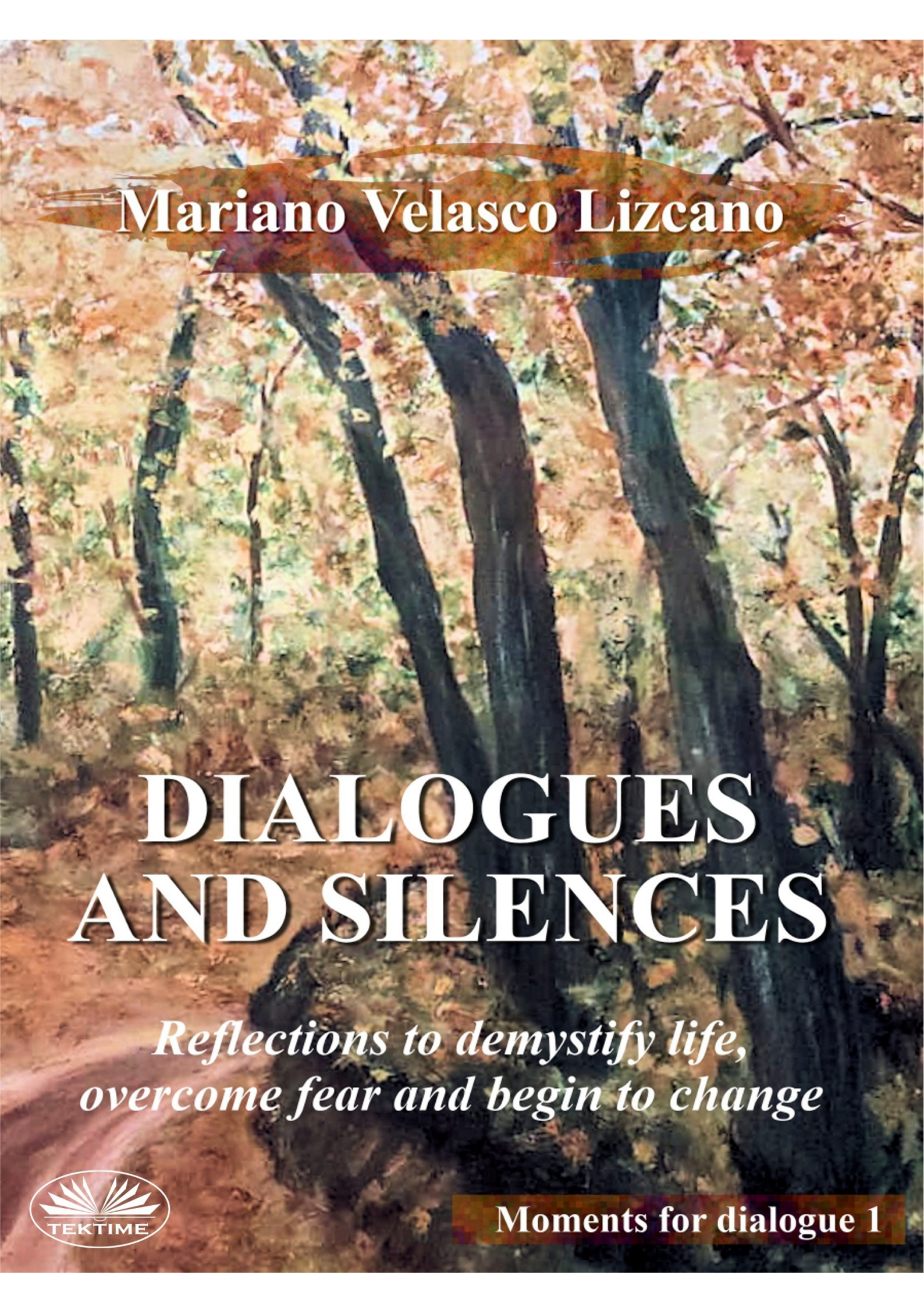




Mariano Velasco Lizcano

DIALOGUES AND SILENCES

*Reflections to demystify life,
overcome fear and begin to change*



Moments for dialogue 1

Mariano Velasco Lizcano

Dialogues And Silences

«Tektime S.r.l.s.»

Lizcano M.

Dialogues And Silences / M. Lizcano — «Tektime S.r.l.s.»,

I believe I am one of those people addicted to self-help literature. Or at least I was. And I acknowledge that the many books I read on the subject helped me to think. Also to reflect. But they helped me little, because in reality I didn't know how—or didn't want—to change. So I thought it wouldn't be bad to write my own opinions on those transcendental themes that this type of literature addresses. Because demystifying is good. And because deep down, I consider that knowing the problems and their solutions will always help; even those who refuse to be helped.

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DIALOGUES AND SILENCES

With my deepest gratitude to Isabel Pacheco and Héctor Campos. With their photographs, they have filled with color pages that would otherwise have been written in gray.

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

By Mariano Velasco Lizcano

I believe I am one of those people addicted to self-help literature. Or at least I was. And I acknowledge that the many books I read on the subject helped me to think. Also to reflect. But they helped me little, because in reality I didn't know how—or didn't want—to change. So I thought it wouldn't be bad to write my own opinions on those transcendental themes that this type of literature addresses. Because demystifying is good. And because deep down, I consider that knowing the problems and their solutions will always help; even those who refuse to be helped.

The themes or problems addressed are the ancestral ones, those that have prompted over time thousands, perhaps millions of reflections. That's why I believe I cannot offer much novelty. But on the other hand, I can convey "effects" and "results." Because I am convinced that the number of people who, after having read this type of literature, find themselves incapable of adopting any kind of solution would be counted in the millions.



With airs of immensity

And the fact is, one thing is to preach, and another to deliver. Knowing the problem and the solutions is one thing; knowing how to apply them or being able to apply them, that's quite another.

But even so, this type of literature carries a value: It is capable of helping us reflect! And therefore it predisposes us to the encounter with truth. The truth of our own lives.



Knowing the problems will always help

I don't know if the hypothetical reader of these lines will be able to find something of value in them. Whether they will serve them or not. What I do know is that, for me, personally, they have made me return to many moments of indecision; to reassess them, and to think that writing them down to communicate them could have some value.

In any case, this task is something I wanted and needed to do.

I hope that for you, dear reader, they will also serve, even if only to enjoy some moments of personal encounter. With that alone, this small publication will have found all its meaning and value.



One thing is to preach; another to deliver

LOST YOUTH

Many are the times I have asked myself what I can expect from life now that I left my youth behind years ago. Perhaps life stops being interesting for this reason? —I wonder—. And I think that the answer stems from a single question: Am I happy? Do I still have reasons to be? That is the question. And about it I no longer want to deceive myself. Because I know I am a wounded and precarious person, a man who has carried wounds inside from the very beginning. That's why I am spending my entire adult life pouring words like blood onto paper. Because I no longer find other rewards, distant from those small pleasures that food, travel, amusements, or alcohol could provide me.

So I write because these letters serve me as crutches to keep myself upright and able to move through the world. I know, then, what I need to be happy in my current moment. And I am even aware of having it. I no longer crave applause or external approval, I only wish to make use of time to do the things I want to do. And furthermore, I am capable of appreciating what I have near me; the beauty of any moment and any place. It is no small thing. So I am not overly concerned with justifying the reason for writing these reflections. They simply make me happy! And everything else seems superfluous. Because I have spent too many moments of my life frightened, afraid, almost sick with worry, my stomach and belly destroyed by such a puerile situation.



What can one expect from life when youth is left behind

That's why now that I am approaching that stage in which I will have to inexorably pay tribute to old age, in which I will see worse, hear with more difficulty, be clumsier at learning and more forgetful with everything I learned, I can no longer continue living off fatuous vanity. My only objective must be to try to convey or leave record of those things I learned in the hope that they may serve at least as a topic for meditation, if not as advice or guidance. In any case, they are life lessons: "Life stories" is what sociological science calls them; in any case, an interesting way to leave record of the passage of time, the uses, ways and customs of a particular society in a particular historical moment, and the reflections and lessons that all of this prompted in me: It is not a bad aspiration!



Traditions and customs of each society



What a beautiful moment to stop and think

REACHING ONE'S DREAMS

I believe that one of the most enriching and relevant occupations of every human being is that which is directed toward making dreams come true. Because we all forge dreams that we would like to achieve throughout our lives. Although reality shows us that few human beings manage to accomplish them. Why? That is the question.

My dream was to write. I mean that my dream was to become a writer. And I remember it was a passion that awakened in me from a very early age. It began during those early school years when for all texts we used the Enciclopedia Álvarez, that compendium of subjects that made up all the knowledge that the educational model in use understood we should learn.

I remember that in grammar and spelling it was a common practice for teachers to resort to both "dictation" and "composition" exercises. And I especially liked that business of composing. Because I had a great facility for capturing on paper the things that had happened to me and telling them, moreover, with a certain air of interest. Without realizing it, the use of recreation of facts was already innate in me, resorting to tricks that I didn't even know then were writer's techniques. I refer to the use of synopses, metaphors and even the world of "like" which, of course, I had no idea were literary devices, but which came to me with the greatest ease.



And in this way, dreams are reached

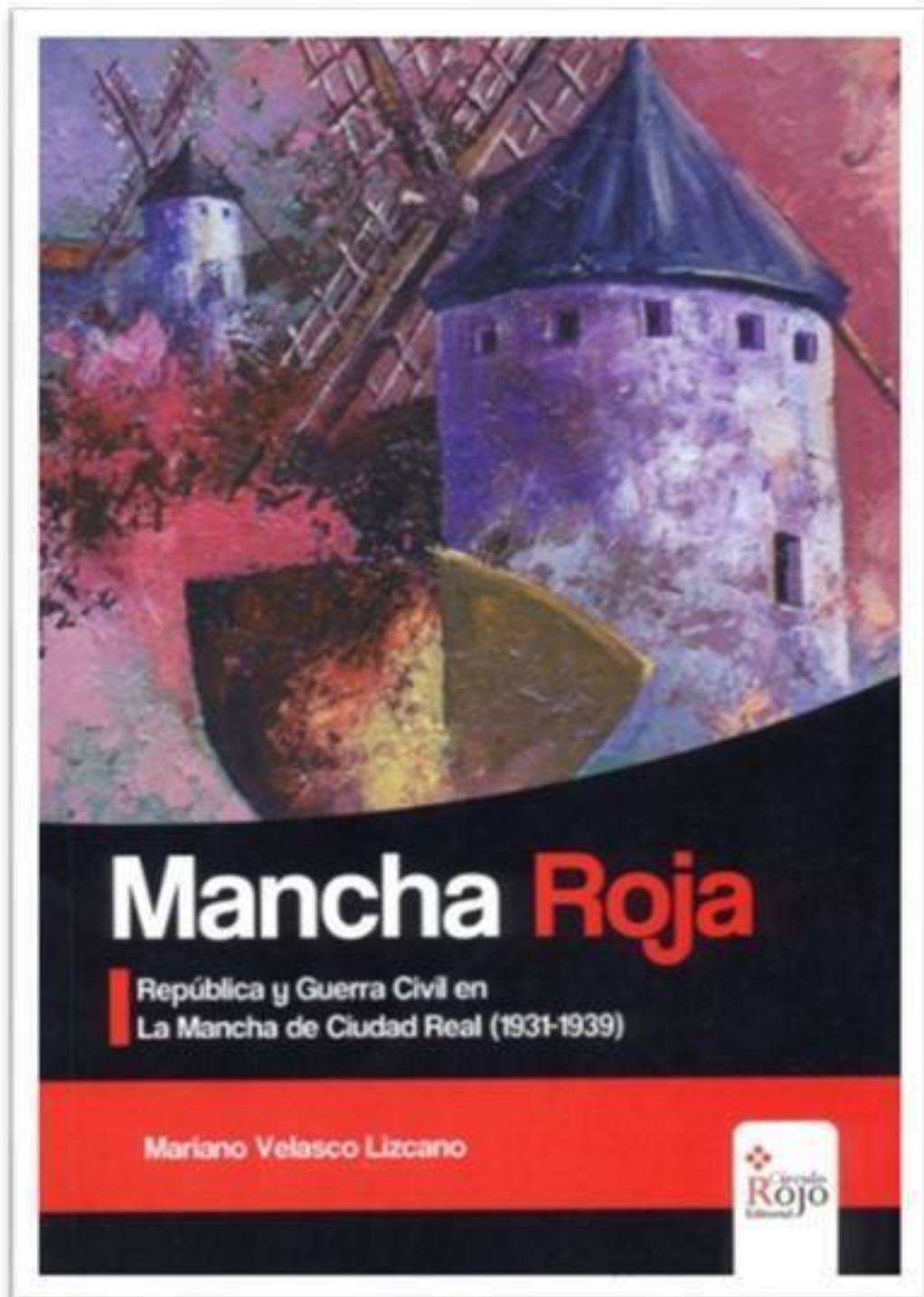
Of course, back then I also didn't know that my taste for writing would forge itself as a vocation with the passage of time. First it was like a kind of desire; then it became a necessity, and later it would come to constitute my greatest dream of personal fulfillment. Although this, like all things in life, emerged and grew little by little, just as plants do in nature, which are first seeds and then grow to become lush trees. Although, in this case, its growth, unlike in nature, was not a linear constant.

Flaubert, at nine years of age, told his friend Ernest Chevalier that "... since there is a lady who comes to our house and always tells us nonsense, I will write it down." At seventeen he doubted: "Before I thought, meditated, wrote, put on paper, whether well or poorly, the inspiration that was in my heart. Now I no longer think, I don't meditate, I write even less [...] I doubt. My thoughts are disordered, I cannot accomplish any work of imagination, everything I write is dry, it is painful, forced, it has been torn out with pain." At twenty, when he had already given up writing and was studying at law school, convinced of his total incapacity, he still acknowledged that "... what takes

the pen from my hands if I take notes, what hides the book from me if I read, is my old love, it is the same obsessive idea: To write!"

He then made a decision: to turn back and try again. And no one doubts that he succeeded. With tenacity, tremendous effort and pain—sometimes it took him several days to elevate a single line to its final form—and above all with an imperishable constancy and obstinacy.

Here is the key to reaching one's dreams: willpower, effort, and a tenacity bordering on obstinacy, not to mention a blind confidence in being able to achieve it.



The beginning of reverie

Does this mean that by being obstinate and trusting in it, we will always reach our dreams?

It is here when I must return to my own particular experience. Because as early as the vocation arose, I did not take long to discover my lack of talent for its realization. The first readings were enough for me to understand that I didn't know, that I was not prepared to write. I lacked everything: training, culture, but above all talent and imagination. So for many years I abandoned the idea of writing to dedicate myself entirely to a single matter: training myself sufficiently for it. And thus, with more than thirty years behind me then, I embarked on a university journey that led me to a degree, a doctorate and countless university courses that among other things allowed me to discover the land in which I lived, its multiple problems, and the great historiographical neglect that characterized it. That is, it opened the horizon of a void to fill. And so I began to write in all forms and in almost all genres; passionately and with little literary value at first. Despite this I wrote constantly; and I also published. So much so that today I can say that in the end I reached my dream: I write and publish, therefore, I can feel like a writer. And this is independent of the success, triumph, or recognition I obtain from others. It doesn't matter if I write well or poorly, if my works are liked or not. The only important thing is that I finally reached my dream: To write! And little else matters.

So today I can validate the assertion: willpower, that willpower that doesn't come from outside, but rather arises from within and is capable of modifying circumstances; effort, confidence and obstinacy. But I also qualify: all these capacities directed toward the endeavor of reaching a realistic dream, something that is not impossible to achieve. Because all of this would have served me nothing if my dream had consisted of demolishing Mount Everest with my hands.



Effort, confidence and obstinacy. Like nature itself.

LONELINESS AND SADNESS



Sad nakedness of a melancholic autumn

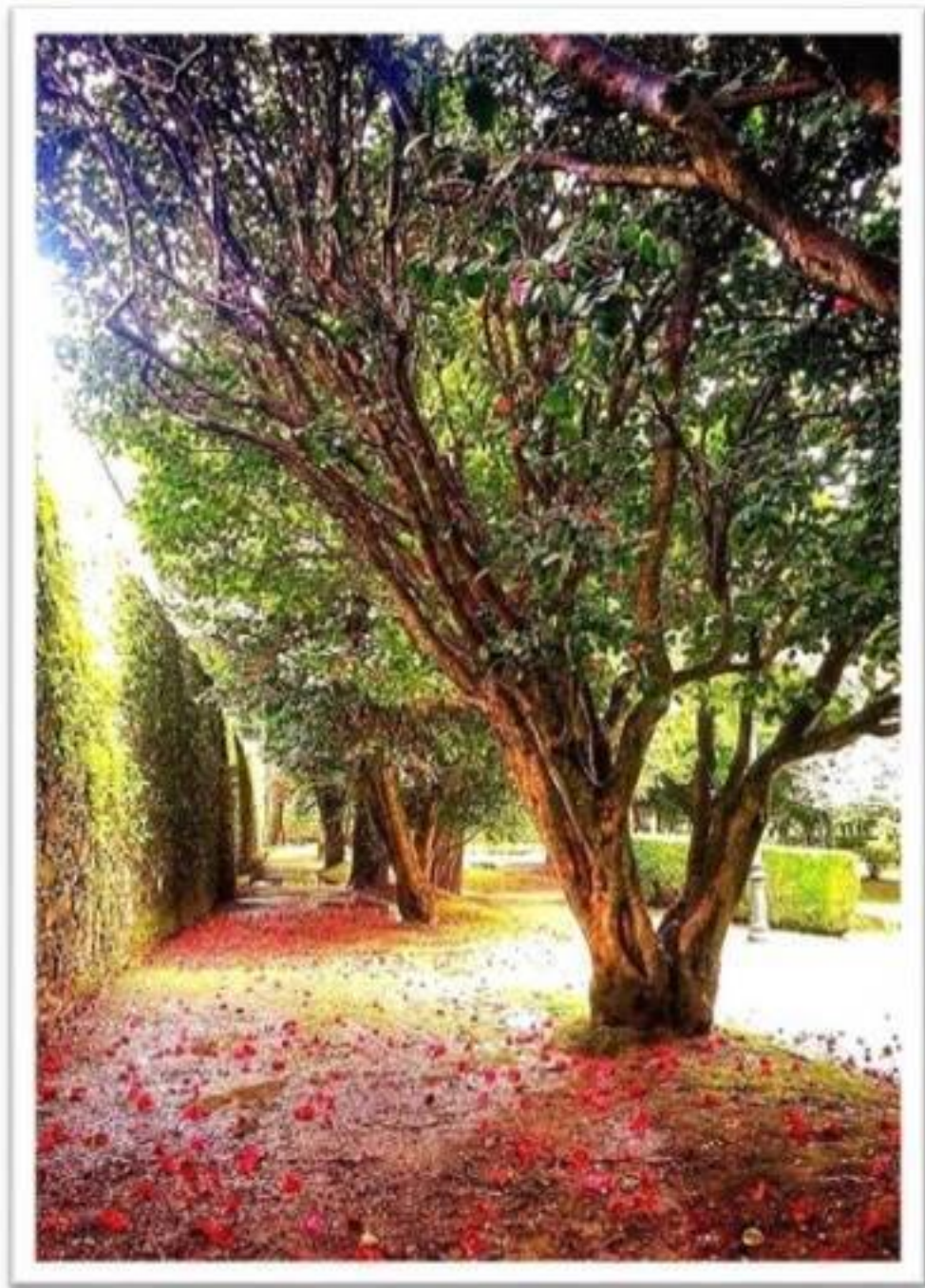
I am not a friend of crowds, so I usually avoid all those events or spectacles that promote them. And this is not an attitude I have sought deliberately, I simply don't usually find myself comfortable among the masses. But I don't know why this happens to me. Something that on the other hand causes me significant inconveniences, since it is not usually a sentiment understood by those around me. This usually generates about my person a concept of oddness: "not very social" in the best of cases, when not that business of thinking that one deliberately keeps one's distance, as if one felt above others: "Who does he think he is!?" And although in reality I don't intend for my way of acting to be situated in either of the two options, this matters little, because one is not how one believes oneself to be, but how others see you.

Flaubert said: "Whenever I endure the spectacle of the crowd for a long time I sink into a well of sadness that suffocates me." Seneca sought a more positive meaning to that longing for solitude: "Nothing is as beneficial as tranquility, speaking very little with others and very much with oneself [because] no one will keep silent about what they have heard."

I do not intend to arrogate to myself any hint of philosophical attitude when I resort to thinkers or writers who in some way have maintained, defended or exercised this attitude as the base form of their life. I only intend to share that sought solitude has not been something so strange over time, and even that for certain lines of thought it has been considered a highly valuable choice. Therefore, perhaps, I should not be too concerned about my tendency toward solitude. But in exchange, there is something that does worry me, and that is the permanent feeling of melancholy and sadness that in my case it usually entails. And although sometimes that sadness can be confused with a certain "virtue," there are not few thinkers who like Montaigne consider it a harmful, cowardly and base quality. The Stoics forbade it to their wise men.

I believe the question lies in understanding that sadness is inevitable on many occasions, it even sometimes allows one to appreciate the conditions of life with greater objectivity than seen from a light and/or exaggerated joy. That's without counting all those cases in which the affliction is so extreme that it stuns and overwhelms and then only tears serve as an escape valve to relieve the pressure. But in any case, following the Aristotelian principle, I believe that in the middle point equilibrium must be found. Neither permanent sadness, nor excessive joy. Complaints and laments, the minimum, because "light sorrows are expressed, great ones are silenced"—as Seneca said—, and if they are light and bearable, they will also be mediocre, so then it lacks utility to express these feelings. And if they are great, better to silence them because as I have already considered, only tears can relieve the latter.

The most important thing, then, to maintain equilibrium will always be to be convinced of our ideas and know how to protect ourselves from the neuroses of others: never enter into dialogues of madmen (nervous, exaggerated, who ask for the impossible), and always seek when possible that enriching solitude that helps us to know ourselves. If this entails a minimum of melancholy or sadness, we should consider it as the bearable price that must be paid.



Dreams! Like that fog that envelops you whispering to the senses

YOU NEVER WIN AN ARGUMENT



It blooms like the wild rose in peace and tranquility.

Few things are as evident as the total certainty that it is not possible to win any argument. Why insist on demonstrating to someone that they are wrong? Are we going to please them with that? The best way to get something positive out of an argument is by avoiding it.

I acknowledge that for a long time I have been a great arguer. I used to do it over anything. I would expound, rather hurl, the reasons that supposedly supported my position, and I was not capable of accepting that these were not accepted. Why wasn't my opponent convinced by such clear and evident arguments? —I would ask myself after each dialectical tournament in question—. The final

result was always usually a state of chronic irritation and the sure conviction that despite all that unbridled display I never managed to get my opponent to change their opinion.



Things are as they are...

The approach to the question began to change in my mind in light of some readings of Schopenhauer—Eristic Dialectic—which I came to for purely academic reasons. In them the philosopher maintained the theory that in human arguments one rarely aspires to find the truth, since what really matters to the contenders is to "win" the controversy in question; that is, to appear at least that one is right. And he was so convinced of this that the thinker came to write an entire treatise on the art of being right; that is, the art of knowing how to win controversies whether one is right or not. He called this art "Eristic Dialectic."

Then, if in most arguments we are not seeking to find a path of light and truth, what is arguing worth? What use is it to be left with the conviction of having told "a few home truths" if the only thing we achieve with it is to irritate the opponent, without managing to make them change their opinion? It is preferable more than speaking, to learn to refrain from speaking. If we argue we may sometimes achieve "triumph," but it will always be an empty triumph, because we will never win the will of the opponent.



Like parallel lines is the art of being right

I have been able to experience this situation on numerous occasions. Leaving with the conviction of having made things clear, of having achieved the objectives I had set for myself, and despite all of this, being left with the complete conviction that that victory did not exist simply because of the animosity and resentment I had created against myself.

We would avoid many of these situations if we knew how to listen. Letting the other person expound their approaches and convictions without interrupting them will not only calm them, but will also flatter them by the mere fact of feeling heard. But what can also happen is that in that situation of attentive listening we find points on which we agree, and even erroneous approaches in our own positions.

Then the important thing will always be to behave honestly with ourselves and be capable of modifying our positions if this proves necessary. It should not weigh on us to grant ourselves time to rethink things; to suspend the appointment or meeting in which the argument is taking place, or even to abandon it definitively even at the risk of appearing to be wrong or having "lost" the argument. Because what we should never forget is that the only way to come out winning in an argument is by avoiding it. And there is nothing else to say regarding this matter!



Flow like water: avoid the argument



Silence and solitude: eternal values

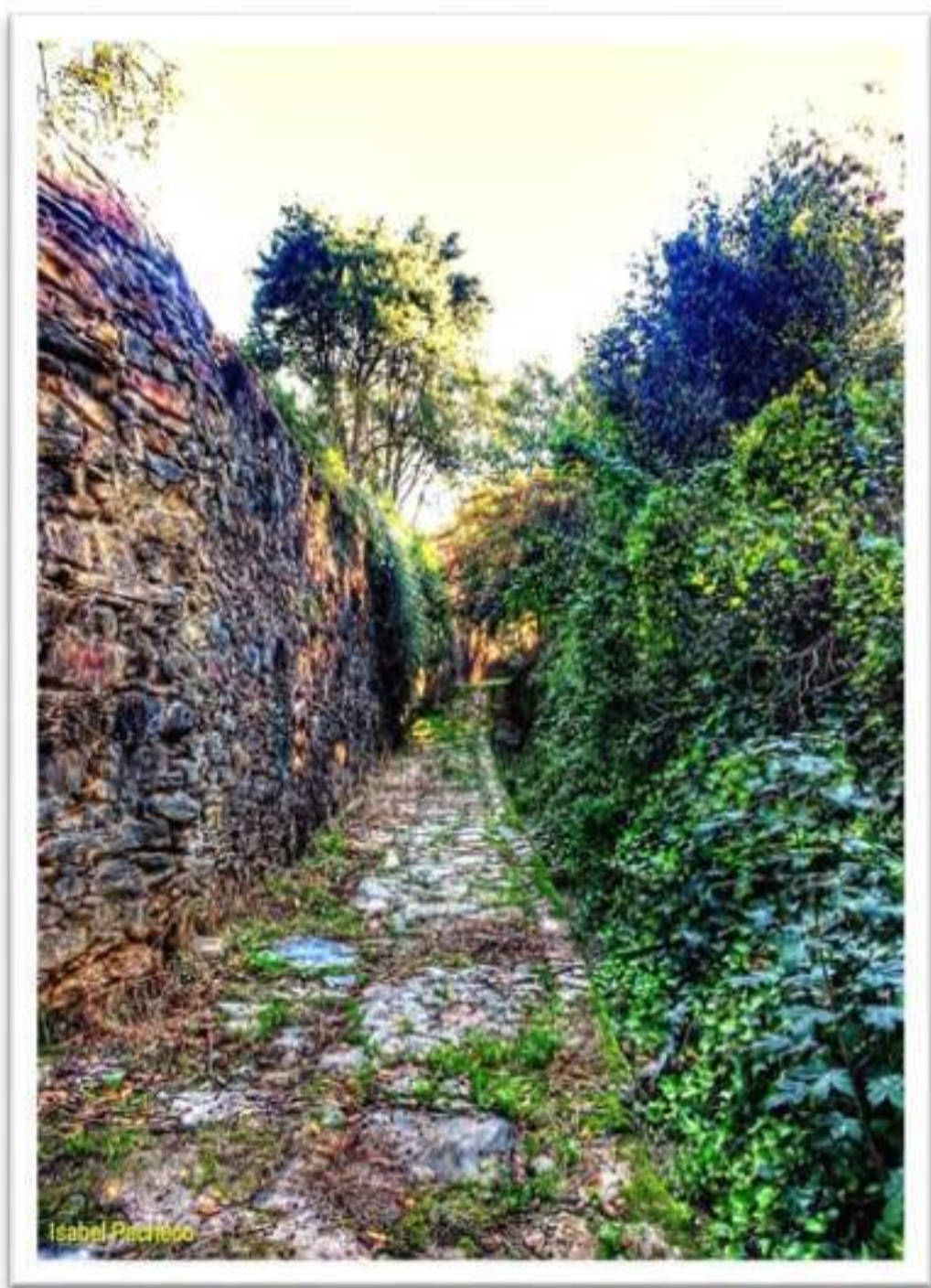
THE VALUE OF TIME

I am often surprised to see with how much care young people work, among them my own children who are those I can best observe due to their closeness. It is incredible how all their eagerness passes and develops through and around their daily work. They get up early, have their breakfast and rush off to occupy their work position: workdays that for one reason or another will never mean less than twelve hours a day of dedication, when not up to twenty-four in the cases of their mandatory shifts.

And so they have come to consider as the most normal thing in the world that business of hardly being able to be with their partners or their family, not enjoying their homes, not having time for their leisure, not resting... And when I ask them why they do it, they only know how to respond that they need the money and now is their time to work: "When the wind blows you must winnow!"—they agree with the Manchegan proverbs.

I look at myself in an exercise of retroactivity in time, and I can realize that they are doing nothing but repeating the same thing I did years ago: work and work to be able to have. But have what... More money, more whims, more material things?; in short, to have more of everything with which to live "better."

Many years have had to pass before I could question whether that eagerness to work without rest was worth it, especially if I consider what I lost in exchange. And I missed so many things: my children's childhood, the serene afternoons sharing time with my companion and wife, those books that remained unread, so many places I didn't visit...



Be like nature; work slowly just like the passage of time

Henry David Thoreau, perhaps the first ecological thinker and writer, said that "the true value of a house was the amount of that which is called life that must be given in exchange, immediately or in the long run." A quote that by extension has been disseminated as a maxim to define that the true value of things must be measured according to the time of life they take from us. And I believe that this assertion constitutes a great truth. Because the time we have to live is the only thing that is really given to us.

It was Seneca, the Cordovan philosopher, one of the pioneers in that business of defending how regrettable it is to waste time—our life time, in short—and with what ease we do it. How many moments are snatched from us? How many do we lose? How many do we let slip away? And yet our

life time is the only thing we truly have. But most of it we squander doing things badly; that is, doing things different from what we should be doing. Who grants value to time? Who appreciates a day?

How much we would gain if we were capable of embracing our hours. In work hours trying not to rush it, not disdain it, but rather trying to obtain from it the greatest satisfaction. Afterwards, the rest of the time we should dedicate to life.

Spending most of the time, dedicating the best part of life to earning money to enjoy a supposed more than questionable freedom during the worst part of it (old age) recalls that person who went to the Americas to make a fortune in order to be able to return and live a poet's life. He should have retired to his room and his desk in the first place!



The authentic value of things is measured by the amount of life that must be given in exchange; immediately or in the long run

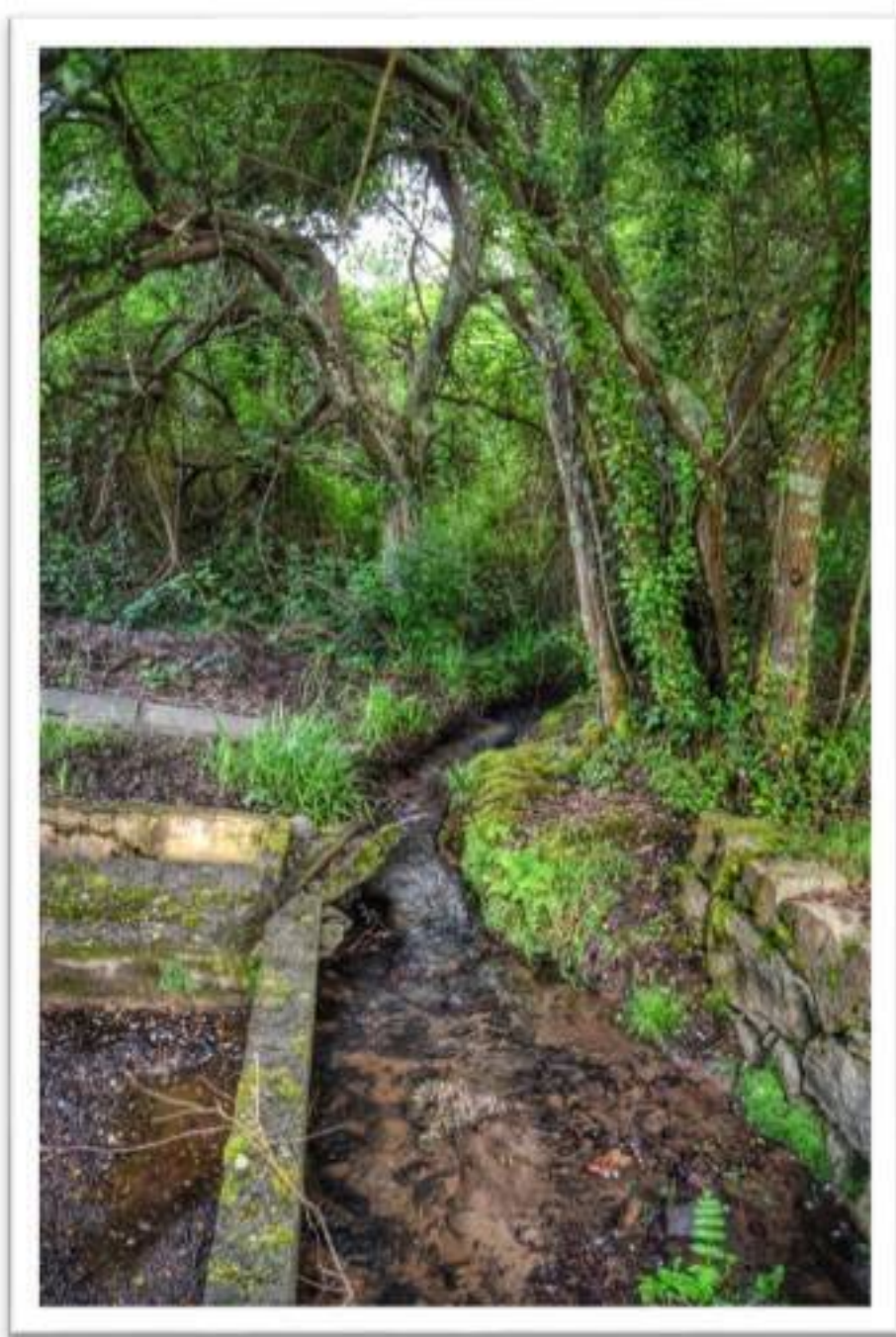
LIFE IN GRAY

In the essential I believe that there are only two ways to see the world: in a positive way and with optimism, or in a negative and pessimistic way. And that all human beings, without exception, place ourselves in one position or the other without there being middle ground.



There are only two ways to see the world: in a positive sense, or in a negative sense.

I am one of the latter, of those who tend to see things in a pessimistic and negative way. And what has this brought me after a lifetime of seeing things this way? Well, on most occasions, an unnecessary suffering that the only thing it achieved was to make many of my days a kind of hell from which the only thing I wanted was to get out: To get out, to escape from the days of my own life, yes! How horrible! As if those granted to me were endless!



Let us not contemplate life only as if it were gray in color

I believe that one of the worst perspectives that can befall a human being is that of seeing life only in a gray way. How many illusions, how many joys wasted! In reality, this way of seeing things only indicates that we live in a very restricted circle of our own possibilities. Because all our potential, all our strength, resides in our mind. And it is incredible the amount of garbage we put into it: worries, anxieties, nostalgia for the past, calculations for the future and the fears that they themselves feed... In short, why continue; that great human mass addicted to the negative knows well what I am talking about, in reality they are, we are, specialists in that business of flooding our mind with worries depriving it of a great part of its power.

Faced with this, the normal thing would be to possess the necessary strength to allow ourselves the luxury of not having a single negative thought. But of course, this is easy to say, almost impossible to achieve for those of us who are like this.

Eastern philosophy maintains that the way of thinking is a habit, and that, therefore, like all habits, it can be changed. But it is a process that needs training and time, because the only thing we truly have control over is our mind, and if we have known how to "educate it" to think negatively, we can also "un-educate it" to teach it to think positively. Although it is not an easy task, but rather the opposite, it is more like an authentic task of titans... But not impossible. Let's see:

Why for a negative person can any trifle—an opinion, a pain, bad weather—become a personal drama? Well simply because we don't know how to control our opinion about these facts, since we cannot control the facts themselves. In reality, the only thing that separates happy and optimistic people from sad and pessimistic ones is the way of facing the facts, of interpreting and processing life's circumstances. When one manages to control one's thoughts and the way of reacting to life's events, one begins to control one's destiny; that is, one begins to choose what one wants to be and how one wants to live.



Choose how you want to be and how you want to live

But how to control negative thoughts, how to avoid such overwhelming and harmful reactions. Well I only know one way: with an enormous will to change, and with a practice bordering on obstinacy, in addition to with an analysis as rational as possible of each situation.



Avoid negative thoughts with the strength of your willpower

Personally one of the cases that most affect and influence my own negativity is the way of perceiving and confronting the problems that arrive, or those that I think are going to arrive, because on many occasions those that worry me so much then don't occur in reality. But if when a real problem arrives I am capable of stopping to analyze to the point of asking myself how I should confront it and how I have to act, the relief that arises is immediate. And it always comes through the same action routine: faced with the problem one must focus and not get distracted; that is, confront what the causes are and the immediate applicable remedies and not get lost in the weeds with what has no immediate remedy—a gangrenous leg is cut off, afterwards one thinks about the prosthesis—.

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