

JULIANE PFEIFFER

FROM THE
INSIDE OUT



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Joana Albuquerque and Marcello Borges

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Dedication

To my spiritual guides, for their protection and inspiration on the way.

To my daughter and teacher Katharina and to my partner in this life and in other lives, Lars: Both, as breezes of love, stroked my wings and allowed me to transform myself and fly freely.

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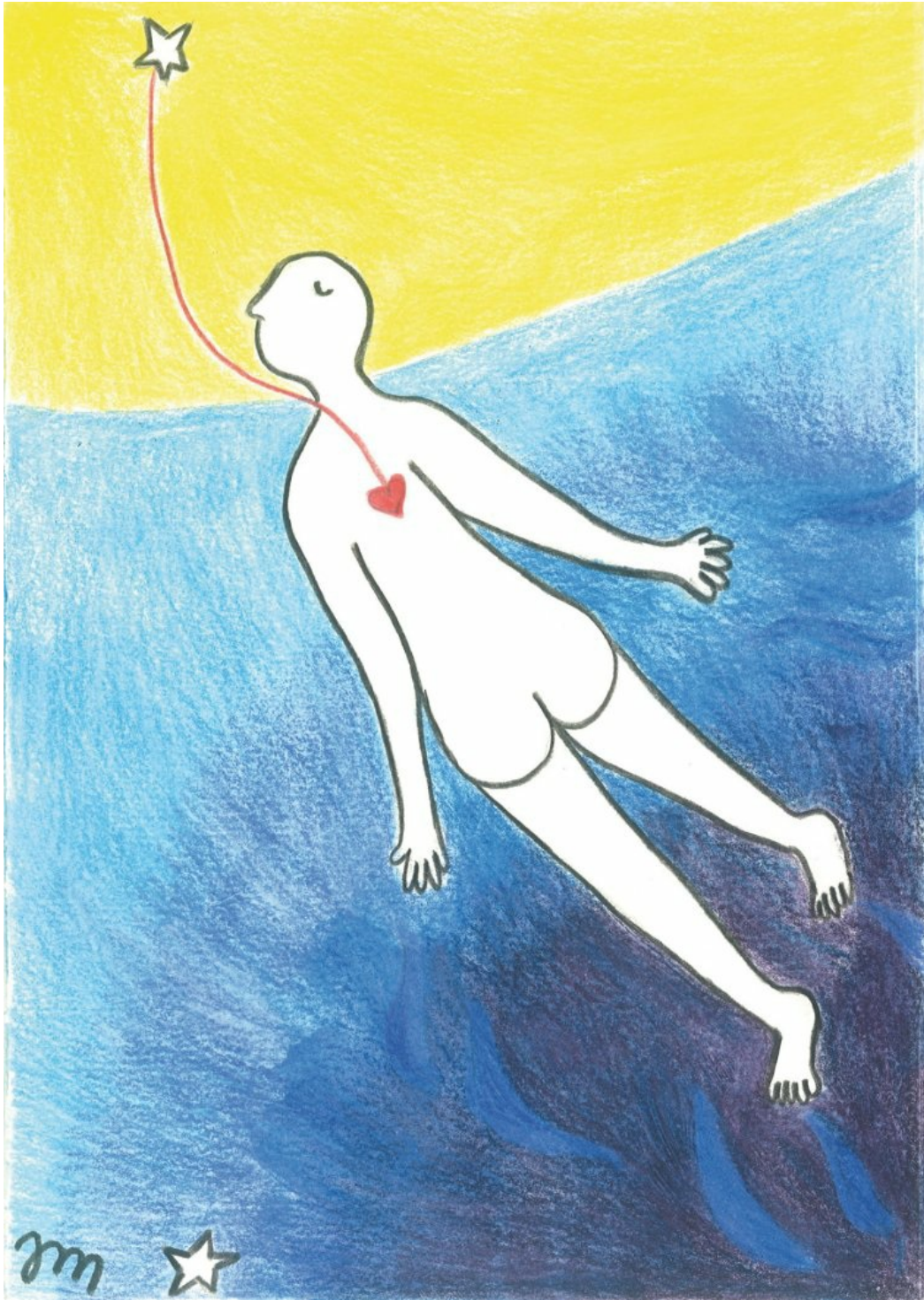
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The urge to survive

The urge to survive

I am here to talk about consciousness. My life story is but a detail, but it may help to understand some of what happened, since it is in the stories that our minds rest. However, I am not my story. I simply am.

I would like to share the challenges and lessons I have learned during the evolution of my consciousness until the present moment. Since I was a child, I questioned my very existence and had many doubts about it. Sometimes I even asked myself whether or not I was alive, if I was asleep or awake; I was almost obsessed by the truth. What is the truth? I studied Michel Foucault's *The History of Madness* in an attempt to understand myself better and to perceive how lucid I was.

For many years, I searched for the truth outside myself and now I know it is inside myself. It reminded me of the old woman who searched frantically for her glasses without noticing they were right over her nose.

Before this realisation, faith gave me the much-needed support and the answers I had looked for as a child and, later, as a teenager. My Grandma Lia was my first spiritual teacher and I found confidence, love and acceptance in my dialogues with God. Still as a teenager, I tried to deepen my spirituality, studying Jesus and His messages and teachings. However, I didn't find an echo in the Christian message spread by Jesus' "representatives". It seemed so distant from my own reality and far from touching my heart. Perhaps this was due to the numerous distortions and misunderstandings perpetrated by the Church of the original message.

As an adult, I became more rigid and more skeptic, feeling distant from myself and losing the unconditional faith, without admitting to myself that it wasn't as strong in me anymore. I believe it may have been a protection to help me deal with the harshness and coldness of what I would had to face. Or perhaps we simply detach from our faith when we feel distant from ourselves.

Many years later, in my therapy with my psychologist, friend and teacher Lício, I was able to find other doorways and languages that allowed me to reconnect to my spirituality. I drank from many sources and created my own spiritual mix combining Buddhism, Christianity, Spiritualism, Taoism, A Course in Miracles, with teachings from Krishnamurti, Eckhart Tolle, Amit Goswami and other spiritual masters.

After my daughter Katharina was born, I felt the miracle of life and this triggered a reconnection process. A human being created in my body, inside me, to live in the outside world. She was like a mirror: I saw myself in her, I saw her in me and didn't recognize myself anymore.

It was unsettling but I wasn't aware of the real dimension of my confusion. Something was missing in the image reflecting in that mirror. It was a beautiful image, self-confident (at least in the surface), a success; strong, hard, but with no soul. And I couldn't ignore the image I was seeing.

What could I teach Katharina? Did I practice what I believed in? Where was the essence, the truth? Lost somewhere, but still connected by a thread, a thread that led straight to my heart. More than uneasiness, that image brought me pain, the pain and guilt of having abandoned myself.

Courage comes when the pain of staying where you are is stronger than the pain of transformation. It comes as an urge to survive, as a cry. Sometimes the soul cries through the physical body, like a disease or a limitation. Sometimes it rings as an alarm that will not go off. That is the moment when you have to choose between doing something because you want to or because the pain forces you to do it: The way of the ego or the way of consciousness.

Since I realised I was numbing myself and that it was life that was leading me, I decided to change the course and take the lead of my life.

In the external world, nothing seemed lacking, in fact, quite the contrary. Everything seemed in perfect harmony, working seamlessly. A successful career, a solid marriage, my house was paid for and equipped with every possible comfort, my physical health was in good shape, the best hotels were the scene for my vacations, excellent financial perspectives, and my friends were always around; it was a full set menu.

However, with so many things, I still felt a void. It seemed that nothing could fill this void. It was then that I realised that my uneasiness wouldn't disappear with small adjustments alone.

I like to recall a passage by Miriam Subirana where she says that when we are not happy with a certain situation, we have three possible alternatives: the first is to change the situation; the second – when that is not possible (which is often the case) – you change your attitude towards the situation; and third, if this doesn't work, you can change from that situation.

Let me assure you that I tried the first two patiently and stubbornly. I created a miniature world around me in my workplace, with values, principles and behaviours I believed in. At the same time, I followed the teachings of Eckhart Tolle, trying to live the present moment without resisting it, just being myself. Acceptance was one of the most challenging exercises in my path. Whenever I resisted to what was there, I complained and felt angry and sad, draining my energy. I felt that this energy could instead be channeled for the search of what I really desired.

I analysed every situation from different angles and forms, trying to see if the problem were my unfocused glasses. I felt as if I was looking through a kaleidoscope, always turning it around over and over again, hoping to see and searching for different configurations of the same elements.

I changed areas at work, leaving the law practice and challenging myself to completely new skills, expecting to see a different image. As a symbol of the

closure of my law cycle, I remember I announced in the department that I was making a "garage sale" of all my law books, mementos and tombstones I had acquired from all the transactions. I left my office with a candy jar – that I keep to this day – and a pen. After some months working in the investment area, nothing seemed to create the movement I was seeking. The problem was deeply entrenched. I told my boss, Geraldo, that I felt that my creative potential was untouched in my work. I shared with him my desire to express my soul fully in everything I did and that I perhaps I wouldn't be able to accomplish that in there. He looked intrigued, smiled and realised that he couldn't help me further, other than letting me go to follow my journey.

For something new to be born, the old must die. When you plant a seed you must clean the land first, aerate the soil until it is fertile. Before you inhale fresh air, you must exhale and let out all the air in your lungs.

It wasn't just a question of trimming the edges; I had to deconstruct before re-building something new over truthful foundations. Letting it all go was as natural as purging my body of something that was bad for me. It demands detachment, but it is liberating. It oscillates between the fear of letting go and the unavoidable way of the truth.

The decision to leave behind everything that I had built, before understanding that it was the right thing to do, gave me the impression that I was at the edge of an abyss. I could only know how vast it was if I took a step forward and released myself. When we do it, we realise the infinite possibilities and the beauty, something so awesome that we become euphoric. It is the moment of the free fall.

This is what I wrote at the time: "What a wonderful sensation of freedom and emptiness. Free from every constraint and conditioning. The beginning of my sabbatical year wasn't the cause of my liberation, just one of its consequences. What I feel now, after three weeks of the deepest cleansing, is the desire and the need to plan nothing. I don't feel like being 'productive', I don't want to do anything; on the contrary. I don't want anything that may threaten

this wonderful emptiness I am feeling. I believe I may restart – better yet, that I may start new experiences on different foundations. There is no turning back. I see things and people without fear, anxiety or judgment. I see things the way they are. I still want to transform, but without resistance or conflict. There is no more conflict. Therefore, there is nothing concrete to be done now. The transformation occurs in another dimension, with other means. There is nothing to fear. Everything is as perfect as it should be. I want to feel every minute of the present, absorbing the smallest details. That moment, as this one, seems eternal. I am ready to learn and share in a loving, non-judgmental way. Things flow and follow their perfect course when the ego or conditioning are not present. It is a permanent exercise, but I am certain that the intervals between ego and consciousness will be shorter in time, leaving only space for the truth and my essence. What I will do, where and how is not important; I will make no decisions on my own (ego), but will be guided by my essence and by what is to be my function here. I will know when I have to know".



Emptiness

Studying the Tao commented by Master Wu Jyh Cherng, I learned that "The way is the Dao in its latent state, the Void of the Absolute as a condition that enables the generation of all existence; thus it is the energy that empowers creation. Virtue is the Absolute manifested in its wholeness as Unity. Thus, the way generates, virtue creates. Heaven and earth protect the human being feeding the physical body on earth and giving it a ceiling (heaven) as shelter". As my daughter Katharina says, "the end of the trail holds a surprise: Peace!"

Creating space for the void

In spite of the consciousness and the freedom of the new beginning, my armour was still too heavy, so heavy that it hindered the movements that my wings needed in order to fly.

Gradually, I removed each piece of the armour, but some were so rooted and still clung to my body that they couldn't be removed by will alone, but by feeling: only feeling could free me from the bindings I had created. First, I thought that all I would need was an action plan to find my purpose; however, along the way, I learned that the key wasn't *to want*, but *to feel*.

Then, with time, I was getting lighter, spreading my wings, looking at their colours, their greatness and power to take me anywhere. Many parts of my body were very numb. I could feel neither pain nor pleasure, as if they were stiffening so that I wouldn't feel how distant I was from myself. It took me a while to reconnect to my body, feeling what it asked of me. Karin, a friend and body therapist, helped me greatly in this process. Is my body asking for a lemon refreshment or a watermelon juice? A fresh breeze or a warm embrace? Movement or rest? White or yellow garments? Music or silence? A word or an image? So I started to learn – no, better yet, to *remember* how it feels to be connected to my body, how to communicate with it, in the small and seemingly insignificant things.

Some locks were not yet ready to be opened. Some memory-filled crannies forbade it. No matter how much I wanted to see everything and face my biggest fears, it wasn't yet the right time, so I kept on tuning my instruments and paying close attention to the sound I heard at each key or string I played.

It was natural, albeit unconscious, to start with the body, the densest part, which keeps us here and connects us with this world. If you start with the body, turning to yourself, you become more alert and present, like when you pinch your arm to ensure that you are awake. When your dentist anaesthetises your mouth the injection loses its effect after a few hours, and then you start to touch your lips and cheek to see if they are sensitive again. You feel happy because you can finally eat something and feel the taste. That is what happens when you numb your body and disconnect your soul from its original source.

I started becoming aware of the food I wanted in my body, of the words I wanted to receive and utter from my body. What is inside me and is truly mine, and what belongs to others? With clear intention, I gave back everything that belonged to other people and gathered whatever belonged to me but had gotten lost in time and space. I identified expectations, beliefs, values, and demands that were not mine and forgave myself for concessions I had made in the past, hurting my essence. It was an authentic *detox* of memories recorded in the cells of my body. I collected debris, found long-lost pieces and recreated the mosaic of my soul.

Inside and outside, outside and inside, what belongs to me, what binds me to the whole and what belongs to others.

This period of physical cleansing was useful. I got rid not only of my armour, but also of things I no longer needed. Trinkets we find along the way to complete us but become heavy and limit our movements; things that distract us from the essential. To quote the Little Prince, "what is essential is invisible to the eye"... Things distract us because they keep us busy and concerned, consuming us. That is the point: we are not consumers of things; they consume us. When we attach ourselves to things, our minds focus permanently in the satisfaction of our desires and in the preservation of things.

At a certain point my husband, Lars, was worried that we wouldn't have anything left in our house. I was getting rid of everything that was duplicated, as well as things we hadn't used in the previous year. With time, he got into the

spirit and also started to look for a lighter way of living. Then I realised that our own house didn't fit our purpose anymore; it was too big for our needs. We started to search for a new home, a place where we could be lighter and freer. One year later, we moved to our little house, one third of the size of the old one. On the day we moved I wrote:

"When we moved to this house (*the old one*), six years ago, the first thing I asked in the contract, as a good lawyer, was the complete elimination of the avocado tree in the centre of the garden, whose roots were limited by a concrete wall. To me, it was an obstacle in the 'landscape': something that obstructed our full view and seemed out of proportion, out of place, and out of harmony with the rest of the environment. Besides, it took up too much space in a small garden.

The avocado tree hadn't been removed before due to environmental restrictions or to the contractor's laziness. For some reason, we were not interested in the reason and didn't enforce the contractual clause that commanded its uprooting.

With time, the avocado tree integrated our home and started to show its life and body in the garden. First, we pruned the branches and leaves that didn't seem "harmonious" with the other plants that covered its trunk, in an aesthetic and planned way, as if to keep it small, contained, and invisible. After some time, when the orchids and bromeliads hugged and adorned the avocado tree, we realised that its leaves and awkward branches were part of the whole: the plants that adorned the avocado tree fed on it and it brought structure, water and shade to the lovely flowers that showed up gracefully once a year.

The tree grew slowly. At each visit of the gardener, we asked him to prune less and less, focusing on the branches that could harm the roof. It gained weight, winning us over little by little until it turned out to be the central attraction of our garden. Together with the coconut tree, and filled with flowers and plants, it became a sort of vegetal host of the house. We even included a spotlight to look at it at night. Orchids, bromeliads and elkhorn ferns grabbed it

and one couldn't live without the other. When the moon was full, the avocado tree was a mirror for its silver light. That tree was a fundamental member of our family, bringing life, shadow and light to our garden.

We lived six years in that house before the avocado tree produced its first fruits. But when it did, there were plenty – the branches were filled abundantly, as if the tree was opening its heart, showing its lovely fruits. Vigorous and healthy, the avocado tree seemed to say, 'I am here with my fruits, waiting for you to pick them up and taste them'.

We waited under the avocados for the best moment to touch and pick them up. We didn't know if we should leave them on the tree to share them with birds that followed the growth process faithfully, with anticipation in their beaks, or just grab a ladder and get them.

One day, Cesar, the gardener, was tending the neighbours' garden and called me over the fence. Our extroverted avocado tree extended some branches over there and Cesar asked if he could pick some fruits for us. I got excited with the idea of tasting the avocados and asked him to pick some for us and to give some to our neighbours. Well, they were green. We had to wait... and wait... and wait...

Tomorrow we'll start the move to the new house.

Today I picked the first avocado from our tree. I immediately started crying, with a mixture of gratitude and sorrow, asking it for forgiveness, for not having honoured such a beautiful gift when we moved to this house. We had hurt it and it took the avocado tree six years to bear fruits again. I asked for forgiveness for the eyes I didn't have at the time... Now I have them and I can see all its beauty, strength and perfection. I asked it to forgive me.

What a wonderful taste it has! It is perfect in its form, aroma and taste.

I asked for its forgiveness for not having respected its presence, nature and generosity. I thank every bit of its fruits and every moment it adorned our lives in those years and I say goodbye with much love and respect. I say goodbye to

the Juliane who wanted to control everything, including the trees in the garden of her house, and who didn't have eyes to see that which brings love, balance and abundance: Nature.

I thank everything this house has given us and, together with my life and work partner, I feel ready for a new phase, a phase where my reassessed values may permeate our new house and our lifestyle."

I found that it would be important to eliminate some memories and agreements that became meaningless. Fire is a good cleansing aid – even for thoughts. We express them and fire transmutes them. I searched frantically for paint cans in recycling bins to support the bonfires of things, photos, images, and thoughts that didn't make sense anymore.

When you make room for the void, you usually try to put something else in that place. When that happens, if that happens, you will lose yourself again and continue to live an illusion.

My ingrained patterns took me many times out of my path and led me to do something else. Sometimes I only realised it after having left the way, and it took me extra energy to return to it. Sometimes I noticed what I was doing and was able to get back quickly. I got better and better at monitoring my behaviour, noticing the traps set by the ego and keeping myself on a straight line even before I got astray. All I had to do was get rid of the excess and whatever remained would be my essence.

As the lesson my friend Diego taught me about the Tao (the way): "When the human being is astray from the original essence, they are still a searcher. The individual then is the one who searches (Zhao). However, when the eyes see the light again, the Way (Tao) shows itself, the first step for a real understanding. Thus one gets to the source of the deepest knowledge (Zhidao). To be on the way is a matter of choosing well (Hao Tiao)". He also taught me that the verb to sin derives from "to deviate from the way", "to miss the target".



Do Be Do Be Do

The mind cannot understand reality in its entirety. In times of big changes, our minds will try to understand the complexities of the situation, leaving us insecure, anxious, trying to control everything. What is the way to access that which my mind cannot see? It is with the Experience itself. A conscious experience allows us to get immediately in touch with reality, without any duality. Our challenge is to experience something without fearing mistakes, without the desire to control the process. We just have to be available to whatever comes. This is the moment when confidence arises or when our faith resurfaces. Faith emerges from spirituality, which has

nothing to do with religion. Spirituality means to walk consciously back to our origins: Back to ourselves, to the essence, to what is simple.

Being and Doing

The first few months involved a lot of "doing": I still followed the old pattern that said, "Doing means happening". I was exhausted and curious and, even with an expanded vision, I still couldn't see my real purpose. I thought it would come from my will and my actions. Therefore, I acted willfully and still couldn't see. I wrote: "There have been now many months of questioning... My contacts, conversations and exchange of ideas have evolved. Alas, I confess that I feel as lost as I was a few months ago. I still cannot see the way..." I saw stories, stories that I could create: More beautiful, perhaps, more colourful, more altruistic, but not from my soul.

As my path had been so challenging up to that point, I didn't want to repeat the same old patterns again and again. It was as if I had no time to lose. I asked for more clarity, light and truth. I didn't know it at the time, but there was still so much more to come. In fact, there is still so much more to come.

I realised that my mind wasn't able to understand something that was beyond anything I could grasp. I had to bring it to my experience and reconnect it to my intuition. Thus, I experimented many practices that involved body, mind and soul: *lian gong*, yoga, therapeutic massages, xamanism, African religions, *chi gong*, *ayurveda*, coaching, quantum therapy, dance, arts, Reiki, Tibetan bowls, magnified healing, theta healing. Also, Bach floral remedies, crystal therapy, mindfulness, aura readings, oracular therapy, psychotherapy, rebirth and too many others to mention, each with their own rich stories and serving some channel. They are only different languages that give us access to the same thing.

Sometimes I needed something more intense, something that would shake my body and help me deal with my limits in a firmer, more grounded way. Sometimes I looked for subtlety and tenderness to create finer connections. As you can see, I am curious about the many therapies and languages we have around us, and I was determined to experiment everything that could contribute to my self-knowledge.

For a while, I had the feeling that a part of my body turned one way and the other part turned the other way, both sides not integrating with each other – it was as if the left side was spinning in a certain way and the right side, in another entirely different, so to speak. Later, I learned that it was the old rational-intuitive, male-female, *ying-yang* sides of me trying to manifest themselves. My body also helped me realise that I had abandoned my feminine side in the past.

The circumstances had led me to the illusory belief that to be firm, secure and strong meant to dominate the male energy. This practice of many years gradually led to the suppression of my intuition, gracefulness and feminine expression up to the denial of those qualities, for I was afraid to weaken the virtues that seemed so important to my survival.

During my pregnancy, I suppressed some of the sensations that could fragilise me and interfere in some way with my work routine. I travelled extensively up to the seventh month, acting as if there was nothing different happening in my body.

Still in my womb, Katharina manifested herself and showed me the miracle of life every time she moved. She made me look at the stars in heaven before going to bed and feel the warmth and light of the sunrise when I woke up. With a huge belly and low blood pressure, I couldn't "jump out of bed" and slip swiftly away. Katharina brought me back to the present moment...

When I felt the first contractions, I went straight from the office to the hospital. I was still instructing the colleague that would replace me, chosen in the previous day to work in my cases during my maternity leave. When I

arrived, I already had a good dilation: Katharina was already set and perfect for a normal delivery. However, my head was replete with thoughts and tasks that I was carrying before the leave, and I realised that it wasn't just a question of pressing a button to let my feminine energy flow and give birth to my daughter. I felt fear, fear of not being able to do it. Therefore, I decided to have a C-section – but felt somewhat guilty afterwards about this decision.

Today, I feel that I did what was possible for me at the time, within the limitations of my strength then. Since my male energy and mindset was running high, I thought the delivery – so visceral and feminine – would demand from me a power that was then dormant. When I submitted myself to a rebirth therapy, a few months later, I realised that part of the fear originated in my own birth. My mother was in labour with me for 18 hours and I was born with the cord wrapped around my neck, delivered with forceps.

As to the feminine energy, I have learned that the sustenance of the energy and harmony of my home are connected to (or disconnected from) that aspect. In my case, due to a complete lack of time, I delegated tasks such as meals, cleaning, grocery shopping and everything else that involved house care. I had no time nor space, inside and outside of me, to handle those things. Whenever I got unbalanced, our domestic bliss turned into chaos: ill-slept nights, Katharina sick, Lars exasperated and I, impatient.

Later, when I found again the pleasure of tending my nest, I learned that if I seized my home and brought to it my feminine energy and care, it would reverberate throughout my family as balance and health. Often, I had underestimated the importance of caring for my home, considering menial house tasks as operational details that somebody else could handle. To deny the importance of the attention and care for my family meant to deny my very own feminine energy.



Art transforming the inhospitable

Art penetrates the most inhospitable soils, wounded hearts and sleeping consciousness. Art goes beyond our immediate senses and our very limits. There is no such thing as a perfect life, but art opens our eyes and allows us to see the perfection of life. We make choices every day and that is how we create our reality. We choose the images we want to see, the food we want to put in our body, the news we want to read, the persons with whom we want to maintain relationships. What seeds have I sowed today? Where am I placing my love and my energy?

More experience, less knowledge

We cannot access our essence through knowledge or more knowledge: we can only do it through experience. Thus I looked for situations that provided me with experience. From what I felt, I filtered that which inspired me and that which was merely an interesting experience.

I favoured situations where everything I had learned and represented in the past mattered nothing for that particular experience, situations I hadn't experienced before. In the beginning of this process, I got involved with a dance and drama project with Lela, my dance teacher and muse from the period we lived in Germany, as a child. It was a project with 250 children in a school in Bilbao, Spain. Lela introduced me to the school principal and to the children as her assistant and placed me in front of the group for the warm up exercises. Suddenly, I was in a situation where the only thing that mattered was who I was. I had no files or memories to help me deal with the children. They looked at me, waiting for a cue. At that moment I realised there was only one place I could go to create: the void inside me. My name, my age, my origins, my story, my victories, my failures – nothing mattered to those children, only a sincere and authentic connection with the present would do. I felt naked and fearful. I was afraid to trust my ability to create; it was a huge exercise of surrender. The notion that I had nothing to lose helped me liberate that expression. I became a child again, enjoying the simple things in life without any expectation, without judging. I noticed I was having fun again after a long time and that the process could be fun and no less deep.

I looked for youthful places that allowed me to expand my vision to the same things the young people were looking at. It was reassuring to know I had friends and allies that also looked beyond those self-inflicted limitations. During this time, social media helped me to connect with people that wore the same glasses.

When I, myself, was younger, and had questions and views of my own, I often felt lonely because I couldn't easily find connections with people of the same mindset. The recent technological advances opened great doorways to strengthen my beliefs. What the young people had to say inspired me greatly, bringing an enlightened view and awareness of the things we can do.

I worked as a volunteer and visited social, environmental, educational, and philosophical projects with intellectually challenged young people... I even visited a prison to understand myself through that experience and reclaim my own cause. The "mind map" of connections and projects that I had drawn on the wall of my work place at home was already more than ten feet long. Later, this "mind map" was also a part of my detachment exercise and burned in a paint can along with other notes and texts I had written.

I found a trap in my search for purpose: I had to understand (and look for) that which the world needs, and not what I needed. I embarked in the illusion of "what the world needs" and realised that that also was a matter of the ego. When the ego does something for the others looking for recognition, the action is not truthful. When we fulfill what our soul desires, we access a light inside us and it illuminates our external world too. The essence emerges naturally when we are anchored in ourselves; then, we give and receive sincerely.

Whenever we try to light a candle inside somebody else – that is, whenever we want others to see what we see, we drain energy and get frustrated. We have to respect the right timing for each person. Even though it is a fact that we are all connected, the awakening process is an individual one. When we look for our self-realisation and we are in tune with the Higher Plan for the benefit of

all people, the world also benefits from it without any further effort from our part.

I was aware that the answer was inside me, but I still looked for external references that could inspire me. I alternated between being conscious, returning to the way and losing myself in the ego. Slowly, one at a time, the structures were being deconstructed. Deconstruction, unlearning, reconditioning, detachment, allowing and letting it all flow.



Losing my head

Letting it flow

The river meets many rocks in its way, but flows around them and follows its course. Dancing was instrumental in the development of my fluidity. To flow without thinking. To abandon myself and trust the process, dissolving stiffness, self-demands, dual thinking. If before I was searching for nuances among polarisations, at that moment to not exclude possibilities was essential for my fluidity.

I could exclude nothing; then again, I should do nothing. To flow also meant knowing the moment of not doing. This period was rife with questions related to my family and to the forgiveness of others and myself. I learned that to forgive doesn't mean to forget, but to deny people the power to cause me pain. To forgive means to accept, detach and recover my own power.

I thought that I had gone a long way to understand what could obstruct my expression channels, but also realised that I still had a lot of work ahead of me.

Meditation was my way to tap into my intuition. I tried many different techniques: transcendental meditation, *zazen* meditation, mindfulness, Osho's active meditation, mantras... but my best vehicle was free dancing. It was through movement that I could flow and access my intuition, turning my mind off. I later introduced *zazen* meditation to my routine, and I have been practicing it ever since. It is not a simple matter of "wanting" to meditate daily in order to become disciplined; it is what I need to do to enter the silence and find balance within.

Hypnosis, rebirth therapy and family constellation workshops helped me deal with past issues, bringing to light memories that needed to be relieved through my body in a conscious way so that my journey could be made lighter. Some issues demand a loving attention, something beyond a mere mental understanding, if we want to be in peace. These issues emerge when we are ready.

Challenge – I like this word – creates tension and tension creates movement. Just as a muscle contracts and this tension generates a movement, a challenge creates tension, moves us and thus we evolve. Therefore, I am always grateful for situations or people that challenge me to what I need to work on myself.

Sometimes I felt anger, resentment, and fear, and these feelings challenged me to look afresh for a cure. The responsibility for my choices was, and always is, mine; there are no victims. However, there are stories and dramas we tell to evade responsibility. Each individual has crutches, and I started to stumble into mine.

Later, I dove deeper into my shadows, which I will relate to further on. I was determined to see all my ghosts: if we want to be truthful, leave no stone unturned. It seems obvious, but we cannot see it all without seeing it all. Issues that involved my birth, sexual abuse in my childhood, an abortion in my youth, things I allowed in my relationships, aggressions against myself, concessions against the will of my soul, agreements that bound me, pleasing other people in exchange for love and attention, abandoning my own essence and many other ghosts.

One day, Katharina told me she was afraid of the wolf and asked me, "Mummy, what can I do to make my fear go away?"

I told her to look right into the eyes of fear and scare it away, and it would disappear. In a sense, it was what I was doing also, looking at my fears and scaring them away (or embracing them) through my consciousness. I forgave myself, undid agreements and created new ones. I promised my soul that

I would never leave it again. But to do that I had to support my essence in any circumstances, whether it pleased others or not, with or without appreciation or recognition. Supporting my soul demanded a great deal of courage, courage to let go of the ego, to be in me, for me and by me.

It is by no means being selfish; quite the contrary. The respect for the other comes from self-respect. The love for the other comes from self-love. Sacrifice produces resentment and questionings. When we are committed to our soul, we are in peace. When we are in peace, we may produce peace around us, from the inside out.

Is it easy? No. Is it possible? Yes.

Often, the need for approval, appreciation and belonging comes back as a tidal wave, putting to test the commitment to our soul. But if we are as one with the soul, under any circumstances, it rewards us more and more with its wisdom and abundance.

Insight means exactly what it sounds like: To look inside, reaching for our intuition and everything that the mind cannot see. When we get goose bumps, it is our soul manifesting itself. Sometimes we try to capture this magic moment of the insight, but it evades us. The soul doesn't like to be confined: it is free and it manifests itself whenever we give it space.

Why do we close our eyes to see? Because when we do it, we can see inside. Each one has a different way to access that look, to see beyond the usual. It is a "blind spot"; in silence, in the void, everything is available.

Everything is perfect. When we surrender to the Universe, to the Divine, to God, or whatever name you want to give it, and let it all flow, everything is perfect. To surrender doesn't mean to reject, but to trust. To trust means to act with faith. Fear is the absence of love, of trust. Our actions in the material plane require dedication, but not effort. When I need power - in the sense of effort - to make something happen, the will comes from the ego: you desire something, no matter what. Sometimes, you even sacrifice yourself. In my studies of *A Course in Miracles*, I learned that "A healed mind doesn't plan. It carries out the

plans that it receives through listening to wisdom that is not its own. It waits until it has been taught what should be done, and then proceeds to do it."

When we act consciously, in line with our soul, whatever happens is always perfect. Why? Because it is truthful.

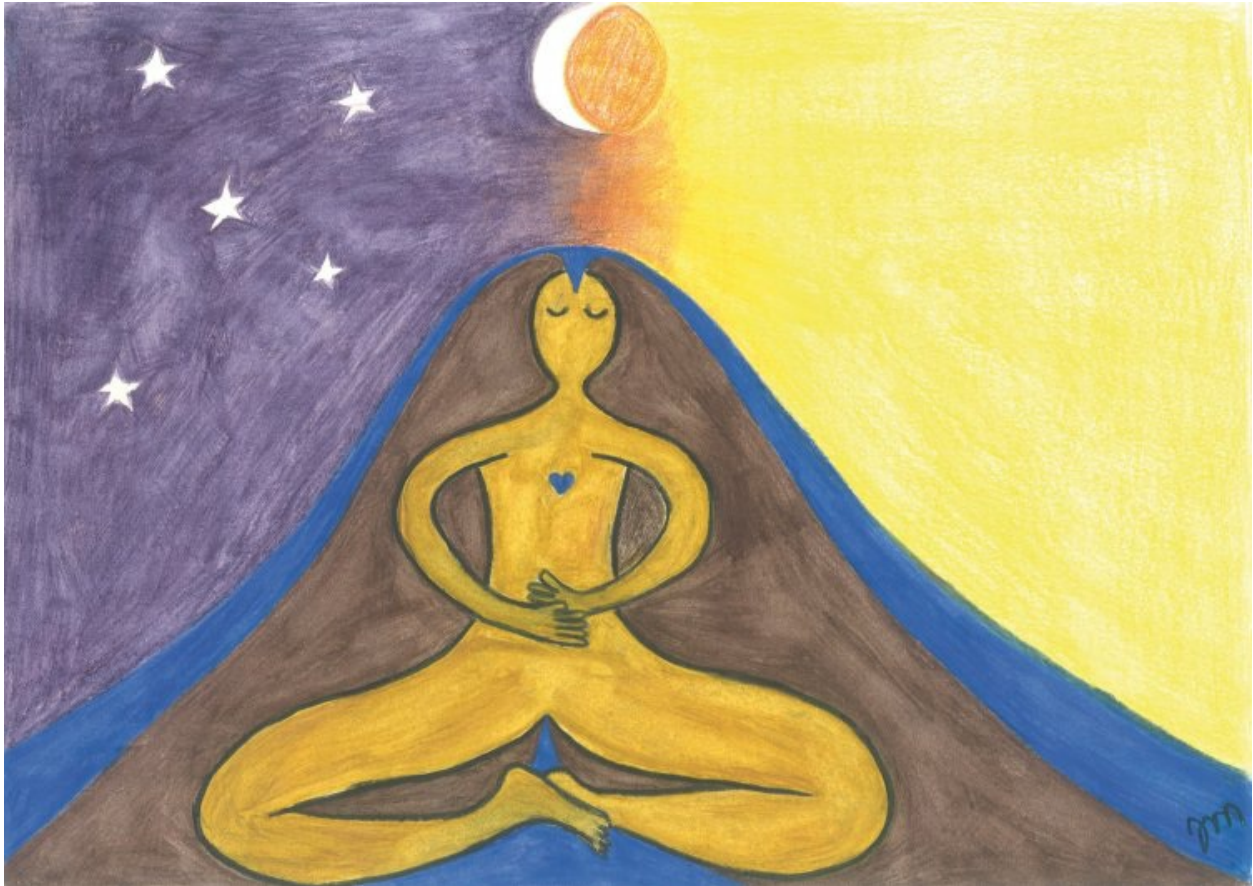
I remember the story of the Zen master and his disciple, which my friend Eduardo told me in one of our meetings. The disciple asked, "How long will it take for me to get enlightened?" The master said, "Ten years". "And if I make an extra effort and dedicate myself to the practice?" "Then," answered the master, "it will take you twenty years".

I lost a lot of energy trying to satisfy my ego: exhausted, as if I was walking on quicksand and not moving. To control all the variables, hypotheses and outcomes would demand a colossal effort. Since I have always been disciplined, I couldn't distinguish effort from dedication anymore.

My discipline had made it difficult for me to see clearly what gave me pleasure and what I had to do to reach a certain result. It was as if I were numbed into the automatic mode for what needed to be done. I even convinced myself that certain things actually gave me pleasure, elaborating a story that justified the sacrifice: a real masochist.

I didn't perceive at the time what was control, or effort, or choices – a big mess, a fog in my field of vision. Whenever I thought that I was getting closer to the clarity of my gifts and skills, I noticed the return of old patterns. At this moment in my journey, I created structures and started projects – even international projects – that could engage all my abilities, or so I believed. I had to keep myself in a constant state of vigilance, of lucidity, if I wanted to stay clear of the same patterns, but dressed in a different colour. Germans have a saying, "It is the same but in green" (*Das Gleiche in grün*). I realised that every experience, mind map, structure that I had built in my first few months of search still followed the same pattern, in one way or another. Why? Because they came from the outside in.

I still had to filter and check a lot in order to really see. I burned the notes and texts produced in the previous months and started from scratch yet again. To be sure, with more experience and knowledge. My arms ached, I was very energetic and ready to operate, but I still lacked focus. And since I didn't want to waste my energy, I had no alternative but to wait.



Stillness

There is a time to do and a time not to do. We usually believe that things can happen only if we act on them. We say, "Let's do it and make it happen". This is a false belief: sometimes, the external inaction opens up the space for an internal Universe of doing. Like a seed that sprouts under the surface, which from an external point of view appears that nothing has happened. Engage in stillness, enter your internal Universe and cultivate energy and consciousness. When we concern ourselves with doing, expanding, or sharing, we deplete a lot of energy, exhaust ourselves and lose the way. Creation comes from quietness, not from the noise in our minds.

At that time I looked for answers in many sources: astrological charts, Tarot, runes, numerology, *I Ching*, aura readings, seashell divination, lilah... perhaps the Universe would at least give me a clue. When I consulted the *I Ching*, the answer was, "Now is the moment of doing nothing". I didn't know the story behind the *I Ching* then, but today, as a passionate student of Taoism and of that divine tool, the hexagram that showed up may have been, "Keeping still".

I almost had a heart attack! As a good Arian, doing is easy; to do nothing is a challenge, to wait is torture.

Roberto said, "When you plant a seed in the earth and look at it from outside, nothing seems to be happening. Nothing is moving above ground. Underneath it, inside that seed, there is a Universe. Cells multiply, the seed breaks the skin and sprouts, and suddenly it explodes above the ground, looking for light. When the bud sprouts without any roots, a strong wind may put it down. Thus, it is important for the bud to form roots, growing strong and firm".

This teaching freed me from the need to *do*. I saw clearly, as never before, that *not doing* is as important as doing: it is a preparatory exercise in different levels. It is from the void that creation comes. Giving space for the soul to manifest is a great challenge in this era of productivity and consumerism.

Later, I began to study the *Tao Te Ching*, a wonderful thing the Universe gave me during my journey. The Tao brings a crystal-clear understanding of the *Wu Ji*, the state that was prior to anything else, and of the *Tai Ji*, the Tao in its entirety.

I realised that I had detached myself from things, money and status, from my circle of friends, references, and my so-called skills, but not from one thing: ideas. The attachment to ideas is also an attachment, obviously.

While I was experimenting, I had the chance to study many different projects. However, art, education and spirituality were strong recurrent themes.

I had been fixed with the idea of using art as a development tool for education, and so I followed my plan of reducing the essence to a known form and structure. I had to admit to the others that after so much movement, I still didn't know what the next step would be: *that* is the moment the soul needs to prevail.

In so doing, after removing all references and preconceived ideas, I realised I could do anything because it wouldn't matter what I did. It could be anything. Transformation is a process, not an event. And I know that I know nothing.

During this phase, Lício reminded me of a very appropriate lesson in *A Course in Miracles*: "I don't know what anything, including this, means. And so I don't know how to respond to it. And I will not use my own past learning as the light to guide me now."



Bent bow

Bent bow, arrow poised: Intuition antennas alert and connected with the Universe. My arms and my body shake and try to relax at the moment of strongest tension. I am not clear what my target is. I feel I cannot release the arrow yet. I don't have much time and I don't want to waste energy on an unclear target. There is only availability and consciousness but not the desire from the mind. Keeping tension without intention. Learning to wait. I have learned that control is an illusion and that a healed mind makes no plans. That is the flow of life's intelligence.



One with the whole

Everything is available in nature: All you have to do is feel it and connect with it, inside and out. Earth brings strength, grounding; water brings fluidity and emotion, fire creates and transmutes, wind is the breath of life, stars guide and the heart opens up in petals. What about singing? Singing makes the body vibrate and asks the goddesses for permission, grateful for their generosity.

Art as an experience

Art is an expression of the soul. It is always beautiful because it is truthful. I like to say that it is a short cut for spiritual connection, for the creative process. It is a religion without any dogma. The various religious languages help us to find some answers, establishing a communication link with God. Art has the same role. It transcends formal language and it is a manifestation of that blind spot I mentioned before. Since it has no predetermined rituals, it permeates everything with ease, regardless of age, creed or origins.

Our values are changing now, and thus art is seeking a new function. Nature is God's art: perfectly balanced, harmonious, a divine composition. When we express our souls, we wake up God inside us. Children do that easily, decorating with flowers, handling colours, moving themselves spontaneously, rejoicing with simple things. Throughout life, we lose the connection with our child and the mind begins to control the heart. The mind controls our actions and will, leaving almost no room for the expression of the soul.

Often, we lose the spontaneity of a smile, of an embrace, of a voice; everything is contained in a thought-form, in the ego's will. When you give space to creation, it emerges with such power and purity that we are surprised with the creation itself. We may compare it with breathing and the functioning of our body. We cannot control or plan how each cell absorbs oxygen, transforming it and carrying it in the body, nor digestion, heartbeats or a blink. The integration is perfect because it was created in that sacred place.

Rivers, oceans, butterflies that fly across continents, sunrays kissing a leaf, a whale cuddling its cub, a cow giving birth, an ant carrying food to its nest –

with a perfect and harmonious complexity that our mind cannot understand.

To dedicate ourselves confidently to perfection is a big challenge, because we tend to try and control the outcome. You don't know the outcome of an art work in progress, and it doesn't matter. We may say the same about this book: Right now, we don't know how it will end. And it doesn't matter: what matters is the creative process.

With time, art migrated from the heart to the mind. We produced big discussions, structures and egos to define the meaning of art and its meaning to humankind. I feel that, as with religions, we got astray from the original purpose. As we have often distorted Jesus' message, we also distorted the messages from artists and created paraphernalia to categorize all the different expressions and languages of the soul.

One day, the disciple asked his master:

"Master, what is zen?"

The master gave him a box, asked the disciple to go out, collect some wind in it, and return. When he came back, the master said:

"This is zen."

If we try to put anything formless in a box, it loses its essence. How can you fit Mozart's music in a definite form? We are stuck in forms, always looking for boxes to keep something that has no form.

We unlearn how to reach this sacred place inside us, to return to what is simple: Anything that is too complex, demanding effort and toil, is not. The *Tao Te Chin* has precious and simple teachings, and its first message is, "The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao." Tao is the way. What did I learn from this message? Whenever we look for some form to frame something that transcends the visible, it is no longer.

It is like trying to put wind in a box.

However, we are here in physical form to manifest something in matter. How can I integrate anything that manifests itself in matter without restricting

myself to form? That was a question I asked myself in my "all I know is that I know nothing" period, a time when I abandoned the splendid projects that flourished in my mind but not in my heart.

Art is a way to express in form things that we reached through our intuition. Mozart used musical notes and instruments to express the symphonies he sensed. Whatever you do in your life, you can do it with art, from a coffee to a novel, a look, a song, a good-morning kiss on your child. If you do something with art, you are doing it from your soul. We can feel when something comes from the soul.

While I still worked as an executive in the corporate world, we used to pass the hat among colleagues to buy a cake every time we celebrated somebody's birthday. We could buy any cake – of any size, price, or flavour. However, we always chose the cake made by our in-house cook. Why? Well, she made them with her soul.

I feel that we are looking more and more for actions and relationships with soul.

Sophistication lies in simplicity. And I felt that I also had to return to what was simple in order to create from my essence. Every idea I'd written down and put in some kind of format I felt were already "contaminated" by the mind simply by being in a form.

Try to describe a smell. How do I recognize a particular odour? Only by smelling it. I may describe in detail what it is like to bite an apple, the noises, the aroma, the taste, its texture on the tongue... Nevertheless, when you bite the apple, you realise it in a second – and it is a different experience for each individual.

I had some clear directions:

- to be inclusive;
- to return to the simple things;
- to offer a wide field of experiences.

Those ideas were so intangible that whenever my mind tried to process them I felt I didn't know where to start. And it was even worse when I tried to share these directions with others.

It wasn't long before I realised that the process had to happen inside me and not outside in that moment. If I believed that the creative process was an experience, then my creation should be an experience too.

Just as we segregate professions, school subjects and foods in categories, I felt that art had gone through that separation. Separation begins inside us. We separate our mind from consciousness and this inner conflict produces suffering. We see ourselves separated from the others, from the Universe, from God.

Just as we separate inside, we separate outside. Biology is separated from geography, which is separated from mathematics, which is separated from language, which is separated from physics; in the same sense, we separate theatre from music, from dance and from visual arts. My mother and I went to a dance performance of the *Corpo* group and I told her that I didn't understand why we called that a dance performance: for me, it was dance, theatre, music, plastic arts, and visual arts. If we segregate, we exclude and limit the field of possibilities.

Since we are evolving in the oneness of consciousness (we have already used *collective consciousness* a lot), now it is time to integrate the arts. Why do we separate the music school from the dance school or from the drama school? When we reach our being or our essence, we may want to express ourselves in different languages. Now my body asks for movement; then, it is chanting. Colours. Flavours. Words.

If I limit my expression channels, declaring which one I will use from the start, I limit the infinite possibilities of expression that emerge from my being in that moment. Since I was in close contact with professional artists, I noticed that they too were stuck in form – as if hostages of their own techniques and artistic knowledge. I felt they were pushing themselves a great deal and how that stifled their spontaneity, the simplicity of what could be.

We create conditions, materials, equipment, space, and timetables to let the inspiration happen. However, it shows up when you least expect it – and with resources that we seldom, if ever, used before.

We must be one inside ourselves and with the whole; there is no conflict between mind and consciousness, and there is no conflict between the various expressions of art.

I realised it was time to experiment without expectations, but with a clear intention: to provide a field of creation with freedom of expression, including new languages. There would be no rules or limits there; only unlimited possibilities and configurations, unique to each moment. I felt that my task was to provide a space for deconstruction and refuge, so that the most truthful and pure aspects of each one could emerge.

When I first entered the abandoned warehouse in the Chácara Santo Antônio district of São Paulo, I saw clearly how that centre would be set up. I couldn't explain exactly what I would be doing there; I only knew the essence.

Sometimes, my ego caught me off guard when I tried to explain the purpose of that centre and of my new work there. After wasting so much energy in an attempt to explain the unexplainable or to make visible the invisible, I realised it was a new trap from my ego: if you want people to understand what you do, it is recognition you are seeking. If I were right about the essence and the purpose, I did not need the applause. What is essential is felt in presence.

There was, however, one thing I knew about it even before the place was born: It would be named Petalusa. In my meditations, without form and without categorization, I looked for a word that meant *nothing* in any language I knew. Words are powerful and our mind is skillful when it comes to creating associations and little boxes. I imagined that, if it had the word *art* in it, many people that didn't consider themselves artistic would be put off by it. The purpose was to deconstruct, to remove barriers. Ideally, the name should represent, in its symbology, something connected to its purpose. So I looked for the word *butterfly* in Greek.

The Greek language brings with it the beauty of mythology and heritage in all its teachings. Besides, the possibility of anyone knowing the meaning of *Petalusa* was small, and so it fulfilled the idea of being only a word without any immediate understanding.

The butterfly symbolizes transformation, the transformation of the caterpillar that grows inside its cocoon and, at the right moment, breaks out, and with so much force expands and flies freely: A miracle of nature shown through the incredible strength of this being.

In Greek, the word *butterfly* is synonym with "transformation of the soul". If we try to break the cocoon before the right moment or if we help the caterpillar to break free and fly, it will die. The power of transformation comes from within. No one, nothing can do it for us.

The way I wrote the word represents its voicing. In Greek, it is written "πεταλούδα".

So I already had a name and a space, now it was time to manifest something. But it would be a manifestation emerging from the essence, from the Higher Plan. Yes, practical things are necessary to bring to Earth something we envision. I cleaned every inch of that place with love and clear intention; I even washed the walls of that warehouse. I cleansed memories that could be there and I cleansed myself, inside and out. I cleansed away concepts, judgments, patterns, allowing the new to emerge freely, with beauty and truth.



In the right measure

Everything has a measure, *slowly but surely*. We receive "doses" of consciousness and awakening as our system is ready to absorb them. Sometimes it is drop by drop, sometimes a bigger dosage through a mysterious hole. Each person has a different rhythm, according to our individual possibilities. There is no "best" or "worst", and no amount of "wanting" can accelerate or retard the process. Dimensions of time and space help our mind in its search for references. Everything is perfect and in its measure, as the flow of nature.

We make the way by walking the way

The initial impulse is always the most challenging. It demands more energy and sometimes it is painful because we are alone. It is the power that comes from within, with all the fears we must overcome to see beyond. It is like a birth.

I returned to my own birth in one of the therapeutic processes I experienced and saw myself under water. There were two rocks deep within with a crack in the middle, through which I saw a light. It was dark and the light attracted me. I wanted to go to the light, but I knew that first I had to pass by the rocks. In my mind, that would be impossible, and this thought was fearful. My mind focused only on the physical impossibility to pass that obstacle. I realised that only faith and confidence would allow me to do it, overcoming my mental limitations. And the power to do it would have to come from myself.

The initial impulse tried me again as to how much I was willing to be true to my soul. Even if people couldn't quite understand or believe it, it was important to be true to the purpose that originated that place. That was the agreement I made with myself.

Lars was fundamental in this phase, allowing me to feel safe and carry on in peace. Until then, the search process had been internal, with less impact on the others. When I decided to go ahead and put in practice what I believed in, the task involved also my family.

He didn't understand quite what would happen in practice or how the place would sustain itself, but he trusted my discernment and the strength of my purpose. It was also for him a process of patience, kindness and surrender.

We create challenges we need in order to evolve. I realised that my biggest challenge would be the control, and Petalusa came to teach me that we control nothing. At each step, my mind was crushed and challenged in Petalusa. There could be no better laboratory for learning.

In the beginning, in addition to the curatorship, I coordinated the public workshops, people's applications to such workshops, the food and supplies. It didn't take long for me to realise that that was a form of control. Two months later, I opened up the centre in a way that it became collaborative, self-managed by its users and sustainable by conscious contributions.

An enormous exercise of surrender and presence was necessary to make people understand that they were also responsible for what Petalusa is.

Trusting the process and the people came naturally to me. Slowly, I made progress in my internal conflict and pacified my anxiety and uncertainties. Laws, contracts and rules had always marked my professional life; I had to foresee the unpredictable and control all the possible outcomes. It was clear to me that Petalusa wouldn't have any written rules: the only thing that would permeate the relationships would be consciousness.

One night, I dreamed that I was in a philosophy class and the teacher, an old woman, sat there in silence. We, the students, were also quiet, learning without hearing a single word: everything seemed natural. Then, one student asked, "What about the laws?" I raised my hand and answered, "Laws were created by the mind, the frightened ego that has to defend itself. When consciousness creates a project, it doesn't have to generate laws and rules. Otherwise, the mind will contaminate it and it will lose its essence." This dream made it clear that the main objective of Petalusa would be the transformation of consciousness.

What I give is what I get. My bets were in consciousness and common sense, and at each step my experience showed empirically that I was on the right track.

In the same way I believe in art as an experience, so also in experience I based my learning process, with detachment of ideas and of the outcome. Everything was moving, and the way to do things is impermanent. But the essence does permeate all our actions. I kept what was working and changed what wasn't. There was no destination: I made the way by walking.

In the first few months, I wanted anxiously for all the workshops to take place in Petalusa. I had seen the special and powerful works of the artists and wanted everyone to have access to them.

I learned that everything is perfect when you surrender. When the workshops happened, it was perfect, and it was equally perfect when they didn't happen. We fear surrender, but when we experience it, it is liberating and everything becomes lighter.

I remember the sensation I had when I stayed four hours inside a xamanic sauna. I felt fear and resistance, but eventually I surrendered and laid down on the ground. I felt the freshness, the acceptance and strength that the earth gave me after I allowed myself to surrender to it, letting go of trying to rely only on myself. It is a relief, liberation.

The Universe works for us and with Petalusa it wasn't different. The Universe helped to filter who would come, who would stay and who wouldn't visit that centre. My role there was merely of a guardian at the creation field, caring for its essence, order and abundance. It was like a dance, feeling the space, listening to the music and dancing the life.

Eastern philosophy says that "When God dances, He makes life." Sometimes, with the firmness needed to establish boundaries, but not restricting creation. Lightly and generously, but not wasting energy.

This is what I wrote on Petalusa's fifth month anniversary:

"Much dedication, but without effort.

Joy without euphoria.

A firm purpose, but flexible with its possible manifestations.

Keeping within the essence, but not rigidly.
Inclusive, but watchful of sustainability.
Connecting with the subtle but producing concrete actions when necessary.
Detaching, but conscious of the responsibility as guardian.
Celebrating achievements, but mindful of the challenges.
Gaining roots without immobilizing.
Opening without scattering.
Loving without attachment."

I have learned to respect the processes and limits of each individual. Many times, just being in the same space and feeling its energy is sufficient for some people. There are others who look for deeper processes to bring their issues to consciousness. Some come looking for the group workshops and work in the first layer, using mental tools to awaken. It matters not. If it is singing, dancing, or cooking, if it is using a coach, practicing yoga, studying your family constellation, submitting to *ayurveda* or learning quantum physics, anthroposophy, mindfulness, mandalas, women's circles, design... It matters not. Each one has his/her own channel and rhythm.

You cannot force a flower to open its petals while it is still a bud: each bud shows its beauty in its own time, and some dry before opening up. Volition has no place here. We have to wait and respect with compassion each one's process, because we are one.

Magic happens when we give space to our being: we take off our masks and bring on purity and truth with strength and beauty.

The live group workshops didn't demand much and didn't require a strict programme. On the contrary, anything that the facilitators and artists programmed ended up differently than previously envisioned. Those who tried to control the process didn't create a spontaneous and truthful field of expression for the group. Since the intention for that place was a different one, this seldom happened.

The communication in these workshops was – and still is – a challenge. It is though the purpose that needs to be clear. However, it is impossible to reveal the track that one will follow because it is not known, and few people enter an experience not knowing what will happen. So, we had to find ways of communicating without saying anything.

For each person I talked about Petalusa I explained things in a different way. I felt what each mind needed to hear to be calm, allowing the soul to manifest itself.

We had more than 300 group workshops in almost two years of work, with over 3,500 participants.

We saw expressions that I had never even imagined could exist. As I talked to each artist, therapist and facilitator as a curator, I grew more and more fascinated, learning more ways of awakening.

I could clearly see the connection, for instance, between an experience with Brazilian indigenous people and one with photography. For me, everything is connected; so, I cannot exclude anything with that essence of the Soul Menu.

We seldom choose vastly different dishes when we are hungry reading the menu in a restaurant. We know when our body is asking for something fresh and light, or warm and more consistent. So is art in its widest expression.

When I wear yellow, I feel like expanding, opening up. If I choose black next morning, it is because I prefer to withdraw at that moment.

What is my soul asking for? Do I want to work my family relations, reaffirm old values? Widen my view, retreat and reflect, have fun and pleasure? It changes constantly. In Petalusa, the idea behind the Soul Menu is to offer the widest possible list of options, serving different tastes, desires and needs of the soul. There are too many "you have to"s in life, so we don't impose rigid timings.

I like to tease people who come to Petalusa saying that there is only one rule there: they don't "have to" anything.

Appointments and obligations overload our lives and few things are free from rules. We even plan leisure activities. At children's parties, there is a specific time to play, to eat, to pee, to sing "Happy Birthday" and to get the party favours. In dance classes there is the choreography, the music and, at times, even facial expressions have to match the choreography.

We unlearn that we have biorhythms, our own wishes and that which give us pleasure: pleasure for the sake of pleasure, without leaflets, scripts or certificates. It is not an easy task to show the value of an experience to those who are addicted on consuming things.

For many, it is easier to pay for something that they can see, touch and keep in a closet than invest in an experience. However, even though we accumulate things, when we face the end of our days, what remains are our experiences.

That is why the result of an experience – be it a drawing, a sculpture, a photo, a song – can be discarded at the end. I do it without attachment, in every meeting, whenever we leave things behind.

What we register in the outside world from within is merely circumstantial; when it is truthful, we don't even need notes to remind us of what is. I visited Liverpool, in England, to understand LIPA (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts), a beautiful performing art school established by Paul McCartney and Mark Featherstone. Mark and I talked about creativity and he told me that when the Beatles had an insight for a melody or for lyrics, they didn't write it down immediately. They slept over it, and, if it were still present the next day, then they would record it in some way.



At the tip of your nose

We often look for answers far away, in tangled thoughts that leave us more lost and confused. However, the answer is right in front of us. We must only have eyes to see it: not our ordinary eyes, but the eyes of the soul. How do we look with the eyes of the soul? Letting go of control and trusting that everything that presents itself is perfect for the evolution of our consciousness. That is the commitment of our soul to follow the way of consciousness to a Higher Plan for the benefit of all. And not the way of the ego that just "wants, and wants, and wants" more, even though it is filled to the brim. The choice is ours.

Inspire, expire, and breathe

A seed sprouts, grows and becomes a tree, then expands its branches, flourishes and its fruits bear seeds; when they grow and fall on the ground, they produce sprouts that grow, and so the circle of life continues, in a movement of expansion and contraction.

Love is like that. It is born inside us, it expands reaching the other and returns to us, contracting. This contraction creates a movement of expansion, which returns. The creative process also follows the same movement. We reach the essence from the void we allow to be and we expand through our expression. Meditation helps us in the contact with the inner world. Our senses help us in the contact with the outer world. Through our senses, we have inspirations and connect with other people and with nature.

Odours, images, tastes, movement – they take us to a memory that says we are the remembrance of everything that already is.

Art exists to help us pour our being out in the world. In experiencing this, we develop abilities and tap into gifts that return to us, creating a new movement.

Inspire and expire: It is the flow of breathing. We are always “expiring”, so we are running out of breath. And so it is with inspiring. We are always looking outside for things and very little inside. Whatever gets out is a result of what we look for in others or in things, and what we find is never enough. We always want more, better, or something else: an eternal emptiness. At the same time, we are afraid of letting go, of looking inside and find that there is nothing

there. However, it is there that lies the whole. But instead we need to feed the ego, fearing its death.

When we do something soulfully and artfully, we are reminded that we are a part of the whole and that an individual's expression is unique. The composition of all unique expressions forms a harmonic whole, an orchestra where each instrument is fundamental for the harmony of the whole.

More often than not, we waste time trying to play another instrument other than the one that was given to us as a gift – a gift from God. We want to be something we are not. When Katharina was three, she liked to watch a film with Tinker Bell, and we must have seen it more some 250 times. One day, I started to cry in the middle of the film. It tells the story of how fairies are born and what their task is.

Every time a baby was born and smiled for the first time, a fairy was also born. She would then go to the fairy kingdom and while there, she is made aware of her gift. In a circle with a spiral inside, there are many tools and symbols, and the newly arrived fairy studies each gift until she discovers her own. There is a water fairy, a flower fairy, a fairy for light, for animals, for winds and even an artisan fairy.

Tinker Bell gets close to the objects and, when she approaches the artisan fairy tool, a hammer, it shines strongly, indicating it is her gift. Nevertheless, she looks at the other fairies' gifts and doesn't like her gift as much. The other gifts are more interesting, more glamorous, and she tries to be something that she is not. This results in a lot of confusion in the kingdom and delays the coming of spring. Realizing the mess she created, Tinker Bell takes her gift back, accelerates the coming of spring, and everything ends well. It was then that I asked myself, "What is my gift?"

I saw so many artists, therapists and facilitators with clear tasks and tools but couldn't see what my gift was.

When we want to be something that we are not, we provoke unbalance and disharmony in the whole orchestra. Accept what is given to us and work

joyfully; it doesn't matter if it is a violin, a piano or a triangle. They all have a role in the final composition.

We segregated the different functions and attributed different importance and hierarchic levels to them, and this caused the separation. The janitor that cleans up the room at the end of a surgery, caring for its environment so that others may be cared for safely, is as important as the surgeon who saved a life there. There is no better or worse.

I interviewed Dr. Amit Goswami after a Quantum Activism workshop in Petalusa and asked him what would be his advice to people like me, who don't express their Dharma with a specific tool but connect fields and enable others to emerge and transform themselves. He said, "For some people Dharma is specific and for others it is generic. What you found for you is simply a generic Dharma. For some changes that the world needs and for some of these changes' needs, we need people like you. I, for one, constantly need people like you. So, welcome to the world where you have become an accelerator of future changes, a facilitator." How I had waited for a clear answer like that.



Bamboo

Don't lose heart, consciousness-transforming agents: Patience, endurance and determination. Plant, tend and detach from the results. A tiny seed of light that we plant has a much wider impact than we may suspect. The biggest tree on earth, over 100 metres tall, was once a small seed. A bamboo may take 20 years to produce seeds. After sprouting under the surface, the bamboo seed may take 5 years to project itself on the surface. For a long period of time, its roots deepen dozens of feet, and then the sprout emerges. You have to strengthen your base to grow first before you can grow as high as a bamboo; consciousness is extemporal and has no hurry.

Nature's wisdom

When one tree is lacking nutrients, the nearby trees connect with that one through their roots to send the nutrients needed. And in this way the system balances the needs and available resources.

Nature doesn't judge or question its function. The ant doesn't know it is an ant. The flower doesn't know it is a flower. They simply are, and the impulse comes naturally. We came to the world with a consciousness and a mind, and our challenge is to transcend the conflict that we, ourselves, created.

There is no point in transforming the system if we don't evolve our consciousness: it would be just more of the same. The path is in the evolution of consciousness, from which transformation arises. It is as if we were in a maze, not able to see the others; however, when consciousness transcends the barriers, we realise that we are all in the same place.

It is not sufficient to realise individually the illusion of the barriers. It is only when the last individual removes the veil of illusion that we will be able to have a complete view of the whole. During a Tea Ceremony I got acquainted with Kuan Yin, the bodhisatva of compassion in Chinese Buddhism, and she touched me deeply. According to mythology, Kuan Yin chose to stay in this world after her enlightenment, for she swore to maintain the human form until every being is enlightened.

We cannot remove the veil of illusions for anybody else: each one on his/her own time and according to their own possibilities. We may inspire and be inspired; after all, we are mirrors of each other and we are together in this journey. When we follow the truth, we have nothing to lose but our illusions.

Every tiny seed planted may contribute to elevate consciousness and that is a huge step. Sometimes a word transforms our vision and we see something completely different. It is like watching a 3D movie without the special glasses. When we wear the glasses, everything changes – and it is a point of no return.

Some people think that it is interesting to limit the vision of people. I prefer to look at what is possible. As my friend Eduardo says, "always ahead and up". If we want to eliminate darkness, we must turn on the lights.

We cannot save anyone. Trying to save the other is an ego trip. Usually we go down together and get frustrated, losing energy.

There are abundant resources around us. When we show clear intention and firm commitment, the Universe moves to give us all the support we need.

We create excuses to prevent us from fulfilling our purposes based on beliefs that limit us: I cannot do that because I don't have enough money; I cannot do that because the system doesn't permit it; I cannot do that for moral reasons; I cannot do that because I don't believe in myself; I cannot do that because I'm ugly. We never run out of excuses and the mind is very creative. Whenever we manage to eliminate some limitations, we create others.

Goethe inspired me a lot in moments when I hesitated or felt insecure when he said, "In every act of initiative and creation, there is a fundamental truth the ignorance of which kills many ideas and splendid plans: and that is that when we are entirely committed, Providence moves with us. All things happen to help us; otherwise, they wouldn't have occurred. A current of events arise from the decision, causing to come our way all types of incidents, encounters, and material assistance that no man would ever have dreamed could have come his way. Whatever you can do or dream of doing, do it. Courage contains genius, power and magic. Start now!"



Centering and turbulence

When we are anchored in our essence, the waves and storms that come up simply pass us by. They don't derail us. If we stay on the surface, trying to control the waves, we lose energy and get tired. The deeper we go into our consciousness, the less we feel the consequences of life's tsunamis, and we keep on going and transforming from the inside out.

To die and to be reborn on the same day

To take charge of our own destiny is the first step. To grasp our own story. Whenever I feared what could happen, I took the situation to every possible extreme. If everything goes wrong, what is the worst that can happen? Nothing. And if it is even worse than I can imagine, what will happen? Nothing. When we do our best and act consciously, the lessons learned stay with us and can take the next step. When we are true to ourselves, there is no wrong. We have false beliefs regarding success, and they lead us to evaluate our actions according to external parameters. For me, success means to materialize my soul's truth in ways that I believe in.

We like to blame the past, our parents, our ancestors for whatever we have failed to achieve. We even deny our origins for fear of letting them corrupt our creative process. I have learned to be grateful and to connect with every source that has allowed me to get to where I am. How many obstacles and oppositions they had to face to allow us to express ourselves freely as we do today? How many generations suffered before we could evolve and reach our consciousness more easily? The *Ho'oponopono*, a Hawaiian healing practice, helped me process my memories and ancient patterns, transforming them in compassion, love, modesty and gratitude.

We have a lot of work ahead of us and we have no time to lose. Let us make each step and each action with clear intention and consciousness. Acknowledging our origins and our ancestors makes us stronger – and then we may go even further.

In a curatorship with a consultant, Roberto, now my friend, I made an exercise where I had to map the abilities and talents of my parents and grandparents. At the end, I realised that I had a bit of each of them in me. The family constellation also helped me "clarify" some relationships that became unbalanced in the family system, allowing the love to flow. We are not separated from what created us: Creator and creature. It creates again, expands and returns, contracting towards the essence.

When I was a child and also a teenager, I used to write letters to myself. In one of them, I said that my greatest desire was to float in space, not touching anything, feeling independent from everything, as if even the support from the Earth could be a nuisance, so was my discomfort in dealing with nature. I wrote, "I would like to be completely separated from the world for a while, that is, to sleep deeply but consciously." We have to be careful with what we ask for. Today, I humbly understand my arrogance in the face of our most precious gift: Mother Earth and its inhabitants.

In a consciousness expansion session with *ayahuasca*, a native medicine, I faced my deepest fears and shadows. One of them involved a situation where I floated without any support. At that moment, my greatest desire was to be here on Earth, connected to myself and alive. I thought that looking at my inner ghosts I would face my fears, angst and resentments. But that process made me realise that I still had much to learn.

To be here alive, breathing, feeling the ground under my feet, feeling smells and tastes, and able to relate to other people is a blessing. Life's impulse is a miracle, and every day we have choices. We can choose that great opportunity or we can simply stroll through life. That doesn't mean we have to do something grand, for, as I have said, sophistication is in the simple things, like being in the present moment.

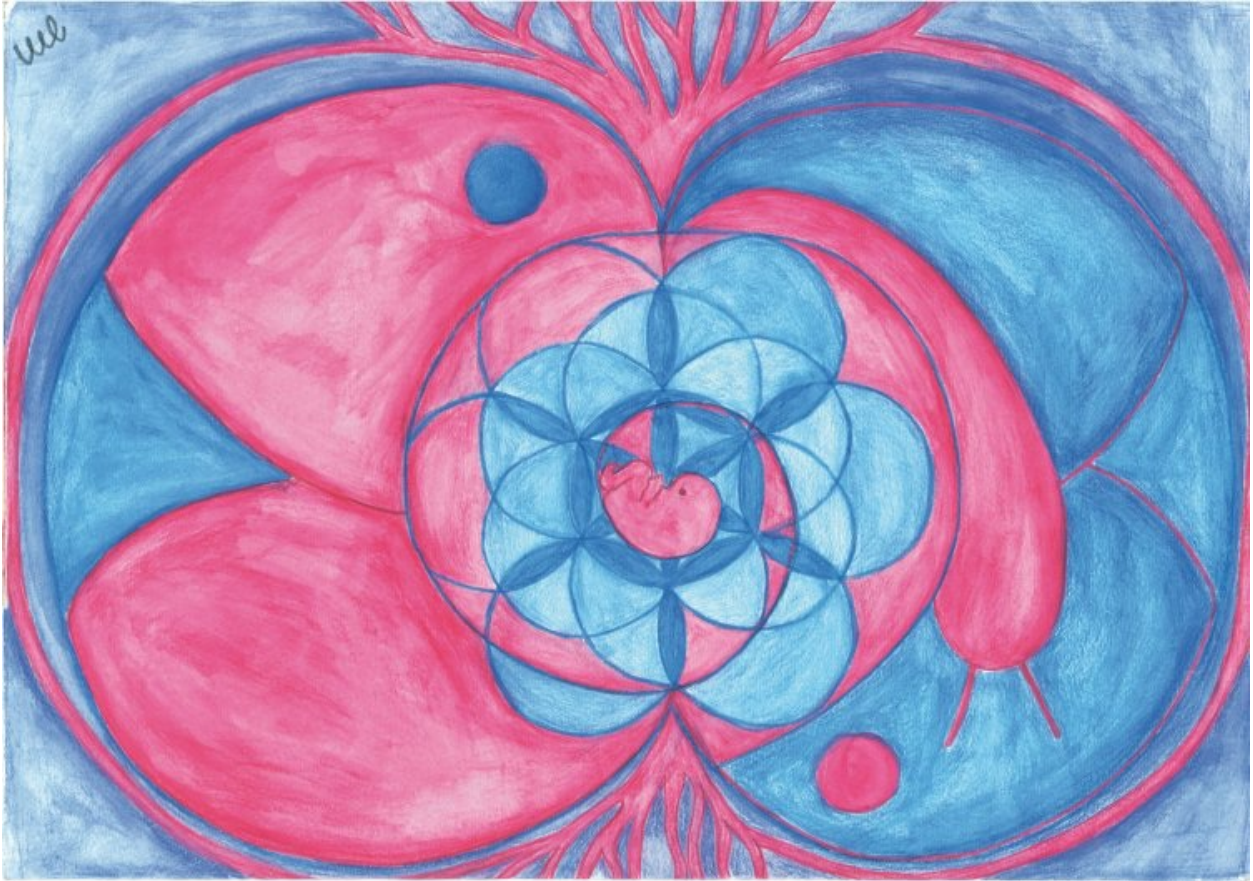
Eckhart Tolle teaches me that there is no past, no future: Only the present moment exists. We cannot change the past and we cannot foresee the future.



Mother Earth

A few months after this experience with ayahuasca, I wrote to my sister Caroline, who had also gone through a rebirth experience under different circumstances:

"We inspire for the first time when we are born
And expire for the last time when we die
At each breath, we die and we are born again
And between each breath, in and out, there is an interval
Life is in this small interval, in this emptiness, in this silence
What separates life and death is but a thread
When we realise the frailty of this thread
We understand that something much bigger supports us and conducts
our nature
And that this force expands way beyond anything our mind may
understand and control
And we may rest on it, trust
And we may transform and free ourselves with it
When we realise that a single thread separates life from death, as well as
day from night,
We connect through faith, and surrender, breathe out
Faith is trusting that everything that shows up is in perfect harmony with
the whole
There is no guilt for what was before and no fear of what will come
Only the knowledge that to be present is a gift
And we are reborn at each inspiration, as the sun shines every morning
And we may create and recreate at each breath
Evolving in our consciousness
Eternally grateful for the great opportunity to be alive
Grateful for manifesting love here, now,
Honoring the breath of life."



Totality

Today, I prefer to express my beliefs in my actions. The love I feel for people, as well as the journey through my consciousness and my spiritual journey, permeate all my actions: no more separations. My own life is a form of my faith. I listen and accept my truth, acting upon it. Petalusa is part of my materialised consciousness and speaks for itself: more silence, simple and truthful actions.

Totality

Consciousness is timeless. It doesn't follow the chronology and bidimensionality of history. It is but fragments and lucid intervals that don't necessarily have a connection with history. Thus, as I said in the beginning, the story is a mere background, a scenario, where consciousness evolves.

Sometimes we think that happiness will come only if we change jobs, leave the country, buy a home, marry and have children; however, when any of these eventually happen, we realise that nothing has changed. Happiness is not outside; it is inside. When we are unhappy and move from our country, we take that unhappiness with us.

In my journey, I visited some places, ecovillages (self-sustainable communities), and environments where people gathered to work with consciousness using different tools, each with its own expression. I got in touch with many languages that allowed me to see myself more clearly. I found that while being among people with the same purpose and similar objectives, may strengthen us in our journey, it may also create separation.

Being in an illusion, resisting to what is out there or even judging those who search for a spiritual path, are ways of creating separation. Nevertheless, those who devote themselves to the spiritual path and consider themselves apart from, or superior to, the "system" or "matrix", as they like to call it, also create separation. The challenge consists in the integration and mutual support among those who have already awakened and those who are still under an illusion. I believe that the virtuous path is the integration between inner and outer.

To be in consciousness may be a wake-up call that bothers many that are asleep. When we don't want to wake up, our first impulse is to turn off the alarm and go back to sleep. Often, the jolts from those who are awake may be a nuisance. But I also feel a general uneasiness and a perception from those who are blurred by illusion that there is missing.

The first corporate workshop we produced in Petalusa was for a team from a big multinational corporation. The main point of the meeting was the fact that the team had achieved all their goals for many years in a row, received their bonuses, had excellent results, but were still not motivated.

The lack of purpose began to bother many people, provoking a dissatisfaction that couldn't be compensated by bonuses, plaques or prizes. To choose to look for something bigger and with purpose, may also require to give up certain things. You can't make an omelet without breaking the egg. Awakening demands courage, in the sense that we have to act with our hearts.

It is not always required to let go of everything or do a total reset to find more purpose in what we do. Often, a small piece changes the whole picture. We create new attitudes and change relationships with the way we look at the situation. We don't have to sit in a lotus position, light incenses or go to India to find ourselves. We can do it whenever we want, at your office desk, in the toilet while peeing, in a meeting, taking our children to swimming lessons... All it takes is to be present.

Look sincerely into the eyes of the person that is with you and listen intently to your companion. There is art in dealing with the challenges posed by that presence. To isolate ourselves in a uniform and protective environment, where differences or huge discrepancies are not present, may prolong the process, in my opinion. In a lecture, Eckhart Tolle teases the audience: "If you think you are awake and conscious, spend a week at your parents' and you will see the truth."

There is no sacrifice to be made, but we must choose challenges that move us evolve us. There is wealth in the difference, and the art of arranging the

differences produces a single and harmonious whole.



An abyss in the puddle

Sometimes we feel that we will fall in an infinite void with one more step. Fear invades us and the conflict is set. The heart wants to go but the mind creates myriad stories. When we act with the heart (have courage) and go forward, we realise that the infinite gap is just a puddle reflecting the sky – and we laugh at ourselves. How could I have believed that I would have drowned in a puddle? What separates us from reality is the veil of illusion.

Embracing the shadow

There is light because there is also shadow. The time had come to face my deepest shadows, necessarily and unavoidably. I had to learn to embrace the shadow and realise its value – it always made me move. Our personal power comes from knowing our gifts and our shadows.

Like a friend used to say, "Shit is a good fertilizer". I had always looked for light and beauty in everything I did, even in my most painful moments. As I said, you cannot see everything if you don't see everything. I thought that the contact with my darkest corners could be a ride; however, it was and has been very intense and challenging.

Often, as I said, something has to die to allow the birth of the new. After a year of learning and producing laboratories in Petalusa, I started to question my "role" in that centre. I created the place and the necessary conditions for the development and expression of artists, therapists and facilitators. The experiences and therapies nourished me and taught me, sometimes as a gust of wind, sometimes as a hurricane.

I felt that my expression happened through Petalusa. Who is Juliane? She is what you see represented in Petalusa, with all her values and the sheer truth of her beliefs.

On the other hand, I thought that in a sense, I could be hiding behind that place, as if I had set the stage, arranged the scenario, summoned the players and kick started the play. I was still behind the scenes, watching the play. I felt for the players and with them, but I believed I still hadn't found my unique expression, in a confusion between creator and creature. A few months later, I

had a dream with Leonardo Da Vinci, a great insight to understand my relationship with Petalusa. Leonardo pointed to the Mona Lisa and said, "Do you see the Mona Lisa?" I answered, "Yes, I do". "Do you think the Mona Lisa and I are separated? I am the Mona Lisa and the Mona Lisa is me."

That night, everything became clear and my heart was in peace.

I started a new cycle knowing that Petalusa was a creation, a materialised part of my consciousness. There is no separation. Still, I realised that the search for a "role" was the ego's desire for eternity. There was no "role", just my availability to be.

I felt pain in my arms and thought that the need to do something was coming back. That same uneasiness, but now I was more experienced and aware of the need for the emptiness. Lars asked me, "Oh Dear, everything again? Haven't you found yourself yet?"

And I answered, "That is why we are here, to learn and evolve. If I had found the answer, I wouldn't need to return."

During a very touching therapeutic session, I was put face to face with my shadow. I was feeling the same pain in my arms and could suddenly see where it came from. I saw the image of many marionettes dangling from my arms, with their strings entangled. Besides the marionettes hanging from my arms and the threads were entangled together. There were other puppets, all dangling from my arms, and their weight was making my arms ache. It was shocking to understand that the pain came from my need to control everything.

I was exhausted from the variety of knickknacks, trying to control everything. Even when I was generous, there was the need to control. I started to feel guilty. Guilt is another ego mechanism, trapping us in a vicious circle. The message in the dream was that I should be conscious, bring light to the shadow and dismantle the theatre – as in "party over", destroy your creation and reinvent yourself.

In that same sense, I remember a frequent nightmare I had when I was a child, one of those dreams that keep repeating themselves, with no apparent meaning. In this nightmare, I was on a chair and strings of different colours came from the right and left. These lines moved quickly and made knots. I tried to undo the knots and, when they were straightened and parallel to one another, they moved and started to entangle all over again. I think those lines already were the marionettes dangling from my arms.

You have to be humble to study your actions and their motives, to leave the shallow waters and dive into the deep ones. You have to know how to embrace your shadow and reborn; live with it, learn from it and have it as a good ally for your empowerment. Stay alert and don't let the drama set in. Look for wisdom without conflict: it takes two to tango.

There comes a time when hiding the symptoms becomes unbearable. It is then necessary to tear down the structure and start again. It is time to look inside and prepare a new cocoon, to communicate with the shadow until there is nothing left.

Petalusa was a great booster and accelerator in the becoming conscious of my shadow. Everything that could challenge my need for control was in that centre that was created, as if I had made the antidote before finding the poison.

There is nothing like art to challenge the need of control, because art can only be truthful when it is free. We cannot rehearse our experiences. I don't know how many people will come, I don't know even if the experiences will happen. Since I opened Petalusa as a collaborative model, I could not even predict the contribution made by the meeting organizers.

I could not predict the result of the experiences happening in Petalusa. In addition, I could not say if the income would be sufficient to cover the expenses in a given month. I had created a situation where all the variables were unknown and out of control. This helped me see clearly what I had to do there and what my work was.



Butterflies' doula

My purpose: butterflies' doula. With a soft, delicate and subtle breath, I unite exterior and interior. I unite those who never imagined themselves together. I go from flower to flower, flying and dancing my life, connecting with the movements of my wings: No touching, no forcing, just the breeze of the movement bringing warmth and union. I don't realise it, but something new is created from the transformation and the divine union. I am but one of the points in the immense screen of the Universe, enjoying, here and now, the great opportunity to create beauty and truth from the breath of life that the Universe gave me.

Transforming

I once read about Ix Shel, goddess of creativity, revered by the Mayan in the Yucatan peninsula, in Mexico. She rules weaving, magic, health, and cure, and her special animal is the dragonfly. Her image shows the goddess kneeling, with an artifact in her hands, weaving threads of energy. The title reads, "energy strings in the web of creation", where nothing existed in the world before the void. I weave, creating life from consciousness, from my body, from my understanding of what must exist. Now there is something new and all life is being fed.

We are particles of energy vibrating in the web of the Universe. When we create an image, a song, a book, a poem, a relationship, we add a new string of energy to the universal web.

The same strings that made my arms ache and brought me nightmares are the strings of creation. Light and shadow are two sides of the same coin. We don't have to deny or eliminate the shadow because it is also light. I realised that guilt is in the past and that the past doesn't exist: all that exists is the now, and the now knows no guilt.

I learned that consciousness has no time, it only is. Therefore, there is no point in judging what is gone. On the contrary, what is gone brought me to the present. Moreover, I make the threads of creation from the threads of control.

In the end, it is always transforming what exists, bringing new visions from experiences and evolving the movement of the Universe, like the spiral that moves in circles but always progresses and never returns to the same point.

Knowing that my shadow is, at the same time, a challenge and the doorway to the evolution freed me from the need I had of getting rid of it.

I wanted to solve my shadows. But what is there to solve? It was almost like a checklist of obstacles that I had to move out of my way to let the light shine through. I remembered when we played on the beach sand, where the waves break and return to the sea. I would dig a hole, the deepest hole I could make, but the wave came and threw sand in it. I would dig again and the wave came back again. The soft sand destroyed my hole and I kept on playing. I could dig the hole in the dry sand, but the fun was in the wave that undid my work. Such is life: We do and undo. We build something new with the sand and undo it.

There is nothing to solve, or else the play ends. There is the way of the evolution of consciousness and absence of conflict. We may enjoy this big play with joy, even in the most difficult moments. Actually, our most difficult moments challenge us to accept the situation and to do our best, living in the present. All other moments may be enjoyed with enthusiasm and joy. As Eckhart Tolle teaches, "Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness. How do we know that this is the experience we need? Because that is the experience we are having at the very moment."

I am aware that I took everything too seriously, and sometimes I still do: often I am rigid, self-demanding and self-controlling. I used to believe that if it is not difficult, painful and laborious, I did not deserve it. Even after I tasted freedom and lightness, at times I would have doubts about worthiness. Can it be right that it is so good and fluid? I think there must be lacking some form of sacrifice or pain for it to be true. I translated sacrifice into hard work.

Hard work never frightened me. When I founded Petalusa, I handled everything – curatorship, communications, organization of the experiences, cleaning, maintenance, gardening, the daily schedule, and legal issues – everything but the finances, which my husband helped greatly, being affectionately elected CFO or Chief Financial Officer of Petalusa.

It was a mixture: I needed to keep costs down and believed that I should have to earn such a special gift. So, I had to work hard. We confuse working hard with a disciplined purpose. I drained a lot of energy because of this belief. I think that it was a way to escape my own creative potential. "Doing things" distracted me and redirected my energy to other creative interests. Today, I am more selective and choose where I want to put my energy, analyzing where it may be more valuable.

To think that you are unworthy is another trap of the ego. To disarm this trap is a challenge because it hides under a mask of altruism.

Unworthiness is the story I told myself, thinking that I should be less so that everyone could be equal. My friend Diego has a tender name for it: "syndrome of the pigeon in the square." Since I was a child, inequality was like a stab in my heart. When I was 9 or 10, during a sea cruise with my family, I cried after the waiter served our dinner. I asked my father, "Why can we be here enjoying our cruise and having fun while he serves us? Who has chosen these situations for us?"

My father said, "We have had our moments at work and now we are on our vacations. He may be glad to work here, and will be able to enjoy his vacations in his own way."

His answer made me feel better, but didn't solve my problem. Many years later, in law school, I learned a lesson from Aristotle - "True equality means to treat equals equally and unequals unequally, in the in proportion of their inequality." I believe this was the most useful lesson I had in my five years of law studies. As we have differences, we must be treated differently to create conditions for equality.

The opportunities, resources, conditions, abilities, and gifts I received – but this applies to anyone – must be explored completely towards the fulfillment of the greater good. It is a commitment to God, nothing less. It is not a question of deserving something or not; it is one of everybody's birth right. Creation is a

right: to receive and use what was given to me and not be a mere spectator in my own story.

Young people have dealt well with the crippling belief that says that sacrifices lead to worthiness. They have realised that it is important to have pleasure and joy; they discard whatever is not pleasing. Well, there is also some confusion here, for spirituality demands discipline. Yes, with pleasure, but with a willingness to be open to the challenges that move us without skipping necessary steps, as a spoiled child would do.

To access our intuition, our connection with the Divine, is a way that involves a constant awareness of the channel that we are. It is like walking the tightrope, demanding focus and watchfulness for the balance between our physical reality with its firm roots, and the power to materialise, connected with the subtlest energy of the Universe. Amidst it all, we have to handle our thoughts, emotions and personality, transmuting that which is no longer useful.

We are taking the impermanence to an extreme, for we don't find firmness even in our relationships. To live the present moment is to be consciously present; not carelessly, as if every day was the last day of our lives. We also confuse things when we look for compensations after some sacrifices, creating a vicious circle. We get addicted to the pleasing experiences generated by the previous sacrifice. I suffer, I let go, and then I compensate for it because I feel worthy. We see it in relationships, in couples that generate a conflict for the pleasure of reconciliation. In the professional environment, a salary raise or the annual bonus is never enough to compensate for the sacrifice of freedom, health and, often, family itself. When deny ourselves our soul, we feel that we are eternal creditors of something that will never fill the emptiness – and we feel resentment.

We do not need to conquer happiness through sacrifice. It is abundantly available in every detail, in the birds singing, the water we drink, and the smile of a child. Our exercise consists in opening the eyes of consciousness. Then we will see something completely different without ever moving.

Sometimes we have to lose something to understand this. Here is a simple example: If I have a cold, my nose congests and I cannot taste food, and then I remember how wonderful it is to smell and taste things. If my ankle sprains before a wedding party, I remember that dancing is so good. When my eye doctor dilates my pupil, I remember what a gift my vision is. When I am alone, I remember that I enjoy listening to the other and seeing myself in him.

Then, things become obvious and automatic, as if we were under anesthesia. After its effect is gone, we feel the pain. Love is so intense, light is so strong, that sometimes we get scared and want the anesthesia again. We feel frightened, afraid of not being able to receive so much love and happiness. I guess that we are afraid of the ego's death. Then, many go back to their sleep, containing the flame of life. Sometimes it comes as an explosion. Other times, small gaps open up to let the light shine through.

Art helps us open small gaps in our soul, close holes and produce slits of creation. Art heals through expression without making notice. It shows up softly, enters the heart, and passes by the mind to instruct the arms or the legs. It doesn't stop in the mind because the mind can't find hooks: It would be like trying to hang a painting in a place without walls. The body only brings to matter what came from the heart: Mind serving the heart, as it should be. Art is highly useful to help us physically realise something in the world, without only staying in the realm of ideas. It flows to the arms and legs, to others, and comes back to our heart: Like the seed that becomes a tree, and then becomes seed, and the seed becomes tree again.

I had a name and the centre was ready to receive the sessions and workshops. It was time to think of a symbol to represent Petalusa. Some young designers helped me with this task and asked for some references that could guide them in the creation of the logo.

I recalled an art and therapy workshop where the organizer asked us to paint love. I didn't want to do something stylised, but an image that would represent what I feel when I am love. I closed my eyes and painted "From the

inside out": a warm, strong light in my heart that expands and returns to me as many circles on both sides. The Petalusa symbol has this stylised image.

Sometime later, a friend that visited the place said that the Petalusa logo is similar to the Torus, a symbol of the flow of the Universe.

Divine synchronicity made me choose July 26, 2014, the beginning of the Mayan calendar year, as the inauguration date. Months later, I was made aware of this, confirming that everything was cared for.

In the inaugural ceremony, my words marked the beginning of a cycle of truth, beauty and wholeness:

"The Universe is made of everything that exists concretely, the whole space and time, and every form of matter and energy.

It contains many galaxies and these, in turn, contain different systems. Our solar system is in the Milky Way and Earth is one planet of that system. It has approximately 4.5 billion years. The *Homo sapiens* (supposedly, wise man) appeared some 200,000 years ago and, 50,000 years ago, took on the present form and behavior.

I am 39 years old... What is the meaning of this lapse of time for the Universe? What will I do with the time I have here to evolve and manifest something? I feel that it is a miracle to have been born and to be alive, here and now.

Two years ago, I started to question what I was doing with this great opportunity. Am I really living fully my soul, my being, my essence, or whatever word you want to employ? Am I using my gifts and abilities in all their potential? By the way, what are they? Am I really free, or is life leading me?

When Katharina was born, I saw her as a mirror... Am I teaching her things I really believe in? Do I practice what I believe?

That is when I started a long and intense journey, claiming my dreams and values. I felt I had to let something die to open up space for a rebirth. I had to deconstruct, unlearn, recondition, let go, forgive, surrender, and give new meaning and flow.

My husband, lover and partner Lars was my companion in this journey, ever the respectful and well-humored man. He said we were flying easily in the planned route, without turbulences when, suddenly and without warning, I made a bootleg turn... However, he felt that, for some not entirely rational reason, I was following the right route... Why? Because I was happy. Maybe that was inspiring for him too.

Petalusa was born from my soul, like the butterfly is born from the caterpillar.

Its purpose is to bring a new learning dimension and to show people the joy of being, of self-expression, where they can feel that the world is a place where dreams can come true.

But how, Ju, how? In the simplest way – from the inside out.

With experiences that bring in art to ease processes such as reflection, consciousness and connection with our truth and expression.

We will reclaim the art outlook to Life in our daily lives: the look of the soul, through visual arts, design, drama, dance, cooking, singing, writing, the art of relationship, the life creating art... and lots of fun!

Ours is a time of great transformations, and a new vision and appreciation of life are painting the future of our society.

Art, too, has seen transformations and is searching for new ways to function. We will use and abuse it to overcome our limits and see beyond.

As we find balance in art, in life and in ourselves, we will become happier, freer, more loving and more secure to face life's challenges, raising our consciousness and contributing to a better world.

Today, Petalusa is planting a small seed to start a new sowing cycle. Each one's expression is essential for sowing and reaping what we have planted.

Whenever I had doubts about Petalusa, or if I was on the right path, doing my task well, I received messages, sometimes of one word only, reassuring me. It was much bigger than me. Besides, if I wanted to understand it with my mind alone, I wouldn't have gone through with it. It was a relief, in a way, because I could trust the process and be available with the abilities and resources that I received.

I never hesitated about the energy and the resources I invested in that centre: I was certain that they were given to me with that purpose in mind. So, I was never afraid of losing or letting something go. Lars was a great help whenever I hesitated. He also volunteered to take care of the financial planning of Petalusa. Before we started our work, he asked me if I could prepare a draft of a business plan. I told him that the business plan was in my heart. He almost died, but called my bet.

I was very transparent and said that I could draft a fictitious plan, with numbers coming out of my head, but I knew that they were unpredictable and I told him so. Why? Because I really didn't know. I knew I would do my best, seeking the sustainability of that centre in all its aspects, financial, environmental and energetic.

It reminds me of the story about Ping, the *Boy with an Empty Vase* that Katharina liked to hear before sleeping. The story goes that a Chinese king was getting old and decided to look for his successor. He called all the children from the village to tell the news and share challenge: since he liked flowers, he gave a seed to each child. Whoever brought the most beautiful flower after one year would succeed him. Ping loved flowers and animals, and he grew the most beautiful flowers. He planted the seed given by the king very carefully in a vase with good earth. He watered it every day, but the seed didn't bud. Undeterred, he moved the seed to a larger vase, with richer earth. He watered the seed and

waited, but to no avail. After one year, he would have to show the flower to the king. Ping, unsure and ashamed, asked his father what he should do.

His father said, "You did your best and the best should be shown to the king."

All the children went to the palace and showed beautiful flowers to the king, with many colours. However, Ping had only his empty vase. After looking at the flowers, the king asked Ping why he had brought an empty vase. Ping said he had planted the seed, tended and watered it, but the seed didn't sprout. And the king named Ping as his successor. The other children, surprised, wondered why. The king told them that he had burned all the seeds he gave, so that none could produce flowers. Since Ping told the truth, the king chose him.

I was also challenged into believing that doing my best would be enough to maintain my creation, and was tested many times in that sense. But I was sure of my commitment to the truth, and this was my sustenance.

Obviously, practical actions and dedication – mental, too – are necessary to create movement. I also understood that my personal experience was useful, and that it wasn't for nothing that I had been chosen for that task. Over time I developed the ability to deal with many different fronts simultaneously, balancing intuition and reason. In my 18 years in the corporate world, the prime – or better, dominant – energy was reason, the masculine energy. I had almost forgotten my intuition until Katharina was born and it came back in the form of instinct.

When I created Petalusa, all my feminine creativity and receptivity emerged, starting with the composition of the space. To receive the artists, therapists, feel people, coordinate the time schedule with tenderness and vision, all this gave free rein to my feminine side.

I changed the way I dressed, my features softened, and I began to take more care of my home. At the same time, I created a resistance regarding some practical actions and rules, as if reason could harden that intuition I was tapping.

People asked for contours and rules, and I couldn't set them up; each case was unique, and every new week I changed the way it worked.

On one hand, I looked for flexibility according to the learning process, but on the other hand there was resistance to everything that could dampen my creativity. I made a mess, because the magic is in the harmony and integration between reason and intuition.

Lars made me practical financial questions, and I didn't want to deal with that area. However, they were a part of my feminine reclaiming process, and not a false balance. I had spent so many years on regulations and laws, so many "you must", that I didn't want to hear about them anymore.

Later, I realised that the contours are fundamental. They are like the womb, containing the baby. To contain doesn't mean to limit; it means being clear about your focus, about the tone, the contour, to establish harmony and order.

The principles of Petalusa are in every action and in every inch of its space, without the need to be written down. Why? Because they are about setting an example, through behaviour, and not imposition. Petalusa has this wild thing about it. When I created its website, I didn't feel like writing about mission, vision, or values. I felt that they were present in its essence and didn't need words. Looking in retrospect, I realise it was a great lesson and it confirms everything I have always believed in: the schedule is open and interactive. The cashbox is there, so that anyone can grab their drink, pay and get the change. The keys are available so any regular user can copy them.

When we empower people, they feel responsible, and empowerment goes hand in hand with the responsibility. I noticed that in the corporate world it is the other way around, lots of responsibility and little empowerment, generating the need for command and control.

When I was the chief legal counsel of a multinational company, I had to sign many documents every day. I couldn't read every paper entirely, so I had to trust my good team for that. I trusted their capacity of analysis and judgment

and I was always available in case they had any questions. Before signing, I would call the lawyer responsible for that document, look him or her in the eye and ask if I could sign it without reading, or if there was anything pending. If they said yes, I would sign it and send it for processing. Often, they still had questions, took the document away, and checked for any overlooked detail.

Until today, there has been no episode that could challenge the trust I put in the way I dealt with people and things in that centre. The spontaneous contributions made by the artists and facilitators in the various experiences were, to my CFO Lars' surprise, larger than what I charged when I organized the meetings.

Trust begets trust and consciousness permeates the relationships for empowerment and sharing.



Quantum ice cream

Life and work

My work rhythm and dedication as an executive were quite intense. And my biggest career jump occurred during my maternity leave. Katharina went to a nursery when she was three and a half months old and I accepted a big challenge, which, by then, was the goal I aimed at during my entire career. It was as if I had finally "gotten there". Today, I think that "there" is a golden cage I built for myself.

As legal counsel and director of many companies, I travelled a lot, supporting and taking care of business. Katharina grew up used to this routine, eventually finding her own way of enjoying, and interacting with, the environment she grew up in.

When she was three, she asked Lars and I where we worked at. And I asked her back: "Where do you think that mom and daddy work?" She said, "Mom works in Rio de Janeiro and daddy plays tennis".

I must confess that I didn't feel like sharing much about my work. There was nothing wrong with it, on the contrary; but it was outside me, not in me. I wouldn't be able to talk about something that consumed 12 hours of my day if not with truth. This made me question how it should be later, when she would be more apt to understand what my work meant to me.

My father said that life is like an orange, and each area of life represents a slice; so, we must find a balance between work, relationships, children, health, spirituality and leisure. Work has always been very important to me, not because it had a bigger slice of my heart, but because it was a source of pleasure and expression. It wasn't only a way to support myself, but also my philosophy of

life. In this sense, my relation with work was unbalanced, and Katharina made me realise it.

When I quit my job, in May, 2013, Katharina asked me why I suddenly spent more time at home. I told her I was looking for a new job, a job where I could be happier, be myself. She said that even so, one day she would like to go to Rio de Janeiro with me.

For her, it didn't matter what I did, but that I find joy in my work. When I took her to the old, dirty warehouse, I told her what I wanted to do there. I pointed to some area and said, "We will cook here. There, we can dance and paint. And play music over there." Then, she screamed, "Music and drama? The stage will be here!" I said, "Yes, we will also have drama."

Five months later, we installed a stage made with the pallets of our sofas by Gui and Jaya, who made a great music presentation. To my astonishment, the stage was built exactly where we had envisioned it before Petalusa came to life. I cried.

On that day, I felt the power we have to create our reality.

So much life, colours, sounds, beauty and love in a place that was a simple warehouse. Nevertheless, the place is but detail: I always say that if a fire consumed Petalusa, it would still exist. It is a field, a creative matrix, independent of space. It can happen at anytime, anywhere.

In the beginning, I didn't know how to handle Katharina and my work in Petalusa. She was in school full time and I wondered if I should take her out of the afternoon period and involve her in my routine. She could stay in Petalusa and explore the art stations while I greeted people and cared for the daily tasks. I did some tests and realised that Petalusa was a place where I could develop myself, but Katharina had her own space too.

Yes, Petalusa would always be open and available, whenever she wanted to be there and express herself. However, I realised that it was I that wanted her

with me in my new job, not her. I am not guessing here; she told me so. I learned to respect her space and stop projecting my own needs.

Today, I speak with confidence, sure of the fact that what I do represents the purest truth of what I believe in. I feel authentic in my task and in my life's purpose.



Ying and Yang - Entangled hierarchy

The integration of ying and yang, intuition and materialisation, inside and outside: for many years, I worked my masculine energy and muted the feminine to face the world. Rigidity and control took over, generating the illusion of power and anesthetizing my intuition and emotions. Recently, I have tried to reclaim my creative feminine expression. The challenge? Bring out the new Juliane, integrated with the concrete energy. It is a big challenge to support the revisited masculine side, and, at the same time, the source of the transforming energy. I am in love with my new gay masculine energy.

Entanglement

The creation of Petalusa was an individual process, so in the beginning I felt no need to share it with many people. In addition, I think I feared judgments or that something could, in some way, threaten my reconnection. When we are whole and aligned with our souls, this will not happen. I didn't want to mix anyone else's stories with mine, receiving opinions and suggestions. I dedicated and committed myself a lot to let it all go, and felt that my cocoon moment deserved respect.

Lars was the only one with whom I liked to share visions. For him, the process seemed very distant, but I felt that he understood me by other means, as if I talked in one frequency and he listened to the message in a different one. We talked without speaking and mutual respect permeated our process. I am saying this because it didn't matter that the transformation was mine alone; as a couple on the same boat, when the waves rock it, both will feel.

It was interesting because every movement I made, therapies I recurred to, experiences, workshops, collectives, didn't connect with Lars. Many times, they didn't even make him curious, and it was alright. I didn't want to force him to see with my glasses, and he respected my inner journey. Sometimes, when it was harder for him to process something as a stronger or more exotic therapy (in his eyes), he would laugh and say, "You don't have to tell me that. It is too much for me."

His sense of humour throughout my experiences helped me a lot. After I tried theta healing, he said that he could have done that for me at home – a "tit healing."

Even during the most serious conversations, he managed to bring lightness and humour, making me laugh at myself. Self-knowledge can be fun, too. It is not for nothing that the Buddha is always laughing, with an expression of joy.

My restlessness brought movement to our relationship. Whenever he thought that the course was set and navigation would be automatic, I brought new facts that changed the route, always wanting to adjust it to the original purpose.

I guess I didn't realise it, but I absorbed my discoveries and questionings, breaking my own paradigms. He helped me a lot in learning to respect everyone's language, moment and ways. He didn't participate in Petalusa's workshops, but he was there in his own way. Gradually, he gave in and broke his barriers and stiffness, bringing a sweetness and sensibility that he didn't suspect he had.

In the control net I had been creating, two individuals never accepted to play the part of the puppet: Lars and Katharina. They placed their limits before me with transparency and frankness, without saying a word, and that was a great lesson.

My family nucleus became my fortress, a place where I could rest and be accepted without questions. One completed and nourished the others.



Ancestrality

In the DNA

One month after signing the rental agreement, I felt like sharing the project with my parents and sisters. Petalusa is only one block away from my mother's place, and I thought, "Soon she will pass by, see me sweeping the sidewalk and won't understand a thing."

I invited my Dad, Theunis, for lunch in a place close by and when we left, I stopped in front of Petalusa, still with the "For Rent" sign that the agency had forgotten to remove. I told him that that was my new place of work. He smiled and his face showed his amazement. He didn't understand anything, but somewhere he understood everything and I knew he was happy for me.

I showed him the warehouse on the street level and he asked me if there was something on the first floor. I had rented only the street level because the art experiences needed an open space, without walls. Besides, I had chosen not to commit myself to an endeavour bigger than my pocket would allow. My father, excited with the adventure and always the entrepreneur, even without understanding the whole project, convinced me to rent the first floor and helped me in the first few months. A great vision: one month after the opening, therapists were using the rooms there for their patients and that helped me pay the whole rent.

I learned with my father that we have to have the courage to dream ahead and up; then we must run, reach it and fulfill it.

When I renovated the rooms, my idea was to provide cozy environments that could receive therapists and their individual patients. We have group

moments and individual moments. I call the first floor "Inspire", and the street level, where we take groups, "Expire".

Karin was the first to arrive and with her experience, creativity, joy and wisdom, helped me prepare the area of individual rooms. Then came Daniela, anchoring her new expression and generously sharing her findings. The Flex room, open to anyone who wished to receive their patients, hosted more than 20 therapists. Despite some requests for the permanent occupation of the Flex room, I felt it was important to keep it open so that we could have other expressions and languages in the therapeutic environment, with therapists that perhaps couldn't afford a regular room. For me, it also opened an infinite spectrum of different tools.

I feel there is an integration between individual sessions and group experiences. For many, the entry doorway to Petalusa are the individual sessions; that was the case with my Mum. For other people, the group awakens them, calling them to interact.

Art was in my cells thanks to my Mum. Colours, forms, drawings were a natural part of my life. She had an unending patience, to sit with us, teach and enjoy our manual works in different expressions. Gently and lovingly, my Mum taught me how to paint life.

My Grandad, "Opa", Wolfgang Pfeiffer, a professor of art history and "other things", is present in me with his ability to bring out the unexpected and create in an arid environment with lightness and humour. To open up new trails masterfully and without resistance, in a silent revolution. The art of uniting and integrating without holding on to the result. To symbolize his presence in Petalusa, I hung a painting on the wall (a woman's bottom in a string thong with panther print and a scrumptious piece of cake next to it), synthesizing my *Opa* in one picture. This picture was hanging by the front door of his house and I, curious about what it meant for *Opa* amidst works of renowned artists, asked him about it. He answered, "I love this painting because I cannot make up my mind between the butt and the cake."

He is probably delighted with the artistic experiences we have been doing in Petalusa.

My Grandma, "Oma", Inga Pfeiffer, marked me with her talent to surprise and shock, with emotion and irreverence. Sometimes, we need the power of a volcano to shake the foundations. I believe her pleasure was seeing the expressions before the unexpected. Dresses with prints never seen before, firm and provocative words, always open to the weirdest things. I liked to tell her my deepest secrets because nothing seemed to shock her. She celebrated what came up after setting fire in a conversation. Even her funeral had her signature: as a musical theme, she had chosen Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue* and her dress had a print of giant spiders, shaking the scene.

My Mum took the news about Petalusa with mixed feelings, joy and fear. Maybe the art scene brought back childhood memories. However, after the initial surprise, I felt that she gradually realised that we had a new story there, even though we were within the family spirit. She had also chosen art as her expression, and she creates beautiful things, quietly.

She chose to keep her creations privately, enchanting those who were privileged enough to appreciate her work, such as I, a great admirer. This new connection with the purpose of bringing art to people was a healing for me and perhaps for her, too.

My middle sister, Caroline, with her practical, pragmatic spirit, also gave Petalusa her blessings when, before renovation, she left a beautiful message scribbled in a wall. Even now, when I look at that wall, I connect with her and thank her for our complicity.

Sabrine, the younger sister, came in slowly, smelling it, experimenting first a small spoon, and eventually became one of Petalusa's best "clients", individually or in the group. I feel that for Sabrine Petalusa was also a place of discoveries, acceptance and true friendships.

For some time, I was afraid to include my family in my dream, because I thought that they would judge me and lead or seduce me to a different path, as I

may have let it happen in the past. Later, I realised that I was including different expressions in the centre, but excluding those who made it possible for me to be there. What kind of inclusion was that?

To honour our ancestors and thank them for giving us life is essential for a peaceful heart: respect individuality and everyone's choices, but keep in tune with the lessons we inherited from them.

"Have faith, child." My Grandma Lia warmed up my heart. Since I was little, she taught me to talk with God and with my angels, to ask without fear or limitations. God's abundance and love are infinite. I learned prayers like Our Father, Hail Mary and so I prayed the mantras that connected me to God with confidence and devotion, knowing that everything would be alright, because God was with me. God was in me.

I went to Germany when I was 11. I didn't speak German and had no references, so I invoked the presence of God in my moments of loneliness. My faith was fundamental to fortify me and help me overcome the obstacles. In a slip of paper that I recently found in her house, she had written:

"Simplicity... simplicity...

Be as the roses, as the infinite sky, a tree, a river.

Why cannot all people be like that?

That is what you are, my dear Granddaughter: Simple, affectionate and a friend. I love you very much."

That simplicity is expressed in a letter I wrote to myself when I was 9 years old. I said, "If you see a flower in the field, it is a declaration of love."

My Grandpa Theunis taught me integrity and honesty. Integrity begins inside us and it is in every action, every detail. He took this value to extremes, keeping for years, the lottery tickets I had asked him to bet for me when I lived in Germany.

Careful and faultless with his words and commitments, my Grandpa taught me to abide by agreements through the example we set. That made me

feel safe and protected.

I have a tiny bit of each one of them in me, forming a new composition.

The first time I really had to overcome obstacles was in my childhood. My family moved to Germany due to my father's professional activities. In the classroom, unable to communicate and unaware of the way things should be done, I felt for the first time that I was alone with myself. I had to pull my strength out to face that external challenges.

Pre-teen children don't tend to make much effort to be politically correct, and Germans have the ability to be frank and direct without any guilt. Today, I appreciate the virtue of truth and transparency. I stumbled, danced and skipped until I found my place. Survival instinct makes you discover new talents. These enter our personality and the former difficulty strengthens and moves us.

There, I had a cultural challenge, missed the Brazilian people's warmth, felt myself distant from those who had showed me what faith was, like a plant torn from a vase and planted in another place, in a different climate and with different nutrients, knowing that some small parts of the roots remained in the original vase and others got lost in the way. Whatever is left of the roots grows and adapts to the new place. Think of the bush you trim to make it grow stronger. This is what I wrote in my diary: "Sometimes you have to leave the land where you were born to reborn."

At the same time, the access to a wide palette of new colours left me euphoric. In school, we were provoked to discuss, question, interpret, and show our resentment – everything I wanted. There was space for that. The range of possibilities was widening slowly and I drank from many sources, many of them art-related.

Lela, my ballet teacher, initiated me in the world of free expression and integrated arts. She became my second Mum and today she is my mentor.

I had freedom of movements and this allowed me to experiment autonomously, without limits. I felt strength and authenticity in my artistic

expression – dance and plastic arts. Later, the circumstances made me leave that expression, as if my soul hung by a thread.

When I was 11, I wrote in a letter, "I don't know... In the last few years, I haven't had a personality anymore and I always have an example telling me how I should behave. I am not myself anymore."

After a few years, still living in Germany and with no return in sight to Brazil, I surrendered to the country's beauties and enchantments. Then I really set roots, and the affliction of the impermanence gave way to my connection with the country where my Pfeiffer Grandparents came from.

My travels showed me that the world has no boundaries. We may speak different languages, eat different foods, have different skin colours, but deep inside we are all equal. I learned to explore the world without fear and to take care of myself anywhere. This is a lesson I would like to be able to provide to Katharina.

My first hangover, first boyfriend, first Kiss, first teenage rebel fit, first job were in Germany. Those experiences made me into who I am today.

I learned that home is where the heart is.



From the inside out

From the inside out

An expression that comes from the soul, an art that comes from inside, bring the future; an art which is a mere external image is stuck in the past. When the movement comes from the inside out, it takes us up and ahead, as if we create at every moment the reality that we access in our soul.

Now the image of the maggot came to my mind. It has no feet; rings form its body. Impulses from the inside out move its rings and make it move forward. So are the past, present and future. The impulse of life and creation make the future become present; then it becomes future, which becomes present. At times, our vision binds us to what has been and we cannot move; and so, sometimes, we even go backwards. Art has also the role of propelling us to evolve. When an artistic expression is hard and full of guilt, fear and anger, it imprisons us in the past. We can see this clearly in some artistic movements, in times when Humankind was going through tremendous hardships and was marginally skipping in the spiritual highway. But when art does not show merely what was, but comes from the most sacred place inside us, it has the incredible power to spark the evolution of Humankind.

That's why art is not just a piece of Humankind's matrix, but rather one of its pillars. It is a universal right. It lost its place, giving way to the ego, and mingled with the complexity, moving away from people.

Art as an end in itself, not as a development tool. We enclosed art in itself and it became boring, or a consumer object, or something so hard to understand that we have to read a book to understand a sculpture.

Now is the moment to bring art back to its original role: a familiar tool, handy, simple and powerful, with which we may create the world we want.

Incontrovertibly, we all want what's good for us and for our children. Even a cruel individual can bring some light when the subject is love. Art helps us bring the purest essence, taking us away from the ego and bonding us. All this is possible through experience.

To not be stuck in the past does not mean that we need to erase it. Art helps us transmute the experiences that made us evolve, an evolution through pain or through consciousness. If we want the emergence of the new, we must transform the old and be grateful for the lesson. Besides, art is available to eliminate whatever is no longer useful, opening us to the new. It is just the energy that flows to matter through colours, words, movements, sounds. Art memorials transmute the memories and show us a different way of remembering. Remembering without holding on to what is gone, remembering with a present viewpoint. Art helps us to forgive because it brings light to a heart in the shadows. It is like nature, which accepts patiently what we pour out. It absorbs with love and always gives us more.

We pour out our frustration, our mental and physical junk, we destroy forests, explore their resources greedily, ever wanting more. We transvestite their beauty in objects, yet nature is there, abundantly available, with unconditional love, offering us its unending nectar. Sometimes it shows pain, but even so, its love remains. Such is also art: it accepts everything. There is no right or wrong, nice or ugly. It is a connection channel with God, richly available to us all.

We are giving a new meaning to our relationship with nature, looking at it humbly and with reverence. Like the son who returns home, already a grown-up, missing his parents and remembering his youth, when he denied his love for those who reared him.

Reconnecting with nature and integrating with it is like going back home after a long journey: it welcomes us, no matter what happened before. Like a mother, when her son returns home.

Nature is the art of God. And we can also create, because God is inside us. As nature returns to its place in our lives, reclaiming a respectful relationship, art has its new role. Whenever we cannot find more answers outside, because everything seems blurred and senseless, we go home and find answers inside ourselves. Spending time in nature tunes us with the harmony and the perfection of balance. Forms, colours and sounds in perfect harmony and connection with the Universe.

However, when we are in a place with hard, aggressive and stiff forms, with sounds that invade our bodies, we also vibrate with the same density and echo the same aggressive and violent waves that surround us.

The concrete, bars and pointed spears, high lanes that swallow us, sounds that invade us, make it impossible for us to feel our delicate and subtle bodies, to listen to our inner voices, almost muted by the external noise. We don't have to be in the Himalayas to listen to our inner voices. However, art may help us form living environments with harmony and balance. When we decorate our homes, our work spaces, we may use colours, forms, and elements in a way that allows energies to flow, making us feel welcome and in peace.

Some places are so sophisticated with their luxurious objects that people feel uneasy there. Others are so simple that, for some unexplainable reason, no one wants to leave. Sometimes we mistake creativity with a gathering of beautiful and fun elements, composing a décor at random. As if a billiard table, a print on the meeting room wall and a children's slide in the office could fill up the void and inspire the people that work there.

To compose artfully our environment means to compose it with the soul, with intention in every detail and feeling how the environment creates movement with the arrangement of colours and objects. It is an extension of what is inside us. An empty and grey office reflects the emptiness and grey inside us, creating a flow that gets back to us and locks us in a vicious circle.

I remember when I shared a 6 squared metre room with my best friend, Joana, in a law firm. We spent over 12 hours a day in that cubicle. One day, we

decided to change the vibe of the room, bringing more beauty, joy and harmony. Our productivity and the pleasure we extracted from our work improved enormously, and nobody wanted to leave our room.

Sometimes, in addition to the decoration of spaces limiting our vision, we add partitions in front of our noses, hindering us from viewing further. It is like the blinkers on a horse, avoiding it to see the cars passing by.

We are trained to contain our vision field until it can fit in a box. When the results of this boxed view start to annoy us, we are summoned to innovate. We are demanded an innovative vision but have unlearned how to expand our vision. Frustrated, we act like babies that want to grasp a toy but cannot reach it.

Then we go back to being a child, and our space, depending on the intention with which it was created, helps with this movement. The external environment is not what determines the process, but it can accelerate and help it powerfully. I learned this in Petalusa. When people enter the centre, it is like they have entered another dimension inside themselves. It deconstructs sweetly and welcomes each one's expression, without masks, without filters.

There is no need to explain or describe Petalusa, you only have to feel it: everything is said. Each one takes a bit of Petalusa inside, and most people cannot explain why they feel so well there. They try to find what hooked them, but in the end it is a reflection of themselves. It is a big mirror that reflects the best in everyone, including in me: a big womb, available to welcome with unconditional love, because the love that expands to the other returns to us, like the movement of the Universe.

When I help anyone to express him- or herself freely, I free my own expression too. When I welcome the other, I welcome myself. I love every expression that finds its way, because they are also a part of me. So, we embrace the love we receive, because giving and receiving are the same thing.

Maybe this is my gift: to create a field so that the best of each one can emerge. Even those who accidently stumble upon this field have a reason to be

there. Because the intention is to surrender to the Universe the guidance of the work and of those who receive it.

I am but a simple thread in the web of the Universe, an energy thread in the web of the Universe. I am a micro particle that is here and now circumstantially to fulfill its purpose with joy and truth. And so we go, each with their own gifts, contributing to the great enterprise of the Creator, which is love.

Now I feel one with the whole.



Creation, heart and mind integrated

*"It seems that we have to lose everything to understand the worthiness and unworthiness of things. All that is left is our spiritual property, which is now stronger than ever. After all, it is the spirit that exists and remains, that builds its body, and so it will be that our books will reappear some day." **

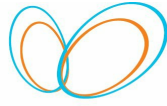
* Fragment of a letter written by my Great-Grandfather Max Adolf Pfeiffer to my Grandparents Inga and Wolfgang in 1946, recorded in the book *"Uma vida dia a dia"* (A Life Day by Day), written by Ulrike Julie Maria Pfeiffer (2016).

About Juliane



Photo by Maria Eduarda Rizek

The past is history, the future doesn't exist; today, I only am.



JULIANE
PFEIFFER
Contact

juliane@julianepfeiffer.com

www.julianepfeiffer.com

About the book

I share in this book my transformation process and some reflections on transitions and changes. After 18 years as a lawyer and executive in the corporate world, I realized that there was something missing in my life, something essential: Myself. Here, I tell the story of my journey of deconstruction and detachment, and of Petalusa's creative process (a center for body, mind and soul in São Paulo). In every transformation, one of the main challenges is to let go of paradigms, patterns and standards imposed by society and by ourselves. How can we reach our essence, expressing it freely and truly? Having experienced this rebirth in my body and soul was a great experience and a gift I share here. I invite you to challenge yourself to open up to the new and – who knows? – to plant a seed of transformation of consciousness, connecting with its purpose to live a life in harmony with its truth.