

## THE INTOXICATION OF BEGINNING

The first step is the most important. The rest follow on, almost like child's play. It's difficult to start tidying up; continuing is a kind of elation. I'm sure you've experienced this. It's not by chance I mention tidying up. Beginning something nearly always means putting a certain area of our lives in order.

A good beginner is reckless. He starts in the middle, with the trickiest part. Make the smallest movement possible; be very specific but aim for the most entangled spot. It's been on your mind. Start with what prompted you to begin.

### Picture the beginning

Don't let go of the thought that flashed through your mind: the realisation that the most disturbing element in the room is the state your desk's in. The fact that it's depressing to even look in that direction. This is an important message: the inner voice, your heart, tells you in a whisper to start here. The less you feel like it the sooner you should begin.

The secret of beginning is that it's a form of sacrifice.

And those capable of making a sacrifice can expect a reward. Start where there's a real need for it. Whether it's a question of changing your workplace, breaking up with your partner or giving up drinking. Summon up the courage to state your opinion publicly on something you think is outrageous – even if this may put you at a disadvantage and you'll no longer be able to rely on the solidarity of others. Begin where the inner voice suggests.

### You'll be surprised

If you begin where you should the continuation will be like a dream - as if you'd got rid of a sackful of lead. Now it's your life you have in the sack. However steep the path you set out on, you'll be climbing it faster than you were descending it yesterday.

You can really soar.

Eventually you'll fall in love with the actual process of beginning because you'll realize that if you always have the nerve to start with the most difficult - the most difficult is what you fear and hate the most - if you're brave enough to risk failure, you're doomed for success. What's more, as I mentioned, there's something intoxicating in continuing. It's the best of all. To those who long for uncensorable, health-enhancing narcotics whose effects are increased inner serenity, an unquenchable zest for action, a self-resolving tendency of other, more minor problems and the inner musical joy of the harmony of life - (when you start whistling self-composed tunes) - I recommend you get down to something you've been putting off for weeks or years. If you're a man learn to sew, if you're a woman become good at DIY.

It's not as difficult as you think.

Contemplating is hard. Coming to a decision is tortuous. But only for those who say five nos before saying a single yes. However, if you start and don't give up in the first half hour, soon you won't be able to. Triumphant over ourselves is elating. In addition, it leads to success. And having done what took so long to get down to, you start all over again.

### Continuing is crucial

To continue you just need to persevere. Once the initial excitement has passed and you've celebrated your victory you'll recognise that what you set about doing was vital. You were almost late but in the end your heart was in the right place. Good work and keep it up. This is generally when the earth slips out from under your feet and a kind of uncertainty takes over you. You feel that what you're

doing isn't good. Or at least it's unnecessary. You should quit. It might not be the way you imagined it after all. This is the sly temptation of the moment. You believe that sooner or later you'll give up anyway.

### **The critical moment**

You started off brilliantly. You were able to get down to action and everything went well for a while. Until you were seized by the desire to stop and do something else instead. You can't even say why. The doctor would say you're stressed, your mother that you're lazy, your rival that you're untalented, your partner that you've taken too much on and that you're in need of a rest. According to your children you're too old for this, and to the authorities you're unauthorised, while your childhood friend maintains that you've always been like this: unable to finish anything and you're not to be taken seriously. Then comes the moment when no other person can help.

The zero point.

That precedes all important matters.

Including the moment of beginning: the first step you took. Don't - in this moment of emptiness - continue what you started because there's a point to it. Nor because you feel like it. You don't. And it's not as if the people who knew you weren't right. Carry on, not out of honesty or virtue, spiritual salvation, money or conscientiousness – like a particular form of suicide – in memory of your parents or even to put to shame those who doubted and doubt you. But for the heck of it.

Out of playfulness.

Putting it bluntly: for nothing. Without a reason. Don't search for perishable excuses just to continue. Have the courage to take on a mere nothing and create something out of it. Don't give up despite the feeling that there's no point in your perseverance. Once you've committed yourself to your decision, and – unaware of it yourself - you continue what you began, help will arrive.

### **Troops of helpers will arise**

Your self-confidence returns: after all you're still at work. And for a long time, perhaps right till the end, you won't question whether you should continue or not. How do I know? Because writing is pure continuation. If you've been paying attention you'll have realized that all I'm teaching you once again is the courage necessary to reach the joy of beginning.

Carry on just as you started.

The problem of continuing only arises if you're uncertain whether you want or dare to continue what you began. While pedalling you won't fall off the bike. Or as the Hungarian poet István Vas put it more elegantly:

*„Beginning again is always the true continuation and to continue the same thing is always the true beginning.”*