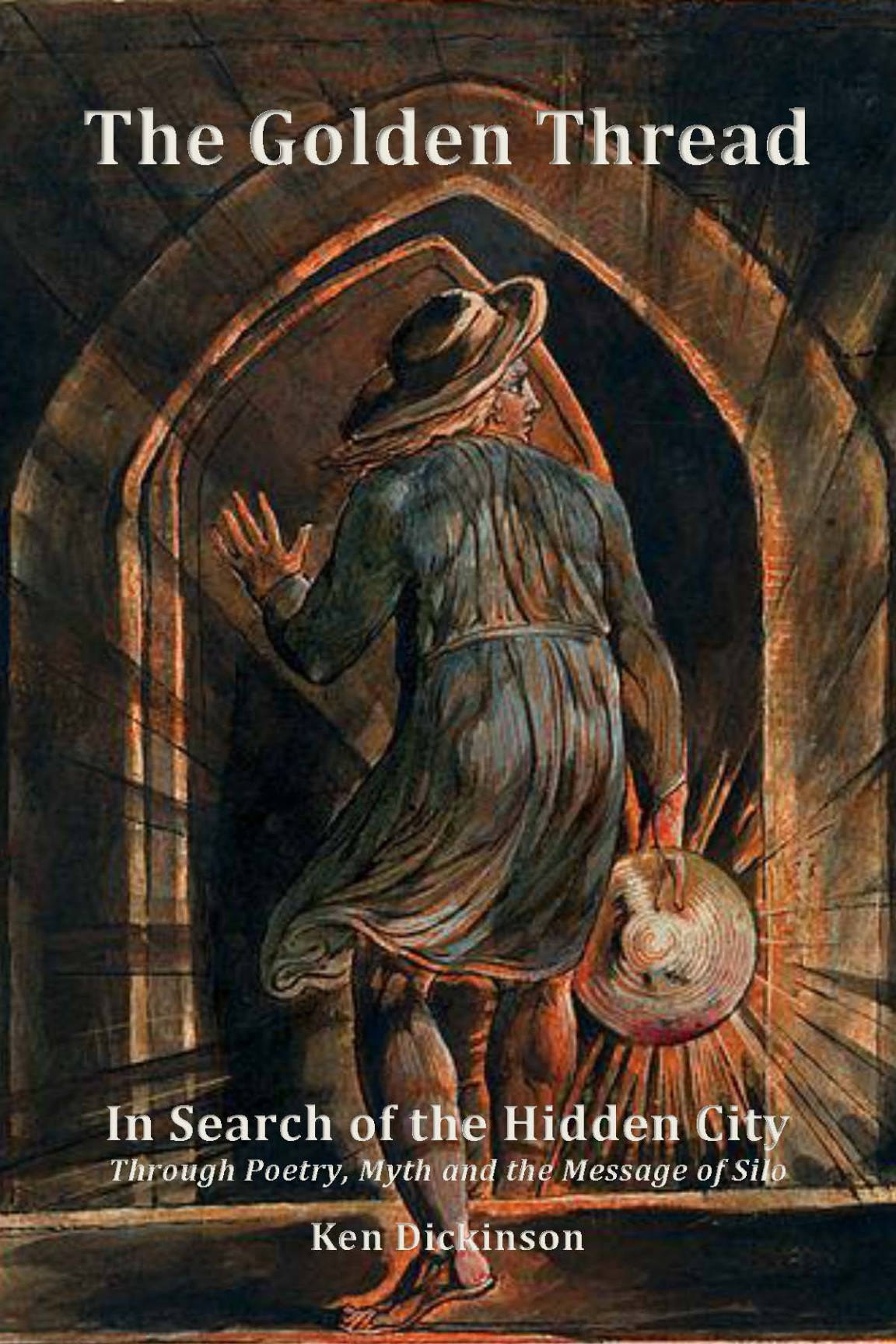


The Golden Thread



In Search of the Hidden City
Through Poetry, Myth and the Message of Silo

Ken Dickinson

Contents

- Introduction 1
- The Determinism of Life 2
- The Hidden City 2
- Developing an Ascesis..... 2
- The Golden Thread..... 3
- Necessity 5
- Fate and Destiny 5
- Developing and Deepening One’s Purpose..... 8
- William Stafford..... 10
- Meaning in Life 13
- Immortality and Defeating Death 14
- Love the Reality You Build 16
- The Internal States 19
- The Force 21
- The Inner Look 21
- The Entrance 22
- The Postscript..... 24

Introduction

The Golden Thread is an experience report that resulted from the work I have done on my Ascesis using poetry, myth and the Message of Silo over the past four years.

The report is directed towards those who are already familiar with the works of Silo. For someone who is not familiar with either Silo's writings or teachings it may be useful to read Silo's works listed in the endnotes which can be found freely available at the following web site: <http://www.silo.net>

Note: All quotations in this report are shown in italics.

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Front Cover
Jerusalem, Plate 1, Frontispiece
William Blake

*Thanks to Kurt Heyl, Fernando Aranguiz, Janet Shirley,
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The Determinism of Life

We are natural, social and historical beings. If we investigate and observe the world in which we live, it informs us that we are subjected to the cycles of life. We are born we live and we die. Generations surpass each other in those cycles, creating society and history. Life goes on in an endless circle of birth, growth, death and renewal. The seasons and stars revolve around us and then in some moment it all comes to an end.

How then do we surpass this determinism of life? Religions and belief systems throughout history have given an answer to this existential problem. From karma and re-incarnation to heaven, paradise and nirvana, obtaining a release from the cycle, to arrive to some final or new destination, is at the heart of how belief systems approach the problem of death.

The Hidden City

Finding *The Hidden City* is an allegory of how one can surpass this determinism. You arrive to a new and more profound place. The 18th century prophetic poet William Blake proposed a *New Jerusalem* as a metaphor for heaven, a place of universal love and peace. *Shambhala* in the Buddhist tradition is a place of peace tranquility and happiness where everyone is enlightened. The 16th century Christian mystic Teresa of Avila had a vision of a *Crystal Castle* with seven chambers and a divine light shining from the largest and most central chamber. In Silo's writing the *Hidden City* is to be found in the great mountain chain where are kept *the done and the yet to be done* but how do you get there? And if you do get there, how do you find the entrance? *You must know the entrance says Silo and you will know it in the moment your life is transformed.*ⁱ One approach to the *Hidden City* can be through the work with the Ascesis.

Developing an Ascesis

We have learned through the works of Silo that there is a type of spiritual exercise, an *Ascesis*, that can be created and that can then become the center of one's entire life. Silo tells us that it is a work on oneself that is equivalent to practices found in mysticism and that focuses on entering the profound spaces of the sacred through the overcoming of the "I".

We understand that unlike some mystical practices, this exercise is not just a daily routine but something that acts as a background, that is co-present and that is able to connect us with a *Purpose* that we have fixed for ourselves.

I asked myself, how then can I begin to construct an entrance to gain entry into the *Hidden City*, the sacred space? How can I configure an entrance so that I can gain access to those spaces that are so meaningful?

From our own internal work and experiences we can discover that it will be an inspiring type of work that operates in us because we like to do the work and not because we force ourselves to do the work. It will be something that we are able to build for ourselves rather than something we have taken from someone else.

It could be similar to the prayers with which the mystics of other times used to call on their Gods. In some religions, for example, this exercise was a prayer or a phrase that was very charged and through which the practitioners could enter into other spaces to connect with their God or with the word of their God.

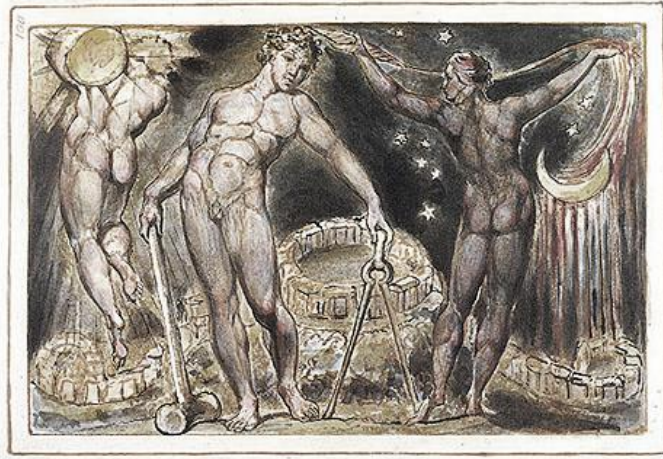
Silo goes on to explain that the exercise is always related to mysticism and that the work we do with it comes with a benefit. It has that ability to improve your life and you build and perfect it through a process. Even the simplest moments of contact with those sacred spaces have the ability to change your life.

Silo tells us that this is a work with intuition. The intention is to receive messages from a world that one is able to intuit. The intuition of a world that you want to go to and *you go where you can*.

The Golden Thread

The subject of this writing is to explore a particular type of poetry as a way of developing an Ascesis and within the poetic form to take the theme of *The Golden Thread* as an approach and a way of working towards the *Hidden City*.

William Blake introduces Chapter 4 of his epic poem Jerusalem with both a challenge and a promise. We can find our way through to *Heaven's Gate* if we just follow and wind the *Golden String* which he places in our hands.



*I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball:
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate,
Built in Jerusalem's wall.*

*William Blake
Jerusalem, Plate 77, E 231*

The *Golden String*, used only once in Blake's poetry, is an image which is rich in associations. It reminds us of the thread that Ariadne gave to Theseus to lead him out of the maze of the Minotaur. Also of the thread which measures the length of life and is cut by the Fates. It guides us into thinking about the path we travel through life with all its twists and turns.

But Blake's image goes beyond that. It suggests that the end of the *Golden String* is given to us and we must do more than just follow it. We must actively wind it into a ball. If we do not keep the string taut and if we do not keep on winding, we may lose our way and wander off into the non-meaning. If we keep winding and following it will surely lead us to our destiny or destination. The destination for Blake was his version of the *Hidden City*, his New Jerusalem.

The idea of a thread running through one's life comes from ancient goddess mythology and is linked to the process of living in the field of time and moving towards death and the problem of death. Many goddesses in ancient mythology are spinners and weavers.



Arachne of Greece was a spinner condemned by Athena to weave constantly and endlessly inside her own web for disrespecting the gods. The goddess Neith of ancient Egypt was a weaver who wove all of the world and existence into being on her loom.

In Teutonic myth the Norns, shown in the image above, are three female divine beings who wove destiny and spun secret meanings into life.

In the American southwest, Grandmother Spider Woman spins all of life from the shimmering threads in her belly.

In Greek mythology from the earliest Goddess mythology, Ananke or *Necessity* controls the life of every human being through the Fates.

Necessity

The goddess Ananke or *Necessity*, shown in the image below is typically depicted holding a spindle and she marks out or represents the beginning of the cosmos along with the god of time Chronos.



The spindle can be seen as an axis mundi about which the world turns or revolves and which also gives access to the world above. Platoⁱⁱ had a vision of the goddess Ananke, *Necessity*, spinning the universe. The sun, moon, and planets were her spindle's spiraled vortexes. Sirens sang through the nets of the time and fate that she wove and souls moved endlessly through the strands on their way to and from death and rebirth.

Fate and Destiny

Ananke was also the mother of the Moirae, known as the three fates. Each fate held one of her hands on the spindle and together they controlled the metaphorical thread of life of every human being from birth to death.

The three fates were named Clotho who spun the thread of life, Lachesis who measured the thread of life assigned to each person and Atropos, Greek for the one who could not be turned, who cut the thread of life and in doing so chose the manner of each person's death and the point in their life when their time had come to an end.

The Fates we might say, were sailing at the helm of necessity, from where they directed fate and watched that the fate assigned to every human being might take its course without obstruction.

This ancient Greek myth is clearly a fearful allegory of life. We are born and we die according to some deterministic controlling force in the universe that we have little or no influence over. Our future is to accept this destiny that we have been born into and see it played out for us by Fate with the possibility of influencing it in only some small way.

Ananke was worshiped at the start of the Orphic mystery religion. Through the long process of the Orphic mysteries cult she finally fell into obscurity and was replaced by the god of desire and love Phanes who we now know as Eros and who became the new force opposing fate and death.ⁱⁱⁱ

In The Orphic Hymn to Phanes, Protogonos describes the Orphic version of Eros as:

*Phanes lives forever, can never die.
We men are made immortal by his love,
men and women glorified,
here below as there above.^{iv}*

Silo uses a similar but more contemporary allegory in his story of the *Traveler* found in his talk on the *Healing of Suffering* which also deals with the themes of *Necessity, Destiny* and *Desire*. Here we see desire not as the creative force of the universe but rather the force which must be overcome in order to reach our destiny.

There was once a traveler who had to undertake a long journey. He yoked his animal to a cart and began the journey to his faraway destination, a journey he had to complete within a certain length of time. He called the animal Necessity and the cart Desire; one wheel of the cart he called Pleasure, and the other he called Pain. Our traveler turned his cart sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left, yet he never ceased moving toward his destiny^v

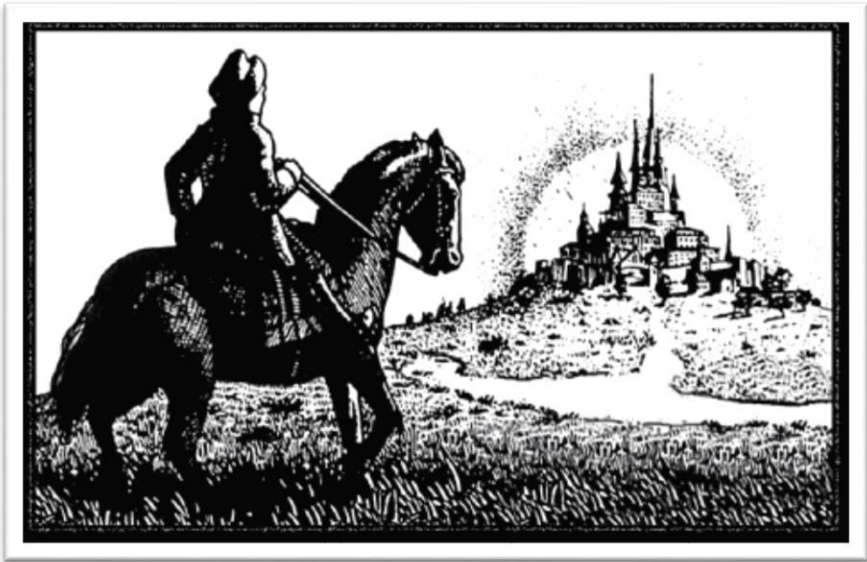


Graphic Rafael Edwards

Silo's writing always leaves the future open ended where one can put one's own content into the story. In the Greek myth the cycle is circular and closed as souls endlessly moved through the strands of the cosmos on their way to and from death and rebirth.

In Silo's story we are moving on the horse of *Necessity* but towards an unspecified destiny. In order to get there, we must overcome or abandon desire.

abandoning the cart of Desire, he mounted the animal called necessity and galloped on its back across the green fields until he reached his destiny



Graphic, Rafael Edwards.

It took a long before I came to terms with the *Necessity* of life operating within me. Silo tells us that we are born into a world we did not choose. We are born into a particular historical moment and a particular time and place none of which we had any control over.

In order to even contemplate and think about our fate and destiny we have to do it in a language and set of ideas and cultural norms that we had absolutely no control over.

In the day to day unfolding of my life, death operated as a co-presence but not really as a finality and particularly so when I was younger. Desires were much more prevalent and it took me a long time to understand that desire arose as a compensation for the necessity of life.

Once I began to unhook myself a little bit from all of that cycle of reverie, desire and fulfillment I was able to search for something more substantial and something more meaningful.

In a conversation with Jaime Montero in Columbia in 1995, Silo commented further on destiny.

Man is a destiny, a powerful force that seeks to fulfill itself in the human; the human is the opportunity to fulfill that destiny. Here we're not talking about some reincarnationist point of view, we're talking about something else. That destiny is precisely the union of the subjectivities of human beings, which goes in a direction that transcends that which is merely epochal.^{vi}

We often think of destiny as a destination, as an end point that we are moving toward and that at some point we may reach. Here Silo shifts the whole idea of destiny into a dynamic unfolding intention moving through the human being and joining with other human beings towards something more transcendent.

In other writings he has expressed this as the ideal of a *Universal Human Nation* and we might think of this as *The Hidden City* concealed amongst each one of us waiting for the fusion of those individual subjectivities to come together in a new expression.

Developing and Deepening One's Purpose

As I developed and deepened my purpose, so that I could become more conscious of it, act, live and move within it and with the flavor of my "I" being more diminished, I began to work with a poetic form.

I have discovered that I can move in the world in a poetic way, so that everything I do and everyone that I come into contact with is the potential for a poetic opening or a poetic moment that can become the basis for a certain style of life.

This has involved a long personal struggle to overcome my own particular landscape of formation. I grew up in a country where class and place were well defined, where you were told very early on in life where you belonged, what you were good at or not and what your life possibilities were likely to be.

Through a long process of personal work and self-discovery, I have started to replace the world that I was born into with a world and purpose of my own creation.

And it would not have been possible to create that world without an emotional force and affective tone that, when I stopped to think about it, had been operating in me since I was a child.

It was as if finally I was able to find and meet the object of my act of search that began early on in life.

Clearly that purpose that I was seeking to connect with in a more concrete way had been operating in me for a very long time, opening the way towards a new destiny that was profoundly different from the destiny that had been given to me at birth.

The development and deepening of a poetic purpose led me into a world of poetry that started to move me closer towards the *Hidden City* and which is expressed beautifully in a poem by the 18th century German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

The Holy Longing

*Tell a wise person, or else keep it silent.
Because the common crowd will mock it right away.
I praise what is truly alive,
what longs to be burned to death.*

*In the calm water of the love-nights,
where you were begotten, where you have been begotten,
a strange feeling comes over you
when you are the silent candle burning.*

*Now you are no longer caught
in the obsession with darkness,
and a desire for higher lovemaking
sweeps you upward.*

*Distance does not make you falter,
now, arriving in magic, flying,
and finally, insane for the light,
you are the butterfly and you are gone.*

*And so long as you haven't experienced
this: to die and so to grow,
you are only a troubled guest
on the dark earth.*

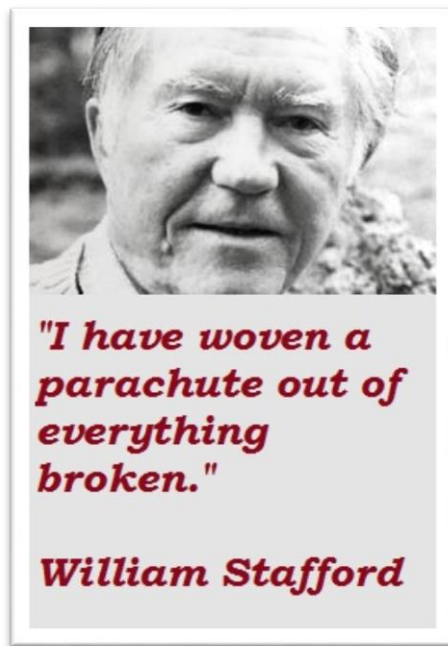
*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
Translation by Robert Bly*

William Stafford

Working through this poetic form I discovered that the American poet William Stafford had developed an exercise that he called *The Golden Thread*. His exercise comprised of the following: whenever a detail is set down in language it becomes the end of a thread and if you follow that thread you will discover remarkable riches.^{vii}

Stafford was a pacifist and conscientious objector during the Second World War. He later became a professor at Lewis and Clark College in Oregon, USA.

He believed that if you handled very carefully the detail of language and followed the detail through association, sound and tone it could lead you into a rich and meaningful world where you could begin to inhabit a more sacred universe.



Some of this technique came from his refusal to give students grades. He felt that as soon as a student began writing for a grade they lost touch with their own internal voice and began to write more externally: for the teacher, the grade itself or the audience. He encouraged his students to grade themselves or to grade each other through a process of peer review.

The exercise of the *Golden Thread* can be an interesting pursuit if one also relates it to one's purpose. We might think of it as following our purpose through language and writing.

Stafford puts it this way...

THE WAY IT IS

*There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.*

William Stafford

We are following a thread that moves through things that change but the thread that we are following does not change. People are not going to understand what you are doing. Perhaps you may not even be able to explain it to someone. Life continues to evolve but you know in your heart that you cannot let go of the thread you are following.

Perhaps you get lost from time to time, put it aside or even forget about it but sooner or later the thread will appear and you will begin to follow it again.

Following the *Golden Thread* works in a practical way to help me stay awake or to help me from getting lost so frequently in reveries. I have used it in the following way.

Several years ago, I created an email list of friends to whom I send a poem each day. The email list is called *A Poem for Today*. Each day upon waking I spend some time choosing a poem that I will send out to the list. The poem has to have something of what I call *The Golden Thread* running through it.

The Golden Thread is a part of the poem that serves in some way to *wake me up* and put me in touch with the sacred. It could be a particular phrase or even a word but the poem will have a way of connecting me not only with the sacred but also with my purpose.

Simply put, I use *A Poem for Today* to create a poetic opening into the world for myself and perhaps also for the members of the list.

The Poet Denise Levertov has a very interesting poem called *The Thread*. In this poem she connects the idea of a thread more solidly with what we might call one's purpose and makes it a little more dynamic.

THE THREAD

*Something is very gently,
invisibly, silently,
pulling at me - a thread
or net of threads
finer than cobweb and as
elastic. I haven't tried
the strength of it. No barbed hook
pierced and tore me. Was it
not long ago this thread
began to draw me? Or
way back? Was I
born with its knot about my
neck, a bridle? Not fear
but a stirring
of wonder makes me
catch my breath when I feel
the tug of it when I thought
it had loosened itself and gone.*

Denise Levertov

That something that is gently, invisibly and silently pulling at me and that seems to have been pulling at me since before I can remember is the thread that connects me with the purpose of my life. But what is that purpose and what is it leading me towards?

Following the *Golden Thread* of one's life is mysterious, a bit like trying to solve the puzzle of Who am I? Where am I going? What should I do with my life? and brings up real questions. Is there a meaning to life? If so what is that meaning? What happens when I die? Is everything predetermined? Does everything end with death?

It also implies that there is a direction that I can travel and something operating that is pulling or guiding me along. But is there a meaning behind it all and if so what is that meaning?

Meaning in Life

Meaning for a large part of the World is supplied through religious beliefs and practices. In most practices there is a belief in a God where the God is a giver of meaning and acts as a moral compass.

It was the 19th philosopher Nietzsche who in announcing that God was dead, claimed that we could not be free until we accepted that there was no giver of meaning and there was no meaning to be found in the external world.

In particular, Nietzsche felt that because God had died in the hearts of the people they would now transfer meaning away from God into Science making Science the new God thereby enchainning themselves yet again.

Once we accepted that there was no God, we would be truly free to put our own meaning into our world, to perhaps become Gods ourselves.

In ***The Gay Science, Section 125, The Madman*** Nietzsche writes...

*God is dead. God remains dead. And we have
killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves,
the murderers of all murderers? What was
holiest and mightiest of all that the world has
yet owned has bled to death under our knives:
who will wipe this blood off us? What water is
there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals
of atonement, what sacred games shall we
have to invent? Is not the greatness of this
deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not
become gods simply to appear worthy of it?*

But of course the problem of meaning is closely related with the problem of death and no matter what meaning we try to put into our lives it can only be provisional when the problem of death is waiting for us down the road or further along the thread of our lives.

We could put it another way and say that the problem of immortality remains, for that also is a common theme that runs through religious beliefs and practices.

Immortality and Defeating Death

Following the thread of immortality and defeating death is a theme that is central to the earliest recorded writing that we know of. In the ***Epic of Gilgamesh*** he is following the *Golden Thread* in this way...

Gilgamesh walked all the roads until he arrived at the mountains, at the very gateway of the Sun. There he stopped before the scorpion-men, the terrible guardians of the gateway of the Sun. Asking to speak to Utnapishtim, he said: "I wish to question him about death and about life." But the scorpion-men tried to dissuade him from his enterprise. They said: "None who enter the mountain ever return to the light of day." Still, Gilgamesh persisted in his request that they open the door of the mountain, until finally it was done. He walked in utter darkness for many hours, until at last he saw in the distance a light dawning. Upon reaching it, he found himself standing before the Sun. Though almost blinded by its splendor, he could still make out a vast garden. He took the paths that the gods travel until finally he came upon a tree with branches of lapis lazuli, and from the branches hung fruit of rubies.

Dressed in the skin of a lion and eating the flesh of animals, Gilgamesh wandered through the garden, not knowing which way to turn. And when Shamash saw Gilgamesh he took pity on him and said: "When the gods made man, they reserved immortality for themselves. The life that you are searching for, you will never find." But Gilgamesh followed the path until he reached the shore, where he encountered the ferryman of The Distant...^{viii}

And we find the thread of immortality and the problem of death at the root of Western belief depicted here through the Hebrew Myth of Adam and Eve...

Eve awoke with a start and recounted her dream to her companion. Adam then asked himself: "Does not God speak through dreams? If during the day he prohibits and by night he invites, how, with my meager knowledge, shall I know to which incitement I should respond? We should acquire this knowledge so as to direct our destinies, since God Jehovah created us but did not say how we should make our own selves." Then he told Eve his plan to take the fruit and run with it to the tree of life in order to become immune to the poison of knowledge. So it was that they waited, until the God Jehovah strolled through the garden in the cool of the afternoon, and when he had passed by they went to the tree. Seeing a serpent gliding among the branches toward the fruit, they thought its venom must derive from that food. And because of this they doubted, and while they doubted time passed, and the God Jehovah began his return to the garden.

Then they thought they heard the serpent whisper: "You shall not die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The snake was not lying, but wanted to stop them from eating from the other tree, the tree of life. As it was already very late, Adam and Eve tasted the fruit, and the eyes of both of them were opened. But when they wanted to reach the tree of immortality, the God Jehovah blocked their way, keeping them from fulfilling their plan.

Then the Lord God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and what if he now reaches out his hand and takes also from the tree of life, eats, and lives forever?" Therefore, the Lord God drove him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he came. He cast out the man, and to the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword of flame that turned in all directions so as to guard the way to the tree of life.^{ix}

Love the Reality You Build

There is no meaning in life if everything ends with death explains Silo, who talks about meaning in a more contemporary and phenomenological way:

I will tell you the meaning of your life here: It is to humanize the earth. And what does it mean to humanize the earth? It is to surpass pain and suffering; it is to learn without limits; it is to love the reality you build^x

This is a completely new approach to meaning, a meaning as something that one goes building, even though it has the classic elements to be found in most religions, those of overcoming pain and suffering. Silo's approach also has the dimension of an open future. That you can learn without limits, implies that there are no limits, there is no closed system that we are a part of or that could impose a meaning on us but rather an open system that we go constructing.

That we should *love the reality we build* is the approach of a process or a path to be travelled or a spiral to be climbed or ascended through action and through acts of overcoming pain and suffering in oneself and others.

It is a meaning filled with learning and of helping knowledge and understanding grow. Of loving that reality that we are in the constant process of building.

This is beautifully expressed in a poem by the poet *Ranier Maria Rilke*

I Live My Life

*I live my life in growing orbits,
which move out over the things of the world
Perhaps I can never achieve the last,
but that will be my attempt.*

*I am circling around God, around the ancient tower,
and I have been circling for a thousand years.
And still don't know if I am a falcon,
Or a storm, or a great song.*

*Ranier Maria Rilke
Translation by Robert Bly*

Who am I really? Those last two lines of Rilke, who still does not know if he is a falcon or a storm or a great song challenges all assumptions about how we may think we are or perhaps who we have been told we are.

In reality we are always discovering who we are and if God is inside of us and we are inside of God, if there is really no difference between the two, if they are just different aspects of the same essential being then finding that thread and winding it into a golden ball, will be one way to answer Rilke's question to himself.

The great Basque philosopher and writer Miguel de Unamuno was also a poet who wrote poetry to answer questions of the spirit. Who am I? To what end do I exist? He was not satisfied with knowing why we are here but he was more interested in understanding what the purpose of our being here was.

Born into a world of conflict, Unamuno created his poetry out of a tragic sense of life, for consciousness, he wrote, was consciousness of death. Despite *the tragic* being a constant companion for Unamuno he was able to write in a way that enabled him to develop his spirit through the struggles and misfortunes of life. *From the darkness of anguish, we emerge into the light.*

This is skillfully expressed in his poem *Throw Yourself like Seed*.

Throw Yourself Like Seed

*Shake of this sadness, and recover your spirit;
sluggish you will never see the wheel of fate
that brushes your heel as it turns to go by,
the man who wants to live is the man in whom life is abundant.*

*Now you are only giving food to that final pain
which is slowly winding you in the nets of death,
but to live is to work, and the only thing which lasts
is the work; start then, turn to the work.*

*Throw yourself like seed as you walk, and into your own field,
don't turn your face for that would be to turn it towards death,
and do not let the past weigh down your motion.*

*Leave what's alive in the furrow, what's dead in yourself,
for life does not move in the same way as a group of clouds,
from your work you will be able one day to gather yourself.*

*Miguel De Unamuno
Translation by Robert Bly*

You feel the sense of Unamuno following a *Golden Thread* through this poem. Don't feed the negative, which is slowly killing you, make an effort to shake it off, wake up and break that cycle of fate.

To live is to work, he says, which for me has a double meaning. Work in the world but also work on yourself and dedicate yourself to what we often call *The Work*, the work of following that *Golden Thread*.

And then the perfect ending using a harvesting metaphor:

From your work you will be able one day to gather yourself

I will now return to Silo who winds us further along the thread and declares that:

*Love the reality you build, and not even
death will halt your flight!*

If we are in charge of building our own reality, then death cannot be imposed upon us from the outside and this is true freedom. Of course we know that the body grows old and dies but that does not have to mean that death stops the future. It simply modifies one's provisional state of existence as a transition from that state into another one.

Silo puts it like this:

*I declare before all of you my faith and my certainty of
experience that death does not stop the future, that death
on the contrary modifies the provisional state of our
existence to launch it toward immortal transcendence.
And I do not impose my certainty or my faith upon
anyone, and I live in harmony with those who find
themselves in different states with respect to meaning in
life.^{xi}*

If we are constructing our own reality, why not construct one with an open future rather than a closed one? But Silo goes further and declares his *certainty of experience that death does not stop the future*.

This is a powerful statement. He is speaking as one who knows and not just as one who believes. He is speaking about his certainty of experience and not just about faith. He is speaking as one who, to paraphrase Blake, *was given the end of a Golden Thread and was let in at heaven's gate*.

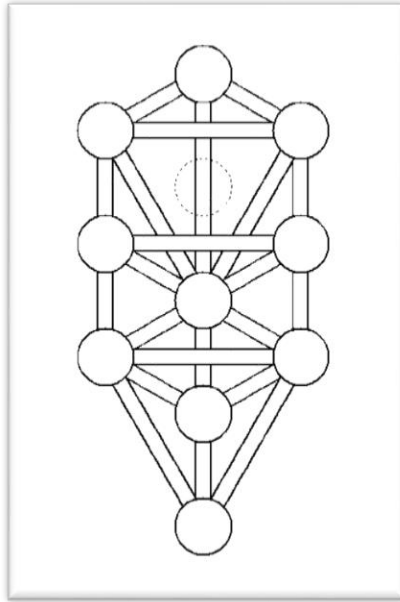
In Silo's book *The Inner Look*, the thread is played out allegorically in his *Guide to The Inner Road* using the example of a *Hidden City* and which echoes Blake's poem.

*When you find the hidden city in the great mountain
chain, you must know the entrance—and you will know it
in the moment your life is transformed. Its enormous
walls are written in figures, are written in colors, are
“sensed.” In this city are kept the done and the yet-to-be-
done. But for your inner eye, the transparent is opaque.
Yes, the walls are impenetrable for you!*

And how is one to find this *Hidden City*? Following Silo, we can discover it by travelling along the pathways of the Internal States that are connected in the form of a Tree.

The Internal States

The *Tree of Life* is a common motif used in various world theologies and mythologies popularly recognized as the Jewish mystical symbol of the Kabbalah. You could also think of the Tree as a machine onto which you could put different conditions or states as allegorical images to help guide you towards a destination.



Tree of Life Symbol

In Silo's version detailed in the *Inner Look* he describes the *Internal States* in this way

You must now gain sufficient insight into the various internal states you may find yourself in throughout the course of your life, and particularly in the course of your evolutionary work. I have no way to describe these states except by using images, in this case allegorical ones. These seem to me to have the virtue of "visually" concentrating complex states and moods.

In travelling this *Tree of Internal States* which, when I began to pay attention, I noticed were happening throughout my day, I discovered that I could also take along a set of Principles to work with. Silo describes these *Principles of Valid Action* in Chapter XIII of the *Inner Look*. They can act as a sort of internal toolbox of techniques for guiding behavior and responses. I discovered that they can and do help me to build a life of unity and meaning that can support my purpose and *Ascesis* and also contribute to my poetic style of life.

Those Internal States that operate as we move in the field of time and that deal with love and desire and all the other states that confront us as we move up and down the tree remind me of a part of the poem *Burnt Norton* by T. S. Eliot which is also part of his famous *Four Quartets*.

Extract from Burnt Norton

*The detail of the pattern is movement,
As in the figure of the ten stairs.
Desire itself is movement
Not in itself desirable;
Love is itself unmoving,
Only the cause and end of movement,
Timeless, and undesiring
Except in the aspect of time
Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being.
Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage
Quick now, here, now, always -
Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after.*

T.S. Eliot

Desire itself is movement not in itself desirable always reminds me perfectly of Silo's allegory of the *Cart of Desire*. And Eliot's treatment of the theme of Love points us back to *Phanes* and *Eros* and to the *Hidden City*.

Eliot's poem also moves in an out of that area that we might think of as the outskirts of the Hidden City. We are on the edge of this place that we want so purposefully to enter. What is it then that might make all the difference and that may give us the breakthrough that is needed?

The Force

The *Golden Thread* running through Silo's book *The Inner Look*, is *The Force*. We are invited throughout the book to discover and work with *The Force*. In Chapter IX of the *Inner Look*, *Manifestations of the Energy* Silo discovers what is pivotal about this practice and declares that:

What was decisive then was control of the force. All this changed completely my conception of both daily life and of life after death. Through these thoughts and experiences I began to lose faith in death and now I no longer believe in it, just as I no longer believe in the non-meaning of life.

The Force is the energy of the thread that pulses through us. The giver of meaning, that if we are able to follow it, gains entrance into the *Hidden City* which is itself allegorically the source of *The Force* and the source of *Mind*. *It is Mind* writes Silo in his Commentaries on Silo's Message *that gives meaning to all phenomena*.^{xii}

The Inner Look

If we have been able to wind the *Golden Thread* to this point we may be able to develop an *Inner Look* that can begin to illuminate our life to a point that will begin to give it meaning. And as William Stafford said: *no matter what you do, you don't ever let go of the thread.*

*When they spoke of a city of the gods
Which the heroes of many peoples strove to reach
When they spoke of a paradise
Where gods and humankind lived together
In transfigured original nature
When they spoke of falls and floods
Great internal truth was told*

*Later the redeemers brought their messages
And came to us in double nature
To reestablish that lost unity for which we yearned
Then, too, great inner truth was told.*

*But when all this was spoken of but set outside the mind
It was an error or a lie.*

*However the fusing of the inner look with the external world
Forces this look to travel new paths*

*The heroes of this age fly towards the stars
They fly through regions previously unknown
They fly out from their world
And without knowing it they are impelled
Toward the internal and luminous center.*^{xiii}

The Entrance

I have constructed an entrance for myself in an attempt to gain access to the *Hidden City* through a work with the *Gnostic Prayer*. This prayer, although not directly attributable to Silo leaves no doubt that it contains all the elements of his early works, in particular his work on *The Transcendental Meditation* and later *The Mental Discipline*.

I start by slowly reciting the prayer and use this as a centering device that brings forward the affective tone and feeling that creates the conditions to begin my work of asking to enter the profound space. I also keep the feeling of the poem co-present as I continue on with my work.

The Gnostic Prayer

*You who are the light of Gnosis,
Teach me to see your presence in the One and the All.*

*Teach me to see with understanding
Beyond the Earth and beyond human eyes.*

*You who are the permanent, show me through my memories,
Through my passions, through my force that is not mine.*

*You who are the One and the All, always still and always moving
Show me the mystery of that which is not in you,*

*To understand through Gnosis that you are above light
And also above darkness in eternal unity*

And then I began to work with a technique of turning Acts of Consciousness back on themselves in an attempt to disconnect the enchainment of the Acts with the Objects of Consciousness to arrive to Acts without Objects. This *Turn* is an attempt to convert the possession that I can register of objects back on themselves as non-possessive acts and which assists me in my work on seeking entrance into the *Hidden City*.

It goes without saying that letting go is the primary register that I am searching for and in some moment I profoundly ask for the collision of my inner look with the meaning. Silo puts it like this. *The Inner look...*

*will have to collide with the meaning that
the Mind gives to all phenomena, even one's
own consciousness and one's own life, and
the collision with this meaning will
illuminate the consciousness and life.^{xiv}*

In my own writing, following my own poetic *Golden Thread*, I have translated Silo's words and imagery into the following poem.

Collisions

*Consciousness actively directed
Seeking significance and meaning
In a confused and chaotic
Inner world*

*What meaning is my look seeking?
That bothers it
To look for me
Anyway!*

*Gnawing at me to look
And revealing by looking
My "Self"*

*Look careful now
That "Self" is not the look
Or consciousness
It is "Mind"*

*Revealing the meaning
Found here through the act
Of Looking*

*So try and grasp "Mind"
As a soap bubble or God
And it will dodge your Act and
Object*

*Leaving you to collide
With the meaning that "Mind"
Puts into everything
You bring*

*The collision is the Act
That lights you up*

*To conscious life
And this meaning
Thing*

The Postscript

From the tiniest speck of matter to the poetic design of the universe, what a miracle life is. And considering the odds, what an even bigger miracle that we have been given the chance and opportunity to experience and participate in it.

What a great and profound gratitude I have for the teachings and writings of Silo, for the experience he gave us of learning how to see and for this opportunity to go on a reflective journey towards *The Hidden City*.

Thank you for coming this far with me. I would like to leave the final word with the Poet Rainer Maria Rilke

My Life

*My life is not this steeply sloping hour,
In which you see me hurrying.
Much stands behind me; I stand before it like a tree;
I am only one of my many mouths,
And at that, the one that will be still the soonest.*

*I am the rest between two notes,
Which are somehow always in discord
Because Death's note wants to climb over --
But in the dark interval, reconciled,
They stay there trembling.
And the song goes on, beautiful.*

*Rainer Maria Rilke
Translation by Robert Bly*

END NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- iv Hymns of Orpheus by Thomas Taylor, adapted by Charles Bryant. Hear the full text at <http://youtu.be/Jmg46Zq13wI>
- v Silo Speaks, The Healing of Suffering by Silo,
- vi Excerpts of a dialogue between Silo and Jaime Montero, 07-06-95. Colombia
- vii William Stafford and Robert Bly on William Blake. Hear the interview at <http://youtu.be/HDgZ17D4T-w>
- viii Sumerian-Akkadian Myths – Gilgamesh, from Universal Root Myths, by Silo
- ix Hebrew Myths, from Universal Root Myths, by Silo
- x The Internal Landscape, Chapter VII. Pain, Suffering, and Meaning in Life by Silo
- xi Silo Speaks, Meaning of Life, by Silo
- xiii The Inner Look, Chapter XX, Internal Reality, by Silo
- xiv Commentaries on Silo's Message by Silo

All Silo's works are freely available at <http://www.silo.net>

Thank you to all the translators of Silo's works into English and also to the poet Robert Bly for his contribution to the translation of so many poems into English such that they retain the poetry and poetic feeling of the originals.



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Ken has been guided by the writing and teaching of Silo for the past thirty years.

Silo is the pseudonym of Mario Luis Rodriguez Cobos. He was born in 1938 near Mendoza, located between Argentina and Chile.

His writings have been translated into numerous languages and have been published as collected works in two volumes. For more information about Silo visit www.silo.net.

Ken is also a poet and runs a monthly poetry event, West End Wednesdays in San Rafael, California. He puts out a daily "Poem for Today" list. If you would like to be included on the list send an email to kdickinson@aol.com

I give you the end of a golden thread
Only wind it into a ball
It will lead you in at Heaven's Gate
Build in Jerusalem's wall.

William Blake
Jerusalem, Plate 77