

All Kinds of Good

A project about *Diversity*

Chapter 1: On expression

Sitting down to write is a slow, gradual, and by no means easy process, particularly for someone fascinated with the voracious vertigo of improvising, of generating new patterns in an instant, of loving them, of playing with them and of simply dismissing them immediately afterwards. Sitting down to write involves reflection, developing an idea in depth, searching for the generation of certain coherence that can be sustained across time. Improvising is somehow going out hunting, and sitting down to write is agriculture. In my personal experience, for sitting down to write, in this case about music, there must be something that affects you deeply and that triggers the search for calmness and reflection. We need to halt voracity and direct all our energy to the development of a specific object.

The act of spending long hours searching for ways to solve a problem generated by yourself—in this case, a musical problem—that has no significance at all for anyone is often driven by a deep internal event, an emotion, a sensation or an idea that emerges and sustains itself through time, exerting pressure on our consciousness. Thus, the expressive act (in this case, the musical act) will symbolically represent the inner conflict in the world and, simultaneously, the world in the inner conflict, and this is why the moment when you find the correct way to satisfactorily connect both of them is so rewarding, irrespective of the means used (auditory, visual, literary, bodily, etc.).

The greater the pressure on consciousness, the greater the search to express the conflict in a symbolic manner is. The mechanism masterfully described in *The Tale-Tell Heart* by E. Allan Poe is the one that, in my opinion, underlies every expressive act. Of course, I am neither referring to the crime nor the guilt but to the process of feeling pressed by an internal event that oppresses our consciousness and to the subsequent relief felt when it is eventually expressed.

In his book *A Treatise of Human Nature* the Scottish philosopher David Hume states: *Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them* [p.416] arguing that desire and beliefs are the roots of every human act and not our intellect. Not only do I agree with this, but I also think that desire and beliefs themselves stem from need. I would like to define need as an occurrence of the subject with three main characteristics: need is internal, inevitable and appears involuntarily.

When the biological mandate of the body (or of any living organism) to keep working properly is felt, the need we call “hunger,” together with the subsequent relentless search for food, appears in our consciousness. If we have stored food, the possibility of satisfying this need as desired gives room to think about how to satisfy it. Thus, the more elaborate modes of nourishment are a symbol of that comfort, of that peacefulness. From the need for food we turn to the desire of some specific meal to satisfy not only the biological mandate but also our own consciousness.

Is expression a need in the same way as breathing, feeding, evacuation, etc. are? In other words, is it an internal, involuntary and inevitable event? Eating, evacuating what has been eaten, breathing are all acts reflecting needs which if neglected, we run the risk of ceasing to exist, and it is there where their undeniable relevance lies. Yet there are other acts reflecting phenomena, which, although unrelated to survival, are equally necessary, and it is this second category that the expressive act might belong to.

By way of example and before turning directly to the analysis of expression, we could identify sexuality as a need that has no direct relationship with personal survival (although it is for our genes, of course). The importance of sexuality can be observed, for example, in the religious sphere, where the negation of sexuality is taken as a sacrifice similar to retreating from the world; this is how religiously ordained people distance themselves from the rest of society. As is widely known, this happens in some of the most popular religions of both the East and the West. Although there are religions that do not suppress sexuality, there is no religion that does not try to impose rules on it one way or the other.

Sexuality is obviously an internal phenomenon of individuals and scientific studies would seem to confirm that sexuality is determined, at least partially, by genetic material and also during the biological development of the individual in the mother’s uterus (exposition to hormones, for example). Thus, sexuality would also be something involuntary and inevitable. There is much information available on non-reproductive sexual behavior, both heterosexual and homosexual. The latter has been documented in at least 471 species, especially those identified as “social species”, such as sea birds and different mammals like dolphins, dogs, primates and hominids (monkeys and gorillas).¹

Going back to the topic of expression, we could observe the cry of a newborn when he is hungry or the barking of a dog when it feels threatened. According to the two different kinds or levels of consciousness given in the examples above, these expressive acts would qualify as a need which in turn reflects other needs: the baby’s need to be fed and the dog’s need to ensure survival. However, those expressions could also be interpreted as instinctive, simple reflexes of the nervous system arising from years of evolution and this could therefore affect, a bit at least, how we assess them. They would thus simply result from a prior need and wouldn’t be a need in itself.

1 Bagemihl, Bruce (1999). *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity*. St Martin’s Press. P. 673

So what happens with those human expressions that are more complex, including those that we call art? Are they a need? From an anthropological perspective, at least since 40,000 years ago, there is clear evidence of expression and of artistic expression. An example of this is the Löwenmensch (Lion Man), a figurine with human body and lion head sculpted in ivory coming from a mammoth found in the Hohlenstein-Stadel cave in Germany in 1939. Besides, on 3 December 2014 an article from the magazine *New Scientist* speaks of art of about 200,000 or 300,000 years of age. The pieces in question are engravings made on freshwater clams found in Trinil, Indonesia, by the Dutch geologist Eugene Dubois in 1890 and, an interesting tidbit is that they have been stored in a museum in Leiden for more than 100 years.

What these anthropological findings show is that, though the date and the species may vary (40,000 vs. 300,000, Homo Sapiens vs. Homo Erectus) it is clear that the expressive act and, in particular, the artistic expressive act, is part of ourselves since the moment we start being ourselves, which would let us think that it is inherent to the human experience, that is to say, a need.

Apart from these examples, considering different scenarios might also help in our analysis. If under inhuman circumstances in which the individual's life is denigrated, oppressed and the chances of survival are indeed very limited we still can find expressive acts and among them those which could qualify as artistic, the idea that expression is a need would be more tenable. Unfortunately, to find such circumstances, it is not necessary to go back in time very far. Recent history is full of examples.

Considering that I am writing this in February, which is the month of the African-American history in the US, we could take slavery and the African diaspora as an example and as one that has a direct impact on our present culture. Violence, hunger, in short, the inhuman conditions suffered by West African women, boys, girls and men all over the American continent are known worldwide. In the same light, the chacarera (Argentine folk music), milonga, landó (Peruvian folk music), candombe, samba, marimba, cumbia, tamborito, bomba, rumba, work songs, ragtime are also known worldwide as are all their more modern descendants: bossa nova, tango, jazz, blues, rock and roll, salsa, and so on up to the different versions of today's popular music, from death or trash metal, through Hip Hop, to the electronic music of Korean pop idols. While having turned into an industry, the expression of this abyss of human suffering echoes up to the present.

Even more recently in our history is WWII and, particularly, the sad, revolting and hopefully not ever repeated history of concentration and extermination camps. The prisoners of said camps are known to have used music as a way of cultural survival and psychological resistance. The song Die Moorsoldaten (Song of the Peat Bog Soldiers) is a good example of this. It was created in 1933 at the Börgermoor concentration camp by the miner Johann Esser and the actor Wolfgang Langhoff with tunes by Rudi Goguel. In his description of the first presentation of the song on 28 August 1933, Rudi Goguel describes that towards the end of the song, as the chorus was repeated and gained strength, even the SS officers sang together with the prisoners because "*apparently they*

also viewed themselves as the Peat Bog Soldiers". Two days afterwards the song was forbidden.

These examples show that, apparently, in any circumstance in which a human being may be involved, there will necessarily exist some kind of expression.

If I am allowed to skip from the anthropological and historical sphere to that of psychology in order to round off the idea, I believe that the expressive act is inherent to the human experience because it has its roots in the depths of the internal world of the individual, in the involuntary and unavoidable flow of our consciousness. Freud used the verbal expression of his patients as a central part of his method. Likewise, in *The Red Book*, Jung shows how pictorial art let him approach the darkest parts of his consciousness.

The definition of consciousness greatly exceeds these pages, but its flow is something that every human being experiences, to a greater or a lesser extent, and, for that reason, I consider it interesting as subject for reflection. The elements taking part in this flow (ideas, emotions, imaginations, etc.) establish such complex relationships among each other that they are very difficult to predict or control; this is why the expressive act is so important. Expression and, particularly, artistic expression, is the central tool human beings have to handle the conflicts daily arising from this flow. To clarify even more my opinion about the relevance of expression and, in particular, of artistic expression, I would like to quote this phrase by Pablo Picasso: "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life."

As a separate comment, I would like to point out that the complexity in the study of consciousness lies mainly in the complexity presented by biological phenomena to be covered by concrete theoretical formulations that make them predictable or quantifiable. It is much easier to develop mathematical models in the study of particle physics to predict the existence of certain particles (as it happened with the prediction and later confirmation of the Higgs boson) than in the study of the human brain or the climate phenomena. The complex relationships present in our consciousness could thus be a reflection of the intricate biological process generating them.

The foregoing is enough to reasonably state that expression, the expressive act in general and the artistic expression in particular, can be thought as an essential need of man and, above all, of the modern man (the last 5,000 years abound with art).

If we assert that expression is a human need, every act of expression is, as a logical consequence, valid and therefore worthy of respect, whether it agrees or not with our worldview. Suppressing an act of expression is to forbid a human to be human, and that is why freedom of expression should be, undoubtedly, one of the cornerstones of any modern society.

The freedom of expression is not something that can be discussed or negotiated in any way, and I am stating this on logical grounds rather than as a demagogic declamation of ethical values. Although it might not seem clear at first sight, the act of expressing oneself is as necessary as the act of eating. Thus, if we give up or suppress our freedom

of expression in exchange for economic well being (to give an example) sooner or later the conflict will arise.

Having established the importance that the expressive act has and, as a consequence, how important it is to defend the freedom of expression, I would like now to refer specifically to the expressive act that I am responsible for.

Chapter 2: Analyzing the problem

In this second chapter, I would like to go back to the topic of the first paragraphs of the previous chapter where I stated that to sit down to write there must be something that affects you deeply. The conflict which has been and still is recurrent in the flow of my consciousness, and which has kept me for hours in front of the piano and the computer is that of *Diversity*. It is specifically our way of dealing with the other, particularly when the other is perceived as incompatible with oneself.

This problem of diversity is central because we have arrived at a point where we have used, as a result of the way in which we develop socially and economically, all or most of the available space, and the little space remaining is about to be used. To quote only one example, a research study published in January 2016 in *the Anthropocene Journal* states that there is no place on Earth which is free of plastic contamination. Anywhere on Earth that might come to mind at this moment is already contaminated with plastic, whether it is visible or micro-particle level contamination. Besides, we are several years far from being truly able to expand beyond our planet. There have been different proposals, such as colonies in the moon and in Mars, and the most realistic proposal of all seems to be the one that involves expanding the experience at the International Space Station and developing structures to live in Earth's orbit. In fact, the researcher and employee from the *NASA Ames Research Center* Al Globus argues that in fifty years there could exist the first orbital human colony. All these possibilities are (luckily) placed in the second half of the 21st Century. According to United Nations' estimates in a document from 29 July 2015, it is calculated that the world population will be 9.7 billion in 2050. It is clear that we are going to live in an overpopulated, super-diverse and super-connected world, in ever more reduced and—probably—very contaminated spaces.

Having been fortunate to travel widely to different places both in the East and the West over the last ten years, I have seen firsthand the impact of overpopulation and of the economy of constant growth on both society and the ecosystem. The simple logical problem presented by the wish to foster growth eternally as the only economic development tool, without carrying out—to give just an example—improvements in the quality of demand, is shown itself in traffic jams both in Los Angeles and in Beijing and in the sad contamination of the air in so beautiful places such as Burbank or the Summer Palace.

The discovery of a cheap and very efficient but highly contaminating form of energy allowed for the appearance of a level of wealth never seen before in the history of the

world that, instead of solving all the material problems of humankind (that it could have solved and it can solve), has generated the greatest level of inequality in the history of the human race.

The level of conflict that this reality generates is high and has a dramatically negative impact, mainly on the psychology of precisely the generation that will have to live at the most complex moment of convergence of the following factors: overpopulation, little space, serious environmental problems (water shortage included), and reduced economic and social development possibilities due to their concentration in only a few people, without considering the proliferation of nuclear weapons. A ticking (atomic) time bomb.

To illustrate the psychological impact that this reality has on my generation I would like to quote the World Health Organization's suicide data report: *In 2012, suicide was the second leading cause of death among 15-29 year olds globally.* Another figure that, in my opinion, is revealing regarding the individual emotional situation amid all this is the number of overdose deaths. According to a report from the US National Institute of Drug Abuse, in 2001-2014 the number of deaths caused by legal drugs abuse such as Benzodiazepines increased fivefold; as for heroin, it increased sixfold. I take the United States as example, because this country is still the first world power; however, in an article published on its website on 3 November 2015, the Boston University School of Public Health states that this is a worldwide trend and that there is an urgent need for further detailed studies on the issue.

There is a phrase by Carl Jung which says “*Every form of addiction is bad, no matter whether the narcotic be alcohol or morphine or idealism.*” In line with this statement, as regards politics, we have witnessed the re-emergence of far right and far left parties in Europe. This can also be observed in the gradual but continued exacerbation of irrational and non-conciliatory positions shown by traditional parties under bicentennial democracies such as the American one, whose government gridlock due to lack of agreement in the legislative power has been, in more than one occasion, proof of, among other things, a clear emotional imbalance when it comes to interacting with the diversity of opinion, thus choosing to affect the whole country over giving in to reach an agreement. Another example is what has happened within families and groups of friends in my native Argentina where, unfortunately, many people have decided to disregard strong emotional ties as a consequence of ideological differences, much in the same way as addicts who stay away from friends and relatives when the latter bring to light their addiction problem, even when this revelation stems from their love and concern.

Another not so serious issue—but, in my view, equally relevant—in which one can perceive the emotional conflict generated by the 21st-century reality is, without going any further, the extremely high level of violence observed in different forums, comment pages, and social media in general. We just need to connect to the Internet to verify this. Within these emotional problems I would definitely like to include all forms of violence, no matter the reason to inflict it: religion, sexuality, political ideologies, melanin differences (skin color), etc. Violence is not the normal and constant mode of behavior of any mammal; it always appears for a reason, this is why, in modern human societies,

especially those of free democratic developed countries with strong economies, I consider that violence mainly results as a consequence of emotional conflicts.

I would like to make a separate comment to point out that violence has never solved a conflict satisfactorily throughout human history if as satisfactory solution we understand the general well-being of all those involved in the conflict once it has been solved. Being a witness of the intellectual, artistic, scientific, and philosophical capacities of the human species, it is my personal conviction that, if a solved conflict cost human lives—even if it cost only one—, we have fallen into a simplistic act and it has not been satisfactorily solved. Killing is comparatively much simpler than thinking, reflecting and talking with an enemy.

The vast diversity of humankind makes it inevitable for opposing thoughts, interests, ideas, and emotions to clash. In addition, there is the pressure of a system that has known how to exclude 90% of the world population from its wealth and, nevertheless, a characteristic of our species is, as any superior mammal (and hominid in particular), to live in groups.

Basically, this is the conflict that has occupied my mind for a long time now and which has forced me to sit down to write and to try to develop a project to show that, if the formal structures allows for it, the diversity of apparently incompatible elements can not only be a reality but, in this case, and granting myself the freedom to be totally subjective, I allow myself to express: “It may sound great!”

What was presented in this chapter made me wonder then about two issues. One related to the conflictive nature of *Diversity* in regards to human society and the other one related to the present socio-economic system. In the next chapter, I will deal with the former.

Chapter 3: Possible solution

Which can be the answer to the conflict generated by this diversity? As the philosopher Peter Singer has pointed out more than once, the ethical problem of how to deal with diversity is solved by the golden rule that promotes the egalitarian consideration of interests. Singer often uses the following religious postulates by way of example: *Love your neighbor as yourself* Jesus said that was the Great Commandment of the Gospels; *What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor* stated Rabi Hillel; Confucius summed up his lessons in the following phrase: *What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others*. The great Hindu epic named The Mahabharata says: *Let no man do to another that which would be repugnant to himself*. This is no news. However, I believe it is now important to add to this the technical information that genetic science has provided over the past few years. Since the Human Genome Project (HGP) was completed in 2003, I think we can state the following: *The other is a concrete possibility of oneself, no matter their skin color, no matter their place of birth.*

According to Dr. Craig Venter’s statements in an article from the 4 September 2007 edition of the New York Times, we humans share—on average—99,5% of our genes.

Differences among human beings are minimal as regards their primary constituent element. But not only do we share most of our genetic material, but also the process of gene formation is the same. According to the book *Understanding Human Genetic Variation* published by the US National Institute of Health (NIH) “*Homo Sapiens is one continuously variable, interbreeding species*”. Enough proof should be epidemics and their cures, which make no distinction regarding the skin color or the bank account status of individuals (well, maybe the cures do make some distinction).

Perceiving the other as a possible “I” that I was not but could have possibly been may be a technical reality and, at the level of human experience, it requires the development of the ability to question everything that constitutes us but, above all, our sense of existence. Understanding that if I had been the son of those parents and I had been raised that way, “I” would undoubtedly be that person that is in front of me, no matter who he or she is; tall, short, black, brown, yellow, green, blue, red or white, rich or poor, pacifist or violent, xenophobic, sexist, a killer or a philanthropist, a rapist or a saint.

If the individual acted in a very destructive way against himself or his surroundings, trying to get closer to another reality, *his* reality—that could very well have been mine though by chance it was not—can possibly and truly help me see the root of the problem that led to the emergence of an individual that we observe as “terrible” (being it an internal medical problem, a socio-economic problem or any other kind of problem of the individual) so as to be able to help, or if needed, apply a form of punishment that is really useful and not merely punitive. Wasting human beings and their proved potential, there being slightly above 7 billion in the whole Universe seems quite unreasonable to me, not to say just plain stupid.

If we reflect reasonably, without getting carried away by emotional impulses, we will be able to quickly reach the conclusion that no newborn is an armed robber, a rapist, a killer, a corrupt person or someone who has set off an atomic bomb on a civilian population; and we were all newborns once. And if all newborns arouse tenderness and are vulnerable, all of us were once tender and vulnerable, and needed a lot of help to keep being alive; and I believe we should not forget this. The problem is that we do not remember this, then it is not a real life experience and it does not affect our emotions, thoughts and conscious decisions at present.

Our *self* is exclusively based on memory and continuity; that is why Alzheimer’s disease is so terrible: we do not die but stop *being*. The memory of the individual’s own past, its continuity and chronological order, together with the memory of the rest of the human beings around us, and the constant perception provided by the senses, which is associated with this individual and collective memory is in general what in my view gives us the sensation of “*Self*”.

Without memory, we do not know who we are. If hypothetically we didn’t have any kind of memories and couldn’t either retain the information received from the senses (light, sound, touch, smell and taste) to be able to process it, we would practically stop living, though still alive and on our feet. In fact, we wouldn’t know that we are standing on our feet because we wouldn’t feel the floor, and we wouldn’t be aware that we are breathing

because we wouldn't feel the air or our own bodily movements. We know that the senses can be easily tricked into, and that memory is much less than foolproof, then, why seek shelter in a construction (the Self) made from such weak elements? Because of fear of storms and lack of choice. The perception we have of ourselves is there, and it is in this way that we work daily, but, as a bent pen seen through a glass of water, it is an illusion. That is, something which is and which is not at the same time (first we should define what *being* means, but that is another story). Likewise, *up and down* do not exist in the Universe, but they are real in our planet: *down* is going towards the Earth's core and *up* is going in the opposite direction. *Up and down* are and are not real at the same time (we should also define *reality*, shouldn't we?). When a magician disappears from one place and appears in another, it is an illusion and we know there is a trick. For our senses there occurred an event that our reason tells us cannot happen, and in the impossibility of finding a causal relation dwells the motive of our astonishment. It occurred and did not occur at the same time. Which is the trick of the *Self*, of consciousness? I do not know, but I would love that science and philosophy, if possible, could show me what is behind the curtains before my time to see (and feel and act in) this show ends. But on the other hand, we should consider that if an eye cannot watch itself and a tooth cannot bite itself, the mind, the consciousness might meet the same fate. Being part of Nature, our intellect should have some limitation, right?

Having reached the conclusion that to solve the problem posed by diversity it is important to slow down, to relativize the *Self*, and not to take so seriously our own emotions, thoughts, ideas, and wishes but rather see them as a very useful illusion, though no more than that, thus considering all our emerging elements as equal as those of the other (any other), I came across the problem of how to represent this symbolically through music. I not only wanted to represent diversity but also the conflicts generated by it and the possibility of solving them. Joining everything under the same topic, developing only one piece of music of long duration would have been exactly going against this idea. Respecting the diversity of musical pieces which I had already written seemed much more interesting to me.

The problem then was not composing new music but rather how to use those pieces, which in themselves reflect different affective states, in order to symbolize the issue of *Human Diversity* as well. If the main symbolic objects had already been decided, the only option was at the formal level, in the structures, that is, in the arrangements.

A melody bearing a nostalgic character close to tango would certainly take its final shape if the instrument singing it is a bandoneon. Well, finding another instrument (and player) to substitute the bandoneon and interpret that character, but without losing their own personality reflects in some way this idea of trying to be sensitive and *see in the other a possibility of one's own self*, taking the other's emotion or problem and making an effort to perceive it as our own but without being negligent with who we are, trying to be simultaneously in and out of the conflict. The Erhu, an antique Chinese bowed string instrument, skillfully played by Wen Bin, in that case provided the answer.

This idea has been somewhat frustrating at a certain point due to my deficiencies as a musician. I know nothing about Hindu musical tradition or about the musical tradition of

the Middle East. Actually, if I start naming the things I have no knowledge about, I could write more than Madeleine Scudéry, and the real problem is what I don't know that I don't know, but that is another story.

However, I don't believe that limitations are a valid element to suppress action, but rather a way to organize it. First, though, we have to acknowledge such limitations and accept them. When we were challenged by the limit imposed by the lack of air in the outer space, the option has not been to dismiss human exploration but rather to find the way to adapt our curiosity to this problem. So this is why I decided to adapt my project to the limitation imposed by my own knowledge.

Chapter 4: Translating all this into musical notes

As technically I only had at hand the tools from the three traditions I had the possibility of familiarizing with (the South American musical tradition— specifically that of Argentina—, the Chinese musical tradition, and the American musical tradition), to a greater or lesser extent, throughout my life, each of them turned into a central theme on which the arrangements of each piece had to be worked.

At the stylistic level, we could talk about tango, about polyrhythmic elements taken from the Argentine folk music, such as chacarera and zamba, elements of the Afro-Cuban music, jazz, harmonic elements of the Impressionist period, and instrumentations taken from the antique imperial Chinese Yayue music (雅樂) such as the Dizi flute (笛子), and the Xiao (簫) or much more antique ones, such as the lute named Pipa (琵琶), used to play music from the Tang dynasty known in Japan as *Togaku*, and also different bowed string instruments from the Huqin family (胡琴), like the previously mentioned Erhu (二胡), which was widely used to accompany different forms of what is known as Xiqu (戲曲) or Chinese Opera.

Each tradition is represented by a group of three songs. Out of these three songs, there are some that are closer to the center of the tradition, and others which are closer to the periphery or which directly converge with other traditions. The Chinese musical tradition is represented by the songs 橄欖樹 (*Olive Tree*), 媽媽的眼睛 (*Mother's Eyes*), and 酒鬼的告解 (*Confessions of a Drunk Man*); *El Ostinado*, *Carta a La Luna* (*Letter to the Moon*) and *Pino* (*Pine Tree*) represent the South American music (Argentine music); and finally, the songs *All Kinds of Good*, *Skydiving*, and *Perseverance* represent the African-American music or music from the USA. All compositions and arrangements forming part of this project are original pieces, except for the melody of *Olive Tree* (橄欖樹), which is a popular Taiwanese song. Literally speaking, I would like to dedicate a special paragraph to this popular Taiwanese song.

The original song is from the early 1970s and became famous in 1979 in the version by Chyi Yu (齊豫). The melody was written by a Taiwanese music composer named Li Tai

Xiang (李泰祥), and the lyrics were written by the writer and translator Chen Mao Ping (陳懋平), known by her nickname San Mao (三毛). According to the website *Digital Taiwan*, for Master Li the work symbolizes a life without restrictions, the complete freedom in a person's life, and the pursuit of an ideal of perfection. On the other hand, for San Mao her original poem made reference to her dreams and to Spain. It is important to mention that San Mao lived for a long time in Spain where she married José María Quero y Ruiz, and she was the one who made the translation from Spanish into Chinese of *Mafalda*, the famous cartoon created by the great Joaquín Salvador Lavado (Quino) —I came across this last piece of information after having made the arrangement and performed this version in public several times.

It was the beauty of the original melody which made me find the translation of the lyrics, and, when I finally understood the message, it affected me deeply, and that is the reason behind the desire to sing it in my own way and, as I actually don't sing, to make an arrangement. I would rather say nothing about the emotions underlying the other eight original songs, and let the listener's imagination run free.

Going back to the topic in question, another technical conflict that appeared when making the arrangements was that of reflecting with sounds the plurality of voices, the need for freedom of expression. The idea of truly giving space to the other and of building a community through the respect for the different expressions is finally reflected by another element which is intentionally common to the arrangements of the nine songs: *the main melodies are always shared by different instruments*. No instrument has the unique voice throughout a whole song. The exception is the lead melody of “*El Ostinado*”, however, in this song the central elements of expression are the moments of improvisation where the diversity of voices is indeed reflected. This also happens in the introduction where the rhythmic/melodic phrase is completed by the double bass, and also in the changes of section both in the song and in the solos, which are performed in unison by the three characters that support each other.

Another element that can be somewhat striking is that the three songs which are more connected to the American music do not have in their arrangements neither timbre nor rhythmic elements coming from the other two traditions involved in this album. This stems from the fact that my way of playing the piano—particularly regarding the Jazz aesthetics—, as well as my way of speaking English, has a very strong “accent” which, I honestly believe, is part of who I am, of the place I was born in. The presence of these deficiencies in my way of playing—this “accent”—makes it quite clear that I am a foreigner to this culture, and speaks very specifically of diversity, that is why I felt it was not necessary to include in the arrangements foreign elements to that sound, namely other foreign sounds other than my own sound at the piano.

I would not want to be misunderstood. Studying in a serious way, knowing the different traditions, investigating the elements—both musical and human—which are part of those traditions, listening to those who have played a key role in the development of the different styles is, in my view, the responsibility of those who state that they love music

and devote themselves to it. As Sir Isaac Newton said, *Standing on the shoulders of giants* we all are, and ignoring them only makes us dwarfed.

Moreover, I was born in 1982 in the city of La Plata, and not in Santiago del Estero, Vienna, New York, Shanghai, Havana, or Buenos Aires in 1930, and, although one can deeply love something, ignoring the limitations imposed by the surroundings and getting carried away by an idea or an image can be dangerous, generate frustration and, why not, cause suffering. I understand that what I say may be controversial, but I think that trying to be a pianist and composer of a jazz trio, a South American folk band or a tango orchestra is something problematic for various reasons. Twenty years in the 20th century is not the same as in the 18th century. From 1950 to 1970 there is much more than twenty years and from 1970 to 1990 there is even more. Jazz, tango, folklore, Cuban son, candombe, bossa nova, and many more styles which have been very popular worldwide throughout the 20th century are all kinds of music that, in my view, were born, have fully developed and fulfilled a historical function and, as a consequence, have concluded their processes (saying that they have died is too dramatic).

At present (if you are lucky), at the same school, a piano teacher will teach you *Prelude and Fugue in c minor* by J. S. Bach, as well as *Confirmation* by Charlie Parker, *A Fuego Lento* by Horacio Salgán, *La Pomeña* by Cuchi Leguizamón and Manuel Castilla, and *Loro* by Egberto Gismonti. These kinds of music are played live and listening to them (and playing them) is amazing, but if I would like, for example, to make a career as a Baroque music composer, I would be ignoring that it was a historical period of 150 years that started more or less in the 1600s with Iacopo Peri and concluded around 1750 with G.B. Draghi (Pergolesi). I would be composing museum music. I think that the same happens with the musical styles previously mentioned.

But there is something even much more important than anachronism, and it is that these kinds of music belong to certain people who were born, lived and died in a specific moment; it was their voice in the world, and I think I should be warmly respectful towards them. By way of example, blues, jazz and their derivatives were the voice of the African-American when they had no voice and received no respect from the society where they lived, but it can hardly be a real vehicle of expression for Generation Y or *Millennials*, as my generation is usually called. The sales lists, the number of views on *YouTube*, and the ticket sales from shows—being them pop, hip hop or electronic music—do no more than confirm what I'm saying.

A boy in his twenties who completed his course of study at a university, who studied with love and passion, transcribing hundreds of solos and practicing tirelessly for hours, is going to be a jazz, tango or folklore musician, much in the same way as Marta Argerich is a romantic pianist when playing Chopin, Liszt or Brahms. The former is classical music of the 20th-century, and the latter of the 19th-century classical repertoire. The interpretations and the improvisations differ, but the specific language has been already fully developed in their context of historical emergence. Nowadays, it only involves a new exhibition.

Listening to Cuchi Leguizamón, or Trilok Gurtu, Clifford Brown, Mariano Mores, Rubén González, Glenn Gould, Rubén Juárez, Freddy Mercury, a recording of the string quartet Budapest playing Beethoven's Opus 131 or Susana Baca singing María Landó is listening to classical music which is amazing, beautiful, sublime, but classical anyway. The present is another story. A famous saying has it that *any time in the past was better than the present*, and Luis Alberto Spinetta, the Argentine musician and poet, replied *tomorrow will be better*. None is better, the coming and the past time are different times, why to compete and to classify everything? The real problem for me is that the voices spreading at present end up being developed exclusively according to the economic profit they could generate. Sodas are a great business, but we all know that they are unhealthy. It is in this context that I find it fairly inadequate to state that I belong to some specific style, even if I would wish to, I can no longer do so. It is a mistake to state that I am a jazz, tango, folklore, or Cuban music pianist. Due to my own technical problems, of course, but also due to historical, social, cultural and geographic issues which would be a sheer lack of respect not to know about.

Thus, I have chosen to work creatively with the limitations imposed by the surroundings, which I consider much more meaningful. Instead of going against nature and the passing of time, I try to work with them. To put it some way, I try to be more ecological and sustainable. In soccer terms, the wish to run forty meters at full speed with the ball at your feet as if there were no players of the opposing team, will clearly lead you to lose the ball; on the other hand, knowing the rival, observing and learning their movements, training hard, and having some luck can lead you to dodge them and, if you are lucky enough, to score the best goal in the history of soccer world cups; or, if not, to pass the ball to whoever can do just that, which is also very important. I personally believe that it is limits that prompt creativity. This is why I decided to associate the stylistic and technical issues of music with certain conflicts, and to work accordingly, using the elements that I have at hand. Such a decision is a direct consequence of my way of seeing music and art in particular, but this is the topic of the last chapter.

To round off this brief analysis of the technical elements, it is relevant to consider that this is an album whose purpose is to explore the issue of *Diversity* and, in this regard, I found that using elements from the different styles that make up diversity is a very good tool to reflect that exploration. It is homework to enlarge the toolbox daily, and it is in part one of the great things that pursuing a job like this has, in which there always appear new things to learn.

Chapter 5: Why is the album free of charge?

My view is this:

The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge.

Knowledge and love are both indefinitely extensible; therefore, however good a life may be, a better life can be imagined. Neither love without knowledge, nor knowledge without love can produce a good life. Bertrand Russell – What I believe.

“If you want to get laid, go to college. If you want an education, go to the library”.

Popular quotation credited to Frank Vincent Zappa.

In chapter 3 I said that there were two questions, one referred to the conflictive character of *Human Diversity* and another referred to the current socio-economic system. In this chapter, the focus will be on this second one.

The socio-economic issue of humanity in the 21st century is a conflict that obviously far exceeds these pages; however, my decision to provide for free all the material in this project stems precisely from this issue. For this reason, I would like to briefly share some related thoughts that could make my decision a bit more understandable.

Man is definitely a social being, and our brain confirms this. The *neopallium* is the external layer of the human brain, covers both hemispheres, includes areas of the conscious thought, language, behavior, regulation of emotions and empathy ², and it is much larger in humans than in other mammals of similar size, like primates. To put it some way, we are biologically connected to be social. How and why this has evolved in this way may be a subject of discussion, but it is there and cannot be denied. It is clear that this characteristic, as well as all our peculiarities, must be related to the evolutionary process, to the adaptability of our species, and to the survival of our genome.

At some point, evolution gave way to progress. That is, from the slow and absolutely arbitrary natural process we turned, partly intentionally, partly stumbling through it, to a process developed by us humans. As Daniel Dennett always says, a clear example of human design is the bovine cattle. About 10,000 years ago we started domesticating the Aurochs as cattle. Its body was changed according to our (neither systematic nor scientific) selection, and now we have cows. Something similar occurred in the case of wolves and dogs. In 2001 Dr. Jacques Cohen, using the technique known as “*cytoplasmic transfer*”, was able to “save” infertile ovules in women with reproductive problems and, adding cytoplasm from a fertile woman, he could make them conceive. Babies who were born under that technique have today the genetic material of two women and a man. This technique was later prohibited by the US government agency known as Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Leaving the ethical discussion aside, it is important to know that for quite a long time now we have been ready to work scientifically on genetic material and, at least, choose the sex of our baby. In fact, there are hospitals offering that service under their fertility programs in such different countries as Mexico, India and the United States. More complex aspects (eye and skin color, height and, why not, intelligence) should be

² Lui, J. H.; Hansen, D. V.; Kriegstein, A. R. (2011). “Development and Evolution of the Human Neocortex”. *Cell* 146 (1): 18–36. doi:10.1016/j.cell.2011.06.030. PMC 3610574. PMID 21729779.

available in a not-so-distant future. What we did with the Aurochs and the wolves, but applied to humans in a systemic and scientific manner.

Progress, both in its creative and destructive capacity, has been possible thanks to the possibility of transmitting information from generation to generation. From learning to make fire to teaching how to use energy coming from atoms, from the Gutenberg press to the Internet, from the wheel to the Apollo program, absolutely everything is education. Why can we do this? Because our cognitive capacities allow us to do so; thus, the brain once again. This would take us to the following logical conclusion: *the more human beings having brains (all of us) get access to a balanced diet, stable social conditions, free information, and the capacities of creative thought are fostered, the greater the probability of making progress. Thus, each human being is a latent possibility of progress.*

As regards to problem-solving abilities, the more human capacity is applied, the greater the chances to solve problems will be, and if that human capacity has, in turn, a huge volume of information and freedom to develop creativity while processing said information, even better. It is no news that two heads are better than one. In this context, since the possibility of emulating artificially the capacities of a human brain does not exist yet, there is nothing to replace human beings. Nevertheless, there are attempts to achieve that. The Human Brain Project backed by the EU has 1.3 billion euros to try to accomplish the task in ten years, whereas in the United States there is an ongoing project—not to emulate but to map the brain (BRAIN Initiative)—, and this is just the beginning.

All human activity is the result of teaching and learning. To talk about education, it seems appropriate to quote Plutarch's words in his essay "*On Listening to Lectures*": (...) *for the correct analogy for the mind is not a vessel that needs filling but wood that needs igniting (translated into English by Robin Waterfield for the Penguin Classics edition of Plutarch's essays).* The more human beings get access to education (have their minds set on fire) and are able to put freely into practice what was learned, the greater the probability of making progress. To be able to receive good education the main condition is to have been and be well nourished and live in a stable social environment so that the brain can absorb and process the knowledge acquired. This may sound pretty obvious, but there is a problem. The problem is our system of value exchange. Money is neither a friend nor an enemy; it is a tool that has been really useful because it has given us freedom. Like any tool, it has its pros and cons and it also has a period of lifespan. Progress often entails the appearance of improved tools that make the old ones outdated. Take, for instance, the abacus, the scientific calculator, the PC, and the smart phone.

Money was very useful for trade development and diversified production. Before money, the possibility was bartering. We were therefore bound to our production and to the relationship that it had with what we needed or wished to have. Instead, if we get a symbolic object (gold, silver, and later bills) for the value of what we produce, we have the possibility of using it freely to get what we need, regardless of what we produce. If I breed goats and want a table but the carpenter does not need my goats, there is a problem. Now, if I get coins for the value of the goats, and both the carpenter and I can use those

coins freely: I give him the coins, the carpenter in turn gives me the table, and everybody is happy.

What happens is that I can feel tempted to enter the vicious circle of trying to get and collect the coins (or any symbolic element of value) as an end in itself, which, at some point, ends up being contrary to progress.

Let us consider three examples:

- A) If money is the end, I should produce a really necessary and high-quality product, and be the only person developing it so that everybody wants it and they can only get it if I sell it to them. On the other hand, I must make sure that no one copies it. This clearly goes against progress, because if you develop something new and do not share it in order to capitalize on it, you are clearly blocking the growth of society by keeping not only the product but also the information about how to develop it, thus denying another person the possibility of improving it because this would be harmful for your business.
- B) Thinking it over, if money is the end, the best would be to develop a low-quality product, and to persuade people that it is a high-quality product so that we earn more by working less. We are also going against progress in this way, because I stop finding real improvements to focus on maximizing profits.
- C) Actually, if money is the end, the best would be not to produce anything at all, because it takes too much time and effort. The ideal thing would be to benefit from the trading of items produced by others. That is, making money generate more money. And it would be even better if we could use other people's money to make money for ourselves. This obviously goes against progress because our activity is only focused on the symbolic element (money), and specifically we do not produce or improve or develop absolutely anything at all.

If we consider the different modern industries, we will be able to identify the three examples above without any effort.

The pharmaceutical and medical industry is represented in example A. There are very good medicines and medical procedures that really work. However, if their prices are prohibitive, we often have no choice but to go deeply into debt to acquire them. This is clearly contrary to progress since not providing a cure to a person who could be healed just because he cannot afford the cost of the treatment means that we are wasting what could potentially be concrete development (human life) for the immediate economic benefit provided by this symbolic element of value (money).

The food industry associated with the advertising industry is represented in example B. As I said before, sodas are really unhealthy. To face the problem of the high rate of obesity in their population and the damage they cause to health, the US Department of Agriculture made a report in July 2010 on the possibility of raising the tax on caloric sweetened beverages. However, according to the website *marketwatch.com*, the net income of one of the most famous brands of cola drinks in the US was at USD 7.35 billion in 2015. A very profitable business producing a substance which has a negative

impact on people's health is clearly contrary to progress and to the promotion of wellbeing.

Example C clearly refers to banks and the financial industry. It is obvious that this industry works indirectly on real production, because it precisely involves the use of money to make money. When working with these symbols of value, we run the risk of getting away from the world perceived by the senses and this can be extremely harmful if the accumulation of this value brings real power to the person (money and power often go hand in hand). The illusion of being out of the world can lead us to show disregard for its destruction when this is economically profitable. Professor Noam Chomsky refers to this masterfully when he talks about the *externalities* of the current economic system. It is because of this that money is so dangerous as a symbol of value.

Although I am not a faith driven person, I would like to recall that financial activity, mainly usury, has been considered a sin for a long time, which apparently shows that people were already conscious of the destructive potential of this activity since antiquity. Moses in Exodus 22:25; Thomas Aquinas in the Summa Theologica II-II q.78; prophet Muhammad in his last sermon; in Matthew 21:12 it is told how Jesus went directly to the temple to express his dissatisfaction; even the comments on the teachings of Buddha of not taking what is not given (*adinnadana veramani*), everybody talks in one way or the other about the problems of lending and/or usury. I personally like Luke 6:34-35: "*And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked*".

Of course, examples A, B, and C are simplifications. Reality shows that there are many ways of thinking money which are constantly combined and which can be found in all human industries, but treating growth and wealth accumulation as an end rather than the real progress of humanity—understood as the total exploration of the human potential—is to put the cart before the horse. Let us recall that comfort is irrelevant when you are actively enjoying what you do.

The problem of wealth accumulation in relation, for example, to the music industry can be easily seen: only one person with a computer making music for 50,000 people is definitely cheaper, less problematic, and makes more money than a band of 15 members. Furthermore, if the music in question is easy, that is, if it involves less technical elements that require knowledge to be understood and enjoyed, it will be much simpler to sell it on a large scale. If moreover we manage to establish the idea, using advertisement, that the music created is just for a select group, we will make people pay much more to have access to it and be part of that group. This is a consequence of considering musical (and artistic) education as a simple accessory to life.

Finally, the freedom that was at first associated with having money and being able to exchange it freely, thus facilitating progress, ends up being a problem. It turns into something negative, even to human freedom itself, because if you need to go into debt for

different reasons, you become a slave whose chains are paper-made but heavier than lead. This has happened both to individuals and countries around the world throughout history (I am Argentinian and if there is something I know about is external debt).

I don't want to be misinterpreted on this. I truly believe that human wickedness and goodness do not exist. In this regard, I agree with Socrates on the (very simplified) idea that people do evil out of ignorance, and with Yang Zhu (楊朱) and his idea of wei wo (為我) or personal interest, that is, that people do or should do everything in their own interest. It is likely that people who defend an economic system based on constant growth do not see the relationship between this, contamination and natural disasters. And if they see it and climate change has not reached them yet, they might not care about it. It is a perfectly understandable logic that will have its consequences if, for example, the mother of a powerful government official who denies climate change dies drowned in a storm like Katrina. In the same way, a person who works in the financial industry and is dedicated to laundering money from illegal drug and human trafficking, this person may not care about the waste of human lives generated by violence and addiction. If a son of that person contracts some kind of cancer, dementia or some serious autoimmune disease which has no treatment, this person will probably not see the relationship between his job, the waste of human lives generated by it (people who could have worked on scientific research), and the absence of a cure for his kid. Let us recall that Sir Alexander Fleming, who discovered penicillin, was the third of the four children that the farmer Hugh Fleming had during his second marriage to Grace Morton, the daughter of a neighboring farmer. As far as I know, there is no difference between a Scottish and a Nigerian farmer other than the stability of living in Europe versus the instability and economic and ecologic hardships associated with living in Africa.

Without going so far, the consequence of deciding to go to the kiosk by car when you can go walking is not perceived by you until you have a heart attack or you have to go out to the street using a mask because the air is so contaminated that it is impossible to breathe through. The same happens if you decide to invest in the stock market small amounts of money to get an extra income, and then you or your family lose everything in one of the many crashes of the financial system. Once more, professor Chomsky's *externalities* are present.

The turn of the screw would be to consider that *the other's interest is another way of one's own interest*, and try to gather enough information to assess, to the best of our abilities, the consequences of our deeds, especially when consuming, investing and/or spending money in any way. If I have a pizza in front of me and I am alone, I can eat it up. If there is someone next to me who is also hungry and wants to eat it up, there will certainly be a conflict that is likely to end up in violence if there are no reasons to give in. Now, if we were both alone lost in the jungle, searching for a way out, starving to death, running the risk of being attacked by a big animal, and I stubbornly ate the pizza alone, I would be ruling out my chance of survival, and if I don't understand the complexity of the situation, I would probably let myself get carried away by hunger and would actually do it. If, instead, I ate half of it and the other person ate the other half, we would both have greater possibilities of survival, because we would be able to help one another to go

ahead; I can become aware of this on my own or the other person can help me do it (education, once again). On the other hand, if no one wants to give in because no one understands the seriousness and complexity of the situation, we would probably fight against each other and we both would surely end up dead.

Without context the last example can be seen in one way, but if we recognize (learn) that we are in a context where our life is being threatened, it can be seen in another way. In general, an external conflict that places us on an equal footing with an external opponent is very helpful to consider the other's interest as our own. To be clearer, if aliens came to settle in our planet and to kill us all viciously and tortuously, humans would surely forget their problems at least for a while and become brothers in arms in the face of the external aggressors to be able to defeat them. It is unfortunate for us that climate change and nuclear weapons do not come from Mars, are not green or do not have five arms, because the final effect is the same (our extermination). The jungle where we are is the Universe and the pizza supporting us is planet Earth. The problem is that we do not understand that due to the dimensions of the current civilization we all depend absolutely on each other. If the city of Beijing in China solves its pollution problem, my sister who lives in Resistencia, province of Chaco, Argentina, will benefit from it. If logging in the Brazilian Amazon stops, my friend Shigeki Umezawa in Tokyo, Japan, will benefit from it. If the extremely poor populations in the world had access to good nutrition and quality education, the likelihood of finding definitive solutions to cancer, HIV or Alzheimer's disease, nuclear fusion, or to the countless problems entailed by the dream of traveling through outer space would increase considerably. And it is not a question of patching up, as is the case with charity, but really of educating ourselves sufficiently to understand the complexity of the problem and of modifying the system appropriately to make it work for everyone once and for all.

My argument is that people forming part of the 1%, those who have real wealth and power to produce deep changes in the system, do not do it because they probably think themselves out of the world. There is a concrete problem in their education. Even those who do understand the logics and generate very good and useful palliatives for humankind—thanks to their philanthropic activities—do not entirely understand that the symbolic tool which enabled them to be in that position of power and wealth (money) is the root of the conflict. To sum up, in my view, for the dimensions of present humankind, the system we live in is not good or bad, it is outdated.

Money is neither good nor bad, actions are neither good nor bad, being a moneylender is neither good nor bad, being the owner of a bank or multinational company that twists the law and looks for any tool to continue generating and accumulating wealth and power while destroying the environment is neither good nor bad, it is just outdated.

The idea that the current socio-economic system of countries with isolated laws on climate, multinational companies whose only real end is profit, and moral and ethical systems which severely punish basic natural impulses (and several other things) can solve the current situation makes no sense. It is like using a sharp stone from the Neolithic period to perform an open-heart surgery.

The first step to modify the system is to be truly educated, to understand that we are in front of a seriously ill patient who needs a heart transplant, and to accept that the tool we have at hand—the sharp stone—will probably kill our patient. Only upon this basis will we be able to try to develop an adequate scalpel to make the incision, do the surgery and see if we can save the patient or not.

In my view, the problem is not technical but human. Things are first dreamed about and then accomplished, and that is why it is important to see what our dreams are made of and, if necessary, adapt them. If you dream of fame and fortune, but the direct consequence of that is to be surrounded by poverty, ignorance and contamination, being selfish is, paradoxically, masochism. Again, I would like to quote Bertrand Russell: *“He forgets that to be without some of the things you want is an indispensable part of happiness”* (The Conquest of Happiness).

The discovery that one plus one equals two would, sooner or later, lead to the development of calculus and theoretical physics. Likewise, having discovered money or trade would, sooner or later, lead to the appearance of finance and other businesses which say that one plus one equals two today but will equal three within a month due to interests.

The same point of view can be applied, for example, to democracy. At the beginning, it was a valid tool in a city-state with a small population where you could meet the candidates because you saw them in the street. Nowadays, it is quite disappointing because, among other things, the future government officials are presented to me by huge media conglomerates that demand large amounts of money for using their space. Consequently, large sums of money are needed and debts—which will have to be cleared once the government official takes office—are incurred (I am simplifying the problem greatly). Another outdated democratic practice is, for example, that, once in office, the wealthiest sectors of the economy can have direct access to exercise pressure, using lobbyists, to pass laws which favor their interests, using their wealth to modify systems which in turn enable them to generate even greater profits to amend even more the legislation, and thus enter a cycle which is very difficult to escape from and which we entered long ago (or from which maybe we will never escape).

A good example to understand what I am referring to when I say “outdated” are our means of transport, and the wonderful solution that we found for this problem. We have created the car, the law regulating it and in less than a hundred years we have found ourselves overwhelmed by the vehicle fleet and a street layout which exceeded our human capacities of dealing with it. Which was the option? The option was to develop a system far superior to the human capacities that take us to our desired destination. Does the system have artificial intelligence or something like a science-fiction element? No, because it is not necessary. What system am I referring to? The GPS. You get into the car, enter the coordinates, and the GPS takes you there. You don’t feel less human for leaving in the hands of an external system something so complex as traffic, because you know that it clearly goes beyond your capacity. The GPS does not affect the emotions occurring in the car during the trip; that is something that we have to deal with ourselves, but it is important to recognize that if we reach our destination quickly, using little fuel

and avoiding traffic jams, we will probably be calmer and less prone to conflict. Self-driven cars are already a reality, and these systems are not even close to reaching Singularity (human level artificial intelligence). If we didn't need to drive, we would be able to use the time spent in the car to read; listen to music; have sexual intercourse; eat; debate face to face about politics, soccer, religion; or to simply avoid both the terrifying silence and confrontation by talking about the weather; in short, to be humans.

The 21st-century conflicts are immense and to think that human beings are the best choice to organize and distribute the planet's resources I don't think makes sense anymore. Our passions, desires and beliefs, fed by the promise of unlimited growth, have become too big for us to calmly focus on our true needs and limitations. Sometimes our dreams might actually be nightmares. I am neither an engineer nor a scientist, and I understand that the likelihood of a computer system that organizes the use of worldwide natural resources and the global economy may sound like science fiction, but telling a car device to take you to an address and the car actually taking you there was also science fiction fifty years ago.

Once more, the answer is Education and it is for this reason that this project is available absolutely for free on the Internet. It is free of charge because its aim is to share the information it contains (music, text and visual arts) in order to bring about debates and reflections which in the face of the clear (in my view) obsolescence of our modern lifestyle are absolutely necessary to continue to move forward, and if I am allowed to be a bit catastrophic, to continue to exist as a species.

Final Chapter: On art

“Art is the uniting of the subjective with the objective, of nature with reason of the unconscious with the conscious, and therefore art is the highest means of knowledge”.

Leo Tolstoy. What is Art? 1898

You can't use up creativity, the more you use, the more you have. It is our shame and our loss when we discourage people from being creative. We set apart those people who should not be set apart, people whom we assume don't have a so-called artistic temperament, and that is stupid.

Too often creativity is smothered rather than nurtured. There has to be a climate in which new ways of thinking, perceiving, questioning are encouraged. People also have to feel they are needed.

Maya Angelou, 1982. Bell Telephone Magazine, Volume 61, Number 1: Creativity: “It's the thought that counts” by Mary Ardito.

I personally believe that art does not exist.

Craig Wright, a musicologist and professor at Yale University since 1973, wrote a book called *Listening to Music*; in chapter 38 on page 447 he states that “*Most African languages have no word for the concept of “music”* and this is what I am referring to. The artistic value given to Chado or the Way of Tea in Japan is known worldwide; less known is the Kintsukuroi or Kintsugi, which is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum, making the cracks more prominent and this is also what I am referring to.

Every activity is carried out with creativity, and therefore from an accountant to an aerial silk performer, we are all doing art all the time. If the activity is chosen freely and the individual's aim is the activity in itself and if there is absolute commitment to reaching the highest possible level of excellence (whatever that means), the truth is that absolutely everything that we do—from making breakfast and brushing our teeth or taking a shower to going to sleep—is art. And naturally, if everything is art, in fact nothing is art because there is no real differentiation. As a consequence, we wouldn't need a word to name art, because everything that we do in our life would be art. It is like asking a fish (if it could talk) to give its opinion about water; the fish would probably say: “What is water?”

What is the difference between sweeping a room and painting a picture? To sweep a room you have to be creative and solve a series of problems, for example, when taking out dirt that is hidden in the darkest and smallest corners of the house. Every time that you sweep is different from the previous one. The feeling of satisfaction provided by looking at the finished work is supreme. Why is this different from painting a picture?

The difference lies mainly in the perception that both the individual and the rest have of the activity performed. It is believed that sweeping is easy and that anyone can do it, while painting is difficult and only a few people can do it. Is this true? If I give a brush to anyone, he or she will do something with it; the appraisal of the technical quality of the work is another question; and the same occurs with the broom. The real difference lies in the object. In Africa, tribal societies generally did not have an object named “music,” and the Japanese Zen culture makes a very delicate and valuable ritual object that is worthy of contemplation out of almost everything. At both ends is the destruction of the object what really matters. Creating or buying objects and clinging to them is something which pervades our way of living. The image of the perfect friendship, the ideal marriage, the musical genius, a sports car of the Italian brand of the little horse, a designer handbag, a diamond ring, a cell phone, the perfect abs, a prize, ten million dollars, the best goal ever, the happiness of childhood, the true tango or the authentic jazz, the honor of poverty and the evil of wealth, the family, sexual perversion and holiness, all of them are objects. Whether they are mental things—such as ideas or emotions—or material things, most of our life we are precisely engaged with the creation of objects (like this project...)

Why? Well, I believe it is because of death. As we grow, we realize that we exist and, at the same time, that there is a possibility of not existing. Even 2 or 3 year-old children start being afraid of darkness, and the more daring ones ask their mothers if they are going to die, and the doubt arises. The thing is that death is absolute emptiness; there is no way of knowing it and it is the denial of absolutely everything that we are, experience, dream, imagine, suffer, and the like. Death is not even darkness or silence, because

darkness is the absence of something called light and silence is the absence of something called sound. Death is... (even the suspension points and the sheet itself are futile).

This considered, objects assert and confirm our existence. Although there is a very big difference between creating a picture and buying it, when I have it in front of me and watch it with a glass of wine in my hand, nodding and smiling, even though I don't understand anything, I confirm that I am alive. The more I pay for the picture or the harder it is for me to make it, the more alive I am when contemplating it; and if everybody comes home to tell me that it is the best picture in the world, I am super alive. Not only am I alive, but I am unique and I therefore reinforce the most important object that I have, *my own SELF*. The problem with this is *Time*, which is so insolent and contradicts me all the time, reminding me that all objects perish and that my most cherished object, *my Self*, will also perish. Thus, art, treated as an object, has the advantage of extending my Self beyond my concrete life. If I become a famous singer, record albums, and when I die I am remembered, I do not really ever die because I live in the memory of my people. The famous Argentine saying *Gardel sings better every day* is proof of this. But the truth is that Gardel died in an accident; it is impossible for him to sing better—nobody ever outwitted death—, and it is impossible to know if after dying he continues to exist as himself in another reality and knows that we remember him.

Being born, growing, reproducing, and dying is the basic cycle of Nature across time. We are part of Nature and we complete the same cycle; however, creating objects enables us to escape from that reality. The objects that we create help us lie to ourselves about believing that we are beyond Nature, that we can beat Nature, and that we are not ever going to die; another way of the *bad faith* that Sartre talked about. It seems to me we try to avoid everything that connects us with Nature, with its cycle and, above all, with the end of this cycle: death. For this reason, deep inside, we are afraid of our animal impulses and we try to suppress them. I believe that this is also the reason why we create objects and try to make them be as less natural as possible. Instead of taking Nature as a parameter, studying it, copying it in order to improve it later, accepting the limitations imposed by it, and being truly intelligent and creative, and of working with it (with ourselves) in a sustainable way, we create objects of all kinds that seek to move us away from it through every means possible, and in the end what we only achieve is to replicate it in a monstrous and somewhat sad way; in spite of the fact that Mary Shelley published *Frankenstein* almost two hundred years ago.

This is why we feel certain pain when objects break down; the bigger the object, the worse the pain, because it represents in a stronger way the end of the natural cycle: death. Marital fidelity is a huge social object, and this is why when it is broken it feels like dying. Love for and from family is one of the quintessential objects of humankind, and therefore relationships are forced and there is constant pressure to prevent them from being broken. The pressure is both social and individual because at least my family will remember me, and thus I won't die. But we all know this is not real. If it wasn't for the object "pictures", I would find it really hard to remember my mother's face. Maybe this is somewhat sad, but no less true for that reason; in spite of the fact that the ideal object "*mother*" and its sacredness is also one of the most important ones we have created, a

proof of this is that in Mandarin, English and Castilian languages there are insults involving the act of breaking the sacredness of the *mother*, which is quite interesting, because if no one would have broken it, we wouldn't be here to begin with.

Devoting our time to creating or discovering (just another way of creating) objects, being them tools, works of art, theories or subatomic particles, is what we do every day. The problem of naming them is the temptation of clinging to them as if our life were those objects, which is nothing else than what we have done with the object "money". Therefore, my favorite Beatles' song is "*Let it Be*". The double reality that things exist and do not exist is what is concrete, which, paradoxically, is not concrete at all: The magic of consciousness.

Art does not exist, art exists; science does not exist, science exists; religion does not exist, religion exists; authority does not exist, authority exists; laughter does not exist, laughter exists; democracy does not exist, democracy exists; falsehood does not exist, falsehood exists, horror does not exist, horror exists; poverty does not exist, poverty exists; hunger does not exist, hunger exists; capitalism does not exist, capitalism exists; misery does not exist, misery exists; psychopaths do not exist, psychopaths exist; cannibalism does not exist, cannibalism exists; madness does not exist, madness exists; God exists, God does not exist; the *Ardipithecus ramidus* exists, the *Ardipithecus ramidus* does not exist; love exist, love does not exist; the Universe exists, the Universe does not exist. *It's up to us. Opening our eyes or going to sleep.*