

## The Island

Great pure heads,  
 with long necks, serious eyes,  
 enormous jaws erected  
 in the gaze of your loneliness,  
 presences,  
 arrogant presences,  
 concerned.

Oh grave solitary dignities,  
 who dared, dares  
 to ask, to interrogate  
 the interrogating statues?

They are the disseminated interrogation  
 which goes beyond the exact narrowness,  
 the small waist of the island  
 and is directed at the great sea, to the bottom  
 of man and his absence. (Neruda, 1981, p. 41)

Finally, we meet each other on the other side of the island.

Planet Earth is an island, an island immersed in *Einsteinian* space-time, the fabric of the universe where everything exists. And despite this unconquerable immensity, only very recently (or even just now) have we realized that our world has a limit, a physical limit. We have realized that our natural resources have measurable limits and that today it is possible to predict with some consistency when fossil fuel reserves will end, when there will no longer be tigers and lions roaming freely in nature, when there will be no longer be giant pandas, orangutans, bees ...

Today we are living within the paradox of a society that tends to attribute a soul-life to machines that we ourselves have built (at an astonishing pace: increasingly similar to us), a society that attributes dignity to our pets and at the same time consumes the planet, destroying the home of other living



beings, especially that of our primitive cousins, who look at the world with the same eyes.

We are repeating in great measure the actions of the ancient inhabitants of Easter Island, the *Navel of the World*. They, after all, like us, built monuments for themselves and the unconscious and conscious forces that possessed them: the spirits of dead ancestors on the one hand, the strong human impulse for the power on the other hand. The desire to erect symbols that represent legacies and, ultimately, immortality, has always touched human beings. The urge to build **the biggest, best, most important** monument led the *rapanui* to destroy their world by cutting down almost every tree on the island in to create pulleys to transport the impressive *moai*.

Many of us still have the illusion that the physical boundaries among countries can forever be fortified: the conscious fantasy that exclusionary behavior (and therefore biased and – paradoxical after the horrors of the World Wars – racist) is acceptable, as if, in this insular world in which we exist today, some could survive the destruction of all others.

Never before have we so needed alterity and empathy. We have multiplied to such a degree and gained so much material success that today the island begins to grow smaller: we begin to search outer space with anxiety, in search of planets similar to our own. We are afraid that we will not be able to find solutions for the distribution of the floor-home and of life-resources in a minimally universal and just way.

Retrograde winds blow through our island world, proffering sectarian discourses that still cling to the foolish idea that a world of walls and exaggerated taxes and egos, occupying the place of the *Big Brother*, can offer protection and security, extolling nationalisms and other “isms”, as the atmosphere darkens, the ozone layer evaporates, the world heats up, peaceful people become refugees and refugees find no refuge, and other peaceful people pacifically continue in silence when faced with the pain of others.

Jung continually affirmed the danger of exaggerated attitudes, fruits of the arrogance of conscience and – another paradox of nature (in fact, another among many) – of extreme vulnerability to unconscious, primitive and even animalistic content to which this arrogant conscience is exposed to as an unforeseen result of arrogance itself. And he practically shouted about how these unconscious primitive contents can be highly contaminating when they freely reach human collectivity. This is certainly the danger we are living now.

But we must carefully observe that the moment we live in now comes as a reaction to other winds, strong winds that were already blowing through the world, winds of tolerance, winds of welcoming differences, winds in which blossomed ideas such as the **dignity** – the unique and sacred character of human life – of every person who lives on this spatial island, and also of those who are gone, our dead and their legacies, their honor for having participated in the human saga: they, who honor us by existing in us.

**Self**, scientific journal of the *Instituto Junguiano de São Paulo* (Jungian Institute of São Paulo), as well as the entire Jungian community of Brazil and the world, seeks the essence of the human being, not excluding a single one, the answer to this apparent modern dilemma we have been living in: since the end of the Second World War, with the expression in the collective conscience that each human person is unique and dignified in its diversity, and just as we start to see the glimmer of a more loving, just and democratic future, these violent and extremist winds spread throughout the world. Jung would say that to all good corresponds to an equivalent evil and that its movements modulate each other; I seem to agree.

In “Civilization in Transition” (a good part written in the inter-war period, or as modern thinkers suggest, in the intervals between the World Wars), Jung gives an answer to the question of what to do:

There are few modern ones, or rather, men who live in the immediate present, for their existence demands the highest consciousness, an extremely intensive and extensive consciousness, with a minimum of unconsciousness, since only one who is fully aware of his existence as a human being is present. It should be understood that it is not the simple fact of living in the present that makes someone modern, for in this case everything that lives today would be modern. Only one who has deep awareness of the present is modern. (Jung, 2000, p. 75, OC X/3: 149)

**Ricardo Pires de Souza**

Scientific editor

## References

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- Neruda P. (1981). *A Rosa Separada*. Porto Alegre: L&PM Editores.