



COMPRENDRE LE FACTEUR HUMAIN

knowing your shadow, knowing yourself

interview d'Irene Goikolea pour l'Université Vivante



1. Can you tell us about your childhood? Did it influence who you became and how?

I was born and brought up in a rural area, the second of 7 sisters. In my childhood, my mother exercised a profound influence on me. She was deeply spiritual, a model of faith, generosity, and loyalty to inner impulses, aspects that she instilled in me. My father was deeply connected to the land and the values of his tradition such as hard work, responsibility, and the sacredness of the given word. From my mother, I inherited the connection with Heaven, as a metaphor of the spiritual realm. From my father, I inherited the connection with the Earth, evoking our Basque roots.

My youth took place in a period of intense cultural conflict. At that time, we were under the repression of the dictator Francisco Franco, who was trying to annihilate the Basque identity, by forbidding most of our customs and traditions and even the use of our own language, euskera. At that time, I found it difficult to reconcile my spiritual nature with the defense of the Basque ideals. While both legacies are inside me, I have always perceived myself dissociated, as if they were two warring halves. Therefore, being loyal to one of them made me feel that I was betraying the other in the same way that very often I would feel that being loyal to one of my parents meant betraying the other.

This dissociation was also present in relation to my mother tongue. The Basque language was used at home but looked down on outside the familial and rural domains. In the more intellectual spheres, it was considered a lower-level language and was discredited. In schools, it was totally prohibited to speak it. When I began to frequent the urban environment of the city of Gernika, near my hometown, I could feel the rejection toward our own cultural and linguistic heritage. At that time, speaking Basque was synonymous with being from the countryside and it was associated with pejorative connotations and a sense of inferiority.

At 15, I left my rural environment to study in the capital city of my county, Bilbao. Determined to honor my legacy, which I had felt tempted to deny to avoid feelings of shame, rejection, or exclusion, I joined an organization for the defense and recovery of the Basque language. After completing a teacher-training program, I started to teach Basque almost in secrecy due to the political repression from Franco's dictatorial regime. Somehow, this commitment signified an encounter with the dignity of my identity and my roots.

In my teens and twenties, I also participated in associations that supported the oppressed social classes and women's rights. However, when I became interested in working on personal transformation and got in touch with my spiritual dimension, inherited from my mother, I felt passionate about the depth of our human condition and I experienced a distancing from social activism. Clearly, the social and the spiritual were split in my generation.

Uniting my Basque identity with my spiritual part, also included in the Basque tradition, has represented a great challenge that has confronted me with my own inner conflicts and shadow aspects. The deep

need for reconciliation within myself inspired me to engage in a process to integrate my conflicting parts. The opposites that were within me, such as Spanish and Basque, Heaven and Earth, masculine and feminine, yin and yang, good and evil, spirit and matter, political ideals versus the transcendental dimension, or light and darkness, were calling for healing and integration. I wished to bridge them and create more spaciousness inside myself to contain my dual nature.

Eventually, I understood that what I rejected about myself were the same aspects that I rejected in other people and that integrating those aspects gave meaning to my human existence. This work in favor of accepting my humanity prepared me to be a group facilitator. My own experience and awareness would allow me to discern and contain the emotions that emerged in those groups.

2. Can you describe your work?

In my workshops, I tune in with the relational field, that is, the space generated in the interrelation with others. This field is made up of visible aspects, as well as unconscious emotional processes. As it goes beyond the individual, in a workshop, each participant acts as a window through which emerge not just individual contents, but also collective contents closely linked to the most pressing current issues affecting humankind. A workshop opens the possibility to become aware of those issues to be able to transform them and live as individuals that participate in a more awakened and sustainable culture.

Working with collective contents supports the individual to penetrate in different levels of depth, reflect on the experiences of the past and visualize the aspects that are blocking their personal growth to open up to the possibilities that come from the future.

When we access our depth, we find the "other" as our own mirror and, when we access the essence, we can experience ourselves as part of a unitary whole. Exploring and integrating these levels provides us with wholeness and freedom. This connection between the individual and the collective turns the workshops into healing experiential laboratories of both individual and collective memories.

3. Why did you choose to found communities? What was your goal?

The seed of Amalurra was conceived in the early 1990s within the first circles of women that I organized among my acquaintances. The purpose of these circles was to awaken to the sentient capacity of the sacred feminine aspect, that is, to the vulnerability of our wounded heart. In them, we wanted to acknowledge and honor our excluded, repressed, or forgotten feelings to recover the life we had lost on the way. Sometime later, once we women had recuperated our feminine space and our own voice, these circles opened their doors to men, who decided to join this project. Thus, the circles became mixed.

As we learned to share our vulnerability in our daily councils, we awoke to that quality of the deep feminine aspect. However, none of us had neither previous nor consciously planned or imagined the turn we were going to give to our lives by opting for a communal model of coexistence. The transition to this higher level of sharing, community life, occurred in an organic manner.

The Amalurra community in Artzentales, Basque Country, was born in 1995, beyond our conditionings or rational identifications. In fact, the intention of materializing this project did not only represent the desire to share our lives but also a necessary mode of understanding the world and of being in it. The introspective process that we committed to helped us become aware of our unconscious contents. That way we started a process focused on embracing our excluded parts, or shadow. In this sense, the community is a very suitable platform to promote the encounter with oneself through the other, so as to become complete or empowered of the full potential of our identity.

In our case, the community has acted as a platform for healing, transformation, and transpersonal evolution in which individual healing processes have somehow contributed to healing some trans-generational wounds engrained in the soul of the Basque Country.

In short, the ultimate aim of the Amalurra project has been imagining, remembering and recreating more conscious ways of living that are connected to the feminine energy and are able to satisfy the deep yearning for unity that dwells in every human being.

4. What is, according to you, the most important challenge into community life?

I think that including the other as a mirror of the aspects that we most exclude is an important challenge. Coexistence and interrelation with the other has proved essential for integrating those aspects. Another is that, to really honor the shadow one must fully assume the effects of the parts that each one of us have disowned or, in other words, assume the damage caused by our disowned shadow part while it has been acting out of our conscious control.

5. How do you think the relationship between people may be understood? How can one take care of it?

I think that everything happens through the others, because we human beings tend to project ourselves on the other, who becomes our own mirror. Therefore, taking care of the other means taking care of ourselves and viceversa.

In my opinion, we cannot give out anything that we do not give out to ourselves and we cannot give anything to ourselves unless we become aware of our needs, the needs that we can see reflected in that mirror.

It is in the interrelation with the other that we can be aware both of our lacks and of our gifts. So, the key for human evolution are relationships, not only among we humans, but with all living creatures, and above all our relationship with Mother Earth and the universe.

To me, when we recuperate our sacred relationship with life, the relationship with the other becomes sacred too. In this case, sacred refers to a primal recognition of the wonder, beauty and divine nature of the world. The sacred is a quality of spirit in which all is one. Once we recognize something as sacred we feel its unity. The sacred naturally draws us away from separation towards oneness. The remembrance of the sacred is a key that can awaken our consciousness to the oneness to which we belong.

6. What kind of vision have you for the future of human being? Are you optimistic?

Yes, I am optimistic, because I believe in the genius of human beings. I think that as well as we can show our worst side at certain moments, we can also bring out the best in us and get in touch with our most kindhearted essence, which can contain our negativity. Then, our compassionate part can occupy its place in favor of Life.

7. What will you concretely propose during a 2 days' workshop?

In the workshop Knowing your shadow, knowing yourself, I will focus on the concept of the shadow; that is, those aspects of our personality that could not be integrated because they didn't find a way of expression. The shadow is made of the qualities we tend to hide because we consider them negative, and that we project on the other (we see in others what belongs to oneself), causing a relational conflict.

This workshop invites you to become aware of your rejected aspects to contain them consciously and thus use the qualities of the shadow itself as a tool for empowerment and for accessing your most authentic identity. Working with one's own shadow contributes also to assimilating fragments of the collective or cultural shadow.

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