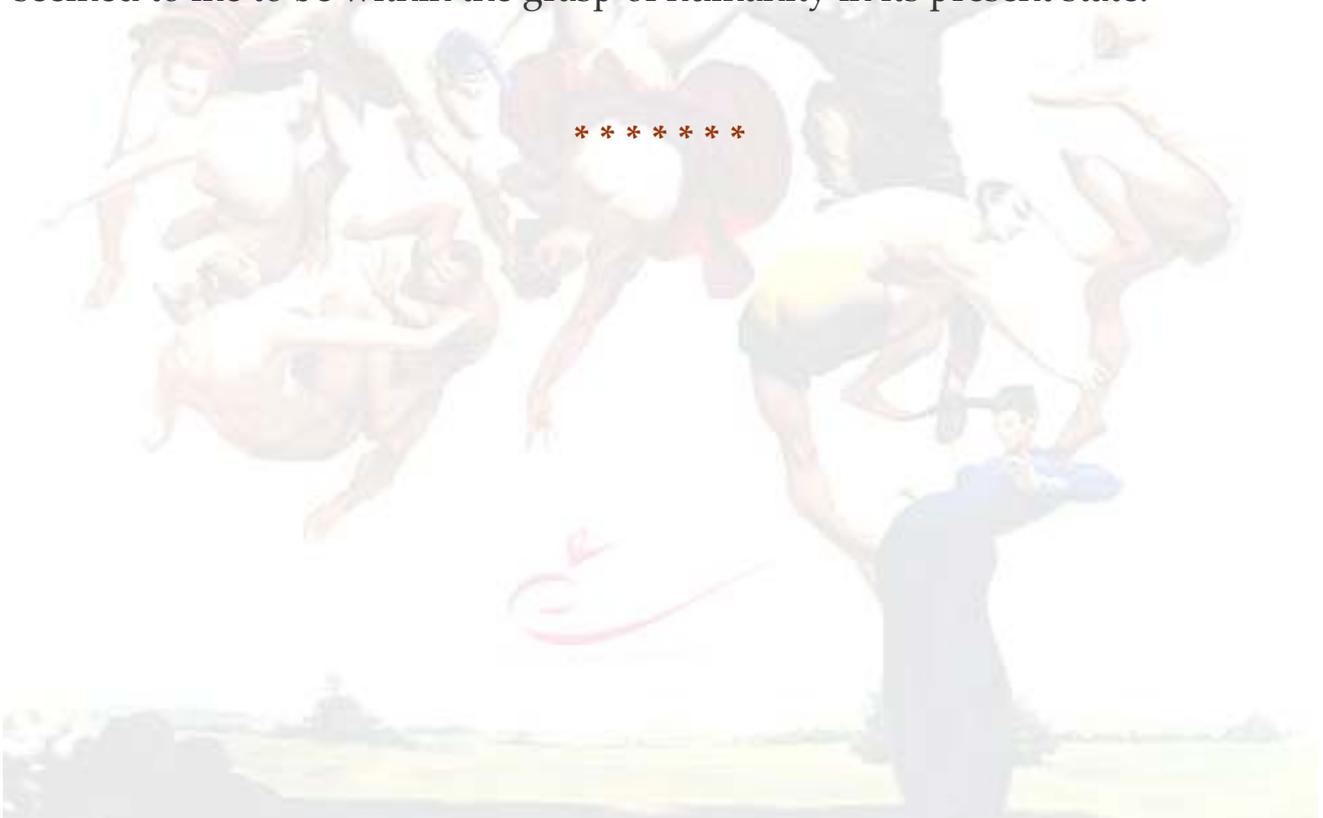
Once I believed that writing, and above all teaching, were the truest form of giving. I know now that teaching is only a stratagem to know oneself, to discover one’s own incompleteness and heal it.

“One can only teach if one doesn’t know - said the Dreamer - Those who truly know don’t teach!”.

“What we have “learned”, what we truly “possess”, cannot be transferred”.
“Happiness, wealth, knowledge, will and love, cannot be acquired from the outside, cannot be “given” but only... “remembered”. They are the inalienable gifts of being, and therefore, the natural inheritance of every man. No political, religious or philosophical system can change society from the outside. Only an individual revolution, a psychological rebirth, a healing of the being, man by man, cell by cell, will lead us towards planetary well-being, towards a more intelligent, truer, happier civilisation”.

In recounting the lessons I learned from the Dreamer I have deliberately avoided including episodes, events and revelations which might go beyond the reader’s acceptance, referring only to those that, while “revolutionary”, seemed to me to be within the grasp of humanity in its present state.

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School for Gods

Chapter I

The Encounter with the Dreamer

1 The Encounter with the Dreamer

At that time I was living in New York in an apartment on little Roosevelt Island, in the middle of the East River, between Manhattan and Queens. The islet, like a ship at anchor, seemed about to slip away from its moorings and drift away with the current towards the freedom of the ocean but, day after day, it stayed where it was in the wavy darkness of the river. I came into the bedroom to say goodnight to the children, but they were already asleep. I tiptoed back to the living room. The silence of the night cloaked me and hid me from sight. A sense of not belonging in that place bordering on revulsion made me feel like a thief stealing into the life of a stranger. I stopped and looked out at the jagged profile of lights from the Queensborough Bridge. The span looked as though it was suspended over the immense void of its metal atoms. It was cold and impending like a threat.

Jennifer had just retired to her room in that manner which typically concludes American marital arguments. I had come home late that evening.

I had been to J. F. K. to pick up a friend I had not seen for some time. When we met I immediately got the impression that his life was somehow more fulfilling and joyful than mine. Instantly, feelings of jealousy, envy and a blind rivalry to which I would never have admitted, not even to myself, burst forth in a mechanical torrent of words, a compulsive need to keep talking. In the car, I spun one lie after another creating a fictitious version of my years in New York. I told him how impossible it was to go to all the parties I had been invited to, the art gallery openings, the first night performances, my own professional triumphs, my hobbies and, above all, how happy I was with Jennifer. The words were already dead when they reached my throat and a cry was building up inside me. The nausea I felt at that river of insincerity that flowed so dense and unstoppable, and my sense of helplessness at being unable to control the string of deceptions, became unbearable. I would have liked to have ceased my absurd display but the more I tried, the more I felt the impossibility of separating myself from that mechanical being, the man that I was. The more disgust I felt at my words, the more I realised it was impossible to recover the situation.

There were two of us in one body. I was petrified by the idea of being trapped inside a split creature: Siamese, centaur, androgynous, forever prisoner of a fierce and grotesque symbiosis.

The evening grew dark. I realised I had made a wrong turn. We were entering a labyrinth of dimly lit streets that became increasingly desolate and filthy. My words died away and finally a cold silence took over and filled the car. We were now driving no faster than walking pace, under heavy torrential rain, when I noticed the headlights of a car tailing us and caught a glimpse of shadows moving under the pillars of an overpass. I turned to look at my friend and froze. He was shaking like a leaf. His face was a mask of fear. I accelerated. My heart was beating so hard I thought my chest would burst. I instinctively swung into the first street I found. With a sharp swerve, I managed to avoid a group of tramps huddled around a burning oil drum. The shadows of the buildings were like monstrous jaws, the gullet of a hell ready to swallow us up.

The shriek of a siren split the air and shattered that anguished atmosphere. I kept casting nervous glances into the rear-view mirror to check on the car following us. I saw its lights fading away until they disappeared into the darkness. I recognised that we had reached a safer part of the city and saw some road signs that finally led us home.

I never saw that old friend of mine again.

I went up to the sixteenth floor in the elevator in the company of a black giant of a fellow, a retarded man whose mumblings followed me up to my apartment. At the time, Roosevelt Island was an experiment in social integration and it was not unusual to meet disabled people who lived there with their carers.

The sight that welcomed me of Jennifer, her hair wound around her curlers, slithering like Medusa's snakes, a cigarette between her fingers as she ranted and nervously paced the living room, was the last reflection of her in the mirror of my life. I felt the vacuousness of our relationship and the yawning ache of my existence, as if the anaesthetic which had numbed me for years was finally wearing off. That apartment, my relationship with that woman and anything my gaze fell upon, revealed what amounted to an unredeemable mediocrity. Those choices which I had believed my own and taken to be the expressions of my own personality, were turning out to be traps with no hope of escape.

This was not the life I had dreamed of! I felt disgusted by my impotence. A numb feeling of despair overcame me. A dark and icy river overflowed its banks, swept over all my lies and compromises and washed me up onto the shores of a desolate existence. I rested my brow on my arms and then sadness gave way to sleep.

Inside the villa was plunged in darkness which was just beginning to be tempered by a presage of the encroaching dawn. An antique canvas occupied the wall at one end of the big hall. In the dim light I could just make out a woodland scene with a dreaming figure at its centre. Just like the painting, every aspect of that room, from the furnishings to the architecture, conveyed an intense message of beauty. Finding myself in that villa, at that uncertain time between night and dawn, was very strange, yet I was not surprised. Everything appeared familiar to me, although I was quite certain I had never been there before.

The villa was silent, as if deep in thought. I climbed the ancient stone stairs and went up to a solid wooden chamber door. I noted that I was smartly dressed as though due to meet some unknown figure of authority.

I don't recall what was upsetting me but I was anxious and in a bad temper. A swirl of emotions fed my internal monologue like dry twigs in a fire. I took my shoes off and left them on the doorstep. This action too, seemed perfectly

natural to me. These necessary and familiar movements were certainly part of a ritual that had been performed on other occasions. I even had the feeling that I knew what awaited me on the other side of that door without actually having the slightest idea. As I knocked on the door I was suddenly overcome by an uncomfortable feeling which abruptly interrupted my stream of thoughts. I felt a kind of apprehension and awe. Something inside me knew. Without waiting for an answer to my light knocks, I leaned on the wrought iron handle and pushed the door open.

I glanced at the fireplace. The dazzling brightness of the flames hurt my eyes so much that I had to turn my gaze away and blink hard to avoid tears. "He" stood next to the fireplace with his back to me. I saw the shadow of His profile projected onto the wall. The room, which the firelight left mostly in the shadows, had imposing arches on two sides that framed ancient windows. These looked like stone eye-sockets wide open onto the night. Through those facing East, I could see a section of the sky becoming tinged with the gentle colours of the dawn.

I had only taken a few cautious steps across a floor that resembled a white lake, when His voice rang out, forceful and terrifying, freezing my every movement and paralysing my thoughts.

"You are in a mess!" - He said, without turning to face me - *"I can sense it by the way you came in, by your footsteps, and above all, by the stench of your emotions."*

You are a multitude, a mob of thoughts. Where do you think you are going in this state? Broken into a thousand pieces as you are, you can hardly manage to live the existence of a clerk".

"I'm not a clerk" I retorted, raising my voice as if to defend myself from a sudden physical attack. Whoever this person was, it seemed appropriate to draw the lines between us. But the impact of my words was lost as if muffled by padded walls. Seized by an unreasonable fear, I barely summoned up enough of a voice to rejoin weakly: "I'm a Manager!"

The spreading silence which followed grew enormous and penetrated my being. A derisive laugh echoed inside me for an infinitely long time. I remained painfully suspended, uncertain which part of me was being mocked and which was doing the mocking. Then, after what seemed like an eternity, I heard the voice again.

"How dare you say 'I'? – He said with such a contemptuous tone that it struck me like a slap in the face – In my world saying 'I' is blasphemous.

'I' is the conflict you bear inside... 'I' is your host of lies... Every time you utter one of your 'little I's' you are lying.

Only he who knows himself, who is the master of his own life,... only he who possesses a real will, can say 'I'."

There was a pause. When He began again His words were even more menacing. *"Never let me hear you say 'I' again, or you will never come back here!*

Observe yourself ... Discover who you are!

The world is as you dream it... it is a mirror. Out there you find your reflection, the world that you have made, that you have dreamed. Out there you can find yourself! Go out into the world and see who you are.

Remove your shackles and free yourself. Do not hold back...do not resist...Accept it! Accept with full awareness what it means to know who you are... to discover in others your lies, your corruption, your ignorance... Change...and the world will change. You are killing yourself, lying to yourself, you are robbing yourself inside...What else can you find, who else can you find outside yourself?

You create a sick world and then are afraid of your own creation, of the thing you yourself have given birth to. You think that the world is objective...but the world is as you dream it. Go out into the world and accept yourself... Meet the poor, the violent, the lepers that you carry within you. Accept them... don't avoid them... don't blame them ... Surrender to your world. Go and consciously accept what you have created: a world that is rigid, ignorant...lifeless.

Man's power lies in his capacity to master himself while at the same time surrendering to himself."

Abruptly, His voice took on the sharp tone of an order.

"In My presence... pen and paper! - He commanded - Never forget!

His peremptory tone and that sudden change of subject disconcerted me. But my bewilderment quickly turned to fear and then to panic.

I felt as if a mortal threat were hanging over me. Every fibre of my being was on edge when I heard His voice transformed into a powerful hiss: *"This time*

you must write. Pen and paper will be your salvation - He said - Writing down My words is the only way for you not to 'forget'.

Write! This is the only way you can scrape together the scattered shreds of your existence".

Then as if He had never strayed from the subject, He took up my last refrain and replied: *"A manager is an employee who struggles to believe in what he does; forcing a faith upon himself... he is the high priest of a cult that, however mediocre, nevertheless gives him a feeling of belonging, the illusion of having a direction.*

But you don't even have this! Thoughts, sensations and desires, in the absence of will, are crazed splinters of being and you, a meaningless fragment at the mercy of the universe."

Those words tumbled down on me like a cold and unexpected shower that left me gasping. The temperature seemed to plummet and I felt myself freeze. A profound embarrassment, such as I had never experienced in my entire life, pervaded my being, slowly and cruelly. I started at the sound of His voice in my ear, so incredibly close I could feel His breath. His tone was a hoarse murmur, without tenderness.

"Among American Indian tribes, there was a caste of men who were at the very bottom of the scale: men who were neither witch-doctors nor warriors; they neither hunted nor competed for rank or for women. They were assigned the hardest and most humiliating tasks. They were the ones who would back away from trials of courage and incorruptibility.

Here He stopped. Then, He launched his rapier-thrust. Paralysed, I could do nothing to parry or to cushion that blow. *"In any tribe, primitive or modern - He whispered fiercely- you would be placed there, on the lowest rung of the ladder".*

This blow struck me full in the chest. I was covered in shame. Now I didn't even want him to stop. I just wanted to escape; to find enough strength to simply turn my back on Him and go. If only a telephone or an alarm clock had rung to save me from all this. But I could not move a muscle, nor muster a single twitching movement, not even my eyes could move. An implacable law, there in the Dreamer's world, would not permit me to make a single gesture or even take a breath that was without dignity.

"I know you would like to escape from this "dream" - He continued relentlessly – But I am Reality. Your life, which you believe to be real, and your world in which you think you are making choices and decisions, are unreal... they are a terrible nightmare. Marrying, having children, a career and a house, making money...everything you believed in ...all this is just a meaningless fetish which you idolise and place above everything else.

Only the "dream" is real - He affirmed forcefully - The "dream" is the most real thing that exists. Learn to live within the world of the real. Here your habits and convictions, your old codes, no longer apply... What you call reality is only an image, and it must be completely overturned. Nothing of the old world can be brought with you. You will have to learn a new way of thinking, breathing, acting and loving ...

You have led a purposeless existence... a painful life. Hidden behind a job, behind the protective illusion of a pay-check, you are perpetuating the poverty and suffering of the world - He diagnosed with a sweet yet grave voice, as if He were assessing some serious damage - Life is too precious to waste in dependence and too rich to lose! It's time to change!

A pause amplified the force of the words that followed.

"It's time to abandon your conflictual vision of the world. It's time for you to die to all that which is lifeless. It's time to be reborn. It's time for a new exodus and a new freedom. It is the greatest adventure a man can possibly imagine: the regaining of his own lost integrity."

My eyes had almost become accustomed to the half-light. Outside, the dawn began dissipating the night. Before the cold, pale earth re-emerged from the shadows, a shaft of sunlight struck the great mahogany mantel supporting the stone hood over the fireplace. Carved in big gothic letters, painted in gold, appeared the words: *Visibilia ex Invisibilibus.*

2 Work is slavery

"Who are you?" I barely found the strength to enquire.

"I am the Dreamer - He said – I am the dreamer and you are the dreamed. You arrived to me through a brief moment of sincerity."

The silence which followed spread like ripples in infinite circles. His voice became a rustle.

"I am freedom! - He announced – After meeting me, you will no longer be able to live such an insignificant existence". The following words would remain forever engraved in my memory. "Dependence, even if involuntary, is always a personal choice. Nothing and no-one can force you into dependence, only you can do that to yourself."

"Dependency is always a personal choice, albeit an involuntary one. The world responds to your every request. But you do not really know what you are asking because you gave up "dreaming" so many years ago.

Staring at me fixedly, He stated that the propensity to lay the blame on the world and to complain about one's lot were the most irrefutable evidence of the fact that these principles had not been understood. A man does not depend on a company, he is not limited by a corporate pecking order or by a boss, but by his own fear. Dependence is fear.

Being dependent is not the effect of a contract, it is not related to any role nor is it the result of one's social class... Dependency is the consequence of lowering your self esteem, giving up your dignity. It is what happens when you allow yourself to be crushed .

In the external world, this internal condition, this degradation, takes the form of a job, and assumes all the aspects of a subordinate position. Dependency is the effect of an unsound mind, enslaved by imaginary fears, by its own apprehensions ... Dependency is the visible sign of having surrendered one's "dream".

This conclusion, the way in which He pronounced the word "dependency" each time and the slow enunciation of each syllable, unveiled the real meaning of the word and all the pain, the lack of self-love, masked by the banality of its common usage.

"Dependency is a disease of the being!...It is the result of one's incompleteness - the Dreamer revealed - To depend means to cease to believe in oneself. To depend means to stop dreaming."

The more I pondered His words, the more I felt them eating into me like acid on raw flesh. My resentment sharpened into a rage. The way He passed judgment on such a vast swathe of humankind was intolerable. What could a man's life or his work have to do with his feelings and fears? For me

these two worlds, the inner and the outer, were separate and belonged that way. I firmly believed that it was possible to be dependent in the outside world and yet remain free on the inside. This certainty fed my indignation.

“Like millions of other men you have lived your life hidden in the folds of lifeless organizations - He said to me accusingly – You have bartered your freedom for a handful of illusory assurances.

It’s time to awaken from your hypnotic sleep... from your hellish vision of existence!”

No one had ever treated me like that before.

“Who gives you the authority to speak to me in this way? - I burst out defiantly.

“You!”

That response, unexpected as it was, left me frozen in a state of utter impotence. I felt crushed by an overwhelming sense of guilt. I wanted to hide. An inexplicable feeling of shame made me feel naked in front of that being that still had no face. I felt the impulse to flee. With what strength I still had I tried to recover a situation that seemed to be catapulting me outside of the boundaries of my world.

“But how could organizations possibly work without employees?” I asked feebly trying to redirect the conversation back to what I considered coherent and reasonable. The Dreamer did not respond. Encouraged by His silence that I took for perplexity or an inability to answer me, I continued: “ If it weren’t for them... then the world would stop.”

“Not at all! - He replied sharply - The world is still because there are men who are dependent, men who are scared to death. Humanity, as it is, cannot conceive of a society free from dependency.” Noticing that I’d reached and gone beyond the limits of my comprehension, He softened His tone and became almost encouraging.

“Don’t be afraid! - He said with sarcastic concern. Flashes of irony crossed His severe gaze - As long as there are men like you, the world of dependency will continue to exist, and heavily populated.”

The pause that followed chilled the air between us. His light and amused tone turned hard as steel.

“You!... will no longer be able to be part of that world... because you have met Me!”

I felt a burst of light painfully pierce through all my calcified layers of thought and emotional debris.

“Dependency is the negation of the dream - He continued - Dependency is the mask men adopt to conceal their lack of freedom, their denial of life.”

I had used and heard that word “dependency” many times, but it was only after that first meeting with the Dreamer that I realised all its painful significance. The condition of being an employee, dependent on a company, revealed itself to be a modern transposition of ancient slavery: a state of inner immaturity and subjugation.

Through a tear in my consciousness, I saw crowds of human beings condemned to the destiny of Sisyphus, chained to an endless repetition of wearisome work, tasks performed but not through choice, labour without creativity.

In a flash-back I once again saw the façade of the Rusconi building in Milan, on Viale Sarca, with its sign, “Dipendenti”, towering over the long line of entrance slots reserved for the employees. I imagined a host of stooped individuals filing through those narrow portals as the defeated Romans were obliged to do in the Sannio when they had to pass in humiliation under the Caudine Forks. A planetary procession of men and women who had given up believing in their own uniqueness. A premonition of the death of the individual darkened the air, and all the sorrow that accompanied that fate clenched my heart in an iron vice. The Dreamer cut through this vision with the delicacy of someone drawing together the sides of a gaping wound. His words possessed a solemn intonation when He announced: *“One day there will be a society which dreams and will no longer have to work. A humanity that knows how to love, will be rich enough to dream, and will be infinitely rich because it dreams.*

The universe is plentiful in the extreme, it is an overflowing cornucopia of all that a man’s heart desires... In such a universe it is impossible to fear scarcity. Only men like you, racked with fear and doubt, can be poor and perpetuate dependency and poverty in the world.

“But I’m not poor!” - I shouted in a voice choked with indignation - “Why would you say that?” – Inside I defended myself with all the reasons I could muster to demonstrate the absurdity of His accusation. The Dreamer was silent. “I’m not poor!” I shouted again - “I have a beautiful home, a manager’s position, friends who respect me... I have two children to whom I am both

father and mother..." Here I stopped, overwhelmed by the intolerable injustice of His groundless attack.

"Poverty means being unable to see one's own limits - the Dreamer clarified - To be poor means having given up your right to be the creator of your own destiny in exchange for a job you do not like and that you did not choose.

You! - He added, just when I was hoping he had finished – you are the poorest of the poor, because you still do not know who you are... You "forgot"! To no one else have I given so many opportunities as I have given to you.

This is the last one."

All at once, that feeling of having been offended and unfairly treated, which had pervaded every part of my being, disappeared and all my defences gave way in the face of that battering ram. I felt the hinges holding together my very existence beginning to creak. My most deep-rooted convictions began to crumble like ancient temples shaken to their foundations.

"Open your eyes and contemplate your condition and you will see just how far a man can stray from magnificence.

"We appear to be here in the same room, and yet we are separated by infinite eons of time."

With those words, as though illuminated in the glare of a flash of lightning slashing across the darkness of the night, I understood the distance that existed between myself and that being. I appreciated the falseness of my offended dignity and the insignificance of that 'I' which I had pronounced in the presence of the Dreamer like the merest squeak in the universe. My illusions of belonging to a decision making class, an elite of responsible men, possessing free will, independence and control of their own lives fell like a curtain after the first act of a comic opera. My eyes were now open. Without realizing it, I had been sinking into the mire of self-pity.

Provisionally, the Dreamer intervened, launching a harsh instruction to the depths of my being.

"Wake up! Start your own revolution...Rise up against yourself!" he ordered sharply, offering me a way out of the tight corner of contrition into which I had retreated.

"Dream of freedom...freedom from all constraints...You are the only obstacle preventing you from achieving your every desire! Dream, dream...Dream without end!"

"There is no greater reality than the dream."

3 "I am a woman..."

His tone then changed and His voice, once deep and resolute, metamorphosed into that of a woman.

This transformation made my blood run cold. It could not be! That voice was...it was...the thought fell into a vortex...although the words uttered were no longer violent they were unbearable.

"I'm a woman breathing her last." - murmured the voice. The pause that followed gave me all the time I needed to savour the sickly sweet nausea of an unknown terror. I was paralysed, incapable even of looking up. A pitiless eye, as huge as the horizon, was opening upon my past.

"I'm a woman suffering from cancer who curses you for leaving her, for your inability to face her impending death." Listening intently, my body rattled by shivers, I felt that every word was pushing me closer towards the edge of an abyss. It was Luisella who was speaking to me, reaching to me across time, from beyond the boundaries of life and death, with her defenceless sweetness. The terrible circumstances of her death, at the age of 27, were now once again confronting my conscience. The sordidness of so many episodes of our life together, the selfishness which drove me to trade everything and everyone for some crumbs of security, my fixation with money, my career and my inability to love her, exploded within me in a single, crushing flash of pain. A limitless shame, an overwhelming feeling of disgust, washed over and flooded my soul; I tried to break away from the man I had been.

"This is 'your' death - He said - it is the death of all that you have been, the death of the old debris you carry within you...Don't run away from it...confront it once and for all! To be 'reborn', a man must first 'die'. I swallowed these words like gasps of oxygen after a long dive. The effort to rationally understand what had just happened made me lose my concentration

for a moment. A mortal anguish took its place.

"What does 'to die' mean?" I asked. The subdued tone I used for that brief enquiry surprised me, and made me realize how much my attitude had changed.

"'To die' means to overturn your own way of looking at things. 'To die' means to disappear from a coarse world, ruled by suffering, to reappear at a higher level." He said enigmatically. I still did not understand. A part of me wanted somehow to resist. These ideas and concepts which were so new to me, were torturing me. And then a river, bursting its banks, flooded my being, dragging away my memories, my friendships, and my most deeply rooted convictions, like muddy river waste. For years I had studied, desperately trying to be top of my class. I had worked tirelessly to make a name for myself, driven by the ambition to be someone who counted. Fight and win, struggle and win... overcome any obstacle that got in my way. The guiding principle of my life and the only one I had ever believed in, had been to work hard to "make it"...my greatest satisfaction...was to win in this world, to get ahead of the competition...And now, did I have to reject all this? It seemed unfair that the Dreamer should condemn my efforts. Overcome by the current, I still clung onto the desire to rise above the rest and hang onto those remnants of my will which I believed to be the healthiest, the most vital part of my being.

4 A dying species

"No one can prevail over the others around him - said the Dreamer, insinuating himself into my thoughts, scattered like debris from a shipwreck. The idea of dominating others is an illusion...a prejudice of the old, conflictual, predatory and failing humanity. The pause that followed gave me an illusion of respite but the hammer had rested in the air only to strike a harder blow - You are the emblem of this dying species - He pronounced, - a species that is making way for a more evolved one."

His words were tunnelling through many layers of old ideas and values. I felt the spasms of a creature making the supreme effort of birth and I despaired of ever succeeding. Then the universe became malleable and fluid until it turned to

liquid. I was now swimming in deep water.

"What you perceive as a sensation of death, is the suffocation of a humanity that is shedding its skin, a species on the edge of an abyss, forced to abandon its superstitions and the old tricks which no longer work". Those words were carved into the air like the universal epigraph of the human condition. I saw myself floundering in an immense ocean of bobbing heads, shipwrecked souls resigned to their watery fate, allowing themselves to drown.

"From their earliest years, men are taught to live in the most desolate parts of their being...Confronted with too big an idea or anything which surpasses the limits of their imagination they will resist it and try to reduce it to a size small enough to fit into the tiny container of their consciousness." These words brought to mind images of the primitive tribes of Borneo that shrank the scalps of their enemies to exorcise their power. His voice tore me sharply away from such thoughts.

"It is time for you to prepare for your 'journey', He announced with paternal solemnity. There was, in His words, the tenderness, the sorrow, the authority of those who 'know'. I noticed that his tone exactly complemented my attitude in listening, as though my image were being reflected in a sonic mirror. Hard and terrible to counter my resistance, he matched my own violence; sweet and gentle as my surrender, His voice now took on a new tone. With a theatrical gesture, he put his hand to the corner of his mouth, as if to share some secret with me, and whispered, *"Until now, when faced with life's challenges, you have not found anything better to do than numb yourself with work, or take refuge in sex, in sleep, or in some hospital bed."* Then with intentional harshness, to shake me from the self-pity into which I was sliding, He said: *"To bend under the weight of unpleasant situations, misfortunes, to take these things terribly seriously, is to reinforce a doleful 'description' of the world, and perpetuates the events which lead you to this view".*

"So what should I have done?" I asked, my voice breaking with desperation.

"If a man changes his attitude towards the things that happen to him, this will in the course of time change the very nature of the things which will befall him."

"Our level of being creates our life." He concluded as He imperceptibly approached me. He had only advanced towards me by a few centimetres but the movement unsettled me. I was on my guard, in a state of anxious vigilance. I

didn't know what to expect. I had never been so alert before. It felt as though all the cells of my being, suddenly awakened from an ancestral slumber, were in my eyes and ears, intent on listening. The Dreamer waited until my attention was at its peak, and then spoke the most devastating words of all.

"The death of your wife was the materialisation, the dramatic representation of the scream of pain you have always had within you. States of being and events are the two faces of a single reality."

I felt faint. An unbearable sense of guilt was making me feel sick. A bottomless pit opened up before me ready to engulf me. I was resisting with all the strength I had left this most simple and unbearable of truths: that I alone was responsible for every event in my life. I was the sole cause of every suffering and misfortune.

The lights of the world grew dim, then seemed on the point of going out altogether. I was on the edge of limbo. I slowly slipped towards it, giving myself up to an irresistible torpor.

5 The awakening

As soon as I awoke, I could think of nothing else. Outside it was still night. The Manhattan traffic flowed in thin streaks like luminous dribble from the mouth of an invisible volcano. I remained still for some time, watching the 'world' floating in my conscience, pale as a ghost. A new pitiless clarity of thought was sifting through me and scouring every corner of that apartment. At that speed every piece of furniture, every book, every decoration, reflected the ache of an insignificant life lived without joy. That distinctive melancholy that emanates from ownerless objects clenched my heart. I felt the enormous effort of existing, the impossibility of change. I was gripped by a pang of grief at the thought of meeting my children and seeing in their eyes the same death that permeated everything that surrounded me. I was afraid they might fade and disappear with everything else.

I spent many hours recording everything that had happened during my encounter with the Dreamer, and all He had told me in that mysterious villa, in the chamber with the white floor.

That being had become a part of my life. I faithfully wrote down His words and every detail of our meeting. It wasn't difficult. I only had to half close my eyes to see every detail emerge in my memory with perfect clarity. I had never been as lucid as in that timeless time spent with Him. Now I knew I belonged to a dark ocean of divided and unconscious humanity; I was part of a planetary mob of sleepwalkers who were unable to love. I could not pretend or ignore it any more.

In the weeks that followed I diligently read and reread my notes, searching for some clue that might lead me back to Him in His world.

From the terrace of the Café de la France, I watched the Western tourists going into the Souk; I saw them wandering in the maze of streets like white corpuscles in the veins of El Fna. They made slow progress, assailed from all sides by noisy merchants, by a sea of begging hands browned by the sun, by water sellers heavily laden with fleece skin bags. Young girls selling ornate jewellery besieged foreigners as they passed by, stroking them as if they were talismans from whom they could magically extract a few dirhams.

I was familiar with their watchful eyes - blades of black fire - and their imploring smiles, like players in the game of love.

For three days I went back to that café surrounded by the pulsating life of Marrakech. I waited, reading and drinking tea. A pair of chameleons I had bought when I arrived kept me company. Every so often, I would stop reading, and get up to observe the kaleidoscopic spectacle of the street life, the brouhaha of commerce, the intense activity of the locals plying their trades. Then I would go back to my table. I began to lose heart! The thought of going back to New York, of getting on the first plane out, and not looking back, often came to me as the hours and then the days passed. I was still trying to figure things out, trying to find a gauge with which to measure what was happening to me. I had left to look for Him without any indication other than the name of this city, a handful of palms and houses clustered between the blazing lips of the Sahara.

After receiving His message, I had hesitated for a long time before leaving. It seemed quite insane to cross the ocean to go and meet a fantastic character whose name I didn't even know. So many difficulties had arisen and conspired against that journey. Above all, I couldn't think of a way of justifying it to Jennifer. Day after day I had put off making any decision. But the need to feel

that sense of healing that I had only ever felt near Him and the fear of missing the only opportunity of seeing Him again had got the better of me and I decided to go. I was helped in reaching this decision by my closest confidante, Giuseppona, the only person to whom I had ever spoken about the Dreamer, and of my encounter with Him.

“Go, my son,” she urged in her direct way of speaking, with her strong Neapolitan accent, when I went to talk to her about it in her little room. “Find him! This Dreamer seems to me to be a good person.”

Giuseppona had always been part of the family. She had been there when I had taken my first steps and it was with her by my side that I had faced my first days at school. Every morning when she took me there I would listen to the stories of the streets and the people of Naples, ancient tales which were forever new. It was through her that I soaked up the spirit, the legends and the exploits of the heroes of that city. A city with an ancient heart, a timeless expression of different civilizations layered one upon another, worn like Pulcinella’s puffed costume, which in time had become like layers of skin. In Giuseppona’s company, I was still able to feel their vitality; beneath the patches and tatters I could see the gleam of gold and precious silks. I still remember my embarrassment when, on rainy days, she would burst into my classroom halfway through the morning, having run past caretakers and janitors, to change my wet socks and shoes. As I grew older, I didn’t want her to hold me by the hand any more, and for some time she continued to accompany me but following me at a distance. From my teenage years she became my confidante in all matters of the heart. I remember her terse judgment “Anyway she wasn’t right for you! ” For many years with these words she would comfort me in my misfortunes in love. She adored Luisella, from the very first, and when we married and had our first child she came to stay with us. She was the best nanny we could ever have had for Giorgia and Luca for whom she still had a boundless devotion.

Giuseppona was a short and stocky woman, self-taught, resolute and pugnacious, with a rough and despotic manner. Her robust physique and strong features gave her the look of an American Indian, something between an old squaw and a tribal chief, and she had all the dignity and bravery of an Indian chief. She was slow and heavy but wherever she went she put things in order.

With her one never went short. Her judgment, which I had asked for on so many occasions in my life, was an inimitable blend of good sense and popular wisdom. Her presence had brought joy and good humour wherever she had followed me, all over the world, and she had been a solid rock for me throughout my life. When Luisa fell ill and died she became a second mother to my children, never missing a day. I will never be able to repay that debt of gratitude nor express what she has represented to four generations of my family. Dear Giuseppona, I will hold you in my heart, forever.

Having reached Marrakech, all my efforts to find the Dreamer had come to nothing. By the third day, I wasn't even sure whether the enigmatic note that had brought me there had really been written by Him.

Whilst waiting, I had spent many long hours roaming the city, looking for some clue.. For two nights, on my way back to the hotel after a full day of fruitless searching, I had mentally gone over every detail of our remarkable encounter, looking for the slightest trace that would lead me to Him.

That morning I was again wandering through the heart of the Souk. In the shadowy labyrinth of its alleyways that smelled of spices, the Levantine smiles of a hundred merchants invited me into their emporia, into small shops piled high with the most improbable of merchandise. This consisted mostly of trinkets arranged in the most haphazard fashion like debris following a shipwreck. The endless succession of these commercial caverns which were often inhospitable and as dark as the cells in a beehive, formed what looked like the banks of a river of people which flowed along dragging together men and women of different nationalities, ethnicity, colours and languages.

A man dressed in picturesque fashion, a corpulent Mustapha designed by Walt Disney's charcoal, succeeded in enticing me into his shop, to the envy and disappointment of his competitors. He had the clever and shifty eyes of a rogue set in a good-natured and intelligent face. Inside, the shop turned out to be surprisingly large. With the help of two assistants he literally turned everything in the shop upside down to find something that might interest me, something I might buy. He unrolled a hundred carpets, and offered me a veritable bazaar of silver and brass objects, first polishing them on his arm before offering them to me for examination. Following lengthy discourses on the merits of all these

items and innumerable glasses of mint tea, which local custom does not permit one to decline, as I was about to leave, he extracted from the top shelf, out of a bundle of knick knacks, a jewel box made of wood and ivory. It was so finely inlaid, so perfectly proportioned, that I could not take my eyes off it, while the merchant, noting my interest, increased the praise he heaped upon it and also, mentally, its price.

On the lid of the box, engraved in Gothic characters, I read the inscription: *Visibilia ex Invisibilibus*. All that we see and touch is born from the invisible.

6 Changing the past

I had left the Souk and returned to the Café de la France to pick up my scaly, green friends. As I leaned on the terrace railing, I reflected on what had just happened.

"The first rule of the desert is to travel light" I heard someone say behind me. I started at the sound of that voice. However much I had longed for that moment and however much I had wished to see Him again, I could not avoid an impulse of fear. I felt the terror of the unknown, his miraculous breath on my neck. Only with great effort, turning very slowly, did I find the courage to face Him.

The Dreamer was smiling at me. His look was that of a rich, aristocratic traveller from another time. He had the bored attitude and the languorous movements of a snob, but his voice betrayed a boundless energy. When He began to speak, I once again recognised His decisive tone, with its apparent coarseness.

"Lightening your being takes a huge amount of work" He announced, launching in without any preamble – *"You have to leave behind everything your parents and your teachers, your masters of misadventure and prophets of doom have imposed on you."*

"From them we have learned how to get into victim consciousness; how to get into misery, poverty and sickness..." Then, slowly moving His face towards mine, He added, *"From them, we have learned a thousand ways to die."*

From the dawn of civilization, by means of a 'generational contamination', millions of men, sealed into a hypnotic sleep, have learned to believe blindly in

scarcity and in limits.

“Why”, I asked, “why shouldn’t we choose vastness without limits...why shouldn’t we choose life?”

“Because man is irretrievably hypnotised. Behind his every misfortune, there is the most evil of evils: his unshakable faith in the inevitability of death...”

The first and most difficult step towards freedom is realising that this fear tyrannically governs his entire life.”

These words, together with the solemnity of his tone and his moving closer, put me into a state of agitation. As in the cults and sacred rites of ancient civilizations, His theatricality transformed the simplest act into a magical gesture, into a unique cosmic event of creative power.

From the tightness in my stomach, I could tell that he was about to pronounce a decisive judgment.

“Your past is a calamity!” he declared, with a hoarse voice. Then He stopped. This pause was particularly long, as if, before proceeding, He had to wait for a signal that was slow in coming. Then He said

“You need to redeem it... to reclaim it ...you need to change it!

“Change...the past?” I asked.

“ In your past, there are still too many holes...unsettled accounts, inner debts that have not been paid off, feelings of guilt and self pity, and above all, dark corners where dirt and rust reign” he listed these things rummaging through me as though I were a drawer full of superfluous, old possessions.

“Your whole being is like a badly managed shop, with articles priced at random”, he observed, *“those things which are of great value you sell cheap, and the junk has ridiculously high price tags. To carry on like this means certain failure...”*

I would have liked to have raised a barrier to prevent those words streaming mercilessly towards me.

“But how is it possible to change the past? How can one change situations and events that have already taken place?” I asked trying to defend myself, trying to divert that torrent which was overwhelming me with an unbearable sense of responsibility.

“There is a place, where thoughts, sensations, emotions, actions and events are archived forever, and even after many years have passed we can still find them like things we have put away in an attic which are apparently inert and

harmless. In reality, these things continue to live and to condition the whole of our existence. That is where you have to go!" He added that all this would take a long period of preparation.

"How long?" I asked, with all the excitement and apprehension of someone about to embark upon a great adventure.

"You will need at least as many years as have already been spent mis-managing your life", was his stony reply, simultaneously reprimanding me for my past conduct and my present question. I felt a stinging feeling of offence flood through me like a conditioned psychological reflex. Then, just as quickly as it had appeared, it shrank to a mild complaint and then vanished altogether.

The Dreamer had taken a seat at one of the tables and I sat down next to Him. The silence that followed lasted a long time and became even deeper as the approaching darkness muffled the multitude of sounds of El Fna.

7 Inner Forgiveness

The sunset was giving off its last rays. Orion was already visible in the fading blue cobalt of the night sky. The temperature had dropped quite suddenly but the Dreamer gave no sign of feeling it nor of wanting to go inside. All the signs seemed to indicate that a new, important chapter of my apprenticeship was about to start. I took out my pen and notebook, determined to take note of every word He said, even though the terrace was becoming engulfed by darkness. That gesture immediately put me at ease. I understood the importance of always having a pen and paper to hand. Grasping pen and paper was all I needed to re-member and re-cover the wholeness that I had lost in the world outside, far from Him. Writing with Him in front of me, noting down his every word, was like tiptoeing into a higher level of being. His voice caught me in the act.

"It takes years of working on yourself," he said, *"to achieve this special condition of freedom, of knowledge, of power, called 'inner forgiveness.'"* He emphasized this term with a particular inflection in His voice which instantly struck me as quite different to the warrior-like character and the uncompromising language of the Dreamer. With a look He established that I

was faithfully writing down His words. He waited for me to finish, and then continued, *“Inner forgiveness means delving into the folds of your own existence where it is still torn...it means washing and healing those wounds that are still open...paying off all the unsettled debts...”* Then, assuming a theatrically conspiratorial pose and lowering His voice as if about to share a valuable secret, He confided, *“Inner forgiveness has the power to transform your past and all its dead weight”*.

Time after time, I turned those incomprehensible words over in my mind.

“Everything is here, now! In this very instant, in the life of every man, the past and the future are interacting.”

These words filled me with an inexplicable, irrational joy. I was facing a limitless horizon. The past and the future were not separate worlds, but connected and indivisible. A single reality. ‘Inner forgiveness’ was the answer...It meant being able to access a time that, seen through ordinary eyes, was gone, and a future that had not yet arrived...

“I understand how the past might affect our lives, but the future...?” I asked.

“The future, like the past, is right before your eyes, but you cannot see it yet.”

He spoke of ‘vertical time’ and of a ‘time-body’ made up of the past and the future. He told me that the portal to gain access to this time without time, was in this instant, this moment.

The secret is never to be distracted, never to venture far from it.

Accessing the ‘time-body’ meant being able to enter into a new destiny. It was this that the Dreamer was urging me to do.

I was thrilled. I wanted this adventure to start immediately...I wanted it with all my heart...but my eagerness had not even started to take shape when I felt it quashed by the Dreamer’s harsh words. *“For you it is impossible to achieve inner forgiveness!”* he announced. His tone was that of a judge passing a sentence for which there was no appeal. *“To enter into your past and heal it you need a long preparation.”*

“Without the ideas and the principles of a School it is impossible, you wouldn’t even know where to begin.”

“Inner forgiveness is the real reason we were born”-He affirmed in a conclusive tone. *“Men should never interrupt this healing process.”*

The Dreamer warned me that this would require a great effort on my part and, first and foremost, a lengthy process of self-observation.

8 Self-observation is self-correction

"Self-observation is self-correction...A man can heal anything from his past if he has the ability to 'observe himself'" said the Dreamer, and then went on to remark how man's condition was nothing more than the result of his inability to know himself, and even before that, to observe himself.

"Self-observation is akin to taking a bird's eye view of oneself and one's life!" said the Dreamer, defining this concept, and then sharpening his observation he went on *"It is like putting events, circumstances and relationships from the past, under a bright ray of sunlight."*

As far as I could understand, the crucial prerequisite for self-observation was the ability to conduct it impartially and without passing moral judgment. Self-observation for the Dreamer meant letting one's life flow, not before a panel of courthouse judges, but under the x-rays of an objective intelligence, a neutral witness whose duty was limited to observing without ever passing judgments or formulating criticisms. This vaguely reminded me of some of the experiments in organisational psychology that I had learned about when I was still studying at the London Business School. Some large firms had dramatically improved productivity by means of 'wandering management' (as the researchers had called it). This approach was based on attention and advocated the adoption of a system involving keeping the management constantly on the move within the organization. The duty of a *wandering manager* consisted precisely in this 'roaming around', making his presence felt in every corner of the company, even the most remote.

His voice abruptly broke into my thoughts and memories, tearing me away from the London desk of the LBS.

"Self-observation is self-correction – repeated the Dreamer – If you are able to observe yourself, you will automatically self-correct...Self-observation is healing...a natural consequence of the distance created between the observer and the observed.

Self-observation allows a man to see everything that keeps him glued to the conveyor belt of the world: obsolete ideas, guilt, prejudices, negative emotions,

prophecies of doom...It is a matter of detachment, de-hypnotism, awakening...

The most minimal suspension of the hypnotic effect the world has on you would shatter everything you ever believed in and would unravel the apparent equilibrium and the illusory certainties of a lifetime.

This is why most men will never be able to observe themselves - He pronounced - To distance oneself from the accepted view of the world, if only for a moment...is an effort too great for most men."

He fixed me with an intense stare and for a long time. He was redirecting the focus of the conversation towards me. A knot in my stomach anticipated the pain of what was to follow.

"Put the observer within you to work! Self-observation is the death of that multitude of negative thoughts and emotions that have always ruled your life.

If you observe inside yourself, the right things will start to happen and those that are not right will gradually melt away."

With a glance He noticed my dismayed expression and added:

"No one can do this alone. To meet with yourself, with your lie, to venture into the labyrinths of your being without impeccable preparation, would kill you in an instant."

His words resounded like a condemnation. I was afraid He would abandon me. I feared He would consider mine to be a lost cause and conclude that any further effort to help me would be in vain. A desperate and heroic determination rose inside me. My readiness made Him reflect. Slowly He assumed one of His original positions. He extended the forefinger and middle finger of his right hand and holding them together, He pressed them against His cheek. Then He laid his chin down on the hollow of His thumb and bent His head slightly forward. He remained like this, deep in thought, for what seemed an eternity. He didn't seem to be looking at me, but I was certain that not one of my thoughts escaped Him. I was playing the final game of a decisive set, quite possibly the last. Everything depended on me alone. I waited. Finally, the Dreamer emerged from His stillness.

"Look...it's a full moon," He said, pointing to the heavens with a slight movement of His chin. "A man might see at most a thousand full moons in his lifetime, but most likely, by the end of his life he will not have found the time to observe even one of them..."

And yet it is external. Imagine how much more difficult it is for a man to see

himself, to focus inwards the direction of his attention. Self-observation is only the beginning of the Art of Dreaming."

We remained silent for a long time. The terrace of the Café de la France, stretching out into the darkness like the bow of a spaceship about to cross the star-filled heavens. We were the only ones on board ...solitary Argonauts of the being.

"Get ready" – He said, with the resolute tone of one used to getting things done – *" It won't be an easy ride."*

I listened carefully to His last words of advice. The Dreamer would stay by my side, but everything would depend entirely on me. He coldly explained to me that I risked finding myself trapped in a sort of mental limbo, a place where the past is abandoned but not yet understood and the new world has yet to take shape. I would have no way of returning to the Dreamer's world from that band of space-time. He made it plain that this might therefore be our last encounter.

"The past of an ordinary man...of a man who hasn't yet taken even the first steps towards the unity of being, is riddled with barbs – He said – These will catch him at the slightest attempt to get in and make changes..."

These were the last words I was able to listen to. I had the sensation that the terrace was drifting like a boat breaking from its moorings and the objects around it were beginning to fade into the distance.

"This is it," I thought, plucking up courage.

I had difficulty hearing what the Dreamer was saying. It was as if for long periods His voice was drowned out by the noise of invisible engines. The terrace turned into a time machine in which He and I were the only crew members. The universe was suspended, the time-tape rewound itself, and nothing else in the world seemed more important than our voyage back into my consciousness and into my past.

I had the impression of slipping into the impenetrable darkness of a tunnel, as if our 'machine' was passing through an inner geology, through many calcified layers of the strata of existence.

A first fragment of my life came into view, like an island, out of the darkness. As I watched it coming closer and looming larger I had the feeling that I was entering a world that was familiar and at the same time arcane, mysterious, at

the edge of the unknown.

In linear time, only a few years had passed since the events I was revisiting with the Dreamer had taken place, and yet, that part of my past seemed incredibly remote.

9 "Death is never the answer."

Luisella had died at the age of twenty seven. A melanoma had slowly carved a hole in her leg like a child at the beach digging a hole in the sand. The edges of my world became ever more blurred, as though I were seeing them through the battered eyes of a boxer. For months I felt only rancour: a numb resentment somewhere between anger and fear.

Stupor,

Pain!...

Darkness!...

A criminal complicity of thoughts and emotions...

Crazed splinters of being...

A blade of light pierces

the darkness of my existence.

Pain,

Stupor...

Darkness!...

A tear...

Behind: darkness...and pain...still!...

I fly towards it, closer, larger,

the opaque planet of my past years...

Land...but where?

There is no space, no opening

Not a square millimetre of sincerity

In the rocky desert of my thoughts.

My gut swallows me....

Darkness...

Pain...

Stupor!...

The room of a provincial hospital...the smell of disinfectant...

The stench of disease and helplessness.

A grief-stricken figure is kneeling by someone
lying down, still...

I move closer ...

that frightened man...

is me!!!

This was the scene I was observing with the Dreamer. The austerity of that, already distant, marmoreal presence, cast a pitiless light upon that small, dejected man, revealing his anachronism. I listened to the confused multitude which assailed his being: the seething mass of thoughts, insignificant desires, emotions jostling within him offering an illusory semblance of a soul. Through the eyes of the Dreamer, as if under the influence of a hallucinogenic, I could 'see', beyond appearances, the lump of selfishness and fear to which this man had been reduced.

"It is a ghost weeping over his own death" commented the Dreamer pitilessly, raising His chin in the direction He was indicating. *"Fear, suffering and anxiety are not the effect but the true cause of all his troubles."*

The Dreamer was revealing to me the most evil of all evil, the source of every misfortune - individual or collective, provincial or planetary!

"The chaos that every man carries within himself, his hell, is projected onto the world and takes the form of strife, discrimination and wars between races, ideologies, religions, and beliefs."

The excitement of this discovery was combined with horror, pity and shame when I saw in this man the distinctive signs of premature ageing.

"This man suffers not because he is facing an event which brings him pain and grief, he is facing this event because he has chosen suffering as his natural state" announced the Dreamer conclusively.

I realised that everything that had been and all that my life would have become was already there, in that instant, just as the life cycle of an oak tree is contained in its seed. Every detail proclaimed the negligence, the carelessness,

the staleness of this life. I would have liked to have done something, to warn the man I once was of our presence. I would have liked to have gone inside him to put things right, to give him a little dignity, to make him straighten his hunched back and wipe that pained expression off his face...

"It is impossible to intervene! You cannot do anything to help!" said the Dreamer holding me back. The tone of His voice had become imperceptibly sweeter. *"That man loves to suffer!...he might swear to the contrary, but in reality he would not leave his hell for anything in the world."*

I was astonished, unable to believe such a monstrous claim. The Dreamer caught that expression of incredulity on my face, and added,

"Indulging in that state allows him to cling to the world. It makes him feel secure. Even with the pain of his condition, he is comforted by the illusion that some help might come to him from the outside ..."

"If he could see himself...if he could change his attitude and his responses by just one atom ...if he had the capacity to raise the level of one thought or emotion by a single millimetre, his entire life would be transformed..."

Then, theatrically, He turned his voice into a powerful whisper. That sudden change of tone sharpened my attention:

"A man cannot change the events in his life, only his attitude towards them."

"You said it was possible to change the past..." I protested. A searing disappointment, a wave of desperation, was welling up behind my eyes like tears.

"What you see here, this fragment of your existence which you would like to step into and change, is not your past," countered the Dreamer sharply, *"It is your future!"*

"Everything repeats itself in your life...Events repeat themselves, remain the same, because you don't want to change...Still you complain, you accuse the world, convinced that someone from the outside can harm you or be the cause of your misfortunes..."

"The ordinary man imprisoned by the circularity of time doesn't have a future, only a past which repeats itself over and over again..."

Now you are 'seeing' through My eyes! One day, when you will be able to bear the responsibility, you will understand that your victim mentality is not the consequence of your misfortunes but the origin...that you, only you, are the cause of all this...only then will you be able to bring light into your past and

heal it."

We were in the morgue. There were other bodies lined up next to that of my wife. None were as young as Luisa. In that silence echoed the words which I would never forget.

"The death of this woman is the mirror image of all your states of being, of your own inner deaths."

Although the Dreamer had warned me about the difficulties I would encounter in revisiting the furrows of my past, experiencing it again with Him by my side I felt crushed by the weight of His vision. The resulting sense of responsibility that was germinating within me was unbearable. How could I accept that I was the creator and the director of this horror film that I called my life?

"Death is immoral – He announced, with a firm voice – and unnatural... Physical death is only the materialisation of millions of deaths which take place inside us every day; it is the crystallisation of a faith borrowed from a humanity which indulges in pain and loves suffering.

Men have made death into their escape route – he continued relentlessly, taking no notice of my discomfiture - They know exactly what they have to do to kill themselves ...they know all the tricks...

The body is indestructible!...And yet, they have managed to turn the impossible into the inevitable. A man cannot die, he can only kill himself! To succeed in this a man has to give it his all and make a full time occupation of self-pity and self-destruction".

At this point He stopped, searching for the appropriate words to overcome my resistance, the rudimentary level of my perception and the hypnotic wall I had raised up against the mysterious power of these revolutionary ideas.

"Death is always a suicide," He declared, conferring that phrase with the force of a battle cry. "When this way of thinking will become your own flesh, it will overturn your vision of the world, and with it, your reality."

The Dreamer was attacking age-old beliefs, the unshakable faith shared by all of mankind, held together in brotherhood by the shared condition of mortality, by the universal belief that death is inevitable. These words made me violent, absolutely vicious, as if someone was suddenly robbing me of everything that was most precious to me. Something was tearing my being. An uncontrollable, silent scream echoed within me permeating the depths of my being like a wail of

anguish.

In this very moment, billions of human beings are thinking and feeling negatively, trapped as you are, in their own resentment," He said. While I felt Him seeping into the recesses of my being that I considered most secret and inaccessible, I felt a profound shame, as if I had been caught in the act of stealing.

"It is this state of being that denies humanity any hope of escape from the most painful circles of existence" He declared with a trace of bitterness. Then, in a conclusive tone and drawing up the threads of that most memorable lesson, He said, *"Men worship death and would never give it up, even if they could, because they consider it to be the answer to all their problems, the end of their suffering and of the thousand psychological deaths they inflict upon themselves...but death is never the answer!"*

The mesmerizing fog lifted, and my vision became clear. And, while the words of the Dreamer became real, the death of Luisella, in that room draped in black, with the other bodies lined up in those little beds surrounded by candles, seemed unreal to me, like a macabre scene from a play.

10 Healing comes from within

We continued on that trip into my past until we docked at the period of Luisa's last months of life. I saw myself once again unconsciously playing the obtuse role of the grieving husband, the head of a household at not yet thirty, already bent under the weight of such terrible misfortune. I watched that little man full of self-pity, blame, regret and recrimination. I saw his rancour and how he was caught in the grip of hatred and resentment; lost in a sick imagination; throbbing with anxiety, his heart held in the ruthless clutches of his guilt. I listened to his song of pain, that unremitting accusation against everyone and everything. Until I could stand it no more.

"Why all this? What am I doing here?" I cried to the Dreamer, feeling crushed by the shame of this vision. I would have liked to turn heel and run, but I couldn't move a muscle.

With unexpected gentleness the Dreamer brought me back to the purpose of this journey: to shed some light on my past, to revisit it with a new understanding. It was an unrepeatable opportunity.

“As with every true healing the process has to start from within” He said sweetly, happily removing me from that state of self pity that was threatening to overcome me at any moment.

“It is our being that creates the world and not vice versa!”

“Like all men, you have always believed that events create your state, that external circumstances are responsible for your condition. Now you know this is a distorted view of reality.” I was recovering. I waited a few seconds and then indicated to the Dreamer that I was ready to continue.

The next stage of our journey took us to Via Bolognese in Florence where, at that time, I had been involved in management training. During those months a sort of emotional symbiosis had been established between my colleagues and me which had combined my natural tendency for self-pity with their support, provided to me at little cost. Without being aware of it, my misfortune made them feel better. By means of a salutary shock, having been faced with the precariousness of life, for a while they really appreciated their mediocre ration of existence. They treated me with the kindness and solicitude usually reserved for the seriously ill, the injured, or the beaten. I ‘saw’ the full horror of this exchange and felt a deep discomfort. Whichever way I looked at it, my past was full of shadows. I could not find a scrap worth saving.

I wandered about like a desperate man arriving at a disaster scene, looking for something to save: a loved one, a relationship, anything that might have some use or value. To no avail. I was breathless with horror. Without the Dreamer next to me I would not have found the strength to carry on.

“Don’t blame events – He said, seeing me tottering under the weight of these emotions. “To be a widower at twenty-nine with two children is not a curse. An event is neither good nor bad. It is just an opportunity. If you had had the discipline you could have transformed that event into something luminous. You would have moved it to a higher level... If you had had the courage to know yourself, it would not have been necessary for Luisa to die...it would not have been necessary to have experienced so many misfortunes.

Our level of Being attracts our life...everything that you see and touch is the reflected image of your being and comes from your incompleteness, from that

gap you bear inside. In existence, there are no empty spaces. If you do not fill them intentionally, by forcing yourself to think and act in a different way, then the world will do it for you mercilessly.

If you do not see, or do not want to see, the disease becomes acute and the comedy of your life will become ever more painful. Everything happens to reveal to you the cause of that tragedy, to take you back to the source of all this...and to allow you someday to intervene and change this mortal vision of existence”.

11 The Landlords

Other fragments of my life, images from the past, streamed before my eyes like a film run on fast forward. The faces of people and the streets made me recognize the hundred cities in which I had lived, the hundred houses in which I had slept. Until I caught a glimpse of it...the shadow!...That dark presence that had always followed me, whenever I had chosen a new house, every time I had moved. I felt apprehension squeeze my stomach in a vice-like grip.

In every one of these houses I had found an ogre: unreasonable landlords, argumentative characters, which an ironic fate, a recurring destiny of admirable pedagogy, required me to have as neighbours.

“Look carefully...observe them closely! – ordered the Dreamer firmly but kindly, anticipating the painfulness of what he was about to show me – “Those landlords were actually just a single person. Always the same. There is no change...You didn’t want to “see” that behind the mask, disguised as a landlord, it was always you. You, meeting yourself!”

Something broke inside me. A heavy door slammed shut behind me and I heard the metallic click of the lock. I had the terrifying certainty that once I had heard these words I would never be able to turn back and nothing would ever be the same again. I broke down inside, weeping without tears: my life had been that of a ghost, a reflection that I could see fading in the mirror of the world and disappearing without trace.

The words of the Dreamer came to my rescue on the edge of that abyss.

“These are the guards, the gaolers that you yourself have paid to perpetuate your state of dependence. Until you have banished forever that song of pain that has always directed your life those ghosts will keep coming back.”

The silence which followed lasted so long that I began to fear that the golden thread which joined us would break. A pang of anxiety began at the thought that He might have cut me out of His ‘dream’. It was a terrible feeling. For what seemed an eternity, while I experienced that emptiness, that absence, I ceased to exist. I understood then how much the Dreamer had become an integral part of my existence. I was connected to Him by a precious cord as though to a vital organ from which I drew life, a third lung from which I breathed “pure air”.

Then, new images of my past began to pass before my eyes, as though I were watching my life in an editing room. Somehow, I began to learn to control them. Now I could stop them, enlarge them, zoom in or out to gain a perspective. I could include or exclude myself from the scene. I saw the villa at Fortini Street again, too large and silent now that Luisa was in the hospital at via Venezian in Milan and Luca and Georgia were with their grandparents in Piedmont. I watched those days quickly rushing by, dawning and waning in the blink of an eye. At sunset, the shadows of the pine trees took possession of the old house, insinuating themselves like thin fingers into the innermost part of my being.

I knew the reason why the Dreamer had taken me to this exact spot and I knew which part of my life I was to live through again. I began to shake uncontrollably.

“We are about to go into the cellar of your life, the dark corners of your existence – He said, encouraging me – It’s time to do some tidying up... to clear things out.

“Get rid of that man!” He ordered, hardening His tone into a scornful sneer. *“Get him out of your life once and for all!...”*

I grasped what courage I had with both hands and once again went up the steep road leading to the large gates of the entrance. I recognized the wind that blew down this hill which would reach its fullest force in that precise spot. Like a torrent, it rushed down the gully of that twisting alley, brushing its rough dry-walls, speckled here and there with the green and white of the wild capers. I went in by the little metal door. I saw the Citroen I had at that time parked at the far end.

The villa appeared before me unexpectedly, the inner driveway being very short. Just as unexpectedly I came upon the stairway of terracotta tiles and stone. As I began to make my way up I turned my gaze towards the bottom of the garden beyond the house. I stopped to look at the illuminated windows of the guest cottage. Our only neighbour lived there. The memories rushed into my mind, crowding into each other. I felt my breathing quicken as the frames of my affair with Judith began to flicker into view.

12 Judith, 'la signorina'

Giorgio and Luca called her 'la signorina'. Just a few years older than me, tall and attractive, Judith was quite reserved. She lived by herself in the little house at the end of our garden. Nothing truly surprised her, and nothing seemed to interest her besides her books and her music. An intense batting of her eyelashes, as though she was in a constant state of astonishment, animated her expression of unperturbed detachment. I checked to make sure that the Dreamer was still by my side and went up to one of the windows to the small living room. My heart was in a tumult, as it had been then, when at night I would go to her seeking comfort in her body through fear and my inability to bear what was happening to me.

Once again I saw that small room, its walls covered with books, the sofa in the middle upholstered in a flowery fabric, and Judith, whose long fingers danced across the keyboards while I told her about Luisa's illness and the deterioration of her condition. Her music filled the room making every atom of it vibrate and reaching a crescendo that covered those words full of egoism and falsehood. Now I could feel the full horror of that man's thoughts and smell the nauseating odour of his intentions. For the first time I clearly saw the kind of struggle that was tearing at my guts, torn as I was between the pain of Luisa's impending death and the wild and secret joy I felt at the prospect of freeing myself from my wife, from the weight of that unbalanced and immature marriage.

At some obscure level, I had been blaming her for my unhappiness, for my frustrations, for the restrictions and obstacles I encountered in my professional life.

“Death is never an accident - interrupted the voice of the Dreamer – like sickness, unhappiness, and poverty. For years you prayed this would happen...without even admitting it to yourself, you intensely desired and even invoked it. Dreams always come true, even the darkest ones.”

The curtain of pretence was raised. I could no longer hide. It would no longer be possible. Behind the tears and desperation of that small man, between his skin and the mask he wore, I saw the smirking face of my own criminality. The horror took my breath away. An unassailable force held me there unable to move, in front of Judith’s window.

Once again I saw the scene of our first meeting. Luisa was dying and I clung to this woman, in search of a little company, her compassion and her body.

When Judith understood my intentions, her attitude didn’t change; she was not upset. She took my hand and took me into her bedroom to give me what I had come begging for. Sex...to forget, to escape, to find relief from the fear which tortured my soul. From then on, we met frequently. We did not talk a great deal and there was no need for ceremony. At night I would go to her in order to soothe my anguish but our embraces would end in orgasms as insignificant as sneezes.

The Dreamer did not spare me even one of those scenes and I stayed there, watching that spectacle, tasting the full bitterness of their squalor.

Luisa was in the house, a few yards away from us, at the other end of the garden. This man could not be me...My disgust became unbearable. I felt faint at the recognition of the fact that I would stoop to any level to save myself. And so, cruelly, the wounds left open from my past were healing themselves, and closing .

Judith dealt with our sexual relationship as a task to be scrupulously fulfilled, with dedication and seriousness, but she never allowed even one atom of my being to attach itself to her life. Our affair flowed over her without leaving a trace and without her life being influenced in the slightest. It was frustrating not to be able to truly possess her; her independence made me feel insecure. I came to the conclusion that Judith lived for no one but herself. I persuaded myself that her love of books and music was just a cloak for her egoism. And thus, sealed under glass and labelled by my judgment, I relegated her to the store room of memories of my past. Only now, through the eyes of the Dreamer, was

I able to see exactly what Judith had represented for me. Only now was I able to see in her reserved nature, so devoid of any hypocrisy, the detached attitude of an impeccable being and the pure love of a sincere woman.

Judith was better than me. She rescued me like a desperate soul from the wreckage of my life. I cannot imagine what I would have done without her. She had clearly seen who I was! She had seen my senseless life turn horribly on itself. She had recognized me as a bearer of death! Keeping me out of her life had been her salvation. How could I have judged her so harshly?

Now Judith no longer occupied a dark corner in the cellar of my life, she shone! Her music was life...

And yet something did not make sense. How had I come to meet her? How had a creature like Judith entered into my hell just when I so desperately needed her?

I turned towards the Dreamer. My legs were giving out from under me. An absurd notion, a slither of total insanity, was planting itself in a small crack in my rationality. From there I felt it pushing inwards. It was penetrating, slowly, inexorably. I had to stop it before it destroyed every one of my faculties. It wasn't possible! Judith was...a gift from the Dreamer!...Judith was the Dreamer!...How many times had He already come into my life to save me? How could I have been so blind? How could I not have noticed such perfection?

The thought whirled at the edge of this precipice and then dropped over it.

"Each one of us is given an immense margin of salvation" were the words the Dreamer used to bring me back. His tone was surprisingly sweet -

"But we use it up, we waste it quickly, by our constant negligence, our irresponsible way of ignoring the signs, the warnings, the 'traffic-lights' of existence...and we believe ourselves to be fragile, exposed to every peril, at the mercy of chance..."

The voice of the Dreamer became severe and resolute once more and His intensity made me shudder.

"Life is very powerful, and the body is indestructible. To die, you must make the impossible possible."

Referring to the man I had been as if He was talking about someone else, He said,

"Forgive him! Forgiving him will heal your past and you will replace it with the light of today."

A hard and resistant part of my being began to melt and then gave way. I cried like a baby. A magma of pain, of unpleasant thoughts and emotions flowed: feelings of guilt, regrets, accusations and resentments came to the surface.

“Men and women are all like you, fragments floating in the universe, ruled by negative emotions...Accusations, complaints and dependency is the story of their lives...it is the only sense they can make of things!...Suffocated by anxiety, they try to forget about death through death.”

13 Thank you, Luisa!

The journey into the past started once again. The scene slowly changed and the Dreamer took me back to the period when I was making constant trips between Florence and Milan to visit Luisa who was in hospital at the Institute on Via Venezian. I was immediately trapped in the same mental cages and I found myself in the same state I had been in at that time. I experienced the same pain I had felt which would become more acute as the moment of each of those departures drew near. I was torn between a moral obligation to be near her and the repugnance I felt each time I entered that place crowded with suffering people. Crossing the wards, meeting them in the corridors, I read their faces and I could flick through them like turning the pale pages of a book. I painfully entered into the lines of their stories, into the words of their expressions, into the ink of their suffering. I was filled with the terrible fear that one day I might be condemned to the same fate. Then I would feel an irresistible urge to flee, to leave them behind and forget them for ever. Outside there was what I called life: people lost in the triviality of everyday life, the hubbub of the traffic, the sound and reassuring flare of futile laughter. And there I would seek refuge, among the crowd. Having hurriedly performed the ritual of the grieving husband, as soon as I had absolved my guilt by conferring with someone on the medical staff, asking for updates and displaying my concern, I would find some pretext and run away. I would wander around the streets of the city centre seeking refuge in the crowds like a desperate man; losing myself in the confusion of the traffic. I wrapped myself in the colours and lights of the city. I was numbed by the smiles of the well-dressed women and the shop window displays, nursing an

illusion of a world without problems, populated by people who were miraculously invulnerable and happy. I sought refuge in that fantasy. In that psychological bubble I could breathe, like an eel in his own drool. Only the thought of Luisa would break in from time to time, without warning, and disturb my drunken state. Apprehension, fear, a sense of guilt came to rout me out, like the Furies and the vengeful gods, from the cinema, from an exhibition or from a café. Then the thought of the fragility of life and the impotence and distress I felt at its precariousness flooded me with cold terror.

Accompanied by the Dreamer I arrived at Luisa's bedside. Her eyes were closed. She was alone. The Dreamer had chosen a day when I was at work or was walking around the city trying to escape from myself. Luisa's laboured breathing lifted the edge of the blanket at an incredible, almost inhuman, rate. I recognized that symptom with an aching heart. Her days were coming to an end.

A nod from the Dreamer encouraged me to move closer.

I carefully moved a chair from next to the metal bedside cabinet and remained watching her for a long time. Locks of hair soaked in sweat covered her brow and the part of her face that was not covered by the sheet. The months and days of our brief marriage sped quickly before my eyes, vividly, loaded with events and memories. Our first apartment. The stories I brought home from work and the pride that I could read in her eyes on hearing of my first successes. The birth of Georgia. Her endless crying at night which we couldn't seem to do anything about. The birth of Luca. And then, her illness.

Our immaturity had soon turned into incomprehension, jealousy, arguments, regrets and recriminations. We were two weak people, clinging to one another; two incomplete human beings who deceived themselves into thinking that together they could form a whole. Our union had only magnified our incompleteness. These thoughts, and others, came to my lips forming words which I whispered in her ear. I spoke to her of life, of beauty, and of happiness. It didn't matter whether she heard me or not. A bitter pain was throbbing in my chest, a tearless weeping was tightening my throat. Yet I was joyful. I felt in love, passionately so, as never before. Up until that day, hypnotically caught up in my activities and by a thousand illusory tasks, I had experienced the time spent with Luisa as pure suffering. The waiting without either past or future, the hours ticking away while nothing happened, the stillness, the silence and the

calm which reigned supreme in that world, filled me with fear. That vision was as intolerable as light to a caterpillar. I felt only one, overwhelming desire: to flee and protect myself from the creeping intrusiveness of a reality which froze the blood in my veins.

“This woman is your past which is dying” said the Dreamer from behind me. The force of these words, and the delicacy with which He pronounced them, caused a tension within my being which moved me and set me free.

The feeling of death which I had experienced for months next to her was not something outside myself. It was my death. The death which I had always carried within me. Luisa had enabled me to see it, to feel it, and to touch it. In this supreme moment, she was giving me the opportunity to defeat it. In return, I had smeared her with every bad thought, every accusation.

“Ask her forgiveness!” ordered the Dreamer paternally. *“Her life was special, it has served to make you recognise the death that is inside you – your victim mentality, your feelings of guilt and your destructiveness which have guided your existence”*.

“Thank you, Luisa,” - I murmured, smoothing the wet hair away from her face, and wiping her brow. “What senseless ignorance. I didn’t know. This is our resurrection...I will change, forever, and our children will change with me!”

The hours went by but I didn’t feel tired. I wouldn’t have wanted to be anywhere else in the world but there, by her side. I reflected that I had been coming to see her and the others in this hospital for so long, feeling detached, convinced that I was the healthy one among the sick. Week after week I had lived alongside those people who, like her, were clinging to a scrap of life, without understanding what they had to give.

Then, it would have been impossible for me to see that all these men and women were not outside of me, but were merely the projection of an unhealthy vision of existence...reflected images of my own sickness, of my own separation, of my irresponsibility. This world was revealing to me the death which I carried within. Accepting this and taking responsibility for it, was part of that process which had not even started yet, which the Dreamer called ‘inner forgiveness.’

Self-observation is self-healing.

Observing all this and realising how much even the smallest detail of this world belonged to me, and feeling thankful, alerted me to the first signs of my

healing process.

It was night. The corridors of the hospital were silent. I no longer knew how long I had been by her side. I had used up everything there was to use up: words, memories, tears. There was one thing left to do! I folded back the sheet and uncovered her. Under her nightshirt, she had enormous swellings. Her stomach in particular was swollen and hard, as if she was ready to give birth. I bathed her chest and her legs with a damp, lightly perfumed cloth. I examined her wound, dark and deep as a nest. Lucidity, judgment, and a cool professionalism I would never have imagined possible, guided my hands as I applied her medication. Years of incomprehension, the encrustations of so many unkind actions and betrayals, were scratched away along with the cells and dead tissue. I disinfected the area, applied a new gauze bandage and taped it with plasters. I covered her once again and kissed her.

"The past needs to be blessed and healed... Go into every fold! Bring light into every corner! Transform the past with a new understanding..."

"Your past will be healed when you cease to indulge in anxieties, doubts and fears. This is the real meaning of 'inner forgiveness'".

The air was still echoing with the Dreamer's words when I felt the pavement give way under my feet as though a trap-door had opened beneath me. I fell on my back and began to slide down an invisible chute at great speed, until a vortex of colours swallowed me up.

When I opened my eyes I was in my hotel room in Marrakech. That same day I made arrangements for my return to New York. An extraordinary feeling still surrounded the recollection of every moment spent with Him, from our encounter at the Café de la France to the journey into my tormented past and the night spent with Luisa.

My luggage had already been taken and the car was waiting to drive me to the airport, yet I lingered. I couldn't tear myself away from the place where I could still breathe His presence. I directed a thought of gratitude towards the Dreamer for having escorted me into my past and helped me to get rid of so much useless baggage. Only a few shreds of my former self were still attached to my being. I had kept one particular fragment, just one, which I still gripped in my fist. However painful, I held it tight, reluctant to let it go: my last look at Luisa, that kiss of love exchanged between the past and the future, on the edges

of existence.



School for Gods

Chapter II Lupelius

1 Encounter with the School

It was late morning. I was going down an elegant street full of antique shops. A hot sun behind my back seemed to push me towards an open space that you could just make out at the end. I noticed that I was walking at a brisk pace as though hurrying to an appointment without knowing where it was, or whom I was going to meet. The pavement I was walking along led to an Italian café and the open space turned out to be a large piazza, one of the most beautiful I had ever seen. The Dreamer was sitting at one of the little tables, in the best spot to admire the square and enjoy the spectacle of the people passing by. He was surrounded by a small cluster of waiters who were obsequiously intent on serving Him and listening to his recommendations. I arrived as they were drawing up a second table and looking for space to set down the contents of two large trays. There was always an aura of prosperity around Him. He sought out refinement in every detail and loved abundance but his approach was marked by the sobriety of a Macedonian warrior. And his dietary regime went far beyond frugality.

He seemed pleased to see me again. With a slight nod of his head he both greeted me and invited me to join him.

From that moment on the Dreamer's attention seemed entirely focused on the little cakes and delicacies of all descriptions which had been arranged neatly on the tables.

I had not seen Him since our last encounter in Marrakech. I had been waiting impatiently for this moment.

Now, in His presence, a thousand questions crowded my mind. Some of these questions had

echoed for centuries and had been raised throughout the history of the world, without ever finding an answer. Religions, schools of thought and prophetic traditions, generations of scientists, researchers, philosophers and ascetics had tried in vain to find the answers. I reflected on the fact that modern man, the most recent link in this chain of research going back thousands of years, remained as naked as ever in the face of the enigma of his own existence, like Oedipus before the Sphinx.

They served us tea. The Dreamer followed every detail of this operation with scrupulous care and directed the waiters according to a ritual known only to Himself. He barely even touched the food.

The Dreamer seemed to derive nourishment from His own attention, His impressions and the harmony and rhythms of each tiny movement.

After the tea there was a long pause. I waited impatiently for Him to begin speaking. In the meantime I had opened my notebook and my pen was at the ready. When His voice sounded, its tone was solemn.

“With me by your side you can leave the tracks of your inflexible destiny – He said – by my side you can break the automatic cycle of your routines, your feelings of guilt...by my side you must give up doubt, fear, your destructive thoughts...you must abandon the lie that binds you to a mortal description of existence.

In order to change, you must fight your indoctrination! - He continued – You must overturn your way of seeing things. Only in this way, and through hard work, can you change your destiny... But a man can never achieve this alone.. You need a School.”

The emphasis He gave to the word ‘school’, and the context in which it was used, made me realise, intuitively, that it held a meaning which went beyond the conventional. I felt as though I was hearing it for the first time. I discovered in this a power that I had never felt before and the sweetness of a long forgotten promise. An idea crossed my being like a shiver and came to my lips in the form of a question. “What is the ‘school’?” I asked. My voice was trembling and I found myself surprised by my inexplicable emotion.

“The School is your return journey,” said the Dreamer. His dark eyes were glowing with a secret joy: *“The School is the quantum leap from multitude to integrity, from conflictuality to harmony, from slavery to freedom. Finding the School means harnessing yourself to the ‘Dream’ with a steel cable...it means being able to access the highest levels of responsibility. Only the fewest of the few can endure such an encounter”* He concluded. Those words and His gaze triggered something hidden inside of me into action. I physically felt the mechanical click of a gear changing. With a stabbing pain of regret, I realised the immorality of having lived for years “away from home”, and how miraculous it was to find myself with something, someone, that I had been desperately searching for.

“How does one go about finding the School?” I asked, with a whisper of a voice, full of reverence, feeling the exceptional nature of that event.

“Don’t worry... the School will find you.” replied the Dreamer. Then, seeing me at a loss, He softened His blunt response adding: *“When a man is irremediably disappointed by his life...when he realises his incompleteness, his impotence, when existence grips him in a vice*

so he cannot breathe, only then will the School appear."

2 "The world is an oft told tale"

Sitting in the café in that unknown city, I listened to Him, accumulating pages of notes. I had the feeling that my apprenticeship, which had started in that unusual house, and then continued in Marrakech, was following a secret educational course, the uninterrupted lines of a design.

"Meeting the 'school' is the most extraordinary event in the life of a man...the only opportunity to escape collective hypnosis – explained the Dreamer – to understand that everything that you see, everything that surrounds you is not the world...but only a description."

"But I am listening to You, I can touch this table...I see people passing by...and know that every one of these men has a life, a job, a family...how can all this be just a vision of mine?"

"The images that fall upon your retina are not the world, only the story that you have been told... - responded the Dreamer laconically – The world has been described to you."

I marvelled at what I was hearing but was even more astonished when He added in a whisper; *"The true creator of the reality that surrounds you, is you!...you have only forgotten..."*

"What have I forgotten?" I asked. A trace of hostility in my voice signalled a distance growing between us.

"In order to exist, the world needs you...You have forgotten that you are the creator, the inventor, and you have become the shadow of your own invention." His tone of voice bridged that distance that had begun to develop between us, and brought me back into line, like a schoolboy.

"The world is subjective, personal!...It is the mirror image of our being...Vision and reality are one and the same thing, the only thing dividing them is the 'time factor'."

I would have liked to say 'yes', to have accepted His vision. Yet, something inside me objected. The rational part of me faltered, but did not give way. How was it possible to face the same object, landscape, event or person, and have different perceptions?

"But surely there is such a thing as an objective reality!" I declared, to shore up my long held convictions – "After all, a thing cannot be anything other than what it is..."

I was still trying to defend 'my' beliefs, but I knew that, no matter how deeply rooted they were, they would not hold. They were bound to be overturned by contact with the Dreamer's vision. This time too, as on every other occasion, the unforeseeable miracle would occur; everything suddenly clicking into place so that in His company I would inevitably understand things without ever being able to know when or how. I wanted, and expected, this change. When finally it came, I felt the walls of my being expanding vastly to make room for a clearer, freer, and more intelligent vision of the world.

Seeing me still perplexed, he unleashed another decisive blow against my vision of the world, and added,

"We can only see that which we are." Then, with His inimitable and subtle humour, touching on sarcasm, He said, *"If a thief encountered a saint, he would only see his pockets"*.

This joke was enlightening for me and for a few moments I dwelt on that comic and instructive image. But the Dreamer had already resumed His lecture with a scowl, as if this digression, albeit minimal, had held him up or caused him to deviate too much from the purpose of our meeting.

"Only contact with the School will allow you to escape from the rigidity of the vision held by common minds."

Only 'school work' will one day enable us to 'see' the world behind its false description.

Only a 'man of the school' will one day be able to access a harmonious vision, a state of wholeness. And only a harmonious and complete vision will heal the world."

3 A School for overturning

The Dreamer revealed to me that training Schools for exceptional men had always existed, in every age and society. Apart from the philosophical and cultural differences that seem to distinguish them from one another, these 'schools' were, in actual fact, just a single School. Its voice remained as it had always been, and its thought had crossed every age and civilization. He called this school the 'School of Being', a forge, a universal hotbed of dreamers, where visionaries and luminous utopians had always refined their intent.

"A school of transformation" further defined the Dreamer, and then paused. He breathed in deeply the aromas that spiralled up from His tea, and then, in a hushed voice added: *"The School for Gods...where before governing others, one learns to govern oneself."* His voice made my spine tingle. It had become the martial howl of a warrior in action. *"A School for overturning – He said – where ideas and beliefs are overthrown...and first and foremost, the idea of the inevitability of death. Death is the ultimate resistance to truth, harmony and beauty. Death destroys whatever is incapable of becoming truth. If we are true in every cell of our body we will never die."*

I thought back to the classical tradition, before the age of Homer, which divided humanity into two species vastly removed from each other: the heroes, who were the champions of a dreaming humanity, individuals capable of making the impossible happen, and an indistinct and faceless multitude without will and without dreams. The former, guided by Fate, were destined for a great individual adventure and the latter, ruled by the laws of Accident and Chance, were fated to a life of insignificance.

I was enlightened by the thought that the great myths, from the most ancient times, in reality narrated the actions of men who had encountered the 'School'. Their adventures, their battles against monsters and giants, sung by the aoidoi, the wandering poets, were the stages along the way, part of an 'inner journey' back into the depths, into the most obscure and

secret recesses of the being. The Dreamer explained that it was there - in the most hidden corners of existence, where the river of destructive thoughts and guilt courses, and negative emotions fester - that one found the source of all those monsters, the evil origin of coarseness, of death, and of all our failures.

"You need, above all, to cast out the enemy within your own flesh. And you will have barely finished routing him out when you will find him confronting you again even more merciless, more cruel and more powerful The antagonist grows with you! There are not thousands of enemies, there is only one, and your victory is also one...conquering yourself."

"The 'journey of return' is the great opportunity for a man to heal his past" He said, as His gaze slowly surveyed the piazza; the twin churches, the patrician palaces, the statues around the ancient obelisk. He looked at the people who crowded around it.

"The world is the past." He pronounced, coining one of His most admirable maxims – "Whoever you meet, whatever you encounter, is always the past. Even if it appears to be before you at this moment, what you see and touch is only the materialisation of your inner states...The past is dust. The world you see and feel, in this precise moment, is the materialisation of all that you have been...There is nothing that can happen in your life that has not already been accepted in your thoughts. The world is dust. Blow upon it, and dispel it.

The Dreamer moved His chair slightly to suggest that we should rise. His movement distracted me abruptly from the effort I was making to keep up with Him and these new ideas. I had a knot in my stomach. I would have liked to have poured this exuberant and irrepressible new wine, into the old cask of my convictions. I wanted to contain this ocean within the limits of my rationality that was now crumbling and yielding under His blows. I became lost in empty, intellectual posturing to hide from myself the evidence that His teachings were penetrating ever deeper, becoming more dangerous, even fatal for my old equilibrium.

In the meantime the Dreamer had stood up. With a nod, He invited me to follow Him. I was reluctant to leave that quiet corner where the air still rang with His words. It felt to me as though I was leaving an ancient temple, a venerable ark of knowledge. Every detail of that meeting would be forever fixed within my cells, including the carefully laid tables, the movements of the waiters, and even the freshly baked rice pastries.

I crossed the piazza with Him and followed Him into a church. Passing between the transept and the altar, beyond the central nave, we came to a little chapel. I could make out two giant canvasses in the semi-darkness, one facing the other. I glanced around; from our position, the church seemed completely deserted. The Dreamer asked me to put a coin in the meter. A strong light shone onto the two works of art. He suggested I look at them from the centre of the chapel, from a point at an equal distance from both. I followed His instructions, and carefully examined the two masterpieces.

The painting on the left showed Peter being crucified upside down; the other was of Paul's fall on the road to Damascus.

"It is not a coincidence that these two paintings are facing each other -He said- They

are indissolubly linked by a single message”.

The Dreamer stopped talking and we remained there in silence. I took this pause as an invitation to reflect and to try to discover the secret of the symbology. However, the minutes ticked by and beat my futile efforts until the Dreamer released me from my bewilderment by revealing that the two works were the most powerful iconographic representations of the idea of ‘overturning’ .

“These works transmit the breadth, the amplitude of thinking of a great School of responsibility – He said – Only such a School can fight prejudice and age-old beliefs so as to overthrow the mental paradigms of the old humanity and heal it forever from its conflictual thinking and free it from pain...Vision and reality are one and the same thing. The world is your reflection. Overturn your beliefs and the world will follow like a shadow. Reality will take the shape of a new vision.

The timer ran out, the lights switched off and the paintings sank back into the darkness like steel blades put back in their sheaths. In the semi-darkness of that atmosphere that smelled of candle wax, I listened to the Dreamer’s extraordinary story of a School that had remained silent for more than ten centuries. He paused a long time before announcing enigmatically that it was time to hear its voice once again. I was astonished. The idea of a thousand-year-old School reappearing after centuries of silence to carry on its mission dazzled me. It was then that the Dreamer told me about a legendary warrior-monk and a precious manuscript that had been lost.

“For you, and for those like you who believe they can find the truth in books...it would be useful to seek out the traces of this ancient School” He said. Then His voice became imperious.

“Find that manuscript!” He commanded.

Beyond the roughness of His voice and His peremptory attitude, I felt He was assigning me an important task. I was grateful to him. A decisive ‘Yes’, solemn as a court judgment, echoed in my chest. I would dedicate all my efforts to this task. The more I thought about it, the more my enthusiasm grew for this enterprise which promised to project me into a familiar and congenial world. The Dreamer noticed I was reverting to my old habits, falling back into the cliché of the scholar, and said,

“One day you will realise that there is nothing you can bring in from the outside, that there is nothing you can add to what you already know...that teaching and experience do not add anything to your understanding ...True knowledge can only be ‘remembered’.

Man’s knowledge cannot be greater or smaller than he is. A man ‘knows’ what he ‘is’, and never the other way around.

To know means, above all else, to be...The more you are, the more you know.”

Later, the Dreamer would talk to me about a memory beyond time, a ‘vertical memory’, made up of states and levels, the container of infinite knowledge. This is the inheritance of every man; we all have it, but we have lost the key...Re-member.

The ancient mosaics on the floor began to expand, and the distance between us began to increase, imperceptibly at first and then visibly. I felt a desperate sense of loss as I listened to

His final words.

“Knowledge is the inalienable property of every man...it is as old as he is”

One day, you will realise that there is nothing to add...but a great deal to be eliminated...if you wish to know.

I drank in those words as though I had been waiting to hear them all my life. I recognised them. A slight tremor under my skin underpinned the sensation that I felt of containing all things. I was a perfect, universal measuring system. I experienced a sensation of wholeness, of understanding and connectedness, with all and everything. I experienced the inebriation of the Dreamer’s invulnerability and faultlessness. Nothing could erode or corrupt that integrity.

“Find that manuscript!” He reiterated austerely. The outline of His face had already begun to fade away. I had just enough time to hear him add with the sweet tone of a promise *“When you have found it, we will meet again.”*

4 Lupelius

That same day, I started my research on the ancient school and began my hunt for the manuscript of which we had spoken. The work He had asked me to find, ‘The School for Gods’, had been written in the ninth century by the philosopher-monk Lupelius, a free spirit of the Dark Ages, who was a native of Ireland - in those years a refuge for learned men, a land at the crossroads of cultures and traditions, tormented by every war and conflict imaginable. Little is known about the life of Lupelius and what information exists is uncertain. The documents I was able to find were few and not always reliable. Since his youth Lupelius had been trained in the arts of war by his father who hired the greatest masters available and brought him up under the strictest discipline. When still very young, he embraced the monastic life and sought solitude in the mountains of Bet Huzaye, today called Kazakhstan, which was at that time a favourite destination for Anchorites from all parts of the Christian world. Of his religious and spiritual training, it is known that he entered the nearby monastery of Shaban Rabbur, where, cloistered for years in its formidable library, he fervently studied the sacred Scriptures, the Greek Fathers and the great mystics of every time and place, from Origen to Giovanni of Apamea, and the Fathers of the Desert. In the weeks that followed I was able to speak to a few scholars of medieval philosophy who confirmed that all traces of Lupelius’ only work, and of the original manuscript, had been lost for centuries.

I researched the libraries of the great universities, contacted various institutes of philosophy and met with scholars and researchers. I extended my search to the rest of Europe, without success. Finally, in Ireland, at the Dublin Wrighter’s Museum, following yet another trail, I ascertained that they had kept a copy, the only known one in existence. However, it turned out this one too had disappeared years before, swallowed by the sands of time.

The obstacles and difficulties I met increased my commitment and determination. Every

clue, every new encounter on the trail of those lost teachings, was bringing order to my existence.

As if following the lines of a precise drawing, the fragments of my life, once scattered pieces of an unknown mosaic, were now coming together, each one finding its rightful place. Finding that manuscript and going back to see the Dreamer became for me one single task. There was no other way of seeing Him again. This thought constantly rekindled my energy to continue the research He had entrusted to me.

From the information I was slowly gathering and the elements of Lupelius' philosophy that I was able to piece together laboriously, the thought and character began to emerge of a great School with principles as powerful as the walls of an immortal city. After more than a thousand years, the fragments of those teachings still shone forth a light at odds with the social and moral dissolution of that era.

The figure of Lupelius, servant to the world, immediately made a great impression on me. From the beginning of my research I had felt a growing admiration for this unknown philosopher.

The closer I got to him and to his mission, the more I saw this thinker towering alone above people and events. His School stood out like a rock in a sea of ignorance and superstition. His thinking hung like a fine gold chain across a history filled with crime and misadventure. I was unable to learn much about his life apart from the period of time he spent at the court of Charles the Bald in France. Undoubtedly Lupelius was an unusual character, a philosopher and man of action unlike any other. He had no habits or routines. It was said that he could stay awake for inordinate amounts of time. In any case no one had ever seen him sleep. "Sleeping makes you weak, in your mind, and in your body," he said to his followers; and with his typical Irish humour, added, "Sleeping is just a bad habit."

One of his more peculiar customs was to wander around the markets in the most dangerous and disreputable parts of the cities of Europe. There, in the most apparently unfavourable conditions, he initiated his followers into new ways of thinking and feeling, overthrowing conventional and narrow minded views of the world. There, his shining madness transformed that world of cheats and criminals, of snares and ambushes, into a school of flawlessness. He used the cleverest tricks to eradicate their ingrained beliefs and erase the emotional slime from their minds.

His school forged remarkable men and invincible warriors. Lupelius made use of creative methods for teaching and purification which he himself would constantly invent. He would disguise himself as a slave, a vagabond, a politician, a banker or a wealthy merchant and he would use these roles strategically. Whether it was the crown of a king or the robe of a monk, Lupelius wore them and had his disciples wear them too, teaching them how to 'become' the character they were inhabiting, to explore and understand every detail and every secret, but without ever forgetting that it was a game and becoming trapped by it. He took them into the Souk where he involved them in wild intrigues with bandits and criminals. He encouraged them to enter the most deprived sectors of society, he pushed them to undertake the most desperate of voyages, almost beyond the point of no return. The Lupelians joined up as

mercenaries in absurd wars, revolutions and feuds in distant countries without even knowing the reasons for these conflicts.

They went into battle, not to defend the weak or the oppressed, not to support abstract principles or ideologies, nor to defeat external enemies or seek revenge but to become masters of themselves, the authors of their destiny.

Real warriors do not fight for supremacy or control over others. They do not fight for glory, nor for any possession or reward, but to gain the only thing which really matters : their own inner freedom.

The battlefields were for the Lupelians the most practical way to apply the principles and the ideas of the School – the real proof of their conscious transformation and understanding. Only he who had conquered an inner integrity could remain unharmed by any attack. The Lupelians' invulnerability sprang therefore from this flawless integrity – death, though near, could neither take hold nor enter.

Lupelius' teaching was a discipline of invulnerability founded upon the development of the will. His aim was to achieve freedom without limits. 'Free forever from all human conditions and natural limitations,' the Lupelians practiced the art of "self-mastery".

The supreme victory is to 'conquer oneself' and not permit any external event or condition to produce internal wounds, to tarnish one's being. Lupelius trained his disciples to maintain their serenity and calm under the most extreme conditions. He urged them to seek offence and encourage hostility in order to test their integrity. Even when crossing cities or regions afflicted by epidemics and contagious diseases, they would always emerge unscathed. "Incorruptibility and purity make a warrior invulnerable, impervious to attack from even the most feared of evils," he would say.

I tried to tackle the question of the difference between impassivity (apathea) advocated by the stoics, and the indifference of the soul towards passions and external thoughts championed by the mystic Lupelians. For Lupelius, impassivity was characterised by the recovery of integrity, by that unity of being which is a natural condition forgotten by man. From the vacuum that the soul creates in freeing itself from the ballast of external and carnal objects, without any illusion that there is anything outside of ourselves, is born a state of being that is a continuous, natural motion towards eternity, immortality, and infinity.

"All that we synthetically call 'world', the events and the circumstances of our life, are but our own projections. If we are aware, we can project only life, prosperity, victory and beauty. If we are alert and attentive we can project freedom, a world without limits, without constraints, without old age or sickness, or death".

The School of Lupelius had enchanted me. I studied it and loved it passionately. I felt as though I was breathing its air. It was in my daydreams. Those visionary men and women, student warriors, lone heroes of an ineffable spiritual battle, were extraordinary beings in my eyes, incomparable models of courage and determination. I secretly observed their shining madness and feverish quest in steadfast pursuit of the conquest of the self. I continued to search without respite and found persuasive evidence that many of the mercenary heroes of that time, in the turbulent years after Charlemagne that saw the slow dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, were his disciples in disguise. Without ever revealing their true identities,

those warrior monks were the legendary protagonists of unparalleled epic deeds often capable of turning a defeat into a glorious victory.

My research reached a deadlock. For weeks I was unable to add anything more to that small amount that I had already painstakingly gathered. I gave up hope of ever finding that legendary manuscript and, with it, the way back to the Dreamer.

However, one day, during one of my many sorties on the trail of this lost teaching, I came to hear of a vastly cultured Dominican father who would be able to help me with my research. He was, moreover, the author of an encyclopaedic work on the medieval history of the Church.

5 The Meeting with Father S.

I arrived a few minutes early for my appointment with the person who, after so much searching, had been recommended to me as one of the living fathers of the Christian doctrine.

Father S. lived in an ancient Carmelite convent. A tribe of tiny nuns, strict and protective, watched over his scholarly meditations and his contemplative old age. Two of these nuns ushered me into a small ante-chamber where I stood and waited.

From the half-open window I could see a corner of the delightful cloister. The green colour contained in the geometry of the arcades and the quality of the silence gave renewed intensity to the sensation I had experienced as I passed through the ancient gates; rather than just crossing the threshold of a convent, it seemed that I had crossed into another time. In an instant my mind flew back to the courtyard of the Collegio Bianchi, in the heart of Naples. The air rang with the sounds of footsteps, of shouting and children chasing each other under the arches; I could smell the food from the refectory and thousands of memories came flooding back to me of my childhood with the Barnabites.

Permission to enter was granted on time. I was sorry to leave that enchanted island and the small crowd of my schoolmates that had run to greet me. Their smiling faces faded and returned to their place among the neurons in the mysterious forest of the memory.

“Father S. is finishing a new volume of his immense work on medieval Christianity” said one of the miniature sister-guardians who escorted me. I guessed from the austerity of her tone that she was issuing a veiled warning to make sparing use of my host’s time and patience.

I went up a narrow spiral staircase made even more constricted by the walls of books surrounding it. Rather than going up steps I had the impression I was climbing a metaphor. Every detail of that symbolic interior seemed a warning to me.

I was about to meet one of the great thinkers of Christianity. This idea filled me with a reverential awe mixed with the slight pain experienced when touched by regret or a passing melancholy. This was the kind of life I had wanted for myself, dedicated to research and study. I felt a sudden resurgence of my old, blind faith in teachers and books.

The harsh and providential words of the Dreamer interrupted these thoughts *“There is nothing you can add to that which you already know... True knowledge cannot be acquired, it can only be ‘re-membered’”*.

I recognized my sickness: the propensity to depend on the world, and in particular, to idolise knowledge gained from books. Once again, I was making the external world into my god. Coming face to face with some fetish was enough for me to elect that man to be my leader, although I had never met him.

I imagined Father S. to be the epitome of a mankind trapped by intellectualism, a humanity that had stopped dreaming. The champion of a Christianity that has forgotten and has placed bookish men and intellectual pride at its summit. *“All the world’s books are contained in a single atom of the being – the Dreamer had said to me - They cannot add anything to your knowledge... books cannot lead you to life. Knowledge depends upon being...the more you are, the more you know!”*

A powerful, psalm-like voice reached me from above, as though it had broken through a breach that had opened up in the rows of books. *“Come in”* it said. The intonation resembled that of a liturgical passage. The invitation echoed very close to me as though giving me advance warning of the modest dimensions of the place I was about to enter.

As I climbed up the last steps, I felt my clenched being gather and compose itself like a warrior approaching a known danger. The words of the Dreamer broke in once again: *“Every man occupies a rung on the ladder of human intelligence and is an ineludible guardian to the higher levels.*

If you remain intact, every encounter will be an opportunity, a rung to step on and go beyond. If you forget, you will find yourself trapped in an external, virtual game which will throw you back into the infernal disorder of your life.”

Father S. was a portal of existence. This was who I was really about to meet: a guardian examiner, a very strict judge who would infallibly assign me the post I deserved on the ladder of being.

The large head of an old man, bald and clean shaven, emerged from behind the waves of books that covered the table. He scrutinised me for a long time.

His dark eyes appeared so extraordinarily young to me that I had the impression they were not his own but had been borrowed and placed in the face of an old man. It seemed as if, by some extraordinary circumstance, those eyes had found some way to avoid the ageing process, leaving all the rest to its biological destiny. He must have realised that I had noticed this. Slowly, he lowered his eyes. He sheathed his eyes like a tortoise. When he opened them again, his gaze was that of an old man.

This impression was reinforced by another contrast; the ceremonial expression of someone who welcomes a guest with the stern frown of a master. This ambivalence was the constant background of our encounter, as if to remind me of the distance that separated us.

His tone of voice, his clothes, and his gestures were setting the rules for our meeting. Father S. apparently wanted to establish the purpose of our encounter as soon as possible and the limits within which it would take place.

I shook hands with him. I felt the same energy I had seen in his gaze. Father S. was studying me. His smile barely concealing the fact that he was gathering and evaluating information so as to classify me. His visitor was not an academic animal but looked more like a young businessman. The type of man that Father S. probably did not encounter frequently.

“The only thing I know about you is that you are interested in moral philosophy and that you come from an American university...from New York...if I’m not mistaken,” he said, pronouncing the word ‘only’ with an almost reproachful tone, revealing his nature and professorial attitude.

“I specialise in Business Ethics” I corrected him courteously, as I handed him a copy of the letter Fordham University had sent a few days earlier. That document confirmed that I was a researcher, a scholar of business ethics. It was the letter of introduction that I had used to set up this meeting. I felt perfectly at ease in this role. I remained silent. I preferred not to give him any more information about me for the moment and leave him on the edge of that feeling of slight unease, caught between curiosity and unfamiliarity. I didn’t want to make his task too easy.

As he read, I noticed an expression of growing interest on his face. He gave a visible start as he read about the studies I was pursuing on Lupelius and my hope that our encounter would help to further my research. With great self-control he contained his emotions at this discovery and only allowed himself to express mild surprise at my choice of topic – such an extraordinary school of thought, so far from the familiar scientific themes.

I did not tell him anything about the Dreamer and I justified my interest in Lupelius by talking about the importance his ideas might have on modern business theory and for the training of a new generation of leaders. I told him about the high expectations I had of that branch of studies, which advocated the application to the world of business of the educational methods, the value systems and the philosophical principles that belonged to the ancient Schools of being. What I had found of particular interest were the teachings of Lupelius and his research into invulnerability and invincibility, because of the relevance that these qualities could have today to the challenges of modern economics, no less difficult or fatal than military ones. His research and experiments on immortality conducted in his School could be extended to modern enterprises.

For a long time, students of economics had been helpless in the face of an alarming phenomenon of planetary dimensions. “Companies die young. Companies all over the world have too short a life cycle, just a handful of years – I told him - Even the giants of finance and the economy, the largest multinationals on the planet, struggle to survive for more than forty years.” Drawing on the Dreamer’s teachings, I passed off as mine the idea that a durable company is born from a durable founder and that an immortal company can only be born from the dream of an immortal being. Once, while talking to me about the polarity of love/fear, the Dreamer had revealed that the true meaning of love *amore* could be found in the etymology of the Latin word, ‘a-mors’, which means the absence of death. Not by chance, the name ‘Roma’, the eternal city, is the anagram of a-mor. Its destiny to be immortal was codified in its roots and sealed into the name given to it by its founder. I cited Rome, which

had recently celebrated 2,800 years of uninterrupted life, as an example of a long-established enterprise that could not be explained without reference to its founder and his qualities as an immortal being. (Romulus was deified and worshipped as the god Quirino). I gave Father S. other examples of extreme longevity in business, from the thousand year old House of Windsor to the largest multinational on the planet, the Catholic Church itself. Again drawing on the teachings of the Dreamer, I maintained that a rich economy was always the expression of immortal thinking.

Vision and reality are one.

Just a fragment of eternity is enough to broaden a country's vision, to expand the horizons of its economy. The concept of immortality is sufficient to raise the financial destiny of individuals, organizations and entire nations.

This was the direction my research was taking. I claimed that these discoveries would soon change the way business was done and would revolutionise teaching and scientific research in all universities of economics.

The interest of Father S. grew visibly as I spoke of economic theory related to immortality and of the little I knew of Lupelius' philosophy. The global economy stood out against the backdrop of an immense battlefield where every day entire nations, companies as large as huge regiments, confronted each other to establish the new economic frontiers to their advantage. Only one victor emerges from these conflicts. All the others, that are defeated, are chained to his cart and condemned to slavery. To survive, they have to adopt the habits of their new owner and learn his language. They have to serve him. Encouraged to continue by a gesture from my host, I carried on telling him everything I had discovered about the mysterious monk-philosopher. I did not conceal the fascination I had for Lupelius and his extraordinary teachings. I quickly reached the point where my research had come to a standstill. I also told him about my efforts, thus far entirely fruitless, to find the manuscript entitled the 'School for Gods' and the mysterious disappearance of every single copy. I didn't hide my astonishment at what seemed to be a deliberate attempt to sweep away all trace of Lupelius' work and of his School for immortal beings.

6 The doctrine of Lupelius

Father S. listened to me intently, his head bowed on his chest. When he raised his head he was glowing. Once again I saw those extraordinarily young eyes which had so impressed me when I first came face to face with him. This time he made no attempt to hide them but continued to fix me with his gaze. His face took on the expression of someone expecting to be recognised.

I did not retreat from the game and concentrated on his gesture. The solution to the riddle came suddenly and was as dazzling as a flash of lightning tearing through a dark sky. I felt dizzy. That man disguised himself as an old man...but yes...he used his apparent age as a

mask...a strategic mask...Father S. was a fake old man. My heart leapt in my chest. Father S. was...a Lupelian. I was certain. I could hardly contain my emotion at this discovery...I felt subtle pleasure at the complicity that was being established between us...A ten centuries-long cord linked us to that race of warriors who knew how to live strategically and understood the art of disguise. His chameleon-like talent had allowed him to live among the folds of his order, hidden in the bosom of Christianity. A tunnel had opened in time and more than a thousand years had been compressed into an instant to lead me to the doors of the School. Before me was perhaps the last of its immortal custodians. A question pounded at my temples, pulsating with my arteries. Did Father S. know the Dreamer? ...I was tempted to tell him about my encounter with the 'dream' and the extraordinary adventure that I was experiencing in those days.

"Lupelius is the prophet of physical immortality, the birth right of every man – revealed Father S., interrupting my feverish thoughts and dropping his initial reserve – A right that we have relinquished and which we must reclaim." Then, as if he were taking cues from an invisible book, rather than quoting, with his eyes closed he read the following words: "The body is the spirit made flesh. If the spirit is immortal, so then is the body."

The joy he felt as he remembered the School and listened once again to the words which he himself seemed not to have heard for years, was evident. He told me that Lupelius had been banished from Christianity for his ideas and that it was a miracle that he had avoided being burned at the stake. The worst threat posed by Lupelius was his faith in the immense power of the individual and in the final victory of life over death. For the Catholic Church, and for all religious institutions aimed at the masses, there could not have been a more dangerous philosophy: the 'revolution of the being', the rebellion to which every man is called to overturn his fragility, his mortal destiny. A struggle against demons, dragons and inner chimeras, against psychological monsters and giants which men have called doubt, fear and pain, which for Lupelius were the true cause of every evil, of every misfortune.

It was not surprising that such subversive ideas should have resulted in persecution and attempts against his life. In effect, every trace of Lupelius and of his work had disappeared. Now this seemed to me to be the effect of a deliberate strategy on the part of Lupelius himself rather than the result of implacable hostility towards him.

To be accepted by his School meant to be put to the most severe test and living with him required being able to withstand great effort for long periods of time. Lupelius wanted his followers to have direct experience of physical immortality and of invulnerability, by experiencing how it was possible to survive the gravest of dangers unharmed. In effect, having left with his blessing, not one of his men ever returned even slightly grazed.

I asked to what he attributed such an extraordinary thing.

"A man's shield is his purity, his love of life and for his Master" said Father S., his eyes half closed. Rather than reflecting on how to respond, it seemed to me that he was remembering "For Lupelius, purity is the fundamental quality of a man, and the way to achieve physical immortality: the supreme asymptote of the human parabola". He paused for what seemed to me an extremely long time. I had noticed that whenever he referred to Lupelius Father S.

always used the present tense, as though he were speaking about a contemporary...or about someone who had never died. In the conversation which followed he led me by the hand into the extraordinary world of those few men and women who were ready to do anything to push themselves beyond the unviolated boundaries, the Pillars of Hercules of the common description of the world. "In the school of Lupelius every effort is made to free the mind from the belief that death is inevitable and invincible – said Father S. –everything forms part of a strategy of purification intended to conquer within oneself that mysterious desire to die which in the common man takes so many forms: it imbues his psychology until it becomes second nature and an inevitable part of his life."

The belief that death is invincible is unhealthy for humans. Your longevity is determined by your mental state, by your life urge.

"Your longevity is determined by your mind – asserted Father S., summarising Lupelius' thinking for my benefit – This means that if you die, you are the only one responsible!"

A tiny nun quietly came in, carrying all that was necessary to serve us tea. From the looks of astonishment which she would furtively cast in my direction while transferring the cups and teapot onto the table and pouring the steaming tea, I realised how rare it must have been for Father S. to spend this much time with a visitor. My host remained silent throughout this entire operation. Only when the nun had left did he resume his point, explaining to me how the Lupelians knew that to question the inevitability of death, even only ironically, would weaken its power.

"For his assertion that immortality is the right of every man, for his struggle to denounce death as the most horrible and unjust of all human prejudices – announced Father S. with an epigraphic tone – Lupelius will be remembered as the most important mystic of physical immortality."

He continued, claiming that Lupelius' thinking was connected to that physical, bodily religion which was the original Christianity and had become its epigone, at the same time a herald of spiritual materialism and of its message of the indestructibility of the body.

"Lying, hiding, complaining, and evading responsibilities are the psychological stigmata, the indelible marks of a man who has fallen into immorality, into fragmentation; of a man who has forgotten the reason for his existence – said Father S. in a conclusive tone – Once man has abdicated his birthright to immortality and forgotten his integrity, he 'invents' death to put an end to his misery. Man prefers to die rather than take on the immense task of conquering himself and his incompleteness... In any case, death is not an answer. A man always starts again from wherever he has left off." Lupelius created the School for Gods, a school of responsibility, to show the fragmented man, the way back towards simplicity, integrity, and his buried will.

7 "Offer a cock to Asclepius"

Through the fragments I had been able to gather of the lost works of Lupelius, and backed up by the words of Father S., I recognised the Dreamer's inspiration ever more clearly and could hear His voice. It was louder and more ancient than that of Lupelius. I thought of him with gratitude.

Father S. was now reading some phrases to me from a little book which he handled with reverence and which he evidently always carried with him. His voice trembled with emotion. His impassioned tone gradually became more intense as some of the more scandalous of Lupelius' beliefs came to light from this treatise, truths which were unacceptable to any rational mind or canon law. As I listened and wrote these down in my notebook, I felt the impact of their unsustainable difference and their striking contrast with the most deeply-rooted, universally accepted beliefs.

"Old age, sickness and death are insults to human dignity, the pillars which for thousands of years have supported an illusory description of the world".

Evil is at the service of good. Always!...Everything comes to heal us...even physical death is actually healing. The last chance!"

This statement, Lupelius' unbearable paradox, set off a secret mechanism. My mind returned to the words pronounced by Socrates as the hemlock was about to reach his heart and stop it beating forever. Their meaning exploded within me with an intolerable brilliance. It lasted only the blink of an eye and then disappeared but it was enough for me to grasp. For over two and a half thousand years the meaning of Socrates' last wish had been an unfathomable mystery. Surrounded by his closest acolytes, Socrates swallowed the hemlock and the paralysing effect of the poison was proceeding from his legs rapidly towards his heart. He had only a few seconds left to live. In that supreme moment he uttered the following words: "We are debtors owing a cock to Asclepius: give one to him and don't forget."

How could Socrates ask his friend Criton to offer a rooster to the god of healing when his life was slipping through his fingers and death was by then inevitable?

For twenty-five centuries these words have represented a riddle for generations of sages, learned men and exegetes.

Lupelius' philosophical statements had ripped open an impenetrable curtain and now, from the depths of time, the meaning of that message and its enormity was finally emerging. Like a castaway putting his message in a bottle to save it and pass it on, Socrates had entrusted his understanding to the ocean of time so that it would eventually reach us. Sealed in his last words is the fruit of his tireless search: even death is healing...it is the ultimate medicine! It comes when all else fails.

As a consequence of the extraordinary circumstances of his death, Socrates reaches a state of inner unity never previously achieved, a height of integrity that allowed him access to the greatest of all secrets: why mankind still has to die and how one day this would no longer be necessary. Behind Socrates' last words towers the dream of a future mankind which would be healed and made whole and would never again need that extreme act of purification.

“Death is the last resort to which existence turns when every other attempt to heal and to become whole has failed –the Dreamer would one day tell me – Socrates used death to understand!

In the supreme moment he discovered that it was just one step on the road to healing, another step on the ladder of wholeness.

And this was the last, and greatest, of Socrates’ teachings.”

Socrates was the epitome of a mankind still caught between two visions. He was a researcher, an explorer. He was not able to overcome death but at least he used it to understand. He showed the way.

8 It is forbidden to kill your inner self

“Wholeness of being is only the beginning for a mankind that has chosen to live forever – summed up Father S. – Like attracts like. Death attracts death and cannot affect anyone who is connected to life.” Armed with their wholeness, the Lupelians would return unharmed from their most audacious exploits. No instrument of war seemed able to touch them, as if connection with death had been erased forever. Without proselytising, and without advocating any philosophy, Lupelius’ warrior-monks knew how to rise up, and knew how to make men and events rise up around them, to a higher level of being. They had won before they had even started to fight. Winning meant conquering themselves, overcoming their doubts, fears and ignorance. External victory was only a sign of their internal victory. Thus, by taking care of their own being, by ensuring their own flawlessness and making themselves impervious to evil, they would meet impossible challenges and carry out astonishing feats.

“The first cause of death is precisely our separation from God, the fact that we have expelled the divine and transferred it outside of ourselves – said Father S., taking a piece of paper out of a drawer and making a note on it. Then he went on– Lupelius says: You can hate God because you’re sick, because you are suffering or because you’re poor, but I can assure you, the reason for your illness, suffering or poverty is your separation from God.”

“Men have forgotten this and they have transformed the planet into a world of death. They have made death into their reason for living. Every thought they have and every action they take is dedicated to it.”

“Love and serve” is the motto...To serve mankind one must love...and before anything else, one must love one’s self and one’s own life...”

At this point Father S. lowered his voice. I guessed he was about to confide in me the most secret of teachings, the most unacceptable teachings of the School.

“Lupelius would remind his followers” – he said, pausing for a few interminable moments. His lips were trembling as he prepared to quote his master’s words – “You are gods who have forgotten...you are gods in a state of amnesia.”

“Even orders centuries old can forget” and the eyes of the old man became moist at the thought of the warrior spirit who had inspired him to become a monk – and forgetfulness weakens the warrior in every man – Once we Dominicans were vegetarians, we ate just once a day; we cultivated the body and the spirit as one entity...The message of Christ and our Mission was very clear to us: the victory of life over physical death.”

Only unceasing work on himself allows a man to overcome death.

I detected in his voice a nostalgia for the discipline of times past, for the memory of the buried brilliance of the School. I admired him and was happy. I did not think that men like Father S. could still to be found in the bosom of the Christian faith, crusaders dedicated to the holiest of wars: the putting to death of death.

“Schools and churches, religious orders and government institutions stopped training responsible individuals years ago. Today they only produce polluted minds and bodies” said Father S.

He finished covering the page before him with crabbed handwriting. Then he folded it several times and handed it to me without saying a word. Symbolically this gesture seemed to me like the passing of the baton in a never-ending relay across the centuries. He was entrusting me with a piece of the race that mankind had been running for centuries, in search of an escape route from its prison.

When we parted at the door of his tiny study he gave me a smile and winked, infecting me with that joyful and inviolable complicity that I had only ever found amongst the little warriors, the bright Neapolitan street urchins of my neighbourhood. I asked him to tell me which of Lupelius’ commandments best represented the sum of his research, the secret formula for defeating physical death.

“It is forbidden to kill your inner self!” – said Father S. without hesitation –It is the thousand psychological deaths that undermine us every day that lead to physical death...Believing death to be invincible is what kills us. The belief in its inevitability is the true killer.”

9 The School for Gods

I had climbed the steep slopes of the plateau as far as the peak of its imposing volcanoes. Through the clear, dry air, across the vast expanse, my eyes swept over the vegetation of the steppes, a landscape without trees. Once I reached Everan, I left the statue of Mashtots behind me and crossed the square towards a bunker-like structure of grey basalt which was at the top of a bare hill. I was in the heart of Armenia. I had arrived here faithfully following Father S.’s instructions and I was now heading towards a severe looking building which housed the ancient library. Here, in thousands of books, was stored the memory of a people who had lived for centuries on the verge of extinction. Here, where copyists and translators were venerated like saints, from the second half of the fifth century until the present day, thousands of classical, Christian but also pagan works had been conserved or copied. Seminal texts and masterpieces now considered lost forever had been saved by being faithfully

translated into classical Armenian. Everan was my last hope of finding Lupelius' manuscript, or at least a copy of it.

I spent many days questioning the archivists and exploring entire sections of the library in great detail. I walked down endless corridors with walls lined with books and dusty folders, like an archaeologist in a buried city. Two young librarians were assisting me in my search. They had been assigned to me by the curator but I am not sure whether they were there to help me or to watch over me. With them I went into labyrinths of papers, I examined parchments and yellowed rolls of sheepskin, bringing them out into the light for the first time in centuries. Whenever I thought I had identified something promising I would select the volumes or the rolls and the two young scholars would take them off the shelves and open them for me. They never touched those precious relics with their bare hands but only with a preciously embroidered cloth, following an almost sacred ritual.

One day, in the catalogue of the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, I discovered that an original copy of a volume without title was conserved under register number 7722. Having been ransomed for its weight in gold from the hands of the Seljukians in 1204, it had been kept and protected in a monastery perched in the craggy, snowy peaks overlooking the Black Sea. By the end of the eighteenth century it was part of the collection of spiritual and ascetic-mystic texts belonging to Paisij Velichovskij who had a Slavonic version printed in Moscow. After many vicissitudes it was again miraculously saved from destruction at the hands of the Turks and brought to Everan in 1915. I felt the heart beats in my chest become as strong as a hammer when rolls of parchment densely covered with the author's handwriting emerged from the safe. I immediately knew that it was Lupelius' work. I only needed to read a few lines to be sure of it. I could hardly contain my joy as I avidly explored its content.

The language of Lupelius revealed itself to be a mixture of vernacular English and Latin, a kind of European Esperanto of striking inventiveness. These words had the power to cancel time and to transmit intact, after more than a thousand years, the precious energy that had inspired generations of warrior-monks.

During my stay in Everan, I made friends with a couple of Welsh scholars. The man was a historian and his wife a Latinist. It was to them, in the small lounge of the inn where we were staying, that I revealed my discovery that evening. We talked about it excitedly for most of the night. Their help would turn out to be providential. Only the Dreamer could have arranged such an extraordinary 'coincidence'.

The one thing of many which seemed most surprising to these researchers was not the way in which I had tracked down the book so much as the fact that I knew its original title. A title which had been lost for centuries and that no-one knew. With their help I immediately started to transcribe some passages and began work on the translation. We studied the manuscript together for weeks. The more I read, the closer I felt to Lupelius' philosophy and the more I felt a passion grow for that forgotten teaching.

The interpretation of one of the passages, the exegesis of a symbol, made me cross the sacred threshold of that school of men and women, indefatigable seekers in the quest for immortality. I commissioned expert copyists to produce a faithful reproduction of 'The

School for Gods'. The result was a genuine masterpiece: a fine leather bound edition with pages of vegetable parchment identical in every detail to Lupelius' original work. I kept that copy with me at all times. At night I kept the book under my pillow as Alexander used to do with the Iliad. It was a present for the Dreamer and I could not wait for the time to come when I would be able to give it to him. I knew that day by day, every small advance I made in my understanding of His principles brought me closer to Him. I was often overcome by uncontrollable enthusiasm which sometimes culminated in moments of real ecstasy at the thought of the wonderful outcome of my enterprise, at the limits of the impossible. I had 'miraculously' found Father S., I had found the original manuscript of 'The School for Gods' and I had met two students who, with boundless devotion, were working on the translation. I had no doubt that I would soon find the Dreamer again. For the moment, nothing existed for me other than immersing myself in the manuscript, delving into King Solomon's mines every day, going down those venerable tunnels and ceaselessly digging to extract 'precious matter'.

In order to choose life, we must choose the thought that death is not invincible. And so, we must find the principles of aliveness, longevity, and eternity in our being.

This and other rules which I learned from Lupelius' manuscript would one day become the cornerstones of all my future activities and the fundamental principles of many enterprises in the world of international business.

An enterprise is only as vital, rich and long lasting, as the ideas and principles of its founder.

For Lupelius the real inequality between men, the root from which every other visible difference arises, is that they belong to different levels of inner responsibility. Differences in the quality of thought places men vertically on different levels of the ladder of being. There exists an inner hierarchy that no war or revolution can ever erase because the true difference between men does not depend on wealth, creed or race. It is a difference in states of being. It is a psychological, vertical, evolutionary difference of rank. For this reason, it can only be overcome by a radical change in the way a man thinks and feels.

A real improvement implies a change of being. A real improvement means evolution or growth towards unity of being which is the result of a new way of thinking and the abandonment of the old, mortal mentality...Only a change of being can raise a man to a higher level of freedom, understanding and happiness.

10 Mea Culpa

For Lupelius the Earth was a cosmic penitentiary, a prison as vast as the planet itself, where men lived like convicts on death row. Instead of drawing from this vision the conclusion that defeat was final and irremediable, his brilliant madness devised the most audacious plan. Lupelius dreamt up an adventure for man which took him beyond the boundaries of the possible: an escape from the laws that govern the planet, a flight from his apparently inexorable mortal destiny. Man could break through the confines he himself had established, he could defy nature and cross over those limits which, like the Pillars of Hercules, he dared not go beyond even in his imagination. Lupelius gathered around himself a few brave men and prepared a detailed plan of escape.

You always encounter the same events because nothing changes in you! Like attracts like. A particle of paradise moves towards paradise, a particle of hell towards hell.

According to Lupelius' philosophy our states of being attract the events that correspond to them, and events cause us to return to those same states. Only the will can stop this endless circle, this never-ending mechanical game and break the hypnotic cycle in which man's existence is circumscribed. *Thought is creative. Thought creates.* Events are the materialisation of our thoughts, of our states of being. Therefore, states and events are the same thing. States are produced in the being of every man and events manifest themselves in his life, over time, and seem to originate independently of his will. In reality we are the ones who have intensely invoked them and unconsciously created them.

Whether positive or negative, a man's thoughts are always creative and unfailingly find a way to materialise.

Our thoughts, like hand-written invitations, sent and then forgotten, attract events that correspond to them. In due course, when we are no longer even thinking about them, circumstances, meetings, events, problems and accidents, downfalls and failures, knock at our door, unwelcome guests with a secret and longstanding invitation nevertheless. Only neglect of our states, which are the true cause of such events, makes them appear to be sudden and unexpected.

Anything sudden always requires a lot of preparation.

No external event can happen to a man without his consent, albeit unconscious. Nothing can happen to him without it first going through the filter of his psychology.

Therefore thinking is a very powerful process.

What we then call facts, events, experiences and all manner of occurrences in one's life are states of being which are already marching towards those who are in tune with them. States are events just waiting for the right occasion to happen.

The quality of our emotions, the breadth of our thoughts and the states of mind that we experience this very instant will decide what will become visibly manifest and the nature of the events that will materialise in our lives.

Thinking is destiny

The higher our thoughts, the greater our life

The fundamental tenet of Lupelius' philosophy is that inner states and events are two aspects of a single reality. This does away with any distinction between an external and an internal world, thereby making it possible for every man to guide his own destiny, through knowledge of his own inner states and self-mastery.

Existence is our own invention and as such depends on us alone.

Guided by Lupelius, I was discovering for the first time the vertiginous power, the 'concreteness of doing', which lay hidden in the Christian *mea culpa*. For thousands of years, as though locked in a treasure chest, the very epitome of human intelligence had been conserved in these two Latin words. *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*. Only now did I recognise this as the most concise and potent expression of the idea of responsibility. *Mea culpa*. This formula, capable of harnessing the universe, from the hierarchy of the planets to the movements of the atoms, holds the secret of boundless energy.

Modifying states of being can transform the events that happen to you. This is how a man, by studying himself and changing his way of thinking and feeling, can transform his horizontal, temporal existence.

Existence on Earth is our great School. A School of life which in the eyes of ordinary men appears to be a prison.

We need to learn how to overturn our vision. Whatever men normally perceive as difficulty and misfortune, whatever they curse and try to avoid at all costs, is actually the most valuable material which can enable them to transform their psychology of death into a psychology of life.

Life through this world is a School for Gods.

Confusion, doubts, chaos, crisis, anger, despair and pain are all excellent conditions for growth.



11 States and events 1

A man's being is made of states and his life of events. Our existence therefore runs along two parallel tracks: the events which are the sequence of circumstances that come towards us during our life on the conveyor belt of time and space, and our states which are the impulses of our spirit, our moods, the emotions which arise within us in a mostly unconscious way. A

man's personal history is therefore made of events, horizontally, and of states, vertically. However, people usually think about their life and talk about it as if it were only made up of external events. In reality, the type of events which occur, and consequently the quality of a person's external life, depends upon the quality of thought and on the states of being. Life is thus made of events but even more of states. We all believe, for example, when we go to a conference or to the theatre, that we are the ones to choose our seat; we are all sure that this morning we chose what we were going to wear. In reality, the choice of seat and clothes was not made by 'us' but by our states of being.

Everyone has a suit, a shirt, or some other item of clothing in their wardrobe which for some reason they never feel like wearing. However they do not throw that garment away because they know that, sooner or later, they will find themselves in a state of mind, a mood, a level of being, which will be in tune with it. When we 'feel' that way, we 'choose' that garment.

The relationship between states and events, inner circumstances and outer events, the mysterious relationship between a man's psychology and the things that happen to him, are at the core of the question of free will and the age-old enigma of whether destiny is determined by chance or necessity. Around this enigma, over the ages, men have accumulated the knowledge of a great science that today is unknown.

The ancient Greeks maintained that there was a causal relationship between inner states and external events. This archaic civilization firmly believed that a man's destiny was the projection of his inner world, of his being. They founded a science and an art on this conviction that for them had the highest value. In the pre-Homeric age, a wise man was not someone who was rich in experience or who had great knowledge but someone who could show what was unknown, who could predict the future. For the Greeks, shedding light on darkness, defining the uncertain, was true knowledge and also an art. Other civilizations also exalted divination but no other people elevated it to the point of becoming the central tenet of their lives. All over the Hellenic world sanctuaries sprang up dedicated to the cult of Apollo to whom, more than to Dionysus, was attributed the dominion of knowledge. This was understood as the knowledge of human destiny and its manifestation and communication. This Greek vocation and the art of predicting the future found its greatest expression in Delphi. This is why the god of Delphi was a unifying image for that civilization and a symbol of Greece itself.

The pilgrim who often travelled great distances and faced grave dangers to ask the god about his future would find the Delphic inscription 'Know Thyself' engraved on the tympanum of the temple - as if to say, 'Do you want to know your future? Then know yourself!' In this apparently mocking paradox the Greeks set out the solution to the oldest riddle of humanity, the secret of all secrets, the answer to the age-old question concerning the existence of free will. A question that led all the philosophers in the world to ponder feverishly whether to follow a fatalistic view of a predetermined and inevitable future or the belief in the *homo faber*, man as maker of his own destiny. Sculpting this Delphic motto onto the very temple dedicated to the most sacred art and the greatest of sciences, divination, the

Greeks revealed the secret relationship between the inner and the outer world, between states and events. They entrusted this discovery to the ocean of time, like a message in a bottle, so that it would reach us. The man who knows himself, his own being, the container of his thoughts, ideas, and attitudes, also knows his own future, because whatever we think is connected to the world; our psychology is our destiny. *Thinking is Destiny*. Apollo is the symbol of the world as a mirror of man's inner self. The world is our reflection.

Classical tradition tells us that Homer was a blind prophet and this is yet another message that has come down to us from that age of wise men that came to an end with the death of Socrates, the last of the sages. The blindness attributed to the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey, the two great bibles of the ancient world, is emblematic of the attention paid by the Greeks to psychology, to self knowledge and states of being. Looking inside oneself is the key to knowing the world, the road to understanding it and foreseeing its events. Noticing how some men were capable of exceptional deeds and of undertaking enterprises well beyond ordinary limits, and observing how they seemed to enjoy some special protection, even in the most dangerous circumstances, and how their lives seemed to be at the centre of extraordinary events, the ancient Greeks recognised that these men had a special nature, a luminosity of being and inner qualities that were almost divine. They therefore concluded that there existed two species of men: heroes and semi-gods, on the one hand, common men on the other.

In the age of Homer only semi-gods and heroes, thanks to their extraordinary deeds, could gain the right to an individual destiny. Their unique and original lives were not ruled by any divinity and were free from chance and the quirk of events. All other men were condemned to a repetitive existence. They were ruled by the laws of Accident and Chance and their lives, whether short or long, as well as their actions, were without purpose and destined to leave no trace.

For Lupelius the difference between these two kinds of human beings, and between men in general, was that they belong to different levels on the ladder of being.

Wherever they meet, for a few moments or for years, men inevitably form a pyramid, arranging themselves on the different levels of an invisible ladder, according to an inner, mathematical order, like planetary hierarchies organised according to their brightness, mass, orbits and distance from their sun.

We may not be aware of it, but our destiny, the quality of our lives and the events which affect us, must respect this hierarchy.

Understanding how everything emanates from the being and that the individual destiny of men, like that of an entire society, is nothing but a projection of the being, the classical Greeks used every possible means, from religion to politics, from science to philosophy, art and even war, to raise the spirit. The wonderful architecture of cities like Athens and works of art like the masterpieces of Phidias, displayed in public squares, were machines that transmitted

messages of beauty, pride and harmony to the being so as to elevate it. Only the Ancient Greeks had a word for poetry (poiesis) in which we can unearth the secret, sealed within its etymology, of doing through being; and all Greek theatre had a therapeutic, cathartic function for society to purify audiences and free their souls from burden. For the Greeks the ultimate aim of the tragedy was the purification of the passions to achieve, through this, the elevation of the being.

12 States and events 2

Many times, as I reflected on the significance of this information and on everything I was learning about states and events, I considered how absurd it was that we should spend a quarter of our lives at school and university and let our entire life slip away without knowing anything about “being” and the power our states of mind have in determining the events and circumstances of our lives.

The first education we receive does not provide us with any sense of the distinction between what is external and what is internal, nor does it prepare us to manage our thoughts or be aware of our emotions. Without any deliberate intent, ordinary culture has relegated emotions, feelings and thoughts to the ephemeral and intangible sphere of myths, fables and dreams, considering them to be separate phenomena and extremely far from what is commonly called ‘reality’.

Following the path of classical civilization, discovering its mythology - more useful and reliable than history in every respect - and studying Lupelius’ manuscript, I made the thrilling discovery that in reality, between states and events there is no relationship of former and latter or of cause and effect, but only of total identification. States and events are two sides of the same reality placed on different levels of existence. They are the two ends of the same stick positioned vertically. What prevents us from seeing that states and events are the same thing is that they are separated by the factor of time which acts as a sort of shock absorber. Between our inner states and the occurrence of the corresponding external events there is a lapse of time and, like a smoke screen, it prevents us from recognising that events are nothing but the materialisation of our inner states in time-space. Thoughts, emotions, feelings and all our states are like invitations which we are constantly sending out and, even though we may forget about them, they never fail to attract the corresponding events. To be more precise, they are already events. It is only a question of time before they happen. It may take more or less time before they occur, in one place or another, but they invariably reach us.

A man’s emotional states are in reality events seeking an opportunity to happen and become visible.

Time distances states from events and masks their biuniqueness. Time paints its sepia over the events which hide and lurk behind the screen, taking us by surprise when we have forgotten, or never even realised, that our states alone were responsible for them.

Nothing happens suddenly.

What we perceive as unexpected always needs extensive preparation. There is nothing that a man could possibly encounter, no event that could possibly happen to him without first having, knowingly or unknowingly, journeyed through his being or psychology. The world is connected to our emotions, passions and thoughts. They are the drive belt between the inner and outer world. By managing our emotions and thoughts, along with everything that we feel and experience in a specific moment, that is by mastering our states, we can take over the helm of our existence and set the direction of our destiny. This is where the Roman concept of fortune and of *homo faber* had its roots, in contrast to the Greek and Middle Eastern vision which represents Fortune as a blindfolded goddess distributing events at random and directing them according to her whim.

It is commonly believed that external events condition our attitudes and determine our moods. Something happens, we meet someone or receive some news, and we believe that the psychological state we experience - irritation, anxiety or surprise - is a result or a consequence of that event, meeting or news. In the same way as, until the invention of photography, it was impossible to determine the exact sequence of the hooves of a galloping horse as these movements were faster than the eye could follow, so thoughts, emotions, perceptions and feelings travel like electronic flashes through the mysterious forest of our neurons at speeds close to that of light, making it seem impossible to establish the exact temporal sequence in relation to external events. Something happens and we believe the psychological state we feel to be the result of that event. So we justify our state of being by reference to that external event while in fact exactly the opposite has taken place. In reality, it is our states of being which announce and determine the external events of our lives. Our negative emotions in time metamorphose into the adversity of which we then complain. To encounter a certain kind of event, be it good or bad, I first have to create the conditions within myself which will create such an event.

Man's biggest illusion is to believe he can change external conditions and change the world. We can only change ourselves, work on our own attitudes, modify our reactions and not express the negative emotions we feel.

The universe is perfect the way it is. The only one who must change is you!

We are convinced that a man's energy and good will count for very little compared to the events that happen to him in life, which appear to be largely fortuitous and inevitable. The torrent of events that continuously submerge us is too varied and confused to be foreseeable and much too powerful for us to imagine that we might go so far as to direct it.

According to Lupelius we need to 'see' that our own self always lurks behind events and states. No solution is possible unless we first change ourselves.

He who is able intentionally to achieve the slightest elevation in the level of being can move mountains and projects himself as a giant in the external world. By acting on our inner states, on the quality of our thoughts, on the way we feel and on negative emotions - starving some and nourishing others - we will not only change our attitudes and consequently also our relationship with the events which confront us in the external world, that is to say how we

react to them, but also the very nature of the events that happen day after day. Our first task must be self observation, observing our thoughts and our states of being. A careful study of ourselves which includes our thoughts, our emotions, our attitudes, our reactions and the way in which we 'take' events, would allow us to discover that man thinks and feels negatively.

It is only on the surface that man appears to wish for himself wealth, health and good fortune. If he could observe himself and know his inner self, he would hear within himself an almost constant chant of negativity, like a prayer of misfortune composed of worries, sick images and the expectation of terrible events, both probable and improbable.

How can we act upon inner states of being, on our own moods, emotions and ways of thinking? Just think how difficult it is to lift oneself out of a bad mood. The physical energy that could move a mountain is not enough to lighten a thought let alone an emotion. The force needed to redirect a thought or to gain control of an emotion is produced at a higher level. In order to accumulate this special energy it is necessary to eliminate all the possible flaws in the system, the thousand weak points through which, like a colander, we lose energy and which consist mostly of negative emotions and wrong mindsets. If an event happens in the external world and I do not connect it to the states of my being that created it, I will have missed an important opportunity.

If one observes carefully, many of the events in our lives repeat themselves and it is possible to try to gain a better understanding of their nature by looking at the way they correspond to particular states of being. For instance, take the cluster of thoughts we might call 'being late'. 'Being late' triggers a feeling of anxiety in me. Intelligence involves knowing that these external conditions correspond to an internal condition that has not yet arisen. There is a part of my being which connects me to those events. There is no other way to eliminate them from my life other than by modifying this inner condition that I call anxiety, fear and worry, but which in reality is nothing more than a sickness of the being – an inner fault.

In one way or another, that kind of event will repeat itself in my life for as long as I harbour within me the psychological states which produce it. Those events are actually the signs which indicate that a recovery is taking place, if we have the power to connect them to the states which gave rise to them. 'Seeing them', paying attention to our own psychological states, means pointing the arrow at ourselves, reversing the process and going back from the event to the state which produced it. This is where we can access understanding and the concrete possibility of transforming our own lives.

Making excuses, justifying oneself, blaming an external event and not recognising that the cause lies in the shortcomings of our own being, of our inner states and ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, means that we have not understood. Not understanding means that in some way the event will have to repeat itself over and over again. The circumstances may change, the events will present themselves in different guises and we will continue to blame external circumstances and in doing so miss the opportunity to free ourselves from them for ever.

Take the blame for everything, accept responsibility for everything that happens to you. The secret of secrets is Mea Culpa.

I reflected upon the fact that entire nations live in states of being which attract corresponding events. For example, in the United States, it has taken tens, even hundreds of years for racial prejudice or the dislike of people who are different for reasons of creed or culture, to be recognised and to create the conditions for these prejudices to be overcome.

The martyrs, the leaders who died an early death, like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy, shorten the time and hasten the conditions needed to change the psychological states and ways of thinking and feeling of nations or entire civilisations, so that they become capable of attracting new events and new opportunities.

Our states can make us win or lose in life. They can make us rich or poor. They can make us ill or heal us. Self-observation, the study of the self, is the means by which we can know our states. The mere act of observing ourselves makes us more aware and more intelligent. *Self-observation is self-correction.*

13 "Put God to work!"

Reading Lupelius' manuscript put me in a state of feverish excitement. Leafing through those pages which had been passed down through the centuries made me feel as though I was wandering in the classroom among the desks of the School for Gods. I listened in rapture to the School's timeless voice. Every day was an intellectual adventure and my research was rewarded with the treasure of an immortal thought.

There is nothing that man needs to introduce from the outside...neither food, nor knowledge, nor happiness...it is his birthright not to depend on anything outside of himself...Man can feed himself from the inside, nourish himself from his own intelligence, his own will and his own light.

For Lupelius this idea was the central element of physical immortality and the cornerstone of every philosophy and every religion. From a recess in the memory came the most ancient words in the world; the words that man's lips had pronounced, like those of a child, four thousand years ago, even before he knew how to write them. *Thou shalt have no other God than Me!*...An understanding grew and spread inside me, initially with trepidation, like a light dispersing the darkness of ages. Then it flared up as powerful as a roaring fire. *Thou shalt have no other God...* meant that man, unaware of being the creator, makes the external world his God and elects it as lord of his being and master of his destiny...That centuries-old warning handed down the first and greatest of all the commandments: do not depend on anything!!!...Remember that you are the one who created all of this!!!...Believing in a world outside of ourselves means depending on it and being trapped by the laws of one's own projection. At this point my thoughts overlapped and became confused like the voices of small children excited by a joyous discovery...*'Love your Lord God. Thou shalt have no other*

Gods outside your self. You are the lord and master, the maker and creator of all and everything. You project all this... You 'are' all this...Never again will you be this close to the breath of a more real and concrete God...Here my thought stopped and remained suspended ...

From the translations I received every day from the team of scholars and researchers I had put together in Everan, emerged a dialogue between Lupelius and Amanzio, one of his warrior monks. Their message darted out between the lines, still alive and fresh, as if the disciple had asked his questions at that very moment. I felt an indescribable sensation in my feet as if I were on the edge of a precipice. Time became compressed and I found myself within the venerable walls of that School.

Lupelius: *"You have made existence and the external world your god... But existence is not real... it is a device that serves the 'dream' so as to help you return to the source to find out what is really real... There is nothing outside ourselves which is not ruled by the 'dream'"*.

Amanzio: *"Then what about this castle we are in and these rooms which are more than three hundred years old?"*

Lupelius: *"I am a creation of yours...now, in this moment!"*

Amanzio: *"And what about my mother and father?"*

Lupelius: *"They are also your creations... there is nothing outside of you or before you!"*

Amanzio: *"So... then... is man... God?"*

Lupelius: *"No!... He is much more!... He has God at his service..."*

Amanzio: *"What does that mean?"*

Lupelius: *"That you could ask him for everything that you desire... and God would satisfy all your requests... without constraint... God is a good servant but not a good master... God loves to serve... he loves to love... God is total surrender at your service... God exists... because 'you' exist...If you are not there then He has no reason to exist... God is your will in action".*

Amanzio: *"I don't understand"*

Lupelius: *"The mind cannot understand... it can only lie... The mind... is mendacious...The mind which is not mendacious annuls itself and makes way for the totality of the being".*



14 The art of staying awake

The battlefield is the Body I read in the manuscript. This authoritative statement by Lupelius echoed inside me like the war cry of a great crusade. The battlefield is our body. Victory is called integrity or wholeness. The goal of a man's life - his aim - is integrity; the unity of the being. In this way Lupelius summarised the sense of mankind's millennial quest and explained the very reason for his existence, the meaning of his entire history. According

to Lupelius, this achievement is physical. The body is the most visible part of the being. The integrity of the being is a victory that takes place in our cells.

There is no war as holy as that in which one 'conquers oneself', no greater victory than exceeding one's own limits. Integrity is the healing of the being. It requires overthrowing age-old beliefs, transforming negative emotions and destructive thoughts, achieving self-mastery and control of one's eating, sleeping and breathing...

Studying this and other passages of 'The School for Gods', I perceived the nature of the experiments that Lupelius and those around him were conducting, in that glowing laboratory that was his School in Ireland one thousand years ago. There his warrior-acolytes trained themselves to master sleep and food, reducing their reliance on them day by day - a fundamental part in their training to become invulnerable and immortal.

According to Lupelius, sleep was a bad surrogate for breathing, a contrivance that the body had devised, to free itself, if only for a few hours, from insufficient and inefficient breathing. As I delved even further into Lupelius's thinking I realised that nothing is as close to us, and at the same time as mysterious and unknown, as our breathing. We are creatures living at the bottom of an ocean of air. And although we are submerged in this element and every square centimetre of our body is under pressure from this ethereal ocean, we still absorb an insufficient quantity of oxygen into our lungs. Lupelius made the astonishing discovery that the amount of air we all breathe in is many tens of times less than we actually need.

In his manuscript he examined and accurately described this condition of near suffocation to which man has been reduced, referring to it as 'underbreathing'.

The consequence of this strange phenomenon is that, according to Lupelius, there are vital parts of our organism that do not receive an adequate supply of oxygen and are undernourished. Anticipating by many hundreds of years the discovery of the importance of respiration in catabolism and organ regeneration, Lupelius concluded that mankind was seriously polluted. He considered that it was necessary for a man to dedicate several hours a day to breathing fully, deeply and completely, and he predicted that one day every school, organization and community would teach breathing techniques as a way of training people to take in the much greater quantities of oxygen that the body really needs.

I noted with regret that, ten centuries later, that prophecy was still far from being realised and that man continued to 'underbreathe' unperturbed, behaving as if oxygen were subject to heavy taxes or counted amongst the rarest and most costly commodities in the universe.

According to Lupelius, deep breathing cannot be done mechanically but only through an effort of will. From him I learned that the destiny of a man is linked to his breathing by a double thread.

The more deeply a man breathes, the richer his reality...If you want to change your destiny, work on your breathing....dedicate time to breathing.

One of the cornerstones of Lupelius's doctrine was that in order to deserve an individual destiny, to be the hero of a great personal adventure, a man needs to breathe consciously and deeply, to be frugal with food and sex and to steal time from sleep. All the necessary efforts should be directed towards this goal. On this subject, I found a letter in the manuscript written by Lupelius to one of his students providing advice in a familiar and informal tone.

People fall asleep in the same way as one hopes to die...suddenly...But, whatever time it is, however long your day has been and however hard your battle, make sure you 'fall asleep awake'...Those who do not know how to manage their energy, fall into bed exhausted at the end of the day, more dead than alive...If you really have to sleep for a few minutes, then you must approach sleep from a state of wakefulness. This will prevent you from falling into the hellish depths.

It seemed as if these words from Lupelius were directed at me, indirectly reprimanding me for my then quite frequent habit of falling asleep suddenly in front of the television or while reading a book. Their force and suggestive power was such that upon reading those words I immediately decided to redeem myself and from that day on I adopted 'falling asleep awake' as a password and a rule for life. According to Lupelius the way in which a man goes to sleep is like a litmus test – a way of revealing the quality of his life. The moment we feel that we are succumbing, when our eyes are closing and falling asleep seems inevitable, is for Lupelius the time when we must exercise our will, rising up and using every possible means to conquer sleep...Lupelius suggested swordplay, bathing or dancing and had devised all sorts of tricks and stratagems that could serve this purpose.

According to Lupelius "To sleep is to die!" With his inimitable dark humour, joker of the universe and master of disguises that he was, he claimed that every night men play out the dress rehearsal for their own final exit from the scene. Persevering in their 'bad habit' of sleeping, half the planet goes to bed, its inhabitants bidding each other good night without even realising what a macabre ritual they are performing. The philosopher-monk who dared to dream the impossible, the head of the School of invincible warriors, concluded the letter to his disciple with some extraordinary advice on the art of staying awake.

"When you know that sleep is the representation of death, you can no longer approach it as you did before...In any case, whatever precautions or methods you adopt, you must never let anyone, not even a woman, see you sleeping...Train in the art of staying awake!...A warrior knows that to be caught napping is to expose his vulnerability...it is like inviting the world to attack and beat us to death".

15 Bad habits

Lupelius had discovered a mystery in man which the mind cannot even begin to conceive. The existence of a black hole which collects a sort of 'psychological scum', that pollutes his cells.

By using the techniques of fasting and breathing, by adopting a new vision, new ideas and making special efforts, a man can change himself and the situations he finds himself in. He can make the transition from an incomplete being, mortal and ridden with conflict, to one who is whole, harmonious and immortal.

Every deprivation, every effort made towards frugality, is part of the preparation for our escape from the hell of ordinariness, freeing us from the emotional encrustations built up over the years. According to Lupelius, only a man from the School, guided by a flawless teacher, can confront such a healing process and overcome the hurdles and obstacles of such an undertaking.

Man is generally incapable of understanding the signs that announce and accompany an act of purification. Ordinary men read these in reverse and rather than seeing them as signs of healing, perceive them to be a true sickness. The pain involved in the effort required is something no one wants to face. This is why, according to Lupelius, every act of abstinence is abandoned just when it starts to work.

Through his long voyages, intense study and tireless research, Lupelius had got to know the ancient schools of initiation and had met extraordinary men who belonged to the great ascetic schools and mystic traditions. In every age and in all civilizations, *otium*, the art of not doing, had been the mainstay of every discipline and inner search; the golden thread that kept every man who aimed at the conquest of the highest levels of responsibility committed to the great adventure.

Following the ideal map indicated by the manuscript, the abstinence of the ascetic, the solitude of the hermit and the frugality of the monk, revealed themselves to be expressions of a single School, different aspects of one, timeless quest that was connected to the martial disciplines and to the wakefulness of the warrior.

Upon further investigation, I discovered that Arriano, one of the two historians who followed the exploits of Alexander the Great, had, in the 'Anabasis Alexandrou', summed up the dietary rules and the secret of his boundless energy in a single sentence: "...he had been trained to be frugal: for breakfast, a march before dawn, for dinner, a light meal." The Macedonian warriors themselves, considered throughout all antiquity to be the unmatched models of bravery and strength, were of legendary frugality. They slept on the naked earth and, even at times of extreme endurance and while undertaking the most daunting endeavours, would eat only a handful of olives. And yet, they were tireless, the most fearsome of warriors, a true nightmare for their enemies.

The deliberate elimination of just one gram of food and abstinence from just one minute of sleep were, in Lupelius' opinion, so powerful as to cast serious doubt on man's entire system of beliefs and upset his artificial equilibrium. His School advocated the absence of sickness, old age and death as an inalienable birthright and natural condition of man.

A diseaseless, ageless, deathless man.

Since the beginning of time, throughout the centuries and in all traditions, the quest for self-mastery had required practice and discipline, intended as a means by which to bring to

the surface what Lupelius called 'emotional slime'. It was an essential procedure in order to discover inner wounds and to drive out all the shadows lurking in the folds of the being.

One day, while working on the manuscript, I discovered the incredible secret which Lupelius had exposed. His announcement is the manifesto for a revolution in thought that did not appear to be directed at his contemporaries but at a scientific assembly of the future: "...It is time for mankind to wake up from an ancestral, metaphysical sleep...It is time to shake off the dust of ages from its belief system ...". The document ended with these forbidding words: "Food, sleep, sex, disease, old age and death are 'bad mental habits'. We must rid ourselves of them."

In several places in his manuscript these were also referred to as 'superstitions' or 'illusions'.

"The battlefield is the body," said Lupelius. "Every refusal of food, every minute rescued from sleep, is a victory in the battle against death...Physical death is immoral,... unnatural,... unnecessary."

Lupelius believed that lack of frugality in food, sleep, sex or work, was the primary cause of any loss of energy and vitality, leading man to achieve the impossible, making physical death possible and finally inevitable. Throughout the ages, in every civilization and religious tradition, an elite few have awoken from the hypnotic sleep vilified by Lupelius and have tried to follow a discipline which placed the idea of physical immortality at the centre of their system of thought, claiming it as the origin of all prosperity and longevity. The Dreamer would one day say to me that the idea of physical immortality was a fundamental element in the psychology of a new humanity, and of leaders in particular. Unless he passes through these Pillars of Hercules, a man will sooner or later be put under severe pressure by his limitations and succumb. And if that man is in charge of an organisation then the whole enterprise folds with him. The idea that death can be defeated uproots every constraint from our psychology, increases our responsibility and is an essential requirement for the establishment of a vital, prosperous and durable enterprise. According to the Dreamer, the philosophy of physical immortality should be taught in all schools, universities and institutions. The idea of a life without end is the strongest antidote to poverty, crime and death.

Leaving Everan and the Institute for Ancient Manuscripts, I returned to New York bringing with me, as my most prized possession, the copy of The School for Gods which I had had made for the Dreamer.

From the enormous mountain of notes I had compiled, two words in particular gave me pause for thought during my entire journey: *Die less*, a recurrent aphorism and perhaps the motto of the Lupelians. These words seemed to me to be the ultimate synthesis of the School's philosophy.

Die less and live for ever.

I thought of the devastating discovery hidden behind the apparent simplicity of this formula. Man dies inside thousands of times a day. Destructive states and thoughts and

negative emotions burgeon and reproduce ceaselessly within our being while distilling the slow poison that kills us. We may not know where to start in order to live for ever, but following Lupelius' age-old aphorism we can certainly "die less". Many times I chanted the Lupelian song of immortality:

Eat less and Dream more

Sleep less and Breathe more

Die less and Live forever.

16 "You won't make it!"

I emerged as if from a journey underground. I recognised the room and the huge painting on the far wall. This time, it was an hour later in the morning in the Dreamer's world, and the light was such that I could easily observe the architecture of that part of the house. I looked up towards the high ceiling and followed its line to the point where it dropped sharply forming an imposing archway of bare brick. It was in that moment that I sensed a presence. I gave a start. On each side of the arch, two naked people, a man and a woman, were observing me like motionless guardians. A shiver ran down my spine before I understood what was before me. They were life size statues placed facing each other. They were so perfectly made that I thought they were copies of Hellenic originals. The chest of the warrior, so high and smooth and strong as armour, conveyed to me a message of irresistible pride. I stood up and straightened my back as if responding to a military order.

I instinctively ignored the steep peperino stairway that led to the Dreamer's rooms and, without hesitation, took the opposite direction, towards a large door made of glass and wrought iron of an unusual shape. Beside it, a large painting covered the entire wall. I stopped to examine it. I recognised an opulent representation of the myth of Narcissus, depicting him as he admired his reflection in a pond, shortly before being swallowed into it. I gazed admiringly and at length at this work which would not have been out of place among the seventeenth century masterpieces of an important museum collection. Then I carefully pushed the glass door open and stopped spellbound on the threshold of a fairytale setting. Without taking my eyes off this scene, I bent down to untie my shoelaces and left my shoes there, where I stood, as I had done on my first visit. I proceeded cautiously in bare feet across the large terracotta tile floor and went into what seemed to be a large greenhouse. The rich variety of plants, for the most part tropical, and the walls consisting of long rows of glass arches, reinforced this impression. Outside, the deep green of the garden laid siege to it and pushed up against the wooden frame like a sea of plants against the sides of an ark. But the elegance of every detail, the works of art, the valuable paintings and the modern sculptures in white marble, left me pleasantly perplexed as to the true nature of this extraordinary place. The first light of the morning flooded in from two large skylights. I looked at the huge beams which supported the roof and my imagination was captivated by the thought of the titan who

had been able to carry and place them there. I explored every corner several times but could see no trace of the Dreamer. I had not seen Him for over a year. Just the thought of meeting Him made my heart race and my breath short. As I carried on I saw an expanse of water in the middle of the hall floor. Rather than a pool, it appeared to be a small light blue pond dug into the terracotta tiles. A constant movement rippled pleasingly across the surface of the water like a shiver. I ran my gaze along the edge until I saw His reflection rippling in the waves. I looked up slowly. The Dreamer was putting a silver flute to his lips. He bent forward elegantly and lifted his face, and the shining instrument, towards the light. The air was filled with a string of notes, threaded one after another, like pearls on a necklace but of varying sizes and value. It was ageless, timeless music, like the villa, like that room, like that moment. I remained motionless as I listened. I felt the joyful thrill of my childhood, permeated with the salty fragrance of the sea, and its forgotten happiness; the foolish races along the rocks, the taste of freshly caught crabs and shellfish, the way my heart pounded before diving off the big rock, the cool shade of our summer house in Ischia, Carmela's sweaty kisses when she returned from the market... I had found Him again. All that time he appeared not to have even noticed my intrusion. Finally one note remained suspended in the air longer than the others, fluttering on the breath which had created it, playing a little longer with the molecules of air, before freeing itself from the music and becoming a single, quivering, sonorous puff. Suddenly it stopped. For an endless moment the flute was held crosspiece, attached to the Dreamer's lower lip, and then it softly followed the hand that laid it down on a cushion nearby. He was younger than I remembered Him, and seemed even thinner. He looked up and examined me at length. He certainly knew what efforts I had made to return to Him...he knew about my extensive search for the manuscript and the success of my mission, the passion with which I had studied and which had brought me closer to the thought of the School. Following the stormy meeting which had begun my apprenticeship and the journey of adventure into my past which started in Marrakech, this time I was expecting words of encouragement, if not of praise. I took a few steps towards him. The Dreamer continued to stare at me without saying a word. Initially I felt a vague state of unease that quickly turned into pain. Under His gaze, my attention reversed its direction. I was looking inside myself for the first time. The spectacle was not the most agreeable: a mass of dark thoughts was forming within my consciousness, along with senses of guilt and other feelings twisted into an emotional jumble which was never disentangled. His eyes bore into me, digging up a psychological sludge that I never wanted to see or confront. He stopped just as the pain was exceeding the limits of my endurance. But He didn't relax his grip. What was to follow would be much more painful. At the end of His examination, as if He had reached a final, definitive judgment, He passed sentence: *"You won't make it!"*

The silence which followed that verdict flooded into the greenhouse, filling every corner. Disappointment, dejection and anger mingled and merged into a single, quiet pain. I felt myself devoid of all energy. I wanted only to be left in peace and collapse. But I did not dare do that, nor did I ask to. Holding my breath, like an accused man, I awaited the final sentence of this judgement. The pause was cruelly long. Finally, like a researcher observing the results

of yet another failed experiment – an expected but no less disappointing outcome - He announced:

“No one can make it...It is humanity that can't make it.!”

He was addressing me as if I were a representative of a defeated race, a species on the brink of extinction.

“There are too many laws which compel you to remain as you are. You have even turned the quest I entrusted to you into something which feeds your vanity, your egocentricity.

I experienced a powerful feeling of resentment, that mixture of loathing and self pity that results from perceived injustice. After months of travelling and research in the United States and Europe, after having found Lupelius' manuscript, that scholars, researchers and archaeologists had thought lost forever, and after having confronted my tormented past with courage, I did not deserve to be treated in this way. I would have liked to rebut the Dreamer's words in some way, but the muscles of my dignity were still too weak. Besides, in my heart of hearts I knew that He was right. I tried to conceal my mood behind a false appeasement: “I can't change” - was all I allowed myself to say. However, my voice betrayed the rancour of my impotence and my tendency to cling and be dependent.

“STOOOOP IT! - shouted the Dreamer, drawing out the “o” in a hideous tone of voice. The passing seconds were filled with terror like the countdown to a harrowing event. I felt an empty silence form inside me, carved out by that inhuman wail, terrible as a battle cry heard among the clashing tools of war in the middle of lethal combat. Something in my being was triggered which sharpened my ability to listen.

“Do you remember when you used to cry for hours until you were hoarse?” asked the Dreamer suddenly in a low voice but conserving all His ferocity in its tone. Image after image rushed through my mind – points of access to a distant past that overlapped and mixed together like playing cards being shuffled by a conjuror. The images all shared the same characteristics. They all possessed the same light and magical atmosphere of my Neapolitan childhood, where Lares and Penates had even more ancient names, given to them by age-old superstitions. I recognized the old house, Carmela's room and the wardrobe with the mirrors on its doors. A boy of about six was sitting on the floor, crying desperately, endlessly ...It was me.

“You are still there, nothing has changed, except that your childish tantrums have become a lasting tendency to complain and indulge in self-pity. He fell silent for what seemed an interminable length of time.

“No one changes... it is impossible to change – commented the Dreamer at last. At the age of seven, a child is already recruited into that sad army of adults and, like a little Spartan, he has already received a back to front vision of the world and a complete set of all the beliefs, prejudices, superstitions and ideas which give him right of unlimited membership to that planetary club of miserable souls.

A man's thoughts, emotions and body are concentric universes...everything is connected. Deliberately changing the tone or inflection of one's voice, straightening one's back by just

one millimetre or modifying one's apparently most insignificant habit, means changing one's entire life. It is almost impossible."

He scrutinised me intensely, severely, and I stood up to His examination. I knew that not even the slightest impulse in my soul would escape His notice and that there was no possibility of cheating in this game. I was betting on all or nothing ...The possibility that, one day, I might conquer myself, be touched by the 'dream' and transform my life into a great personal adventure, or else fall and lose myself forever, with no hope of recovery, was there...the alternatives co-existed. My life was hanging by a thin thread suspended over the mouth of an abyss. One word, a change in inflection, the length of a pause, could make it fall into the swarming mass of a collective destiny.

With a quick movement and the agility of someone who keeps their body in trim, He rose from His reclining position. The light blue of the pool caught His movement like the reflection of something in flight and rocked it on its trembling surface. Slowly, He took a few steps in my direction. I held my breath and waited for what seemed an eternity. Then, with a firm tone, but this time devoid of harshness, He announced:

"Only if you remember Me will you make it."

17 "Overthrow your beliefs!"

In the mean time, He had settled Himself comfortably, carefully arranging a few cushions around His body. His attitude was like that of someone putting on a brave face when about to resume a momentous task that he had previously considered already complete. *"Overthrow your beliefs!"* He exhorted me, emphatically. The idea of inviting me to take a seat must never even have crossed His mind, and He left me standing on the same spot where I had been from the beginning of our encounter. I thought this was lacking in consideration and felt resentful and offended. At the time, it was inconceivable for me that one could live every moment strategically like the Dreamer. He did not so much as bat an eyelid without it consciously serving His purpose. Brooding over my resentment, I carried on listening to Him, not moving from the terracotta tile on which I was standing, next to the trembling waters of His pool.

"A man's present, past and future ...the events, the circumstances and the experiences he encounters on his way, are shadows projected by his beliefs – continued the Dreamer – his existence and his destiny are the materialisation of his convictions and, even more, of his indulgences..."

'Visibilia ex invisibilibus'. Everything you perceive, see and touch comes from the invisible. The life of a man is the shadow of his 'dream', it is the visual manifestation of his principles and of all he believes..."

Everyone invariably sees come to pass what they have firmly believed in ...A man always creates. The obstacles he encounters are the materialisation of his own limitations, his fragmented thinking and his impotence...

There are those who have faith in poverty and those who only know how to believe in sickness...There are those who have an unshakable belief in misery and scarcity ...and there are those who have staked everything on crime...Man is always creative, even when he is imprisoned in the darkest states of his being."

According to the Dreamer, no man has any more faith than any other. Every man has his own allocation of faith to manage, to invest...everyone has been apportioned exactly the same amount. *"What differentiates men...what really gives them a different destiny, is the direction of their beliefs, the different quality of their goals, be they conscious or not ..."*

I was more than a little disconcerted by the Dreamer's claims. I had always believed that faith was a rare commodity, and, what is more, that it was precisely their varying capacity for faith that essentially differentiated men. One of the ideological plinths which underpinned my vision of the world certainly included the belief that Mohammed, Alexander, Socrates, Lao Tzu, Churchill or Napoleon could be set apart from other men by the strength of their convictions.

"But if everyone has faith...and furthermore, the same quantity of faith" - I asked, using the Holy Scriptures to support my case and drawing strength from their authority - "what then is the meaning of the words 'if you had faith like a mustard seed...'?"

The discussion which followed imprinted itself forever in my being. Not so much for the memorable words He pronounced, but for the authority with which He delivered them. The Dreamer was not giving me an interpretation of that passage from the Gospel, He was creating it. The dreaming essence of that age-old message and the intelligence compressed in its atoms, was being released there and then, in that moment. The words I was listening to were new and alive. They had never been spoken before in the entire history of the world.

"If a man were able to shift the direction of his faith by even one millimetre, if he could only redirect the strength of his convictions towards life rather than towards death...he could move mountains in the world of events."

Like a flash of lightning that tears through the darkness and illuminates what a few moments earlier was buried in shadows, so the evidence crossed my mind and I understood vividly just how much energy was contained in a single atom of faith. I understood that the elimination of the smallest particle of hell would destroy that total faith in death - the most deeply rooted of all men's beliefs. I also realised the enormity of such an undertaking. Grasping this idea alone required an effort equivalent to a Titan carrying the weight of heaven and earth.

For the first time I asked myself what I had believed in ...to what had I attributed value up until my meeting with the Dreamer...His voice reached me while I was immersed in these thoughts and helped me as they turned irreparably towards the dark pit of my past. Although I already knew, it was embarrassing for me to have renewed confirmation of the fact that I was an open book to Him.

“Until today your reason for living, the goal of your existence, as for all men, has been to kill yourself inside. Sickness, Old age and Death are the gods that mankind has worshipped for thousands of years...Thus has man painfully renounced life... and his infinite dream.”

‘If you had faith like a mustard seed...’ meant that the slightest raising of our vision, the most minimal change, could have diverted us from our mortal destiny.

The dream is the most real thing.

To ‘see’ one’s own limitations and circumscribe them, means to free oneself from them! For how long will you be able to remove these constraints and escape this condition of impotence? Man’s life is ruled by negative emotions. The anguish he carries inside is the real cause of all his troubles and unhappiness. The Dreamer rose and, turning His back to me, He took a few careful steps going past the large pool towards the opposite corner of that extraordinary greenhouse. From there He spoke, still with His back to me, and I heard His voice as strong and clear as if He had been right next to my ear.

“It is only a question of time...I faithfully wrote down in my notebook – In time we will reach the targets we have set ourselves...In the end we will all win...we will all become what we have believed in...and we will all achieve what we have held firmly in our sights ...you, your misery, your immorality, your death...and I, flawlessness, infinity and immortality.

18 The Narcissus syndrome

“Your most unshakable faith...your most harmful belief, is that a world exists outside of yourself, that there is someone or something on which to depend, someone or something that can give or take from you, elect or condemn you.” – said the Dreamer. *“If a warrior believed, even for a moment, in outside help, he would immediately lose his invulnerability”* He said. Then He fell silent and shut His eyes.

I tried to fill that moment by writing down what He had just said in my notebook. But the void expanded. I struggled to overcome my discomfort at suddenly feeling irrelevant and superfluous by mentally re-reading parts of my notes. Finally, the Dreamer broke His silence and with His eyes still closed, recited:

There is nothing out there...

There is no help coming from anywhere at all...

“Man’s most serious disease is dependence” He announced in a severe tone. I immediately became very wary. I unerringly felt in my bones the importance of this statement and the central role that I should give to it in my new system of beliefs. *“There is nothing worse than dependence on others, on their presence or their judgment...To free oneself from this requires extensive preparation... One must train for it...”*

As I later recalled my attitude on that occasion and other similar ones, I realised that what I accepted without too much resistance, or even immediately and unquestioningly, when the Dreamer referred to mankind in general, provoked in me a response of unassailable resistance when His criticism was aimed directly at me.

“People like you... only feel alive when they are amongst others ...they prefer crowded places... they find work in government offices or large companies...wherever they feel the reassuring presence of the crowd...They celebrate all the rituals of dependence and gather in its temples: cinemas, theatres, hospitals, stadiums, courthouses or churches, just to be in a group with others, to escape from themselves and the unbearable burden of their solitude” continued the Dreamer.

I had an instinctive defensive reaction. An irrepressible hostility darkened my being, almost as if those words had threatened something vital or upset a plan which had been made long before. Mentally I lined up all the harsh words, like a row of mortar shells I would have liked to lob at Him. By focusing on that reprehensible mob I attempted to clear it away, but only managed to draw a pained grimace on my face. The Dreamer was testing the walls of my resistance. He knew how to breach them. He gave me a ferocious smile, as if He were about to strike me, and whispered:

“A man like you falls ill and is willing to be cut to pieces by surgeons...by the shamans of a still primitive science, just to draw attention to himself...” I gasped, as if I had been punched in the stomach. The Dreamer let a few seconds pass as if he were counting me out, as if he were referee and adversary at the same time.

“Do you remember the painting?” He asked me out of the blue, completely changing his tone and demeanour. He knocked me off balance every time. I would never get used to these abrupt changes which would be performed with a suddenness and mastery that I had never seen in anyone before. I was amazed by His ability to transform Himself entering into a totally new state of being without transferring even one atom from the previous one. I immediately understood that His question referred to the painting I had admired before coming into the greenhouse where we were now. I recalled the picture of Narcissus admiring his image in the pool moments before being swallowed up by it.

“It is the symbolic story of a man trapped in his own reflection” – explained the Dreamer, barely concealing His mirth at my vain attempts to adapt the muscles of my face in response to His sudden change of topic and mood. *“The fable of Narcissus is the metaphor of a man who becomes a victim of his own creation”* He continued. He revealed to me that, contrary to what is commonly believed, Narcissus was not in love with himself but with the image reflected in the water, without being aware that it was his own. In fact, believing he was looking at somebody else, he became infatuated, fell into the water and tragically drowned.

“Once you realise that the world you see is the projection of yourself, you are free of it” concluded the Dreamer.

I was in a state of shock. ...How had it been possible for one of the most crucial myths of our civilization to be misunderstood for thousands of years? How on earth had it been possible to miss an explanation that was so simple?

Alongside the Dreamer, I distinctly heard the voice of that age of giants which ended with Socrates to be substituted by the consolatory invention of philosophy. The echo of that knowledge still crosses the ocean of time to reach us and we continue to misunderstand its eternal fables that reveal the true condition of man. We still present Narcissus as the archetype of vanity, whereas instead his myth is a warning, a signal alerting us to the stupidity and danger of the conventional vision of the world. What the Dreamer had repeatedly tried to make me understand was finally penetrating a little deeper. The story of Narcissus was a message from a School of Overturning which had existed thousands of years before Caravaggio and which had inspired him to paint those pictures of the crucifixion of Peter and the fall of Paul.

“To fall in love with something outside of ourselves, forgetting ourselves, means becoming lost in the meanders of a world of dependence...it means forgetting that one is the sole creator of our own personal reality...”

A world outside of ourselves does not exist – He stated again – Everything that we meet, see and touch is a reflection of ourselves. Other people, the events and circumstances in a man’s life reveal his condition.” Blaming the world, complaining, justifying and hiding, are therefore the surest signs of dependency and the absence of a “true” will.

“This is not the only message which has come down to us across the ages and which man has consistently misunderstood in order to escape its unbearable proposition” said the Dreamer. *“Like Adam, Narcissus also ate the apple!”* He said, catching me by surprise. It was difficult for me to keep pace with Him, as with a single step, He crossed the abyss of time and space between distant worlds, placing the four thousand year old story of Genesis alongside one of most ancient Greek myths. *“He too, like Adam, believed in otherness, in the existence of a world outside himself.”*

Narcissus drowned, victim of his illusion that there was someone outside himself and Adam was cast out of Eden and condemned to death for having bitten into the apple and believed in the existence of an external world. However culturally distant they may have been, in both traditions the message was the same: to believe that the world is outside us means to become its victim, to be swallowed up by it.

“The world is created by you, every second!” said the Dreamer. *“The pool in which Narcissus saw his reflection is the external world. Believing it to be real and relying on it means depending on one’s own shadow...it means becoming smaller than the world we project. From creator, you become a creation, from dreamer you become dream, from master you become slave, until you are suffocated by your own creation.”*

It occurred to me that the message conveyed by these myths, as the Dreamer was helping me discover, could also be found intact in modern as well as ancient fables, from Frankenstein to Blade Runner, from the Gospels to Alice in Wonderland.

“The fall of Adam and Eve from paradise happens at every moment”, concluded the Dreamer, *“we are thrown out of Eden every time the description of the world takes hold of us...when we forget that we are its creators. Then the creation rebels and rises up against us...This is the original sin, the unforgivable, mortal sin: mistaking the cause for the effect.*

A man that is whole and true... is such because he governs himself...And in spite of the apparent dynamism of events and the variety of situations he knows that the world is his mirror.

Whether it is good or bad, ugly or beautiful, right or wrong, everything a man encounters is just his reflection and not reality – said the Dreamer, and from His tone I understood our meeting had reached its end. He was about to leave me. - Everyone always and only reaps what he is...You are both the seed, and the harvest...".

"This is why all the revolutions in history have failed...they tried to change the world from the outside...they believed the image in the pool to be real...".

"Do not rely any more on the world for help. Go beyond it! Only those who have gone beyond the world can improve it."

Here He stopped for a few moments. *"Go beyond it!"* He ordered and then fell silent once more. Transcend the world - go beyond it! What could this mean?

"For centuries man has scratched at the screen of the world, believing he could change the images of the film he himself had projected onto it."

The explanation for the failure of so many generations of men who had set out to change the course of history was being handed to me on a silver tray. That bitterly comic vision summed up the infinite succession of atrocities, defeats and heroics, passing upon it just one judgment: that it had been a colossal useless folly.

"You...get out of this madness! – He ordered with unexpected kindness. "Forget about wars, revolutions and economic, social, or political reform... concern yourself with the one who is truly responsible for everything that happens...Stop thinking about the dream and take care of the dreamer in you. The greatest revolution, the most difficult of all undertakings, yet the only one that has any sense, is changing one's self".

19 A man cannot hide

"Those who depend on the world remain mired in the lowest levels of existence - The Dreamer warned –Your whole life, you have looked for ephemeral certainties and satisfactions and security outside of yourself...constantly suspended between hope and ...which are the roots of dependence...."

While speaking to me the Dreamer fixed me in His gaze with a severity that did not allow me to blink or to draw breath, as He would do when He had to overcome my barriers and reach me at a deeper level. *"Your life, like that of all those who are dependent, is horrible. It is the life of a slave...Years and years in an office, perpetuating mediocrity and scarcity, without even the slightest desire to escape from that prison."* I took note of what He was saying, like a war reporter, writing amidst a hail of gunfire. *"There is nothing out there...there is no help coming from anywhere at all – repeated the Dreamer, to impress this statement within the core of my most deeply rooted beliefs – I will never stop repeating this;*

nothing is outside of you...What you call the 'world' is only an effect...what you call reality is the materialisation, the mirror image of your dreams or your nightmares...".

This vision would reveal itself to be the backdrop to all His teachings and, on several occasions in the future, the Dreamer would elaborate and expand on it, as my ability to understand and support its subversive force developed. I remember how that first time had been a shock for me - a reversal of everything I had believed in up until that moment.

"Realise that the world is in you, and not vice versa! What is in the world, or pertains to it, can neither help nor save you!"

Then His words became an exhortation, an appeal that I felt was directed not only to me but to every man. His words were laced with the disappointment of one who knows he is offering something of great value to someone who can neither appreciate it nor use it. *"Aspire to freedom, leave this crowd of miserable wretches ...Impose a new way of feeling upon yourself. Conquer the immensity within you and the galaxies will become grains of sand..."*

"Broaden your vision and you will see the world become small...Vision and reality are one and the same thing...Look for integrity and what are insurmountable mountains for others will become tiny bumps for you."

I interpreted the pause that followed as an invitation to make a comment and, carelessly, I ventured a few observations. I said something about the difficulty of accepting the idea that we are the cause of every event or circumstance in our lives. I took care to avoid anything contentious and adopted the impartial tone of one who tries to introduce a wise neutrality into a casual conversation with a stranger. Like a blind man, I could not perceive the unfathomable distance which separated the Dreamer's words from mine on the ladder of responsibility.

"It seems impossible to believe that everything that can happen to a man, from a cold to a plane crash, is the materialisation of his psychology" I concluded. I felt simultaneously fascinated and threatened by the Dreamer's vision. Following the trail of my reflections, I was digging down to the roots of our civilization, as far as those two contrasting positions which have divided our world to this day. Classical Greece believed in a goddess of Fortune who blindly bestowed favours. They represented her wearing a blindfold. The ancient Romans, on the other hand, believed in *homo faber*. Fortune to the Romans was a goddess who had the most dioptries and respected the virtue of the individual. In my mind I classified the Dreamer among those who supported the Roman conception of the world. However, I hardly had time to formulate this idea, when I heard His voice transform itself into a roar which froze my blood, as in the most terrible moments I had previously experienced with Him. *"...Do you think you are here to engage in small talk with some poor schmuck like yourself!...Hear me well* – He said, and reinforced this order by tapping His right ear with His first two fingers together, several times, in a slow and deliberate way. *'The world is a reflection of your states of being' means that Luisa did not die of cancer. Her death is the theatrical representation of your inner drama, your mortal anguish...That event, like all events, is only a manifestation of your states of being...Even if you try to conceal it by blaming and complaining endlessly,*

in reality your song of sorrow, like a fertility rite in reverse, has invited all the troubles and difficulties of your entire existence."

Suddenly everything fell silent. I felt an inexplicable anxiety pushing up against a hidden dam/emotional floodgate inside me. A tough and unmoving part of me gave way and a gaping abyss yawned open until it swallowed me up. I felt my heart beating furiously against the walls of my chest and my breathing was blocked by an unending exhalation. I experienced the nauseating dizziness of an endless fall and a silent cry for help... a sense of fear, desperation, shame which echoed in the most remote fibres of my being as if all the pain of my existence had concentrated in one place. Only when He began to speak once more was I finally able to breathe again and I greedily swallowed all the air I could. *"A man cannot hide!* – whispered the Dreamer, as if passing on a secret teaching. I listened like a child, without disagreement or opposition. *"Our most insignificant action, every perception, thought, gesture and facial expression is recorded in eternity"*. He told me that the way we live every moment, like a frame in the film of our lives, indicates a raising or lowering of being and puts us in tune with everything that will happen to us.

"A man cannot hide!... Here with me you stand alone facing existence...Here there are no political affiliations or trade unions. When you enter this room you cannot bring anything with you from your past, not even the lie of your name or your role in life. Here there is no guard rail for you to hold onto...here you are alone facing yourself..." He noticed that I was trembling visibly. My teeth began to chatter as if I was coming down with a fever, and He said, *"Stop being afraid and stop hiding! There is a part of you that has to die because it is absurd. This death is your great opportunity. Only you can do it..."*

Physically and painfully I felt that the Dreamer was penetrating through layer upon layer of ignorance and psychological garbage which had accumulated over time and become hard as rock.

"If you work tirelessly and for as many years as you have previously spent damaging yourself – He said in a whisper as sweet as a promise – one day time will break and a tunnel will open up and guide you to the part of yourself that is the most real and true...a part with which sooner or later every man must reconnect: his dream." Only at this point did the Dreamer take His eyes off me, allowing me a moment of respite.

I saw His figure ripple like a reflection in the water. He was about to leave me. All at once I felt impossibly tired as if I had run a race for miles and miles on a single breath of air. My legs refused to hold me up. I knelt down on the carpet which had just become visible, claimed from the shadows by the first light of the day, and fell to the ground like a dead man.

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