

Comments by Silo
Center of Studies
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Full video transcript: The Themes

Silo: and so..... you were saying, Hugo?

Question:... *I wanted to ask you, Negro, in the early days when we were still here in South America ... what were the themes of those studies, those works, with that bibliography...*

Silo: The thing started with a few politicos because the first friends who accompanied us in all these works were from the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences. There were political scientists, some anthropologists and of course ordinary people with their various occupations.

As we began our studies in those kinds of retreats, we were keenly interested in studying the sociopolitical situation of that historical moment. Partly because of the formation of the people who made up those groups and partly because we saw there was a certain urgency. A number of phenomena of social disintegration were taking place, changes in all the systems of the era that heralded an increase in violence. Later this could clearly be seen in the guerrilla movements and military repression and all of that, but it was already under way when we began those first investigations, those first studies.

So it was about understanding the social situation, the political situation, the economic situation. And we began to organize some monographic studies. That is, there were people who focused specifically on studying social movements. Others produced compilations of materials and major syntheses on political parties, some very well done. And other people began to study what was closest to us, the overall situation of what was taking place in Latin America. So the first studies were of that kind, and of course we were already proceeding along the lines set out in *The Inner Look* and elsewhere.

We were seeing another kind of phenomena, beyond what could be seen so obviously in the sociopolitical reality around us. Other very important phenomena began to emerge, but far beneath the surface. I am referring to certain changes that today we would call psychosocial. That is, changes in the collective mentality. Aside from what was happening on the surface politically, economically, and socially, we began to see a lot of psychosocial changes that weren't visible at the tip of the iceberg. They were at work outside this, but they were at work.

Also back then we began to produce various monographs and studies on philosophical anthropology, anthropology, popular beliefs, popular myths, and on the changes in the religious currents that were taking place in Latin America. It was a work where in some way we connected what was happening on the surface—

what we call the political, the economic, the politological—with what was happening in the social consciousness, but below the surface.

We supposed that this would continue to express itself with increasing strength, producing larger and larger dislocations. So basically we moved between those two coordinates—the coordinate of the psychosocial and the coordinate of the politological...to say this in a complicated way, but we were studying that kind of thing...

Question: *Then when we moved to Europe, we continued working on these themes...?*

Silo: When we started working on something in a certain place, we continued working on it afterwards. So when we passed from one stage to another, the previous work did not disappear. We continued working on it, and added other elements that were in fashion, so to speak. Wouldn't you agree? And in that way we went through several stages, until we completed the works and studies of the Centers of Study, the Centers of Work, the places of retreat, etc.

We went through two or three stages. Because we needed to have a suitable apparatus for these investigations, we worked much more intensely in Europe. We were also working on the psychosocial thing, but now with investigations that one might say were pretty strange. These were investigations of paranormal phenomena.

We studied and worked a great deal on paranormal phenomena. For that time our setup was quite sophisticated, quite complex. We equipped ourselves well in Corfu, and we had all the literature and some contacts with people who were studying those problems. Particularly those who were studying at Duke University with Rhine and Pratt—who basically turned out to be frauds—so right from the start our investigations of paranormal phenomena met with difficulties.

On the other hand, even though they weren't adequately controlled, Vasiliev's investigations in Russia were important. So, seeing what was happening with these investigations in, let's say, the "most important" places, we started to do our own research. And we began to see that controlling the tests was something that was very difficult to do. We found a number of errors that others had not previously noticed. Among other things, the psychology they were using failed to take into account the importance of the translation of impulse into image. Complicated things, really, but we started to control for all that, and after a long time of studying the paranormal, after a long time, we started to send out missions, so to speak. That is, people who went to certain places to do field research, because such things end up giving you insights. You know that there are some people in the Philippines, some "healers" who touch the patient, and the patient is cured, and it looks like they take out some of his viscera ... well, all those frauds—we studied them, we checked into them, we photographed them from every angle, we built all the apparatus that was considered necessary at the time, I'm talking about Kirlian

cameras, galvanic skin response devices, electromyography instruments, and so on. And then in that field research we also looked into some extraordinary cases, which in most instances turned out to be fraudulent.

And so the field kept getting narrower and narrower. On one side we had the errors of the Russians, on another side we had the fraudulent work of Rhine, and really Pratt more than Rhine. And on another side we did our own investigations about whether there were extraordinary phenomena outside the laboratory setting, and what was outside the laboratory was mostly trickery. And so this let us greatly narrow the field and our investigations. That happened in Europe over a long period of time, even after returning to Latin America. The investigations went on 4 or 5 years. The literature we produced formed a bibliography for our internal use. It was never published, but it's among the materials we produced.

We returned to America, and after making all those investigations, and carrying out those tests everywhere, we arrived at the horrible conclusion that the paranormal phenomenon never appeared... or at least that paranormal phenomena could never be verified using this form of investigation.

So we set aside the paranormal phenomena. When it came to spiritualist or special explanations, explanations that contemplated the phenomenon of UFOs and all that, we set them aside. As other scholars might say, we put them in "epoché," we put them in parentheses, because we had no proof, and what the system offered was not trustworthy.

And so as you can see, this was one more investigation that was added to our accumulated studies on the political phenomenon and the psychosocial phenomenon.

This had a lot to do with the psychosocial phenomenon. All these stories and rumors, stories of UFOs and other strange things, gave rise to great disturbances... and, well, for many people it was just a curiosity, but for us it was quite important to look into the manifestation of all these phenomena. And so our investigations were very diverse...

Silo: ...You were saying?

Question: *We were asking about how all these studies and works on paranormal and psychosocial phenomena ended up...*

Silo: We kept studying the paranormal, although after Corfu, where we made the most thorough investigations, we changed our location... we kept on investigating, but our study of the paranormal moved into other fields, or more precisely the study of the psychosocial moved into other fields, outside the paranormal. We also saw that we might be able to carry out and apply our studies through some kind of institution created to keep all this moving forward. And so cultural and social

institutions like the Community, the Community for Human Development, began to appear.

The Community was useful for making contact with a number of other institutions and allowing an interchange with them regarding the large body of knowledge that we had developed in that field. Many psychologists and sociologists began to join this sort of institution and we began to interchange with them and get interested in new projects. And so the psychosocial and the social took on relevance through these institutions, but we always continued moving forward with all the other works... yes, that's what I can tell you without getting more complicated.

Question: *The other line, that of the politicians, somehow also begins to find expression as increasingly concrete action...*

Silo: Yes, also the thing of the politicians and all that. Just as the Community was there, beginning to connect with people in certain sectors, with scholars and so on, social and political organizations also begin to take shape. For example, the Humanist Party appears and begins to develop activities in the full political field. What's more, it's from the Community for Human Development, from this institution, that the first steps are taken to build the Humanist Parties, which is rather extraordinary.

What happens with the HP and all that? What happens is that the investigations and the studies that were done much earlier begin to bear fruit, making it very easy for all these friends to create their platforms, to develop their work. They also had their literature, because in my books I dealt with this whole theme, so they were sufficiently prepared to initiate political action and social action.

That's how all of this, which is by now well known in the periphery of that Movement in motion, began to develop... that's what I can tell you without making this very complicated.

Question: *I wanted to ask you about this thing of the image...*

Silo: ...Yes, the Theory of the Image was a consequence of our psychological studies. It was really something unexpected. We went along carefully collecting a lot of evidence so that the tests we were doing could be well established. So that there wouldn't be any errors we had to study a great number of details. In studying these details we begin to see phenomena of the translation of impulses and things related to that, and we begin to study the image, and that's where the Theory of the Image developed.

The Theory of the Image paves the way for the Theory of the Space of Representation, which is a complex psychological theory that a few are now beginning to incorporate into the ambit of what might be considered official psychology... Yes, that is happening with the Theory of the Image and the Theory of the Translation of Impulses, yes, of course...

And so in no way did this stop. We were talking earlier about what happened in the social realm with the Community, with the parties, and so on. But of course the other investigations were not abandoned, they continued moving forward, moving very strongly. That's the way it is...

Question: ...Then come the historiological discussions... that way of seeing the temporality of the consciousness...

Silo: Yes, of course...

Question: And there a whole theory of the psychism begins to take shape?

Silo: Yes, without a doubt, yes. But that is part of *Contributions to Thought*, *Contributions to Thought*, which is made up of the Theory of the Image, an approach to psychology, on one hand, and on the other hand, Historiology. It is like two volumes integrated into one... yes.

Transcript by Andres K.