

On the LXXII anniversary of her death, August 24, 1943, in  
Ashford, Kent, England

# **THE WEILIAN INSPIRATION**

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For Sara Zaida, in Berlín

“Inspiration is a waiting. It will yield its fruit while we await.”

Simone Weil (On Supernatural Knowledge, 1942)

The problems of today's world, divided between those who are in debt and the usurers, owners of the debt, are not too different, in reality, from the fundamental worries to which Simone Weil consecrated her greatest attention and her devotion to humanity, both virtues whose unity expresses itself only in the greatness of

true philosophy.

Our main obligation, consequently, continues to be the same that she recognized while war, crime, force and constant uprooting were devastating the European continent during the forties of the last century: the roots of such a regressive civilization as we are living in plunged into darkness, blinded by idolatry, whipped by the long shadow of all the empires of bandits that have tormented the planet, by the suffering wedged between opposites, by the absence of the good and by so much pain-- must be pulled out and discarded.

This is to say that, we must eliminate everything preventing truth, beauty, spirituality and justice from receiving their reflection in social life. For example, the notion of progress, a poison converted into a supreme end –as Weil defined it-, in spite of the fact that, in practice, it has served only to strengthen necessity's despotism: the reign of an unabated frustration of the body and soul's needs in this world.

Necessity –constituted by the hellish division of contraries, Weil said- is, in effect, the force that oppresses us since the principle of the complementariness of opposites is absent from contemporary society in all its spheres: between feminine and masculine; between the social and the individual; between the universal and the particular.

Henceforward, it becomes unthinkable to conceive of any nexus binding the disparate elements requiring of a certain harmony in order to be able to serve as means towards the satisfaction of humanity's fundamental needs: for example, truth and freedom of expression; personal and collective property; freedom and obedience; equality and hierarchy; isolation and intimacy besides social life; work in common tasks and personal initiative; punishment and honor; security and risk –without which, any human action would ever be possible-.

Consequently, wherever necessity is a tyrant -the master, the permanent enemy- wretchedness holds sway.

The manifestation, finally, of that forsakenness which prospers whenever the inspiration of the order of the universe disappears: the eternal order, the harmony of opposites; the truth that Antiquity knew when –in Weil's words-“human beings were better than are we”; the certitude that only what is universal is true, as, in their own time, the Mayas, dedicated with intensity to astronomy, confirmed as did the Greeks with their development of mathematics, of geometry and science.

The need of certitude, therefore, whose search also demands inspiration: the spirit of truth, the energy

that a love for truth elicits.

An inspiration specially alien to idolatry and to the use of force in all its variants, including pressure, eloquence and propaganda. Related, above all, to any form of dialogue connecting what is personal with what is collective, and the latter in view of the fact that *debate* –the useless confrontation of ideas requiring *force in the guise of eloquence*- separates, given that its purpose is not to inspire, to irradiate, but to exact the *degraded obedience* that prestige and power always demand.

Weil, in effect, put a lot of interest on the problem of force, pointing out a notable difference in societies according to the ways of using it and to the level of its assessment, as in the cases of the Roman Empire, Nazi Germany or Greek Antiquity. She noted, equally, that force was also a determining factor in the modern world, primarily hidden, nonetheless, under the guise of prestige: the *supreme value* linked to its institutions and the upper hand aspiration of individuals.

According to Weil, in reality, we live consumed by our attachment to prestige; that is to say, for the sake of an illusion, a shadow, a lie that secures the presence of force in all the spheres of social existence. Prestige – she used to say- places a screen in the face of truth; in the institution of money, for example, money's prestige as a means of accumulation overshadows money as a

means of exchange for the sake of what is good. And henceforth in all spheres of society.

The absence of inspiration in universal truth, on the other hand, induces equally as well that attention be put exclusively on what is particular: a disequilibrium that for Weil stood as the origin of idolatry; that is to say, the take-off point for all that which is contrary to authentic religion. Otherwise put, if there is separation between what is universal and what is particular, idolatry takes the place of such a unity; the root, certainly, of unconditional submission to the Church, the State, political parties, money and the leader.

## II

Dissenting from the notion of God as an object of idolatry means, undoubtedly, a return to ancestral thought, to the various narratives about the origin of the world and of life that share the same vision: the Creator has withheld himself, is no action –as Weil would say-, even if his presence manifests itself precisely in the inspiration that the order of his own creation, the Cosmos, the Universe, elicits.

In this world, quite so, everything takes place within the framework of the perfect regularity of circular movements of rotation and of passage that give way to night and day, to the seasons unalterably following one another: time, finally, which is circular.

Linear time, an ally of the modern project and of progress is, hence, a fiction; an expression, simply put, of the distance that separates the social order from that universal truth that is –in the language of the Pythagoreans- the harmony surging forth from the union of what is limited and what is boundless, of the finite and the infinite; the union from which all realities surge, that is, the beginning of everything.

In the universal order –Weil stressed-, only that which limits and contains a number can be known: it is the truth. What is unlimited –that she called “supernatural”- may not be known: something that is infinitely small and infinitely active all at once.

The harmony of opposites –opposites that have the greatest distance between them and the greatest unity at the same time-, the mixture of the supernatural and of what is limited, between what may be known and what may not be known is, then, the source of the truth and beauty of the world. An order – Weil believed- that one learns to accept, to obey, through intellectual attention; free obedience,

nonetheless, that can turn into virtue through the practice of a *superior attention*: the one that allows us to recognize precisely that the universe is not only an object of knowledge; it is also beauty susceptible to awakening love.

A train of thought, nonetheless, that –as she herself warned- may appear as madness: the *Amor Fati* of Antiquity, the unconditional Love for what can be known and for what is unknown, for what is limited and for what is boundless. A current of spirituality, nonetheless, that centuries ago spread across a great part of the world, expressed in different versions: the manifestation of a common way of thinking by those who think separately, the Pythagorean ideal of friendship –personal and collective.

Weil, it is quite the case, sustained a hypothesis concerning the development of a *continuous civilization* previous to Greek civilization, between the Mediterranean and the Near East, wherein an identical truth was expressed in different ways, whose legacy probably inspired the emergence, later, of original Christianity and also, in a certain way, Plato's thought, who she considered, more than a philosopher, the disciple of an ancient spiritual tradition.

A hypothesis, besides, that we can extend to the civilizations that peopled the American continent (Abya Yala) before the Spanish conquest and whose myths and oral stories, kept in the memory of the original communities, lead back to the same truth in relation to the order of the cosmos and its reflection in the organization of social life.

We suffer, hence, the consequences of the great loss of our vocation for unity. The artificial notions of progress and of lineal time, of course, are similar to the error that entailed imposing the dogma of the earth being flat; they show, in reality, the degree of destruction of authentic human spirituality and the dangerous levels of uprooting of our world in relation to universal truth.

“Nothing can have as its destiny what it does not have for its source,” Weil wrote. Thus, only when the profane is derived from the sacred, when we reproduce the harmony of opposites in ourselves, is it possible to find the change, the Tao, the necessary mediation that will allow one to leave behind the apparently dead-end alley of modernity.

Our vocation for unity forgotten, mediocrity prevents us from recognizing mediation; nonetheless, recovering it would mean, without a doubt, as Weil

supposed, the agony of that very same mediocrity.

Without the development of the virtue of free (or consented) obedience to the eternal order, hence, there is no possibility whatsoever of liberation, of a true social transformation. An authentic *revolution* that would consist, without further ado, of a circular movement, divested of the violence of force and the falsity of idolatry; the return to the inspiration that comes from the past -similar, for example, to the cyclic movement that the ancestral wisdom of the indigenous peoples of the Andes identifies as the *Pachakuti*: the change, the transition that is involved in a return to the original space/time, since the future is conceived as a return to the past from the *Uku Pacha*, the World Below, that of the dead, to the *Aka Pacha*, the world where life resides, humanity-.

“Go with the dead and stay with them,” the Oracle of Athens answered Xenon, the Stoic, when he asked where he might go in order to find wisdom and knowledge.

### III

For Weil, on the other hand, it would be essential to establish a difference also between that which is necessary and the good. In contemporary society, in fact, economic institutions and the State attribute to themselves artificially the prestige of constituting the only sources of satisfaction of human needs. Another shadow, another illusion, that hides, in reality, the absence of a true alternative to the dominance of necessity; the absence of an answer, of a solution, whose nature will be the good: that is to say, justice, beauty and the unity of opposites.

It is necessary, hence, to zero-in on the fundamental points of meeting among art, technique, philosophy, religion and science, on the one hand. On the other, the ideal of a new *continuous civilization* among the diverse bioregions of the planet since the Earth's vocation is also complementariness; a proposal, in effect, that is incompatible with the "globalization" that, making a reiterated use of force in all its modalities, drives all clashes and competition ever more profoundly, furthering, as we know, uprootedness and destruction.

It is, consequently, obligatory to create the

nexus, the bridge, the *metaxu* uniting opposites: the means for overcoming separation, considering that the most beautiful of all is that which allows for the greatest possible degree of unity, of harmony, of agreement among those elements that are discordant, different, of unequal nature and rank; this is to say, the one that makes them identical, that builds what Weil called a *natural equality*, in opposition to the fictitious, unreal equality that is the province of the law and which shelters division and duality.

#### IV

In light of the certitude that there are only truths and errors, it would then behoove to science the obligation of inspiring voluntary obedience to the order of the universe, in substitution of its *degraded obedience* in relation to the interests of power.

The sufficient obedience that issues from the exercise of the will and from the death of the “I” derived from a lack of nourishment –of attachment to prestige-, since as long as we do not learn how to obey freely, we will be condemned to withstand the outcome of all the equivocations, aberrations and miscalculations of

illegitimate hierarchies that rule our social life.

This obedience that, next to reciprocity –of giving and returning-, is, ultimately, the source of every obligation.

Projecting the image of the order of the cosmos in society means, equally as well, recognizing beauty, truth and justice as the authentic norms of all things, at odds with the exclusive prestige of written law whose origin is derived from the use of force, from the destruction of the rules and ways suitable to conviviality and which, in principle, involve, free, consented, obedience and obligations more than rights.

Thus, the good that emanates from justice, truth and beauty –the supernatural enjoyment, joy- thereby grants a legitimate meaning to humanity's wish for that which Simone Weil called the *natural happiness*: that is to say, an aspiration for the greatest harmony and unity of opposites, when necessity ceases to be the master, the enemy.

The joy in social life that the Guarani people in South America call *The Land without Evil*, the world in equilibrium; the *Kawsak Sacha –The Living Jungle-* of the Sarayaku people in the Equatorian Amazonia; or the *Good Living –Sumak Kawsay* in Quechua and *Sumak Kamaña* in Aymara- a vision that integrates the

individual, communitarian life and nature by way of the principles of reciprocity, cooperation and complementariness: the same notion, nonetheless, that the Plurinational State in Ecuador and Bolivia has denatured, demonstrating in practice that its real objective is to destroy the ideal of the original communities in relation to its ancestral heritage.

Truly beautiful things, hence, proceed exclusively from that inspiration that reclaims attention and obedience: two complementary poles in any society that is to become a reflection of universal harmony in this world.

Madrid, August, 2015