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# Honesty & Responsibility

I was recently reading a magazine article by a popular author on the subject of self-evolution. He made some good points about honesty and then I came to what he had to say about responsibility. He started off well but I soon came to a section that set off some alarm bells.   
  
The piece that caught my eye concerned a statement that responsibility means "... to do what it takes to remedy whatever can be remedied should others choose to experience the outcome as damaging in any way." The alarm bells were ringing for number of reasons, as I discovered, when I started to consider why.   
  
My mind flicked to the Christian Bible and to how Jesus chased the money lenders from the temple. I thought too of how he had constantly chastised and lambasted the pharisees. I have no doubt that all these people experienced these situations as highly damaging! Yet nowhere is Jesus reported as going around after these events saying "there, there chaps. Don't worry. I didn't mean it personally. Let me make it better for you!"   
  
Certainly, the first point to bear in mind when we're talking about exercising honesty is that we do indeed have responsibility to ensure that we are understood as clearly as possible -- that we get our message across with clarity.   
We also have responsibility in relation to our motives. Honesty can be brutal, and our use of it must always been backed up with the sincere desire to uplift, and not to destroy. We need to remember that words must be used with care, for, once uttered, they can never be taken back.   
  
But once we abide by these two guidelines and are being as impeccable as possible, then we cannot and should not undertake to fix up however the other person experiences what we have said. Although we can and should take responsibility for how we treat others, we cannot take responsibility for how other people choose to experience whatever happens in their lives. This type of intervention is not only demeaning, but also contravenes the whole concept of freedom.   
  
A wise person once said "the cup of truth is bitter indeed, but if we drain it we find in its dregs the seeds of our strength."   
  
Applying the same principles to our own lives is incredibly empowering and liberating. I know from my own experience that having something "negative" pointed out to me by an honest person can be very painful, but without such people I would never have come to see my own behavior for what it is. However, if the person then tries to make it better, I always feel patronised and diminished. In fact, I end up feeling worse, rather than better. So, whenever you need to say something to someone, make them big enough to accept your truth -- don't condescend to make them small. It almost always takes another person to point out our shortcomings, and in time, we learn to thank them for this. Once we have seen our shortcomings, we can start to address them, to transmute them and so achieve our freedom from our behavior.   
  
In addressing our shortcomings we are always alone. It can be bleak indeed to look into the mirror of justice, but so much strength, power and self-confidence comes about when we have faced that inner battle on our own.   
  
If we try to fix the situation, we also contravene the principle of individual responsibility, which is expressed through the interrelationship of all life. This basically means that if I have a "bad" experience, instead of rushing around blaming other people, I first ask "why did I attract that experience into my life?" This is because I, and I alone, am responsible for how I choose to experience what happens in my life. If I experience it negatively, then I must deal with that. In doing so, I always keep in mind another principle, namely, "I am never given a challenge that I cannot handle." Therefore I know I must be able to handle it, no matter how bleak things may appear to be.   
  
However, we can see so clearly how individual responsibility, and consequently, individual belief in self, have become eroded in the world today, and especially in more developed countries where, if anything negative happens, people simply reach for their lawyers, to sue the pants off the other person.   
  
The result of this is a generation of people -- and especially men -- who have a great deal of good will, high ideals and lofty talk, but very little strength and commitment to translate these into any meaningful action.   
  
At the end of the day true responsibility means "the ability to respond to life." And this only comes about by developing the openness of heart that enables one to embrace all of life fully. But such openness itself can only come about through the strength that is borne of meeting one's challenges honestly and fully, rather than throwing the burden onto someone else's shoulders.   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Qualities - (1) Friendship

These articles examine some of the qualities that we generally take for granted. They are not definitive, but they provide a starting point - a springboard, from which we can launch ourselves into gaining our own knowledge. For it is our own experience, and not information, that is important at the end of the day.   
  
Yet, these are qualities that we cannot ignore, for they represent the invisible force that gives power to the Toltec teachings. Without them, the information imparted just becomes words - mere information - and the application of the teachings again leads to a sterile uniformity in which a rigid structure of rules becomes the order of the day.   
  
Friendship and loyalty are lumped together, and that is correct. But they each signify specific values and attributes, so let us consider each in turn.   
We all have notions of what friendship is, or what it should amount to, but look around you in the world today. What do we see that friendship really means nowadays?   
  
All too often friendship is a question of "I'll scratch your back, if you scratch mine". In this extra-competitive world friendship is simply a means to an end - the motivation normally being advancement in work or social activities. In this scenario, there is no true openness - only a mutual grasping, and a pervasive fear that one day your "friend" will stab you in the back, and that the world will come to see you for what you really are.   
  
Because we have all felt betrayed at some point in our lives, this fear hangs over all of our relationships, debilitating us and preventing us from really opening our hearts.   
  
Another aspect of the "I'll scratch your back, if you scratch mine" mentality is co-dependency, where each supports the other in their weakness. There is no mutual sharing and uplifting - only mutual destruction, as each drags the other down into the mire of their mediocrity every time one tries to climb out. We can call this being "partners in crime."   
  
Here, friendship becomes a manipulative suppressive tool. Nowhere is this clearer to see than in schools. Starting from a early age, where the peer pressure to conform, in order to be accepted, is enormous, children start off by having to lie, cheat and indulge in all sorts of behaviour in order to get accepted by their "friends".   
  
The strings of complicity attached what normally pass for friendship are strong and keep us like puppets for the rest of our lives, so that we end up either totally giving, out of a sense unworthiness, or totally taking, also out of a sense of unworthiness, and no proper balance is ever struck.   
  
Friendship is a gift - pure and simple. Like a gift, it can never be imposed. Like a gift, it needs to be offered wholeheartedly. But what does this really tell us about friendship?   
  
In the past people would differentiate between people they knew and people they would invite into their house. Using this as an analogy we can say that a friend is someone you might invite into your heart - someone you decide to open yourself up to - to share yourself with, not in the sense of going out, but in the sense of letting them in to your world.   
  
What then does friendship imply? From the above it is clear that it must mean something more than just 2 people liking each other. The suffix -ship denotes a process, so friendship means the process of becoming a friend of someone - the process of opening your heart to them and of inviting them into your world.   
  
A process is not a state, but a continuation, and so friendship is an ongoing journey of discovery and opening.   
  
It may appear as though the process of opening one's heart to someone is all about "being nice" to them - about being politically correct - about always putting on a smile - but this could not be further from the truth.   
  
A quality of the heart is its utter inclusiveness, and this implies a total honesty - a level of honesty that we term ruthlessness.   
  
Ruthlessness means without pity and it is based upon a desire to be honest enough to speak one's truth, whatever the consequences. For in that openness of heart one knows that one's motive is to uplift and help one's friend, even if he or she may not always thank you at the time.   
  
Yet, how often do we not remain in collusive silence, when we know we should speak up, for fear of losing the approval or affection, of our friend? How often in our lives do we "let sleeping dogs lie" or not take action for fear of rocking the boat?   
  
Nevertheless, with honesty, care must be taken, since it does not give us licence to go around preaching and trying to change our friends into something we feel that they ought to be.   
  
Our friends will always mirror for us aspects of our own behaviour, and so, if there is something we do not like in a friend, then we should first of all address and change it in ourselves, before we get busy with the finger-pointing. Remember always the inclusiveness, which is the start towards true unconditional love.   
  
The process of being honest starts, at the outset, with being honest with oneself about one's motives for wanting to have a friendship in the first place.   
  
Generally, whatever we may imagine our motives to be, the bottom line is that we want something from the other person, whether this is warmth, love, attention, company, amusement, or even something more tangible, such as assistance, or career or social advancement.   
  
If we are honest about our motives, we can not only avoid disappointment and unmet expectations but we can also work and co-operate intelligently to achieve our goal.   
  
There is nothing worse that the idea of "just wanting to have a friend" - for you need to ask again, "What is a friend?" Someone who will make you happy? Someone who will act as a kleenex for you? Someone who is useful?   
  
Now the term has become so debased that almost anyone is a friend, even if you have only known them for 5 minutes. So, we should ask, "what do I honestly want from this person?"   
  
Then we should honestly assess that we are prepared to give the other person. In other words, are we going to pursue a real friendship with them, or are we just going to manipulate them in order to get what we want? Is this someone we are going to commit to, or someone we are going to use and then toss aside? It is only through the process of being honest and then co-operating intelligently that we can truly build a proper friendship and really open our heart. But this takes time, effort and commitment.   
  
Look around you and count how many examples of real friendship you can see, compared with how many examples of manipulation. Then examine your friendships and your own motivations. Do you support your friends in their strengths or in only in their weaknesses? Do you manipulate, in the name of friendship? What qualities would you like to bring to your friendships?   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Qualities - (2) Loyalty

These articles examine some of the qualities that we generally take for granted. They are not definitive, but they provide a starting point - a springboard, from which we can launch ourselves into gaining our own knowledge. For it is our own experience, and not information, that is important at the end of the day.   
  
Yet, these are qualities that we cannot ignore, for they represent the invisible force that gives power to the Toltec teachings. Without them, the information imparted just becomes words - mere information - and the application of the teachings again leads to a sterile uniformity in which a rigid structure of rules becomes the order of the day.   
  
If the keynote of friendship is openness of heart, then the keynote of loyalty is steadfastness. In practice, friendship and loyalty are inseparable, because loyalty is the measure of true friendship. Without loyalty, friendship doesn't amount to very much in practical terms. Without loyalty, friendship loses its true meaning and it becomes impossible distinguish it from concepts such as "warmth," or "companionship."   
Friendship is a quality that is revealed in its demonstration, and that demonstration is achieved through the practice of loyalty.   
  
The symbol for friendship and loyalty is a dog, and in examining dogs we can learn much about these qualities and what results when they combine. Anyone who has ever had a dog will have exact experience of the openness and loyalty that these animals display. It is not the same with other people's dogs -- the relationship is peculiar to a dog and its owner.   
  
Yet, it is instinctive for a dog to display these qualities, and whilst they may indeed form part of our deepest nature, we are obliged to make a conscious choice between these, other qualities and, in fact, the whole of our baggage.   
  
We have a hard time with loyalty nowadays. Part of the reason is the same fear of betrayal that was mentioned at the beginning of the friendship article. Part of the reason is the rapidly-growing sense of separativeness born of our social conditioning. The more we elevate the rational mind to the status of God, the more separative we end up becoming. The result is that we begin to perceive everything in terms of "me versus the world out there." And the problem is that the rational mind can justify all sorts of behaviour under the guise of self-preservation.   
  
Yet, loyalty is not a product of the rational mind -- it is a child of the heart. And in this respect it is a peculiarly masculine quality. A woman's most basic instinct is to nurture, to protect and preserve her family. In doing so she will fight tenaciously, and will be the equal of any man in courage and determination. But the very most basic instinct here starts with self-preservation, which has a natural tendency to develop towards fragmentation and separation for the purposes of survival.   
  
The male's most basic instinct is to explore the unknown, which translates into hunting. The act of exploring, or hunting, implies opening oneself up to the world around one, for no-one can successfully navigate the unknown, or hunt, with the mind. It is necessary to be open enough to feel one's way through the interaction we are having with the world around us, with the wilds, or with our business colleagues. Feeling is a quality of the heart. As a man learns to interact more with the world around him, so he begins to develop a respect for life. He wants to understand it and so he explores more. In the course of his explorations he comes into contact with other hunters, on the same quest. They share time together, build associations, form societies, make alliances. The unifying factor of all this being a common purpose. But any alliance stands or falls upon the strength of the loyalty to that purpose.   
  
In time, societies and associations give way to larger groupings involving countries and rulers. Here, at face value, loyalty is given to the sovereign, rather than to a purpose, but that is the face value. For it is an ancient truth that the King and the land are one. So, going back to our origins, and we find that because the King is one with the state, he is identified with the state and his purpose is that of the state. Therefore, our allegiance to the King is in reality allegiance to the Crown, which represents the purpose of the state.   
  
This ancient notion is important when we consider the application of loyalty nowadays and how it can work in practice, for far too often people trip themselves up by asking the question "How can I possibly be loyal to this person if I don't know how he or she is going to behave? Or if he or she may let me down?"   
  
We may look at the world around us and see the greed, corruption and self-centred manipulation that is displayed by so many leaders today. We may look back through history and see the same. We may look at our lives, and the figures we have looked up to and note how they have disappointed us by not living up to our expectations of them, or by not living up to their own promises. We may then quite rightly look at the actual practice of loyalty with some scepticism and mistrust. So it's no wonder that people have so much difficulty with loyalty, and with the related concept of commitment.   
  
The answer to this dilemma lies partially in the need to exercise discrimination. For many people, loyalty is synonymous with blind trust. How many times in our lives have we not blindly placed our trust in people, only to be disappointed in them? As a result of having been burned, we tend to throw trust/loyalty out of the window, rather than looking and learning how we can exercise better judgement next time around. In this context it is truly heartbreaking to see how dogs, who have no choice, will continue to show loyalty and friendship unreservedly to people who take advantage of that loyalty and friendship in order to abuse them.   
  
At least we have the ability to choose and to discriminate. But what do we choose, or discriminate between, and how? This brings us to another part of the answer, namely, honour. The concept of honour is vast, but for our purposes we need only look at it in terms of relating it to the purpose we are deciding whether to support, or not. So the question we need to ask ourselves is, "Does this purpose have honour?" "Am I going to give my loyalty to a purpose that is honourable, or to one that is dishonourable?"   
  
Toltecs define honour as "the absolute unconditional willingness to be open to supporting the purpose of the Spirit at all times." This is the sacred trust that they bear, and have carried with them since time immemorial. The honour for Toltecs lies in living up to that trust. Extending this idea to the concept of friendship, Toltecs would say "I am not honoured that you are my friend, I am honoured by the trust you are placing in me by being my friend, and I shall do everything in my power to live up to that trust." This differs from most people's understanding of friendship, which has no honour, being more along the lines of "I am your friend, and therefore you must be my slave!"   
  
So we can see how the concept of honour is closely interrelated with the concept of loyalty and friendship, and how we can use it to discriminate with wisdom in deciding where we will place our loyalty.   
  
Honour is a quality that is also masculine in character, developing out of the same considerations as loyalty. However, this should not in any way be taken as saying that women are incapable of honour or loyalty, or, conversely, that all men are loyal and honourable. We are looking at the essential conditions of these qualities, how they have been developed in human beings, how they have been abused, and at how they can again become incorporated into our lives with due respect and meaning. For more on the relative states of awareness of male and female start off with Theun Mares' book "This Darned Elusive Happiness."   
  
By understanding the essential constituents of these qualities we can start to work with them, and especially in the context of exercising intelligent cooperation between male and female. Take the use, or misuse, of honour, friendship and loyalty. How often in the past have men not gone off to fight some war in a strange land, for the noblest of motives, whilst forgetting that charity begins at home, and so abandoning their families? Nowadays, how many men still run away and neglect their families through the pursuit of what they perceive to be noble ideals? Here, there is no co-operation between male and female, no balance between the hunting and the nurturing instincts.   
  
Reverting to the reasons why we have so much difficulty with loyalty, and commitment, we saw that a partial answer can be found in the need to exercise discrimination. Another part of the answer, closely allied with discrimination, is deciding where we wish to place the focus.   
  
Here, there are two main issues that need to be addressed. The first relates to our low sense of self-worth. This is so pervasive, that it runs, as a bottom line, through everything that people do. When something really good happens to a person, how often do we not hear them exclaim "this is too good to be true!" No one believes that they can have their perfect job, their perfect partner, their perfect house; and so it is always too good to be true, rather than it being a question of "I really deserve this." However, when something nasty happens, all too often it is only then that it becomes a matter of "What a schmuck - I really deserved that.” Or, “That person really deserved that."   
  
What this low self-worth translates into, when it comes to having to show loyalty, is a feeling of utter fear or panic, that we will never be able to live up to the commitment, loyalty or trust that is being placed in us. If we keep letting ourselves down, how can we ever avoid not letting someone else down? If our leaders, heroes and figureheads are incapable of displaying loyalty, how will we ever manage, in our own lives?   
  
Yet, this fear is always there, for all of us, for there is not a person on this earth who does not feel the heavy weight of the responsibility for living up to the loyalty or trust that is placed in him or her. But we can either place the focus on the fear, and allow it to debilitate us with all manner of doubts and excuses as to why we should turn aside, or, we can acknowledge the fear, but then shift the focus to the only thing we can -- our belief in our self. Money, qualifications, achievements, all count at some stages, but when we are facing our biggest hurdles, the only thing that counts is our belief -- "I believe that I can do this -- I believe that I am worthy -- I believe that the mere fact of my being alive is proof that I have a purpose that I have to fulfil." This may not sound like much, but when you are in the midst of a battle, it is the only thing that you can really hold onto, and in holding onto it, you will find that it is, in fact, as solid as a rock. With belief, miracles can and do happen.   
  
The low sense of self-worth has a further aspect, or manifestation, and this leads us to the second of the issues that we need to address under placing the focus. The fear of not being able to live up to someone's trust, of not being worthy of their trust, friendship or love at a deep level, often turns into doubt and suspicion of that person and their motives. Whilst beforehand, we might have been able to view their faults and virtues with some equanimity, we suddenly find that their faults become horrendous and quite fatal. Yet realise that this too is our fear speaking. Our low sense of self-worth has brought forth a fear of rejection. Therefore, throughout our friendships, we can either search for feet of clay, in which case we will always find them, and we will face constant disappointment as our loved ones crumble into dust; or else we can focus on the person as a whole, and the honour and impeccability that is their hallmark. Also, we can focus on their purpose. Again, we can ask the question, "is their purpose honourable or dishonourable? What can we do to support that will enhance and direct that purpose? Do we trust that person, not in the sense of blind trust, but in the sense of believing that they know what they are doing, and that they are capable? Above all what is our heart telling us? Now we can decide where our loyalty lies.   
  
Earlier in this article, it was stated that any alliance, or society, stands or falls upon the strength of the loyalty to its purpose. Today, we see organisations crumbling all around the world because people are not prepared to carry on supporting a dishonourable purpose. This will continue. However, the very real problem is that as these institutions fall, no other purposes arise in their place, or else, the purposes that do arise are either equally dishonourable, or, so fragmented and separative, that supporters spent all their time fighting against each other, rather than for a common purpose. So, we have a world in which dishonourable purposes are being replaced with greedy, self-seeking, self-interest groups. Loyalty and honour have gone out of the window. How do we restore a sense of loyalty? Perhaps we can make a start by defining our purpose. In doing so, we need to remember that, relative to the Spirit, we are all, men as well as women, female. This means that if we are to have a valid purpose, it must be one with the Spirit -- it must in all respects be life-supportive and not life-destructive.   
  
Men, it is up to you, as the representative of the Spirit on the physical plane, to define your purpose and then to take the necessary action to see your purpose realised. In this you will need to take responsibility for providing the lead and initiating the process of intelligent co-operation.   
  
Women, it is up to you to determine the purpose that you will support, and then to commit to supporting that purpose with all of your heart. It will not be easy, since there are few men with a real purpose, let alone an honourable one, but if you wish to, you will find a purpose to support.   
  
By taking action, and by finding or supporting a purpose, soon enough, both men and women will have the opportunity to explore the concept of loyalty, and in depth.   
  
There is no other way than through practical experience. So, decide, follow your heart, and jump right in. The power is in the moment, and you will soon enough know if you are swimming in the wrong stream.   
  
One final word on loyalty. Although it is not possible to have friendship without loyalty, it is possible to show loyalty in some sense, without friendship. In this case, loyalty becomes more akin to duty. The danger in this is that the pursuit of duty for its own sake simply leads to political correctness. The pursuit of political correctness soon leads to conformism, rigidity and compromise, and so to dishonour. Most of all, though, political correctness leads to a utter lack of any heart. Never let your hunger for a purpose be subverted into a blind sense of duty for any old cause. You do have a value and you need to place that value wisely. If you are scrupulous in following your heart, and if you never lose sight of the quality of friendship, then your commitment to loyalty will never let you down. Instead, you will be stepping onto a path that will surely lead you into living the interrelationship of all of life, and eventually to true unconditional love.   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Significance of the Yellow Rose

Having looked at the meanings of friendship and loyalty, what can they tell us about the Yellow Rose of Friendship? What does this concept embody?   
  
The Yellow Rose is an ancient symbol amongst Toltecs. It is encapsulated in the following Toltec salutation: "Warriors of Atl, I salute you! By the love which is the essence of your own true inner fiery being! By the impeccability which constitutes your invincible power! By the humility which is the mark of your free spirit! May the peace and the harmony of the Yellow Rose of Friendship abide with you now and for ever more!"   
  
But this doesn't tell us very much. In fact, it is difficult to say anything really meaningful about something that is a symbol for what can only be experienced. The best we can do is to talk around this, and in the process, to try to get to feel for what the Yellow Rose stands for.   
  
The Yellow Rose appears as a visual impact to Toltec Seers when they try to "see" the source of life within manifestation. The first thing, then, to note, is the colour. Why yellow? Yellow for Toltecs symbolises vitality. Look at how yellow appears in your life; look at the daffodils and daisies in the springtime; feel what happens when you walk into a yellow room. Above all, look at that most powerful and pervasive symbol of vitality -- the sun. Look at the impact the sun has upon our lives, starting with how you feel on a beautiful sunny day, compared with how you feel on a dark day, and then consider the effect of the sun on plants, animals and the whole of nature.   
  
"Vitality" means the ability to sustain life. And if we pause to consider the implications here, we see immediately how far-reaching these are. The first of these implications relates to time, for sustaining anything requires an effort that is continuous, unceasing, relentless. Like the sun, it must always be there. Even though it may rain from time to time, the sun is there always. The next relates to action, for sustaining anything requires action. It is not possible to sit in a corner quietly beaming away. Yet, neither does the concept of action mean that you have to go out there and save the world. Action implies having a purpose, and then materialising that purpose. Very often you may not have very much to show for your efforts, for a while, or at all. But if you know what you are working towards, and if you stick to it, then you will be taking action.   
  
Another consideration concerns the quality of the action that you need to take. To sustain life means that all of your actions need to be the sort of actions that will nourish and encourage life. In short, your actions must be tailored in such way that they are totally life-supportive, rather than being life-destructive. Your actions should be directed towards enhancing and uplifting life.   
  
Then, you might ask, what is life? This may seem obvious, but unless we have some clarity as to what life is, all of our actions may become horribly misplaced, and we could end up hindering, rather than advancing, the process of life.   
  
So, what is life? Most people tend to think that life is what happens - to them or to others. Therefore, if someone is hospitalised, or married, or divorced, or mugged, or promoted, or fired, they say: "that's life." Similarly, people go to watch movies, see shows, attend spectator sports, and they think that those actions mean that they are living life. But the truth is that life is not what happens to you. Everything that happens to us, everything that we experience on the physical plane, is but an expression of the form side of life. All our repetitive activities – our doings – simply confirm to us that we are alive: a life. Even our true creations, (as opposed to our reproductions), are simply an expression of what we feel we are as spirit beings.   
  
Life itself is a mystery - it is part of the unknowable. Life is the nagal, the Spirit. We really do not know what life is, for, being an expression of the Spirit, it lies within the realm of the unknowable, which is No-Thing. The only thing we know for a fact is that we are alive. Thus Toltecs say that life is a feeling. We can only get a feeling for who and what we are. It is not possible to define No-Thing.   
  
What are the implications of this? Firstly, it is not the notching up of experiences that means that we have enjoyed a rich and meaningful life, but the quality of our interactions in the midst of those experiences. What do our actions amount to? What are our motives, our intentions, and what have they actually resulted in? Do we leave a trail of beauty, or a trail of destruction? Or do we just keep repeating our performances time after time? Take, for example, a bunch of people who are great golf fans. They may spend their lives going to watch tournaments, and they may even travel widely. But if all they are ever doing, with minor variations, is watching the game, having a few drinks, having dinner, catching up with other pals, then they are simply doing the same thing, over and over again. When they look back at their lives, they will see how everything blurs together, with one or two events standing out, like perhaps the time when Jack Nicklaus said hello to them, or when they won a special dinner. But, generally, these will all be things that simply happened to them.   
  
This leads us to the second, and most fundamental, implication -- namely that we are not passive victims of life, but beings of immense power and energy, with the ability to take control of our life’s circumstances -- with the ability to sustain life. The key to this, lies in vitality. And in this respect, we keep remembering that life is a feeling, and not an intellectual exercise.   
  
What does this mean? All true action -- as opposed to re-action -- arises out of a feeling. A feeling is like a seed that grows and bursts forth into the medium of our actions. Life is forever renewing itself -- always in constant motion, surging and falling back upon itself, and its expression is vitality, and the meaning of vitality is life itself -- they are one and the same thing. To be vital means to be alive, and to shut ourselves off from vitality is to die.   
  
Looking at the rose itself, we discover that this symbolises a "Path with a Heart," for roses have forever been synonymous with the heart. Here, though, the focus must be directed towards the Path -- meeting "purpose," for every one of us has a purpose, and it is vital for us to uncover and to pursue that purpose. In doing so, we come to learn that our purpose is indeed for us a Path with a Heart. But if we try to focus on the heart, without finding or defining our purpose, then we risk getting lost. We all have a Path that we need to follow -- this is our fate, and this Path can only be uncovered by walking it. It is for this reason that Christ said; "if you wish to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, pick up your cross, and follow me."   
  
Even though we all have our own Path to walk, as we journey, we gradually learn that all paths are interconnected, interactive and interdependent, and so we come to see that the manner in which we undertake our journey affects the whole, as well as the other individual parts. This is another fundamental truth of the rose, that there is only one life. For even though the rose is made up of many petals, they all combine to form one rose: their purpose and life being all one.   
  
But a rose is more than just petals -- a rose is attached to a stem, and on the stem are thorns that cannot be ignored. So life is not just a bed of roses -- it is not all sunshine and happiness. The thorns represent our challenges, which need to be faced and handled impeccably. We cannot run away from our challenges, for if we try, we end up getting hooked and torn by the thorns.   
  
Finally, there is the scent of the rose. Smell denotes personal power. We need personal power to handle our challenges, and when we handle them impeccably they bring us more personal power. Moreover, we need to have personal power in order to be able to show friendship and loyalty, for without personal power how can we really give anything of ourselves of meaning and value?   
  
  
  
Now we have come the full circle, and we are back to the concepts of friendship and loyalty. But this does not mean that there is nothing more to be gleaned from these concepts, or from the Rose. As we each continue to explore we never cease to open up new vistas and areas of knowledge that we may rightfully call our own.   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Building Character

Building character is said to be a good thing. We freely analyse a person's character - is it strong or weak, do we admire it, or do we despise and reject it? Yet, is a "strong" character necessarily a good thing if the person concerned is a self-righteous bigot? Is a "weak" character necessarily a bad thing, if the person at least appears on "Oprah", openly confesses to their degeneracy and sheds a few tears in the process? This is one area of our lives that seems filled with confusion. What do we really mean when we talk of a person's character?   
  
The main dictionary definition of the word is "the collective qualities or characteristics, especially mental and moral, that distinguish a person". Another is "moral strength".   
  
Both of these definitions imply a judgement based on nothing more than socially accepted standards of behaviour or, in other words, how well one adheres to one's social conditioning. But is there not something more permanent that this concept implies, something that comes from the inside, rather than being imposed from the outside, by society?   
  
According to the majority of the American people the impeachment proceedings were a waste of time and Bill Clinton should have been allowed to get on with his job without any further interventions into his private life. Why did so many Senators think differently? What made them wish to buck the mores of the times? Has character, either theirs, or Bill Clinton's, got anything to do with this? Does it really matter?   
If we feel that it does matter, and we are interested in building character then we need to get an understanding of what the word really implies. We need to find some kind of balance so that we retain the strength that enables us to stand firm in the face of opposition, and also the flexibility that prevents us from joining the pig-headed bigots of the world.   
  
The Toltec approach to building character starts off with the concept of impeccability. For Toltecs, all of our life experiences are challenges - challenges which we can either avoid, or meet and handle as impeccably as we can.   
  
Impeccability means "doing the best that one can in any situation, according to both the time and the knowledge that one has available in the moment".   
  
There are two very beneficial consequences from adopting the standard of impeccability, and they are, the avoidance of, firstly, perfectionism, and secondly, goal-orientation.   
  
How many times do we not spoil our memory of an event because we look back with hindsight and compare our performance badly with that of someone-else, or use our hindsight to criticise ourselves needlessly? For example, all too often, after having given a party, instead of having a feeling of satisfaction, we tend to think that it wasn't quite as good as John's down the road, and how stupid we were not to have taken the ice-cream out of the fridge earlier. Yet, all of this just falls away if we only remember that we didn't need to compete, or be perfect, but simply to do the best that we could at the time. We may well be able to do better next time, but until then we can only deal with the knowledge that we have right now.   
  
Equally, the current obsession with winning at all costs both debilitates, and also tends to invalidate the knowledge that is supposed to come out of the experience, since one is only fixed on the outcome. Say you have to make a journey to somewhere you have never been to before, and say you could take your time. You could walk, bicycle, take a train or boat - whatever you fancy. You could also stop on the way, enjoy meals, make friends, experience so many things. Yet the sad thing is that most people today would just jump on a plane, take a sleeping tablet and be glad when the journey is done. Life for them has simply become a process of getting results.   
  
By way of the complete contrast, the impeccability of the warrior does not allow him to become obsessed with the outcome of his actions. Winning or losing is not his primary concern - he is just absorbed in the challenge of the moment.   
  
Simply to be fully engaged in the challenge, knowing that you are doing your best, and knowing that whatever happens, tomorrow is another day - is that not an uplifting and liberating way of living?   
  
To be impeccable in one's thoughts and actions also implies true humility. It is simply not possible to be bigoted and arrogant if one is pursuing a path of impeccability.   
  
Most of us are generally far too busy ensuring that our actions do not draw the disapproval of our fellows. But, since warriors do not regard themselves as being more important or less important than other people, it does not matter to them if they lose face in the eyes of their fellow men.   
  
In this way the warrior does not strive for self-importance and does not care about public approval. This freedom from having to seek approval is true humility. Since they no longer have to fear the impact that their actions may have upon their sense of self-importance, the only consideration of warriors is acting upon their own knowledge to the very best of their ability. Accordingly, a warrior understands self-confidence to mean "confidence in one's own ability to act impeccably".   
  
This, of course, is a far cry from what is normally understood as self-confidence, which is an assurance based upon the belief that one is right, and that one is better than, or superior to, other people. But what kind of "character" does this imply?   
  
The warrior's ideal of impeccability gives each of us an attainable vision of what we can aspire to be - the very best that we can.   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Why worry about abortion?

The debates about abortion continue to rage. However, they will never lead anywhere, because few people, and certainly not the politicians, are willing to go beyond the face value and start addressing the real issues.   
  
The fact is that abortion is only the end of the line of a whole series of issues that begins with how we choose to look at the whole issue of sex, its purpose and meaning. It includes examining the responsibilities of men and women in relation to sex. It involves looking at the whole issue of contraception and what it implies. For in the light of the bigger picture can we really say that abortion is any better or worse that contraception? What is this bigger picture?   
  
What is our responsibility, as educators, as parents, as individuals? We all have a part to play in defining our values. Sex brought us all into existence, and it forms the core of our lives. It affects all of us at a very fundamental level.   
  
Yet, it has also been the cause of more misery, shame and despair than it has been of happiness and joy – why is this?   
  
As we look back through history we see how sex has been subject to much harmful secrecy and suppression. Then came the enlightened ‘60’s, with its wave of promiscuity and icons of free love. But what happened to the happiness that these icons promised? Why did promiscuity not deliver the freedom that everyone hoped for?   
  
We’ve been through the enlightened ‘90’s and have entered a new millennium. This is a time in which information about sex is more freely available than ever before, sex education is more advanced than ever before and people have more freedom of expression and movement than ever before.   
  
But why, in spite of all our progress, is sex so badly understood? Why too is the greatest and most devastating virus to threaten humanity also linked to sex, so that this most sacred of acts is now fraught with fear and death?   
  
It’s time that we re-examined our whole approach to sex. Measures like banning abortions and handing out more condoms are no more than window-dressing. They are not going to do anything to solve the enormous crisis that we are all facing today.   
  
Let’s look at sex, then. At its most basic biological level the act of sex is the act of reproduction. We reproduce so that we can perpetuate our species. At this most fundamental level it is nothing more than reproduction. For example, in nature, one plant and one insect in a species look pretty well like the others.   
  
However, as we go up the evolutionary ladder, we find the spark of individuality appearing. In humans that spark carries with it the ability to choose – the ability to make conscious decisions – the ability to know ourselves – the ability to take responsibility for our knowledge – the ability to create. The implications are that with this spark of individuality and knowledge, sex is much more than an act of reproduction – in humans, sex becomes an act of creation. This fact is also underlined by the term “procreation”. This word certainly confirms an act of creation, but what is suggested by the prefix “pro”? “Pro” means “for” or “on behalf of”. But for or on behalf of who, or what? Quite simply, we say that rather than being a self-centred, mundane act, the act of sex is an act of creation that we carry out on behalf of something outside of ourselves – and that “something” is life itself. For this we carry an enormous responsibility.   
  
It is no wonder then that in the inner teachings of all the great religions and major belief systems, sex has always been regarded as something sacred and mysterious, and, deep down, we all know this. The problem though, is that sex has also been associated with sin and thus suppression. In trying to overcome the indoctrination of sin we have forgotten its mysterious and sacred function.   
  
Yet, through having forgotten the sacred and mysterious function of sex, it has become for most people nothing more than a pass-time – albeit a major and all-consuming pass-time. The possible consequences of conception and disease are now merely regarded as something to be avoided with the right precautions. Like everything else in the world, sex has become a commodity, and today we are all expected to enjoy “a good sex life” or run the risk of being a failure. Concepts such as true warmth and friendship and have mostly disappeared.   
  
In addition, with the sole focus on the physical act, not only has the true nature of sex as a creative act been forgotten, but the essential fact that every creative act is an act of intelligent co-operation has also been forgotten. We simply do not know how to exercise intelligent co-operation nowadays. This concept and how we can all benefit from it, is explained in This Darned Elusive Happiness, by Theun Mares, and we cannot go into it here. The important fact is that every creative act is an act of intelligent co-operation between the polarities of male and female which will bear fruit in one way or another.   
  
The point is not that we should not enjoy sex, or that we should cut it out, but that we need to understand that physical sex is part of a much bigger picture – a picture that relates to creativity as a whole – and that we need to take a lot more responsibility for all of this than we have done so far.   
  
Nowadays, more and more people are complaining that the world is becoming a cold and sterile place. Let us look at this from the bigger creative standpoint to get a clue why. What if you are working in an advertising agency, and every creative idea that you have is shot down, or the plug is pulled on the project before it comes to fruition? What if you are an artist and you keep washing the paint off the canvas before the picture gets painted? What if you are an inventor or a businessman, and you cannot bring any of your ideas to the marketplace? Would it be surprising then to discover that you have lost touch with your creativity and have become sterile?   
  
And yet, exactly the same happens when you go home. You will quite happily expect to have sex with your wife or girlfriend, using contraception, and then, if a miss-take happens, and she conceives from you, you will more than likely want her to abort. So if you are wanting to contracept or abort everything in your life, is it surprising that your life, as well as the whole world, are becoming cold and sterile?   
  
So it is not abortion that is the problem – abortion is only one of the symptoms of a much larger problem to do with our whole understanding of sex and creativity, one which the politicians cannot and will not solve for us – simply because we need to take responsibility and solve it for ourselves.   
  
Many other issues, and the responsibilities of men and women have not been addressed in this article, but if you wish to read more, two books by Theun Mares – “The Quest for Maleness”, and “Unveil the Mysteries of the Female”, contain valuable information and ways of approaching the whole issue of gender.   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Womens Day - a celebration of Non-Victimhood

Every August, South Africans celebrate Women’s Day. This national holiday is uniquely South African – no other country devotes a day to its women and thus to providing us all with an opportunity to assess our attitudes towards one half of humanity. It also gives us an opportunity to look at the greater picture, specifically to see how women’s issues are in fact all our issues – at an individual, global and societal level. Hopefully, it also gives us the opportunity to see what can be done to bring about true change.   
  
Sadly, much of the focus on Women’s Day is on abuse. This is such an enormous feature in the world nowadays, and one that affects everyone. What can be done about abuse? What needs to happen if we want to see it eradicated, rather than simply being lived with and tolerated? Why does it seem so difficult to eradicate abuse, of all sorts, from our lives?   
  
One of the major problems we are faced with is that the focus has almost exclusively been on the abusive behaviour, rather than trying to address the bottom line of what has actually led to the abuse in the first place. Although we pay lip service to the concept of treating the cause and not the symptom, we tend to throw this concept out of the window when we are involved with matters closer to home. Thus, even though we may understand that it isn’t a good idea to keep on taking painkillers when we have a stomache ache, when it comes to something like crime, we tend to adopt a completely different attitude.   
  
All of a sudden, reason goes flying out of the window, as we clamour for the authorities to increase the police force, step up the judiciary, get convictions and put the offenders behind bars, for as long as possible. It is as though the old adage of “out of sight, out of mind”, still has us in its grasp, or, in other words, “Don’t bother me, this is someone else’s problem. I pay my taxes and am entitled to live in a society that is free from crime.”   
  
Yet abuse, or crime in general, IS our problem, and each and every one of us bears some responsibility for it.   
  
To put this another way, we are all a part of the problem. It is simply not possible to be a part of a community that is plagued by crime and to claim that we are just innocent bystanders without any responsibility. The self-righteous way is to stand up and say “Look, but I don’t rob people!” Yet some ways of stealing can be more subtle than others, and the truth is that if we are totally honest, we can see that they still amount to stealing. These ways can range from taking stationery from work, doing personal business in your work time, to stealing time from your family, by keeping yourself busy with other outside activities, to stealing from your staff, by underpaying them. There are, in fact, countless ways in which we can steal. But if you are confronted by crime in your life, it is there – you need only look for it, and you will find it, if you can be honest enough. If you really cannot find it, then ask yourself in what ways are you supporting it in your life? Almost every abuser or criminal has someone who is silently supporting them – a mother, father, brothers, sisters, other relatives, friends, anyone who knows what is going on, but who just doesn’t speak up.   
  
Nevertheless, whether we are discussing theft, or abuse, or any type of crime, the principles remain the same, and these are that there are no accidents in life, and there are no victims. We all have our part to play in whatever happens to us, and therefore we are always just as guilty as someone who has committed a wrong against us.   
  
In this third book, The Mists of Dragon Lore, Theun Mares expresses these points in the following way:   
  
“If you choose to believe that you are a victim, then indeed you are a victim, and I fully agree with you that you are a victim. Therefore there is nothing further to discuss. If, on the other hand, you choose to be a warrior, rather than a victim, then realize that you are responsible for whatever happens in your life. If you walk across the road, and someone runs you down with his car, then you are just as guilty as the one who ran you down. First of all, you decided to cross the road at that particular moment. You could have crossed somewhere else, or you could have crossed later, or you could have crossed faster or slower. In short, you could have been more alert. Secondly, realize that although man-made law will essentially be on your side, these petty laws will not relieve you of the fact that you are guilty of having damaged that person’s car, and of the fact that he might even be found guilty of negligent driving.   
  
Likewise, if you are raped, it is because you needed that experience. Perhaps it was to teach you humility. Perhaps it was to teach you what it is to be humiliated. Perhaps it was to teach you something about your behaviour. In other words, what could you have done to attract rape? If you are extremely sexy, or pretty, or like to advertise your sex appeal, then take responsibility for it. If on the other hand, your attitude towards others is so snooty that someone felt the need to humiliate you with rape, then you must likewise accept responsibility for this. Furthermore, accept the fact that if the rapist is caught and jailed, or perhaps even sentenced to death, you will be guilty of that man’s sentence, even though thousands will hail the justice of the courts, and will flock to your defence…   
  
…In the examples I have given, I can already hear the angry wails of the ‘victims’ of this world. However, remember that I have not said that a rapist has any justification for raping another being, neither have I claimed that a driver has any right to drive recklessly. But, by the same token, neither does someone have the right to make another person guilty of rape by calling forth a rape, or to make a driver guilty of negligent driving by calling forth a driver that is either half asleep or just plain reckless.”   
  
To our normal, socially-conditioned view of life, these may appear to be challenging concepts to grasp and to take on board. Yet, what are the implications of NOT working with them? Because crime and lawlessness show every sign of increasing, rather than abating, the possible consequences are dire, and will lead to 2 polarities of existence. On the one hand, a society in which the average individual feels ever more powerless, having no impact on life, constantly at the mercy of circumstances, forever blaming others, unable to take action, and therefore increasingly despairing and apathetic, (i.e. the victims of humanity), whilst on the other hand, we will see the arrogant, self-righteous, bigoted bullies, forever imposing their wills on other people, usually through some “good cause” or other, but by addressing the symptoms, rather than the causes, failing to bring about any real change, (i.e. the victimizers of humanity). These polarities must come into being as an inescapable result of the projection of victim-consciousness out into the world.   
  
One example of a “good cause” failing to bring about any real change, can be seen in the USA, in which immediate steps were taken to set up special investigation and prosecution assistance units, when child abuse was first recognized as being rampant in the 1970’s. Yet today, in spite of a successful track record of prosecutions and convictions, child abuse is still absolutely rampant.   
  
Where do we go from here? Towards a world that is falling apart from inertia and apathy, or towards a fragmented world of suspicion and terror, in which secret police are watching our every thought and movement, just in case we should commit a crime – a world of Big Brother?   
  
There IS another way – a hope that is held out by these teachings, of a new world in which men and women are strong enough to take responsibility for what is happening in their lives – a world in which men and women are open enough to accept that they too have a part to play in whatever happens to them, to their families, their communities, their countries, knowing that they too have impact and that they too can make a difference – a world in which men and women are courageous enough to see what they don’t like out there, and to start changing it in themselves; or to see what behaviour they don’t like in themselves, and then to take the necessary action to change it, knowing that their actions will affect all of those around them.   
  
One of the greatest obstacles towards creating this new world is the victim mentality, and the way in which this mentality is growing in the public awareness, strengthened day in and day out, by the media, the insurance companies, the legal system, the governments.   
  
Women’s Day has the potential to benefit humanity enormously, if the focus is on upliftment and addressing the concept of individual responsibility. It also has the potential to be hugely destructive if it is used simply to perpetuate and reinforce notions of blame and victimhood. Let us individually, and together, be bold and make the leap towards ending the myth of victimhood.   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Freedom & the Warrior's Path

What does freedom mean to you? Is it a life devoted to leisure - a kind of grand retirement?   
  
Perhaps it means not having to do a specific thing - looking after your parents/children, or working in a particular job, or perhaps not even having to work at all, so that you can concentrate on "living"?   
  
This is the category into which most people fall, for, when asked, most of us would say that we could be really free "if only we did not have to ............", or "if only we had ...........".   
  
However, all of these wishes and little escapisms have little to do with real freedom. This is because they leave us "hooked" to a specific outcome, and so we remain "trapped" until that outcome comes about.   
  
Freedom for those wishing to follow the Warrior's Path, is somewhat different, and is described in a series of books by Théun Mares, a Toltec author and teacher.   
  
The warrior knows that life is unpredictable, and therefore the outcome we desire may never materialise, leaving us sad and disillusioned. How many people limp along in their jobs, because they only have 5, 10, 15 years to go before their retirement, consoling themselves that they will then be able to do what they've always wanted? Yet, even if our dream does come to fruition we soon discover that the freedom we have sought still eludes us - as most millionaires will readily testify. Even with a million dollars in the bank, and even after retirement, we find that we still have the same hang-ups, the same fears, the same relationship problems, the same arguments with our families, and the same deep sense of regret that we could have lived life to the full, instead of having frittered it away.   
The warrior understands so well that, because of the unpredictability of life, not only may future hopes never materialise, but also that he may die at any time. We all like to believe that we are going to be alive, next week, next year, or in 5 years' time, but not so the warrior. He or she knows that we have no guarantees upon life, and that death can therefore tap us on the shoulder at any moment. The warrior cultivates a healthy awareness of the presence of death, and uses this to live always on the edge, where life is ever nascent, ever new.   
  
Yet, through our social conditioning we have been taught to "live for tomorrow", and so most people spend their lives in a kind of limbo, waiting to win the "lottery of life" that is going to transform their lives from a mediocre existence into an exciting adventure.   
  
For the warrior, freedom is not escaping, or waiting for life to give you a better break, but is instead an attitude of mind. This attitude of mind will enable you to rise above the belief that you are a victim, and will imbue in you the knowledge and certainty that you can take charge of your life's circumstances.   
  
However, because such an attitude of mind is so contrary to all of our social conditioning, its cultivation is not only a long journey, but also a journey that is more akin to a constant battle than a stroll through a meadow.   
  
In this regard, realise that people normally look upon their birth as having been beyond their control. Therefore they also think about their lives as being the product of their environment, social status, culture, religion, education, etc. In other words, people see themselves as victims of their circumstances.   
  
A warrior is never a victim. By fighting for freedom from the debilitating effects of social conditioning warriors take full responsibility for their birth, their life and their death.   
  
It is the bane of our human condition to believe that the problems in our lives stop us from realising our full potential. The warrior knows that whatever his or her life's circumstances, or whatever "problems" have arisen, they have not come about as a punishment, but as an opportunity for growth. Each and every one is a challenge to enable us to claim our power. We are never given something that we cannot handle, and thus the warrior knows that the greater the challenge the greater the gifts of power will be at the end of the day.   
  
How else is the warrior expected in a practical way to go about achieving freedom? The first three books by Toltec nagal, Théun Mares lay the foundations for both the concepts, as well as the practical teachings on this. These are some of the basic tools and techniques that are taught to every apprentice on the Path of Freedom. Although they may initially seem simple, once they are understood and put into practice, they are not only very powerful, but they also yield to greater and greater depths of complexity and understanding.   
  
· Through the process of recapitulation we can learn to come to terms with our past and see our life for what it really is. Apart from the vital importance of gleaning every gift of power from all of our life experiences, unless we can also learn to see the folly in our behaviour patterns, we will simply continue to re-enact our folly, instead of truly living.   
  
· Words are powerful tools for a warrior, for they literally shape our world. We therefore learn how a warrior approaches the correct use of words.   
  
· We are all creatures of habit. Therefore, it is often not enough simply to achieve clarity on a particular issue. Only through the technique of not-doing can we break those destructive behaviour patterns which are ingrained, long-standing, and which always manifest in myriads of different, and obscure guises.   
  
· A hunter is a master of stalking his prey. Our biggest prey is our self-destructive behaviour, and the warrior learns first and foremost to stalk his behaviour. However, because it is easier to see the faults in other people we start by learning to stalk the behaviour of other people.   
  
· For the warrior, the whole world is nothing more than a mirror of potential behaviour that exists within us, whether this is past, present or future behaviour. Therefore, by using the concept of mirrors we first learn to recognise and then we change in ourselves the damaging behaviour we see reflected, for the truth is that we can never change other people - only ourselves. Naturally, with a correct application of this technique, the need to judge others also quickly falls away.   
  
Freedom means many things, but perhaps the essence of freedom is the knowledge that whatever happens to us, we have a choice. Knowing that we have the ability to choose how to respond in any situation is the heart of freedom. Any other way is to leave us dangling like a puppet on the strings that have been set up for us by our parents, friends and society.   
  
And the problem with dangling like a puppet or victim is that we not only debilitate ourselves, but also those around us, for at the end of the day, life is thoroughly interrelated, interdependent and interconnected.   
  
Therefore the star upon which warriors fix their gaze, as they battle for freedom, carries the legend: "If you uplift yourself you automatically uplift all those around you, and if you shoot yourself in the foot, you automatically let all those other people down too".   
  
Implicit in this motto is another facet of freedom, namely, that we cannot force other people to change - we can only change ourselves. But through constantly working to uplift ourselves we can, and do, work miracles in the world around us.   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Playing the Nice Guy

If one looks beyond the face value of the violence and chaos that is occurring all over the world today, it becomes clear to see that the real motivating force is man's inherent, albeit mostly unconscious, drive towards seeking harmony through conflict. Inside each and every one of us is the instinct for survival, and therefore also the intuitive recognition of the need to fight for that survival, irrespective of whether it is physical survival, economic survival, emotional survival, survival of one's culture, religion, language, or quite simply survival of the self in the broadest possible meaning of the term "self".   
  
But in a world that has become riddled with crime and violence, injustice and anarchy, the word "fight" has become a dirty word. Consequently we frown heavily upon those who express the desire to fight, we protest loudly when any one person steps out of line relative to what is the accepted norm, we condition each other in the so-called civilised ways of democracy and, worse still, we condition our children into becoming meek and mild, unable and indeed, unwilling to fight. Then we wonder why our children cannot fight peer pressure when it comes to alcohol and drugs, and we wonder why, once they have become adult, they turn out to be so weak in fighting for their rights. Therefore the question facing all of us, is not whether or not it is good to fight, but that if we have to fight, how best can we fight to our advantage so that the positive emerges, rather than chaos, anarchy, rebellion and ultimately also destruction?   
  
If we are going to achieve peace in our country, rid society of crime, build a stable economy, and carve out a type of future which all of us can look forward to, then it is time that we start to acknowledge that the only way in which to achieve our goals is for individuals like you and me to stand together, not only in taking joint responsibility for our circumstances, our challenges and our lives, but also to fight for what we believe in. No-one can fight for us, because no-one can live our lives for us. Not the police. Not the government. Not the church. Not the schools. Not our neighbourhood watch or the security companies. We all have our own lives to live, our own challenges to face, and our own responsibility in fighting to create the type of world and society in which we would like to live. And most important of all, each and every one of us has our own individual responsibility to give our children the correct guidance in helping us to build the country and the future of our dreams. Why? Because our children are the future, and therefore they too need to learn to fight - to fight against peer pressure, to fight against the debilitating restraints of social conditioning and, above all, to fight for self-respect in learning to think for themselves, rather than just becoming the victims of circumstance and society.   
A very sad reflection of where we are failing as a society comes from the result of a three year study commissioned by the Mental Health Foundation in England. The report concludes that pressures on children to succeed and mollycoddling by parents who fear for their kids' safety are turning out a young generation that is emotionally illiterate and at an increased risk of mental breakdown. One in five from the age group four to twenty suffer from problems, ranging from bed-wetting to anorexia, which significantly disrupt their lives. The problem is that the pressures on children to achieve are enormous, but too little is done to help them to build the resilience they need to cope when things go wrong.   
  
Up until now the needs of children everywhere have been determined largely by the demands made upon them by adult society. In this respect it has for a long time been assumed that the needs of children are the same as those of their parents and teachers, and although people, generally speaking, can sense that children must by the force of evolution develop needs different from those of their parents, yet in practice very little has been done to guide children towards discovering for themselves what are their own particular needs within an evolving world.   
  
Oliver L. Reiser, lecturer at the University of Pitsburgh points out that:"The world today suffers from a cultural provincialism based on the dualism of an outward-looking, objective attitude of the Western world, and an inwardness or subjectivity of Oriental societies. For the future, the remedy for the social schisms and psychological fissions that have handicapped and obstructed modern efforts to overcome the divisions of humanity, lies in a restoration of unity of principles upon which an integration of human values and achievements can be attempted. The educational implications of this development are clear. The time to resynthesize the objective and subjective, the extrovert and introvert, and to achieve a great orchestration of culture is now."   
  
In this respect our greatest challenge is how best to resynthesize the objective and subjective, the western and the eastern, and ultimately male and female, conflict and harmony. Culture, in its broadest possible implications, must be restored to its rightful place within education, for buried deep within its abstract depths are the roots of all education. Culture is not the product of education; rather does the evolution of culture lead man into new avenues of thought, and hence of education.   
  
In speaking about culture we should bear in mind that man is essentially a religious creature, and that at the basis of all culture lies man's deepest questions concerning life. Who are we? Why are we here? What is the purpose of our lives and our deaths? How should we understand our place in the world, in time, in space? And what indeed, is the purpose of education, of going to school, of learning?   
  
Yet sadly, how many of us are knowledgeable about even our own culture, let alone that of another? How many of us can even accurately define the meaning of the word "culture". We may look upon our modern society as being highly civilised, but ironically, it is also very uncultured. To lack a knowledge of the meaning and the purpose of culture is to be uneducated, even though we may be highly schooled in several academic disciplines. To be schooled but not educated is to be a fragmented human being. Culture addresses the questions pertaining to life. Schooling in those questions enables us to live life. But to be schooled only in academic pursuits that are not seen within the context of life as a whole is to be uneducated in the true sense of the word. Uneducated people cannot live life. Uneducated people can at best exist within the confines of their academic abilities and achievements.   
  
Our problem today is indeed a world problem, but nowhere else in the world has any one country been blessed with such an abundance of potential as has South Africa. Not only does the South African population represent a most marvellous mixture of different peoples, different races, languages, skills and culture, but also the fundamental polarity of East and West. We too should be fully aware of our potential, our opportunity and our challenge. South Africa is one of the youngest countries in the world and has in the immediate past often been accused of attempted trickery, and quite rightfully so. Like all young people, South Africa is badly in need of education, something which cannot be accomplished by concentrating only upon academic schooling. Why? Simply because, as Joseph Henderson observes, "the trickster is thoroughly amoral. He submits to no discipline and is guided wholly by his experiential attitude towards life. Yet it is out of this trickster figure that the Hero-Saviour ultimately evolves. The trickster impulse provides the strongest resistance to initiation and is one of the hardest problems education has to solve because it seems a kind of divinely sanctioned lawlessness that promises to become heroic."   
  
Does that sound familiar? If it doesn't, then it should. This last phrase sums up so very accurately where our children are at today, where society is at today, where we in South Africa are at today. This is a lawlessness which we can try to suppress, or eradicate altogether. But if we do we will be killing off something in us that is vitally important to our future and to our well-being. We will be killing off our potential to develop the Hero-Saviour. The alternative course would be for us to educate ourselves in what it means to be human beings, and thereby to come into contact with both the meaning and the purpose of the Hero-Saviour. In this way we may claim our deep inner drive towards fighting off inertia, in order that the evolution of awareness may proceed unencumbered. It is not rebellion that is bad. What is bad is that we have never taught either our children or ourselves to rebel with discrimination. It is not fighting that is bad. What is bad is that neither we nor or children know what it is we should be fighting for. As a result, rebellion turns into anarchy, and fighting becomes destructive, and the Hero-Saviour, instead of being a hero and a saviour, becomes instead a manic dictator that suppresses man's instinctual urge towards creativity and innovation. Instead of the Hero-Saviour in us guiding us towards harmony through conflict, we debilitate ourselves into achieving only chaos and destruction through an ignorance which breeds only crime and violence.   
  
If we wish to uplift ourselves and our children to the status of the Hero-Saviour, then we must come to the acknowledgement that academic schooling without a proper education is not even nearly enough. In this respect the major disadvantages of mere academic schooling lie in the fact that, firstly, the teaching of social interaction is neglected almost entirely, with the result that the child is seldom, if ever, taught and evaluated as an entire person. Consequently, although he or she may excel in academic work, the fact remains that the child is not equipped to handle life, to handle the many pressures of society. Why should this be? Because the physical and emotional training of the child has been omitted, whilst the only mental training received is centred almost entirely around academic achievement. Other areas of the mind, such as creative imagination and thought, learning to translate feeling into conscious thought, are relegated to the back row, if not frowned upon.   
  
Yet it is only through this type of training that the child develops the ability to formulate purposeful questions, and thereby acquires the necessary ability to evaluate self, and to assess the personal. Yet, it is not the responsibility of only the schools to educate our children. All of us are jointly responsible by virtue of the fact that we all partake in the one life, we all participate in the one society, and therefore we all interact with each other to create those emotional responses and mental impulses we should be educated in handling constructively. True learning, true education takes place all the time, everywhere. Life doesn't happen only at school. Life happens all the time. We need academic schooling in order to establish a career, but life is infinitely more than merely holding down a job.   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# The crisis of Manhood

There is an immense, and growing, problem surrounding males today. More and more people are asking "what has happened to turn men into powerless asexual softies who are at the mercy of everyone and everything?" The disturbing picture that is emerging is one in which, having lost their confidence to express their maleness, in case it is frowned upon as being anti-social, men everywhere are becoming more and more withdrawn and secretly aggressive in a vain attempt to suppress the urge to violence, whilst their inner frustration continues to mount. In effect, we are sitting on a time bomb.   
  
As a result of having had it impressed upon them that no-one has the right to take the law into his own hands, men now stand back powerlessly to watch as crime, violence and injustice thrive and escalate. As a result of having had impressed upon them that as parents they do not know what is best for their children, fathers now watch helplessly as school psychologists prescribe expensive guidance and medical drugs for their children. As a result of having had it impressed upon them that men must be sensitive, considerate, caring and gentle, men feel that they have no option other than to emasculate themselves.   
  
What has happened? The answer is simple. Men, in trying to correct the mistakes of the past, have handed their power over to the Big Brothers of society who are meant to be the experts in any particular field. Thus men are no longer taking joint responsibility as the protectors of the family or of the community. In other words, no longer do men take the lead in their families, for to do so would make them guilty of practising sexual inequality; no longer do men discipline their children, for to do so would make them guilty of child abuse; no longer do men protect their families, for to do so would mean transgressing laws that protect the rights of criminals. In short, no longer do men stand proud in their masculinity, for if they do, they are accused of being insensitive, inconsiderate, uncaring and anti-social. To put this in a nutshell, men have tried so hard to become "good males", that they have in effect traded their masculinity for the mentality and the behaviour of the village idiot or of the village wimp. The result of this debilitating situation is a society that has become so unisexual in its pursuit of equality between the sexes that it has become uni-sick.   
What can be done about this situation? Once again the answer is simple. Men need to make a stand by claiming back their masculinity. However, they need to do this not with a chip on the shoulder, but with the necessary insight in how to rectify the mistakes of the past, and how to guide themselves, their families and their communities toward those values that uphold true justice and equality. This does not mean being a macho man in a superficial sense, but it does imply living your full masculine potential, which includes caring and providing for your family and also being their protector. Reclaiming ones responsibility as a man also requires one to be fully creative in one's life - creative in one's relationships, in one's work and in one's thinking.   
  
In this respect it really would spell disaster if men, lacking the necessary insight into both the needs of humanity and the role and purpose of the true male, were to try to plunge the world back into outdated practices that had their basis in ignorance and prejudice. Instead, the focus today should be on the value and the role of each and every individual, as well as on the importance of the individual's actions relative to the well-being of the greater whole, irrespective of whether that greater whole is the family unit, the community or the country.   
  
Toltec author and teacher Théun Mares is looking for men who are not embarrassed by their masculinity and who would like to explore more fully what it means to be male.   
  
If you are tired of having other people's pet theories and points of view forced upon you, then you will greatly enjoy Théun's simple, honest and highly practical approach in guiding people towards the necessary clarity, so that they can find their own answers based upon their experience of life. In this way, and in conformity with the requirements of freedom, each individual comes alone to the realisation that he or she is special in having a unique purpose and role in life. Knowing from experience that merely to hand out rote answers randomly leads to a mediocre state of mind, Theun instead guides individuals into realising that they already have all the knowledge they need to handle a problem at any particular point in time.   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Using Emotion - Melancholy

This week started with a dose of heavy melancholy - it just sat on top of me, and I wasn't sure what to do about it.   
  
Knowing that for a warrior, melancholy is the expression of the desire for change I wondered what on earth I had to change, and how?   
  
Where did my feelings of melancholy originate? Looking back to the weekend I found it was quite easy to trace their source. On Sunday I had bumped into someone whom I had only recently been courting, and her little son. Despite the initial high expectations, things hadn't worked out, and I hadn't seen her for a while. When we ran into each other, a lot of old feelings came up. I also had this sense of awkwardness and of not knowing what to say. We chatted for a short while and I played with her little boy, recalling how fond I had become of him.   
  
After I left, the sense of melancholy just began to grow, so that on Monday I was filled with a huge sense of heaviness and despondency. Naturally, my mind started to turn to all those "what if" questions - what if I had made a mistake? What if she were my "ideal partner"? What if I'd blown this great opportunity of a lifetime? I could feel my personal power trickling away as I began to doubt my own judgement.   
  
Knowing that backtracking and indecision were not the way, I decided to focus on the melancholy again, and to see what further clarity I could obtain, rather than trying to wish that things had turned out differently. From bitter personal experience I know that going back always leads to compromises and sourness, and a general feeling of having let oneself, as well as the other person, down.   
  
By Tuesday I gained further clarity and I could see that the main source of my melancholy was in fact the little boy. Having met his mother on a workshop about children and our childhood, I had been taken and given a very practical introduction to the world of little people. Since I have little daily contact with children, Ryan had opened my heart to this world. That was his gift to me.   
Looking further into the melancholy I also realised that the change it signified had already taken place within me. Just like when anger surfaces, signifying the desire to fight, you know that you are already in a battle, and there is no need to look for one, so, with melancholy, the change is already there, all you need to do is to live up to that change. And for me living up to it means living with that extra openness of heart that was Ryan's gift.   
  
Where does this leave the mother? The courting ended rather abruptly after an argument, and so it was an unsatisfactory ending, if any ending can be described as "satisfactory".   
  
My normal way would have been to go back and try to make it better - to achieve what is fashionably referred to as a "completion". Yet, Toltecs say that life is a feeling, and not an intellectual exercise. What most people regard as a completion is an attempt to package and tie a ribbon around life in a very intellectual way, and this simply cannot be done. The hurt and disappointment can only be resolved by oneself, and in the context of the whole of those other hurts and disappointments that we bring into our lives.   
  
For me, the overriding feeling was that I had nothing really to say. Of course, I also experience a great sense of disappointment and loss, but no-one else can make these better, and talking about it is not going to resolve it either. It is only by seeing the pattern in my life, and seizing the gift in this particular episode that I can come to a resolution.   
  
How often do we not take some kind of action to make things better, but with a heap of rather doubtful motives at the back of our minds? It's hardly surprising then that our "good" intentions backfire on us, and we end up in a mess. I often find that the desire to make things better is really a disguise for seeking approval, and it comes about as a result of my feeling insecure. The remedy for this is the same as for when one has been unimpeccable. Here, feeling guilty or saying sorry is not going to help one jot. Instead, the warrior's way is to use the feelings that come up as a result of unimpeccable behaviour to ensure that you never again behave in that way.   
  
However, I now started to become painfully aware of the fact that clarity is a two-edged sword. For example, to understand why you may be in "flop" mode does nothing to get you out of it. In fact, the extra clarity can easily make you feel much worse about yourself. Its not too difficult to make excuses and pass over events when you are living your life in an unquestioning fog. But with the addition of clarity and through the desire to be "honest" and ruthless about oneself, it is very easy to tip the scales into a total indulgence in feelings of worthlessness and to moan "why can't I get it right?", and in many other ways to beat oneself up.   
  
Of course, because life is interrelated, the fact that I was having challenges in one area of my life meant that I was also being challenged in other areas too - so the opportunities to make myself feel bad were enormous! Especially in the 11th month of this year of completion, when all sorts of habits are coming up for re-evaluation.   
  
In handling this challenge that my clarity brought me, I found that I needed to make three decisions, from the bottom of my heart.   
  
The first was to decide "enough - no more. I am not going to allow feeling bad about myself to dominate my life."   
  
The second was to decide to believe in myself - to trust my own knowledge and feelings. The third was to give myself honest and real credit for the changes that I had made in my life.   
  
It is so easy just to look ahead and to see how far we have to go, but it is only through looking back, to see how far we've already come, that we can own our changes, and consolidate them, before we take the next step.   
  
These three decisions are an act of will, and they need to be taken from the bottom of your heart. You have to mean them with all your heart, for you will get challenged in the strength of your decisions, until you know beyond any doubt that you do believe in them.   
  
I have found that all three decisions are equally important, but it is the constant giving of credit to oneself that is the most difficult. Our social conditioning teaches us to be hyper-critical and dismissive of our own efforts. Yet, if we look around, we can quite easily see how much we praise and give recognition, sincerely and honestly, to the deserving efforts of our children If we can give credit to our children, surely we can also learn to give honest and sincere credit, without flattery or conceit, to ourselves?   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Interview with Elizabeth Schnugh

Elizabeth Schnugh is director and founder of the Institute for the Study of Man. Her ten-year experience as Financial Director of a multinational company convinced her that a lot of what we are doing today is no longer working. Elizabeth established the Institute for the Study of Man which provides practical courses for men and women based on the Toltec approach to life.   
  
Here she was interviewed in Cape Town on 12 July 1998 for a forthcoming publication.   
  
Charles: Elizabeth, you have been running courses for some time now. How long exactly?   
  
Elizabeth: From the beginning of 1991.   
  
Charles: During this period you became an apprentice of Théun's and you have worked closely with him to incorporate the Toltec principles into your courses. Why was that?   
  
Elizabeth: Once I started to work with him I realised that the 2 courses that I was already teaching, in some ways did not uphold freedom. In fact, there was an element of dependancy in them, and then at the end of the second course we just left people to their own devices; there wasn't actually anything to follow on with and to take them further. As I sat down with Théun and read through them from beginning to end everything fell into place. Every single time I grow within myself I find more elements within those 2 courses that I change. But the other courses that we started from scratch in the Toltec tradition have also been growing as I've been growing but I certainly haven't had to change any of the basic concepts or techniques at all.   
  
Charles: What drew you specifically to the Toltec Teachings and to Théun?   
  
Elizabeth: I arrived on his doorstep. He asked me what I was doing there. I said I had absolutely no idea but I had a total feeling of inevitability. Then he started to ask me what I wanted to do with my life. At that particular point in time I had just left the corporate environment and intended to take a year off and do all those things I hadn't done while I was working. He just grinned at me and started to tell me all about what it was that he taught. One light went on after another for me and 2 weeks later I started to teach the little bit that I had from him. He gave me a draft copy of his first book and I read through that and I knew that this was what I wanted to do, so, far from retiring as I had planned, I just leapt straight in.   
  
Charles: From then and over this period since then it seems that you've handled courses on average every 2 weeks in addition to on-going counselling work. What kind of insight has this given you into the problems we are facing today?   
  
Elizabeth: The main issues that were beginning to come through are that relationships, particularly marriages, and romantic relationships in this country are falling apart at a very rapid rate. The divorce courts just churn out the divorces like a sausage machine, and this isn't only people who have been married for a few months or few years, in some cases it's 15, 20, 25 years, so there were a lot of relationship issues coming up between males and females from a romantic point of view. A common thread running through all of them is that the women all tended to be mothering the males in their lives and the males are all resenting this in varying degrees. For some of them it suits them because they don't have to grow up and take responsibility. But for those who are resenting it, they realise that they are totally conditioned to mother but haven't known what to do about it. Coupled with that was the intense competition between males and females. So it wouldn't only be in a work environment that competition would actually happen, it would be in a romantic relationship too and, of course, that spells death to any sort of relationship - that competition where you are not working together.   
  
Charles: And in general, how are people handling their problems, or challenges as you would call them?   
  
Elizabeth: A lot of them are scurrying around going to all sorts of alternative healers, going to all sorts of therapists, going to psychologists, to psychiatrists. It seems to be the age where people are now more likely to go seeking help than ever before, because if you went looking for help before you had a stigma. They go to psychologists and they learn how to communicate with the psychologist once or twice a week but they are not learning how to communicate with the people back at home. Some of them are put onto drugs like Prozac and that sort of thing which just deadens any emotional response, so they are precluding themselves from working with those emotions and finding out why they are coming up in the first place. So it's just the symptom that gets treated; it's not the cause. Or they'll go to sex clinics, for example, where there's a sexual or physical breakdown in the marriage, or in the relationship, and once again only treating the symptom. So what I'm saying is what is out there and where people have been going to is not working. They are not getting their answers.   
  
Charles: And leading on from that, based on your experience what is it that most people who come to you actually need in their lives?   
  
Elizabeth: The very bottom line for every single person is to believe that they do have the answers for themselves, that they don't need somebody else to tell them what to do, and how to do it and how to live their lives. People's self-image generally is very low. For them to even start to believe that they can sort out their own problems without having to run to all sorts of people and find a crutch is, I think, the basis of everything. For me, the biggest thing is the lack of self-respect in people and if that's where one starts to work, just on building up your own self-respect, learning to be impeccable for yourself, not for anybody else, to stop seeking the approval of everybody else around you, just at that very basic level; once people start working with that, then they can start to work on their relationships. The other big thing, of course, is that nobody has ever been taught how to use the people around them to see their own behaviour, so they'll see their own behaviour reflected in somebody else, take it out on that person, but never actually take it back to self and say why is this actually happening to me? So, the blame game is big, it's very big, "it's everybody else's fault and it's not got too much to do with me" - which I think comes back to low self-image.   
  
Charles: Thank you. In a nutshell what do the true Toltec Teachings mean to you?   
  
Elizabeth: The ability to dismantle our social conditioning. To me it's the only path I have found that gives me the ability to free myself of that and get on with what it was I was supposed to do when I arrived here in the first place.   
  
Charles: And in your experience of him has Théun himself applied the principles of freedom and upliftment in his life and towards you?   
  
Elizabeth: Théun has never ever, and I repeat, never, ever, attempted to dictate to me in any way whatsoever as to what I must do in my life. In fact, the way he puts it across, I write the script and all he does is ensure that I carry it out impeccably, so he gives me that complete and utter freedom and he will insist that that is the only way to go, so sometimes I don't get guidance from him because he has indicated that I need to make my own decisions.   
  
Charles: And where do you see yourself going from here?   
  
Elizabeth: Théun has a saying that it's not the sky that's the limit, it's our own belief in self that's the limit, so I think to me that's the bottom line. My belief in myself will be the limit, not anything else. I certainly see that part of Théun's purpose is to spread the Toltec Teachings and that quite evidently is also my purpose because until I met him I had not found anything I could put my heart into. So I think I am very much linked to whatever he does and where he goes, but in the meantime I will do whatever I can in my own environment to spread them - to spread the Toltec Teachings.   
  
For further information and for details of courses see:   
THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF MAN   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# Carlos Castenda - A Toltec Perspective

The late Carlos Castaneda was a controversial figure, inspiring many people throughout the world with his books, but also attracting severe criticism, amidst claims that he was a fraud, and that the experiences he purported to describe in his books were an utter fabrication.   
  
In a series of ten books Dr Castaneda, a professor of anthropology at UCLA, described in detail the experiences he claimed to have undergone during his 12 year apprenticeship to a great teacher - someone he called Don Juan Matus.   
  
The books themselves are an interesting mixture of part anthropological commentary, part spiritual teachings, and part autobiographical anecdotes.   
  
A number of anthropologists have dissected his books from a professional point of view over the years, and have drawn their own conclusions. This aspect is of no real interest save to a very small audience.   
  
Most of the world's attention, though, has been focused upon the anecdotal autobiographical side. With its strong emphasis on mystical experiences, the ingestion of hallucinogenic substances, extraordinary journeys into the desert and amazing visits into weird and frightening worlds, it is not surprising that this aspect of his books should have received so much attention - especially as these seemed to reflect the prevalent mood in the 60s and 70s of fantasy and escapism.   
  
For a significant number of people and the majority of the media, in fact, fantasy and escapism were as far as Carlos Castaneda went. For these people, what he described in his books was so far removed from everyday life and thought that, even though they may have found the books inspirational, and filled with beauty, and perhaps hinting at a meaning they sensed was profound, they still could not come to regard the books as containing a valid and practical spiritual teaching.   
  
Yet, strangely enough, the relaying of an ancient, universal spiritual teaching was indeed the primary purpose behind all these books. His teacher, Don Juan, was a powerful and impeccable teacher of an ancient tradition known as the Toltec tradition, or the Warrior's Path. Carlos Castaneda was specifically allowed access to the training provided in that tradition by Don Juan and others, so that he could convey what he was taught to the world, through his interest in anthropology, in his books.   
  
This he did, but he ended up hiding most of the true teachings amidst his anecdotal experiences and his own interpretations of them. Yet, even though it is these that have attracted the public's attention, the anecdotal experiences are by far the least important parts of the books and should be viewed with circumspection, since they obscure and distort the real teachings, and are responsible for the widespread impression that these are all about sorcery.   
  
Carlos Castaneda's own teacher, Don Juan, constantly reminded his student that sorcery was a dead-end street, and that it was the aim of all true warriors to walk the Path of Freedom. However, in spite of this warning, repeated often in his books, the impression conjured up by the name Carlos Castaneda always has connotations of drug-induced mysticism.   
  
Whilst it is a pity that this reputation should have arisen, Carlos Castaneda is not entirely without blame for this state of affairs. His studied secretiveness, the bizarre company that he did choose to keep and his later departure from the true teachings given to him by Don Juan, all contributed to a growing picture of a man who had veered dangerously away from the impeccability of his mentor, and who instead was straying onto the pathways of the Old Seers, with their pursuit of sorcery for questionable ends.   
  
Thus his final book, Magical Passes, received critical reviews, as it went further than his previous books in straying from the original teachings, and created more doubts in his readers' minds. Magical Blend Magazine, in a review of this book summed up a lot of people's views when they stated, "Carlos Castaneda's radical shift from a reclusive sorcerer to a seminar leader and gym teacher is a difficult leap of faith for me."   
  
Herein lies the rub, for if we remember that it was Carlos Castaneda's role simply to record and to pass on what he was taught, and if we also remember that his teacher, Don Juan, did not present himself to the world for authentication, we can get some idea as to how things got out of control and became distorted.   
  
The majority of humanity needs to have a focus, a recognisable identity, in order to validate and relate to a message. In the absence of a primary focus it is natural for a gullible and unknowing public to raise the messenger to a higher level of importance than the message itself. If one adds to this the media's constant appetite for the bizarre, as well as Carlos' strong sense of self-importance and his inability to escape the trap that his excessive rationality imposed, the results become all too clear.   
  
However, in spite of his later aberrations, there is no doubt that the service rendered by Dr Castaneda in writing his books was enormous, for he was responsible for bringing to the world a body of teachings which, although mostly hidden, and perhaps because they were hidden, are awesome in their scope and pristine in their purity.   
  
So, what of these hidden teachings?   
  
Hidden amongst the mystical anecdotes and the interpretations lies an ancient system of viewing, and relating to, the world. This system has been handed down orally, not just in Central America, but all over the world, and for aeons. Even though people today might refer to these teachings as a universal spiritual teaching, Toltecs themselves would not use the term "spiritual teaching" - since for them the term makes no sense, as there is no difference between life and spirit. Therefore they describe their way as a "Path of Knowledge".   
  
The word 'Toltec' itself is an ancient word meaning "a man or woman of knowledge", and since its origins predate the Central American civilisation of that name, it has no direct connection with that dynasty, and does not derive from it.   
  
From a Toltec perspective "knowledge" means experiential knowledge - that is, something one has oneself learned through one's own practical experience. This practical experience arises out of one's own life. Thus it can be said that the Toltec teachings are designed to enable one to handle life skilfully, so as to be able to gain the maximum amount of joy and knowledge out of every life situation.   
  
This is hardly the stuff of fantasy and escapism, but this misconception is, sadly, the result of too many people who do not know any better, as well as some who should know better, focusing on the anecdotal experiences at the expense of the true teachings.   
  
How can one view Dr. Castaneda's life from a Toltec perspective?   
  
Even though he was constantly chided for his indulgence, his self-importance and his excessive rationality, it was nevertheless precisely these characteristics that ensured that Dr. Castaneda meticulously recorded and passed on in his initial books what he had been taught. In this respect Carlos Castaneda can be said to have been successful.   
  
However, there comes a time in the life of every warrior when his shortcomings need to be transmuted. Even though a warrior may have a specific "public" task to perform, this does not relieve him from the responsibility of attending to the unfoldment of his "individual" fate, through putting the teachings into practice as impeccably as possible.   
  
Yet, even in this respect too there is an enormous gift that Carlos Castaneda succeeded in giving us, and this is the example that to have the most amazing teacher in the world is no guarantee that you will ever end up as an impeccable warrior. You may display the most incredible potential, but what matters at the end of the day is how impeccably and diligently you struggle along the Path. Nowadays, there is a lot that someone with sincerity and tenacity can achieve, even without a teacher. Thus it has always been said that: "The status of warrior is not the end result of having undergone a particular training programme, but is rather a silent acknowledgement of self which comes from knowing that one has become impeccable in travelling the Warrior's Path. To be a warrior is not a goal in itself, but is instead an eternal quest for knowledge and freedom stretching into infinity".   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.

# South Africa - the Rainbow Nation

Stretching 2000 kilometers from the mighty Limpopo River south to the rugged wind-tormented Cape Agulhas, and 1500 kilometers from the desolate Atlantic seaboard to the lush sub-tropical vegetation of the warm Indian Ocean, South Africa is not only a large country, but also one of immense variety. The landscape is as varied as is the vegetation, the animals, the people, the cultures, the history, and above all, the hope born of its rich and abundant folklore, legends and prophecies - all as varied, but also as interconnected, as everything else in the country.   
  
Ever since the early days of the Stone Age, South Africa has had a long and tragic history of being a land of turbulence and strife, the inevitable result of man's insistence upon discrimination against, but yet it has also always been a land inspiring the hope which comes from knowing that somehow, at some time, this part of the world must and will come into its own within the unfoldment of its true destiny.   
  
That hope started to materialise in May 1994 when the peoples of South Africa set a new trend by bringing into force a constitution that not only acknowledges the importance of the individual to the well-being of the greater whole, but which also acknowledges the fact that within diversity there is both strength and beauty.   
  
On the 13th June 1995, thirteen months later, those who had the eyes to see saw the fulfilment of an ancient and all-but-forgotten Toltec prophecy - a prophecy concerning what is known as the Cry of the Eagle. Put in a nutshell, the Cry of the Eagle concerns man's coming of age, a time when individuals the world over can begin to make their mark upon the world in a most meaningful way by claiming their power and their freedom - a time of unprecedented change, opportunity and hope for each and every person, irrespective of race, religion, or social standing. The fact that this ancient prophecy of the Toltecs should have come to fulfilment thirteen months after the peoples of South Africa chose for themselves the Path of Freedom, is indicative of the enormous power that can be unleashed when enough individuals drop their sense of separativeness to stand together in the spirit of true democracy, saying: "Enough is enough. We want peace. We want prosperity. And we want self respect born of the power and the freedom to take charge of our own lives, of our future, and of the future of our children."   
  
In South Africa the great change has come, as it indeed has come also in other parts of the world; the most notable changes being the demolition of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain changes, which many look upon as being truly miraculous, and as the materialisation of the impossible. Yet, although these mighty changes are already altering the course of planetary history, the process of transmutation, as always, takes its time, and its toll. Slowly, slowly, mostly unnoticed by men and women who are still either totally debilitated by their sense of apathy, or alternatively still refusing to acknowledge that irrevocable change is the inevitable outcome of history, the great wheel of evolution is grinding out a new pattern within the web of destiny - a pattern which inspires as much insecurity as it does hope and excitement - a pattern which has been predicted since time immemorial, and carefully recorded in several of the world's great prophecies.   
  
But this is not only a time of prophecy coming to fulfilment. It is also the time of an ancient adolescent, humanity, finally coming of age. In this respect, it is also a time of celebrating and, as with all celebrations, it is time to send out the invitations to all who may give meaning and warmth to this truly momentous event in the history of our planet.   
  
However, as is always the case with history, rarely is history-in-the-making recognised for what it really is, and this is especially true of the delinquent orphan of the world, South Africa. Very few are those scholars who are recognising South Africa to be the microcosm of the macrocosm, in that it is merely reflecting for the rest of an indignant world collective humanity's own hidden will, its secret aggression, its covert racial discrimination, and its gross injustices inflicted upon all of life by man-made laws. Yet in having mirrored for the rest of humanity its own inhumaneness South Africa has also had to address its own shortcomings and, as a result, South Africans, far from being able to afford the luxury of indulging in self-pity, guilt or shame, have been forced to stand firm in their belief that each and every person does have value in fulfilling an individual purpose which is important to the well-being of the greater whole of their people and their country. In this respect South Africa has set an example for the rest of the world and, in many ways, taken the lead in the world in terms of becoming a fully responsible adult.   
  
This then, is also the time of South Africa, and therefore also of telling the story of South Africa - a story which is really very simple, but also very touching and very profound. It is a story about the wishes and the dreams of average men and women - simple wishes and common dreams like one would expect from average people. Yet it is these very wishes and dreams that have become the greatest driving force in South Africa, that have made the impossible become possible, and "fantasy" become reality. It is an accomplishment which is rapidly becoming prophetic for the rest of the world.   
  
One of the narrators of the story of South Africa, which, in the final analysis, is but the story of one humanity, is a man destined to impart to humanity its Toltec legacy; a South African by the name of Théun Mares, nagal of the ancient Toltec tradition, and the author of both books and courses revealing the wisdom of the Toltec teachings. As part of his assignment to reveal to the world the hitherto secret oral teachings of the Toltec tradition Theun is in the process of reviving the ancient pagan festivals that are today either completely forgotten, or else mostly distorted and filled with ritual and superstition.   
  
Although the work of Théun is profound, it also has about it that same touching simplicity which is so very characteristic of his beloved country and its people, and it is in acknowledgement of that spirit of childlike simplicity and openness that Théun believes South Africa to be the perfect venue for these age-old festivals. South Africa, aptly named The Rainbow Nation - a country of eternal hope, a country of hope materialising.   
  
by Charles Mitchley  
Scholar to Theun Mares.