

Unit 1

The Integral Dimension of Personal Life. The Individual and Citizenship

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1.1.- Let's Work:

- 1.The complexity of the human being
- 2.The importance of taking into account the different dimensions of human life in order to avoid partial approaches
- 3.That we are the result of the relationship between genetic and cultural inheritance
- 4.That we are defined by our origins, but also by our experiences (what we do, what we decide)
- 5.That our life is the result of our abilities, our vocation and our circumstances
- 6.That we have to organize our desires and aspirations to be able to write our biography
- 7.The importance of autonomy in our life, as well as counting on others
- 8.The richness of human feelings as expressed in the cinema or in literature (reflections of life itself)

Introduction

The reality of human life is peculiar. It is not just another thing in the world and universe. A range of information and different perspectives are necessary in order to understand, explain, analyse and take it into consideration. What are we? What is the human being? We could look in a science book for a scientific explanation, or in a catechism or religious book to find out the religious angle, or an anthropology book to understand the special socio-cultural characteristics. We could even resort to literature and cinema to see ourselves as beings full of feelings and passion. While the answer may be very simple, once we stop and think about it we realise how complicated an issue it actually is.

The same question we ask about the human being in the general sense - "What are we?" -, can also be asked by each of us from an individual point of view - "What are we?" "What am I?" "Who am I?" If someone asks us, "Who are you?", we quickly give our name, as if that explained everything. But a name is not always enough. I am my name, but maybe it does not define me. I might have to say something more, talk about my sisters and brothers, my parents, my city, my friends; or I could also describe myself: tall or short, the colour of my hair, my constitution, etc. Or maybe I have to talk about my achievements: what I've done, what I've achieved; or maybe, even, what I expect to do: go to university, have a family, go on an important journey, etc... All these things define us, and, in a sense, none of these things are enough by themselves.

This is just one of the reasons why it is said that personal life, each life - not only human life as a biological species -, requires many outlooks. It requires us to recognise and appreciate the integral dimension of human life. Several points of view and perspectives are needed to contemplate human life, each person's life. The same happens when we are looking at a landscape or any other object, we only see part of it, and we need to move around it to see other perspectives, other angles. We are not just biology, we are not just biography, we are not just feelings, we are not just intelligence, and we are not just citizens: we are all that, and more.

The study of human beings as citizens, which is the objective of this book, should not be done in an isolated manner, detached from all the other factors that are part of us. Human life cannot be split into segments of perspectives. The segment of an orange is not an orange, it is only part of it; it is an orange when it has all its segments. The same happens with personal life; it cannot be broken into several pieces where just one part, one dimension is studied. Hence the term "integral dimension".

1.2.- In Anger: Primo Levi



Primo Levi was born in Turin in 1919 to a Jewish family. He fought in the anti-fascist resistance in 1941. Primo Levi was one of the 7500 Italian Jews deported to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. He was one of the survivors. He tells his experience in his book *The Truce* (1963). He never forgot the horror he saw and suffered. Other testimonies from his suffering were *If this is a man* (1958) or *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986), among others. He died in 1987.

“His hair and beard were grey, the beard greyer than his hair. He had an ironic look and a mischievous smile. A very structured intelligence, with detailed memories. At some point during the interview, he took the paper on which I had written my questions and drew the map of Auschwitz on the back: with the central Lager, the annexe camps and with the names of some prisoners. He spoke quietly, without interruption: I mean, without resentment. Many times I have wondered about this mildness, about this gentleness. And the only reason I could find is that Levi did not shout, he did not insult, he did not accuse, because he did not want to shout; he wanted something more: he was getting us to shout. He renounced his own reaction to provoke ours. His reasoning was courageous. His mildness, his gentleness, his smile—which had something shy, almost child-like about it—were actually his weapons.” F. CAMON, in J. FUCHS, “The Power of Words”.

If this is a man (1947)
 You who live safe
 In your warm houses,
 You who find, returning in the evening,
 Hot food and friendly faces:
 Consider if this is a man
 Who works in the mud
 Who does not know peace
 Who fights for a scrap of bread
 Who dies because of a yes or a no.
 Consider if this is a woman,
 Without hair and without name
 With no more strength to remember,
 Her eyes empty and her womb cold
 Like a frog in winter.
 Meditate that this came about:
 I commend these words to you.
 Carve them in your hearts
 At home, in the street,
 Going to bed, rising;
 Repeat them to your children,
 Or may your house fall apart,
 May illness impede you,
 May your children turn their faces from you.
 Primo Levi, in *If this is a Man*, 2003.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Look for information about Primo Levi. What is Auschwitz? What happened there? Why?
2. What characteristic would you highlight in Primo Levi's personality? Why? Could you please establish a relation with the photo?
3. What situation is Primo Levi describing in this poem?
4. What do we learn from this poem?
5. When is a human being no longer a human being?
6. The term “dignity” is not in this text, but it could help you. What constitutes a person's dignity? How would you relate the dignity of a person with the name of this unit “The Integral Dimension of a Person”?

1.3.-Contents

1. We are Heirs: Genes and Culture

Origins and Originalities

The human being is a “strange” reality, the result of the interaction of several realities. Firstly, we have a body, or maybe we should say that we are a body, and this body we are/have is the result of the biological evolution of our species, and also of our own evolution, and that is why it is very important to look after it. But we are not only biological beings. To a large extent, we are made of culture and of the society in which we live. We are also the result of cultural influences.

Each of us is heir to a biological trajectory and some cultural influences. The human being is the result of the interaction between genetics and culture, of both things at the same time. Our origins consist of genes and culture, the internal and external aspects. But we are not only the result of this interaction; we are not just “a product”; we also do things and create ourselves. Thus, in the same way that we say that we have an origin, we must also say that we have originalities.

Human being: each one of us	
ORIGINS	ORIGINALITIES
Nature (biology, genetics) + Culture (society)	- what we do, say * the fruit of our: freedom and responsibility

A Great Debate: Nature or Nurture?

Hundreds of erudite books and scientific magazines have dealt with the conflict between nature and culture. This debate is not far detached from our daily life and we must have heard of, or even discussed it, but perhaps in other ways. On the one hand, we have heard someone saying hundreds of times, “He is like his parents!”, “Genes always show up in the end!”, “The most important thing is biological nature”. On the other hand, we have also heard “That comes from experience”, “There is no such thing as nature, just history and culture”. This can also be debated using the example of twins: think of two genetically “equal” twins, with “the same” socio-cultural factors. Would they be “equal”? No, because each one is the way he is, with his own personality. And where does this personality come from? Genetics? Education?

Activities:

1. Which of the following do you think is the most appropriate word to define what we are? (Look it up in the dictionary and give your reasons: "human being", "person", "individual", "man", "conscience", "citizen".
2. Choose one of these options: Are we the result of our inheritance (nature) or of our life circle (society, culture)? Or both? Or none of them? Give your reasons.
3. Think about a situation in which you turn to nature or culture to justify something you have done but do not want to admit to.

These are the terms of the debate. Present-day science usually gives a complex view. We are culture, but not just culture. We are also biology, but not just biology. We are bio-cultural beings.

REMEMBER: This debate, from either point of view, tends to clear the individual of any responsibility, because those saying that we are the result of genetics defend that there is nothing we can do, and so do those stating that we are the result of education. Both arguments conceal what we are:

complex beings, the result of biology and culture, but also people who decide and act, people who change their own and others' lives.

2. We Are Many Things: A Plural Identity

As we have seen, there are many terms that define human life, many dimensions, and when we threaten it, when we threaten a person's dignity, we reduce it to just one dimension and deny diversity.

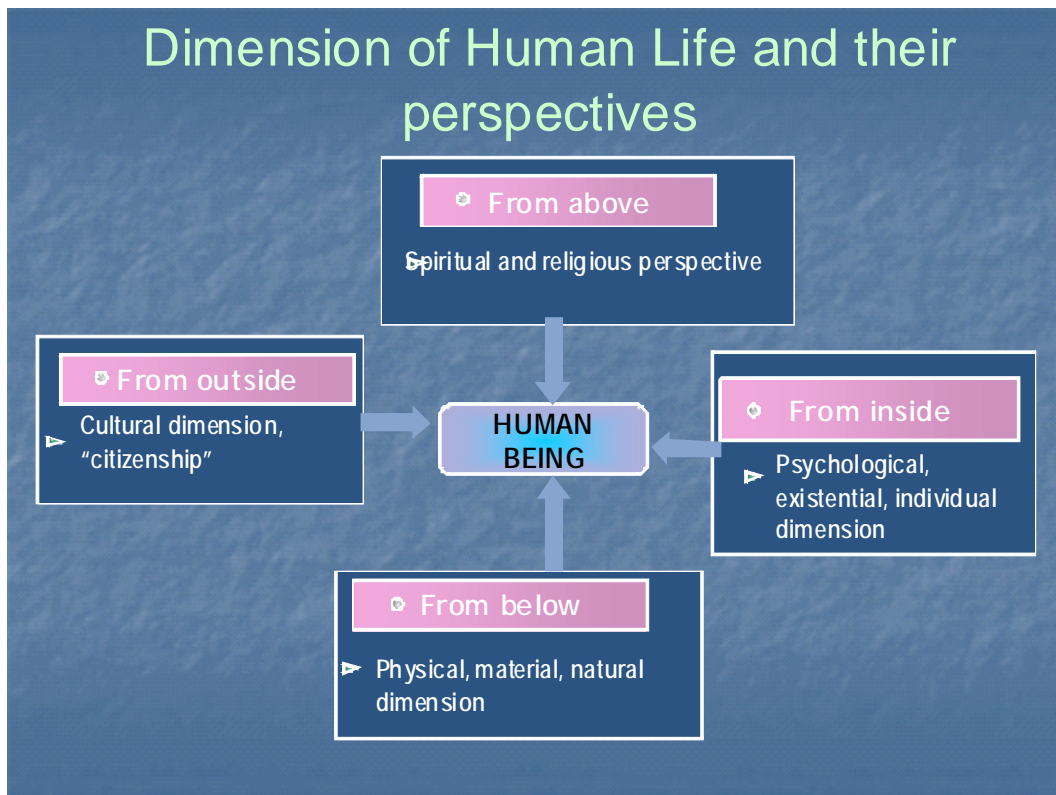
If the human being is plural and diverse, the way in which we approach him or her should also be different. Many times, we try to explain it from only one point of view, like when we try to define an object by just observing one of its sides.

Bearing in mind all of the previous ideas, and in order to simplify this difficult matter a little, we could say that there are four main dimensions to the human being and, consequently, four perspectives, four different ways of explaining what he is, what we are.

The human being can be seen from four perspectives: "from above", "from inside", "from outside" and "from below".

1) "From above": the spiritual, religious or transcendental part of the person; according to this perspective, the human being is willing to transcend;

2) "From outside": the socio-cultural dimension or "citizenship"; the human being is defined as a social being by his relationships and sense of belonging;



3) "From inside": this perspective concentrates on the deepest part of the person, the personality itself, and tries to ignore the external part: the human being is a psychological, emotional and internal being.

4) "From below": the physical or biological perspectives (genes); the human being is an element of nature, a biological species, another living creature.

These four dimensions are correct but separate. In a complicated way, we are all of them. Nowadays, many of the ideas on this matter reduce human richness to one unique dimension; this is a mistake.

Activities:

1. Human life occurs within these four dimensions. All human activity may be seen from the perspective of these four dimensions. According to this statement, how could we define *friendship* from each perspective?
2. Which do you think is the most important dimension? Why? Are "basic dimensions" and "important dimensions" synonyms?

3. Creating our Biography

Biology and Biography

Human beings not only have a fundamental biology, but also a biography. We could say that biology is what we have, while biography is what we do with the resources we have, from biological to cultural factors. Human life, each life, is not made; each person has to build his life, hence the importance of thinking about these matters. Being a citizen means being a person, but we cannot be a person without an identity. Strangely enough, one needs the other, in other words, we also need other people to achieve a personal identity. This is why this matter is so important and transcendental.

To "write" our biography we need three major elements:

- what we are, our qualities, our aptitudes and abilities
- what we aim to be, our life project, our vocation
- our circumstances

We all have some resources and possibilities, and this is why we - helped by education - have to discover our abilities; they might be related to sport, they might be artistic abilities, or a capacity for scientific investigation, among others. Thus, it is important to know ourselves and value what we have. But it is also important to know what we want to be, in other words how we are going to use our abilities: to know our vocation, what attracts my attention, what my calling is. It is also important to be aware of one's physical and social circumstances.

If some of these factors fail, feelings of frustration and unhappiness arise.



Activities:

1. Of the three factors that make up biography, which do you think is the most important? Why?
2. Look for the biography of an important person like Velázquez.. How are these three factors expressed through his life?
3. If you had to write your biography or CV, what would you say? How would you organise it? What are your abilities, vocation and circumstances?

Like a Novel

Human life, our biography, could be compared to a novel. Novels have a plot and suspense, just like our own lives. We create

the plot from our experiences and from the characters we come across. Our life makes sense when we tell it, when we narrate our experiences. We like telling people about our life and listening to others talk about theirs. We like stories, tales, adventure films; we like to identify ourselves with their characters and heroes. We also have to create a character in our life, so we must think a lot and choose the character we want to play, the story we want to tell about ourselves. Therefore, we must pay attention to our life, our wishes, our motivations, and to others.

4. Motivation, Autonomy and Health

Being Autonomous

Writing our biography is a way of being autonomous. An autonomous person is someone who decides for himself, who makes his own rules. Meanwhile a heteronomous person is someone who lives through others and not through himself. Of course, being autonomous does not mean living without counting on others; an autonomous person counts on others, listens, takes advice and knowledge from others. Autonomy is not the same as independence; it's about making your own decisions, but not in opposition to others.

To be an autonomous person we need to organise our wishes, our motivations or, as was said before, our vocation. What do we want in life? What do we value? What do we want to achieve?

Human Motivation

The psychologist A. Maslow designed a pyramid of human motivation that became famous. This pyramid organises human wishes, from the most basic to the most important. It is also an organization of human needs. Let's look at this pyramid.



Activities:

1. Look up in the dictionary the following terms: "self-fulfilment", "self-esteem", "social acceptance".
2. Everything we do, or almost everything, can be found within this pyramid. Try to think of an example of each step from your own experience.
3. How would you explain that a person remains on one of the first steps and doesn't aim higher?
4. What relationship could be established between this image and the dimensions of human life?
5. Who do you think is a happy person? What does happiness mean?

Biography and Health

Building our life means taking care of all that we are. This involves looking after our biography (the importance of reflection, criticism, etc...), but also our biology. As human beings, we need to help each other and comply with some rules. This does not mean an end to our freedom, rather it is the path to total freedom, to be able to develop our biography and climb the steps of the pyramid. We can help others by taking care of ourselves, because, in a very basic way, this is part of mixing with other people. This can be reflected in terms of personal hygiene or respect for others; when a colleague is speaking, for instance, we wait our turn to speak. Good personal hygiene is also essential when mixing with others.



1.4.-This Issue in the Press: What is the Human Being?

You will read two paragraphs from some press articles that try to define the human being. One of them gives a more scientific view, while the other is more philosophical. Read them carefully and answer the questions. Pay attention to all of the different approaches.

DOCUMENT 1

“Nacido de un enfriamiento de la tierra y de sus consecuencias climatológicas, surge el hombre en su cuna tropical. Ese primer hombre diversificará sus herramientas, unas de piedra y otras de hueso, instalará a su familia en campamentos, a los que él vuelve con los alimentos que ha cazado o recogido para todos, construye los primeros refugios y las primeras cabañas, empieza a experimentar sus primeras emociones y a expresarlas en un incipiente lenguaje articulado. La conciencia, resultado de un sistema nervioso central más desarrollado, y la movilidad, resultado de una mejora en los movimientos bípedos y de una dieta más amplia, transformaron profundamente el comportamiento de ese nuevo Homínido. Se desarrolló la capacidad de reflexionar, y con ella la curiosidad, y poco a poco, por primera vez, el hombre empezó a extender su territorio, una tarea que llevará a cabo por toda la tierra y sin duda, dentro de poco, por todo el Universo.

El hombre, nacido probablemente en África oriental por una selección exigida por un importante cambio climatológico, va a sufrir, con el impulso adquirido y de forma constante, una microevolución biológica que le hará atravesar tres etapas más delimitadas a las que se aplica incorrectamente el nombre de especies: homo habilis, homo erectus y homo sapiens, hasta nuestra forma actual, homo sapiens sapiens. Su talla y peso aumentan, así como el volumen de su cerebro –1200-1800 centímetros actualmente-, su cráneo se desarrolla, sus dientes se hacen más pequeños, su esqueleto y musculatura se vuelven más ágiles, sus movimientos bípedos adquieren un extraordinario equilibrio dinámico. Pero, a lo largo de 3 millones de años de su historia, el Hombre desarrolla sobre todo, y de forma extravagante, ese nuevo entorno que su predecesor había inventado: el entorno cultural. Las herramientas materiales que le acompañan y que ponen de manifiesto que disponía de unas herramientas intelectuales, espirituales y morales que se nos escapan, evidencian un sorprendente desarrollo tecnológico por su eficacia y diversidad”

Y. COPPENS, “Somos africanos y tenemos 7 millones de años”, **EL PAÍS**, 19-12-1991

DOCUMENT 2

“La vida humana está llena de paradojas. Pero lo extraño es que tales paradojas no son del todo resolubles. Esto ya no resulta tan obvio, y demuestra que las paradojas no se tienen sino que son. La vida es paradójica.

La paradoja básica la han venido denunciando los pensadores y filósofos desde épocas inmemoriales. La mitología griega la expresó a través de varios mitos, el de Jano, con su doble cabeza, el de Prometeo, el de los Titanes, el de los Centauros, tanto más. Todos ellos tratan de expresar el carácter ambiguo, monstruoso de la realidad humana, que de una parte es estrictamente animal y de otra se eleva por encima de la pura animalidad hasta asemejarse a los dioses. La definición de ser humano que dio Aristóteles como “animal racional”, desde entonces canónica en la cultura occidental, no hace sino elevar a categoría filosófica esa paradoja. El ser humano es de una parte un animal, pero de otra se despegua y sobrevuela el mundo de la animalidad, precisamente por su carácter racional. El hombre no es ni ángel ni bestia, decía Pascal. ¿Qué es, entonces? De algún modo, un ser descentrado, ambiguo, monstruoso.

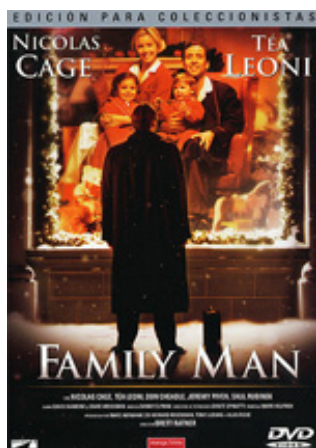
D. GRACIA, “Las paradojas de la vida”, **ABC**, Creación Ética

Activities:

1. Look up all the words you do not understand in the dictionary.
2. How does text 1 describe human characteristics? And text 2? Which do you think is the most appropriate vision of the human being? Why?
3. What implications could the definition of the human being in text 1 have? And in text 2?
4. Science and philosophy define the human being in different ways. Without going into it too deeply (you will do it in later courses) what, in your opinion, are the contributions of science? And what about philosophy?

1.5.-Let's go to the Cinema: Family Man

Many films deal with the drama of human life, showing its grief and love, harshness and difficulties. Cinema is like a mirror into which we can look at ourselves and from which we can learn. “Family Man” is a film that could help us to reflect on our life, in its integrity and different dimensions. Let's see why.



Directed by: Brett Ratner

Year: 2000

Country: USA

Script: David Diamond and David Weissman

Cast: Nicolas Cage, Téa Leoni, Don Cheadle, Amber Valletta, Jeremy Piven, Saul Rubinek, Josef Sommer, Mary Beth Hurt, Francine York, Harve Presnell, Ruth Williamson, Ken Leung



SYNOPSIS

Jack Campbell is a young Wall Street businessman; he is obsessed with his work and his luxurious lifestyle. But one morning - after an incident in a shop on Christmas Eve - he wakes up living a different life, an alternative life: he is no longer a rich man, rather he is poor, a humble tyre salesman married to Kate, the former girlfriend he had left some years ago to be able to devote himself to the world of business and finance..

IT MAKES US WONDER ABOUT:

- The values that rule, direct and give meaning to human life.
- The value of human life itself.
- The responsibility of our decisions.
- The need to contemplate our life as a whole, beyond specific experiences and situations.
- How important other people are in giving meaning to our life and our happiness.

THINK

- Could you imagine yourself living a different life?
- In your opinion, what are the values that should run our lives? Do you think people take these values into account? And you?
- Complete the following hypothesis:
 - a) If I decided to study medicine in my city my life would be...
 - b) If my parents won the lottery and they had a lot of money my life would be
- In your opinion, what are the most important moments in a person's life?
- Do we build our life by taking big or small decisions?



1.6.-Looking Through Images: Human Reflections. Caravaggio and Dalí

Art has long been able to represent the human being's search for identity, his complexity and beauty. These two pictures by Caravaggio and Dalí - different in style and composition - show problems, situations and experiences that we could all come across.

Narcissus: CARAVAGGIO (Michelangelo Merisi) (1571-1610)

Italian painter, an outstanding member of the Naturalist school, who skillfully used the chiaroscuro technique.



Research

- Who was Narcissus?
- What is the chiaroscuro technique?
- Caravaggio is a Baroque painter. What is Baroque? What are the characteristics of this style?

Learn to look

- Briefly describe all the elements of this picture.
- Does this painting have a balanced or broken composition?

Think about the picture

- What is the painter trying to tell us with this picture? What does "narcissist" mean?
- Explain the differences between being "narcissistic", "selfish", "individualistic". Do these terms have the same meaning?

city of drawers: DALI (1904-1989)

A Catalan artist with a unique genius, both in his life and art, he was one of the outstanding figures of Surrealism.

Research

- Find some information about the life of Dalí. Where did he live? What was special about his appearance?
- What is Surrealism?

Learn to look

- Describe the elements of the painting.
- The human body gives a diagonal composition to this picture. What could it mean?

Think about the picture

- What does this body full of drawers mean?
- Is the top right-hand corner of the picture important? What is it symbolising?

"Sigmund Freud was the only difference between immoral Greece and the contemporary period. Freud discovered that the human body-platonic during the time of the Greeks is nowadays full of secret drawers that only psychoanalysis can open." DALI



LET'S KEEP THINKING AND IMAGINING

- What picture would you choose or paint if you were asked to depict the complexity of human life?
- Which painters would you choose if you had to organize an exhibition called "The Human Being"? What kind of paintings would you choose?

1.7.-The World of Literature: Quevedo and Lope de Vega

Literature is actually an art that expresses human experience in an incomparable way. Literature is, without a doubt, a world full of feelings, reasons and emotions within which we human beings can recognise ourselves. You will read two sonnets, two poems dealing with two essential human experiences: solitude and meeting.

QUEVEDO (1580-1645)

Amor más allá de la muerte

Cerrar podrá mis ojos la postrera
sombra que me llevare el blanco día,
y podrá desatar esta alma mía
hora a su afán ansioso lisonjera;

mas no, de esotra parte, en la ribera,
dejará la memoria, en donde ardía:
nadar sabe mi llama la agua fría,
y perder el respeto a ley severa.

Alma a quien todo un dios prisión ha
sido,
venas que humor a tanto fuego han
dado,
médulas que han gloriosamente ardido:

su cuerpo dejarán no su cuidado;
serán ceniza, mas tendrá sentido;
polvo serán, mas polvo enamorado.

LOPE DE VEGA (1562-1635)

Desmayarse, atreverse, estar furioso

Desmayarse, atreverse, estar furioso,
áspero, tierno, liberal, esquivo,
alentado, mortal, difunto, vivo,
leal, traidor, cobarde y animoso;

no hallar fuera del bien centro y
reposo,
mostrarse alegre, triste, humilde,
altivo,
enojado, valiente, fugitivo,
satisfecho ofendido receloso;

huir el rostro al claro desengaño,
beber veneno por licor suave,
olvidar el provecho, amar el daño;

creer que el cielo en un infierno cabe,
dar la vida y el alma a un desengaño,
esto es amor: quien lo probó lo sabe.

FEELING AND THINKING WITH WORDS

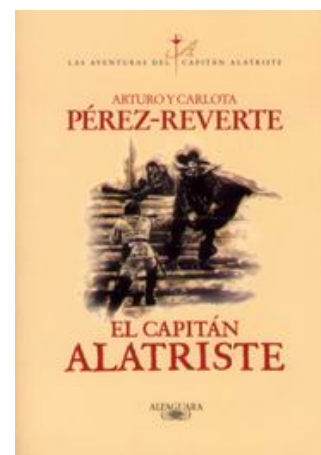
1. Read these sonnets carefully. Look up the words you do not understand in the dictionary. What do these expressions mean?

- "final shadow" - "will soon be ash, but ash that is aware"

- "To avert your face from bitter disappointment"

- "To believe heaven is encountered in hell"

2. Which human experiences are the poets talking about? Do you agree with their descriptions? What would you tell them? Have a go at adding more adjectives to the experience described by Lope de Vega!



3. Get some more information about Lope de Vega and Quevedo. Where did they live? When? Mention some other outstanding writers from the same period and place.
4. Search for a poem or a brief description that deals with human experiences.

AN INVITATION TO READ...

Arturo Pérez Reverte describes the age of Quevedo and Lope perfectly in his books about "Captain Alatriste". These books lead us into a world full of emotion and adventure. The saga not only teaches us about history and literature, but we also discover the dimensions of our existence through its adventures. We also discover the complexity of feelings like courage, honour, caution, friendship, commitment, etc...

"He was not the most honest or pious of men, but he was courageous..." This is the beginning of *Captain Alatriste*, the story of a veteran soldier of the Flanders Army... You can continue on your own...

1.8.-Final and Summary Activities

1. Read this tale carefully. What is it trying to tell us? Do you think that human life can be limited to this? Why? Establish an imaginative relation with G. Klimt painting. What does it mean? What does it mean to you?

"A young king of ancient Persia ascended the throne full of great wishes. Willing to learn, he summoned the wise men of the Court and asked them to write a summary of the history of humanity. This took them thirty years. Once they had finished it, they loaded their five hundred volumes onto twelve camels and went to the palace. But the king, who was already in his fifties, said: "I won't live for long, I will die before having read it. Write a shorter version". The wise men started to work again. Ten years later, they brought the summary to the palace. This time they only

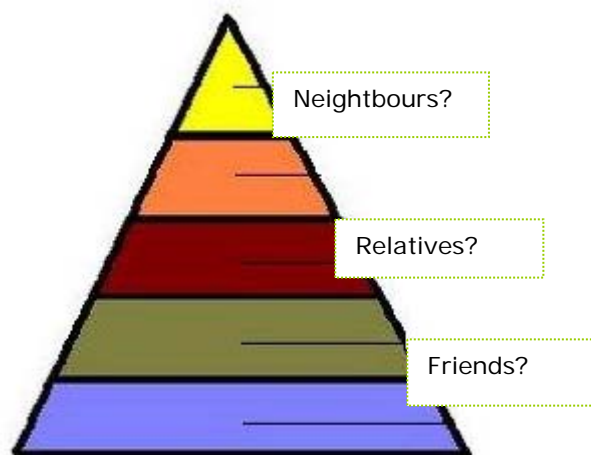


G. KLIMT, 1905, *The Three Ages of Women*, National Gallery of Modern Art, Rome

needed three camels to carry the volumes. But the king, who was already in his sixties, did not feel like reading so many pages and asked them to write a shorter version. This new version took them ten years, and they needed just one camel to carry it. However, during this time, the king's sight had been getting worse, so he needed something even shorter. After five years of work, the wise men reduced the work to one volume. However, by then the king was ill in bed. He told them sadly "Am I going to end my life without having learned the history of humanity?" The eldest wise man leaned towards the headboard and whispered "Majesty, the history of humanity could be summarised in three words: Humans are born, suffer and die". Then the king nodded and died. PERSIAN TALE.

2. Motivation survey. Quickly look at the Maslow pyramid. We suggest you do some research on the concept of happiness that the people you know have and decide where on the pyramid they are. It's simple; you just have to ask them what happiness is for them. They should explain their definition to you, and then you have to position them on one of the steps of the pyramid. You can do it this way:

1. Question: "What is happiness? Explain it."
2. Ask this question to (approx.) 10 people: relatives, friends, acquaintances.
3. Position each answer on one of the steps of the pyramid.
4. Show the results using graphics.
5. Conclusions.



1.9.-Find Out and Take Part

AT SCHOOL

- At school, our identity depends on our class, colleagues and teachers. To think about our personal identity is also to think about the identity of the school. Your school also has an identity. What makes up this identity?

Do some research on its history

Ask about the number of teachers, pupils and classes

Review the rules on co-existence

Find out the school's long-term project, its style, teaching methods

Ask about the school associations, what they are devoted to
Find out the ways pupils are involved (pupil representatives, school board, representatives, etc...)