

RIDING THE WAVES OF THE FUTURE

In Search of Our Route

(Intervention by Riccardo Rami – “Osare il Futuro / Dare the Future” Conference, 2012)

The original program of the conference scheduled my talk for a later moment, and I thought I could therefore “take advantage” of the other speakers’ time to approach the future in a less abrupt way.

A change in the program — or Chance, if we want to call it that — anticipated my intervention. But this too is part of Destiny, and part of what I need to tell you. You will understand this shortly, also in light of what I am about to say.

I would like to take this circumstance — having to speak first — as a starting point, because situations like this have characterized my life and represent an important part of what I want to share with you.

In life, many things happen, most of which we experience in a distracted way. Very little of what we live remains truly conscious.

The challenge is to try to understand these events, because from them it is possible to draw important insights, useful to better orient ourselves toward the Future.

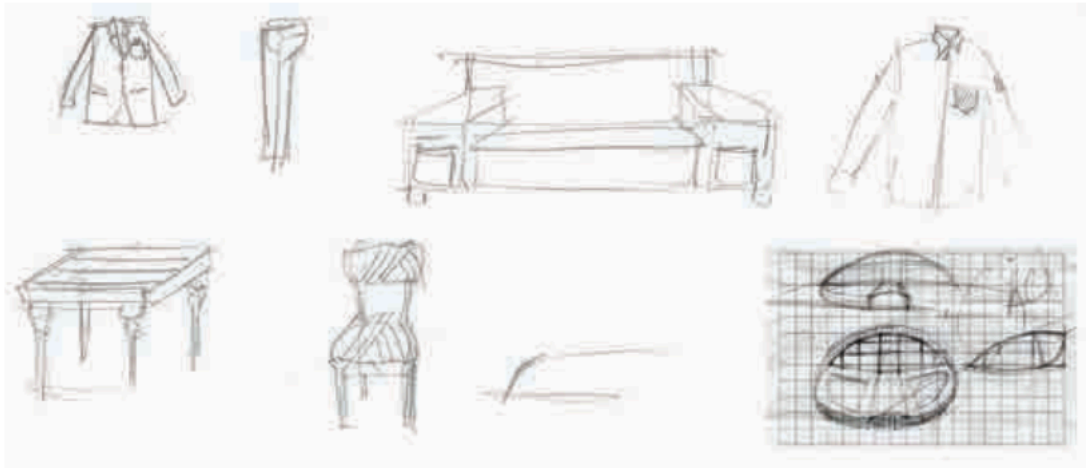
I will use my own life as a pretext, to try to contribute to the title of this conference, which I find very interesting: “*Osare il Futuro*” — *Dare the Future*.

Regardless of the present moment — which, incidentally, is a moment of crisis — our Future always exists. It is there, waiting for us, and we must dare in order to reach it.

When I was fourteen years old, my parents worked in the textile industry in Prato. They were both factory workers: my mother worked in spinning, my father at the looms.

At that time, driven by the idea of a better world — beautiful, entirely my own — I began to draw it. I drew everything that came to mind, trying to focus it on paper, and then (something I understood only later...) to pursue it.

I drew machines, houses, clothes — everything. Those drawings were my dreams, my world.



[IMAGE 1 – Riccardo Rami’s early drawings]

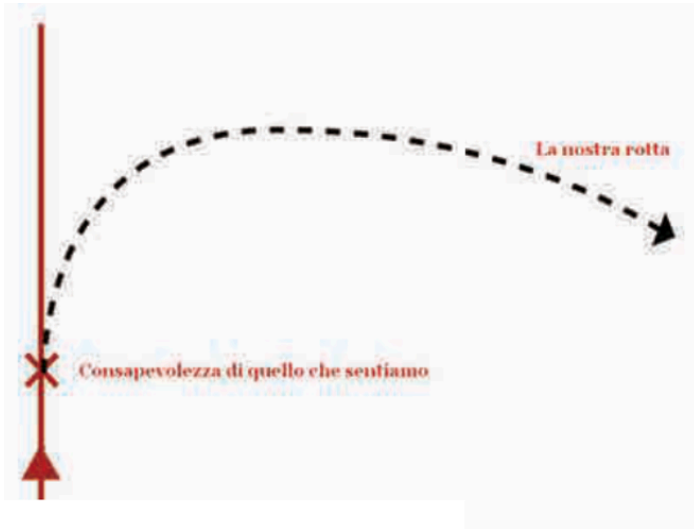
At the end of middle school, despite the suggestions of my teachers who advised me to attend an art institute, my parents — unable to afford university studies — decided to send me to the *Tullio Buzzi Technical Institute*, a textile school where one could become a textile, chemical, or mechanical technician.

At that time weaving dominated the industry, and I graduated as a textile technician. Prato produced a great deal of fabric, and for a young man back then, this was the most desirable professional path.

Thus I became a textile technician. My territory, my professional battlefield, was defined in this way.

Here **[IMAGE 2]**, I have tried to represent with a line — first continuous, then after the X dotted in black — what my life has been. A “*Life Line*”, which I believe follows a similar course for many of us.

As you can see, when we are born, we are launched in a direction. Our mother, when she gives birth to us, “fires” us — so to speak — in a direction. Only later, and not in the same way for everyone, at a certain point in our lives we realize that this is not exactly our direction.



[IMAGE 2 – The “Life Line”]

For example, when I was eighteen, I wanted to become a good textile technician because my father worked in one of the most important textile companies in Prato, producing fabrics for designers who were just beginning their careers — Versace, Armani, Laviola, Correggiari.

That mill had the courage, at the time, to sell fabrics to people who were practically unknown. And it was my father who, returning home late in the evening, would bring me small fabric samples and tell me about how the company’s textile designer — Giuseppe Bartolini — collaborated with these designers, opening a new path.

Guided by these thoughts, and by the desire to become as good as him, over the years I became one of the most skilled and sought-after textile designers.

At eighteen, I fantasized about all of this, and I read *L’Uomo Vogue*, which at the time was not easy to find, except occasionally at the barber’s shop.

I remember looking at the photographs, the editorials, reading the interviews (I must say that at that time everything was done far more seriously than today).

Among all those interviews, one in particular has remained vividly impressed in my mind: an interview with Giorgio Armani, in which he explained what he would do in the following year.

Inside myself I thought: “*Incredible.*”

In that interview, he clearly and specifically described what he would do the following year: he would use very soft fabrics, not compact, even somewhat coarse, combined with soft shapes; trousers would have no crease; and he would remove the internal structure from jackets — the famous *deconstruction*, invented by Armani himself, the greatest invention of the last century in fashion.

We are talking about 1977 — many years ago.

At that time, everyone dressed neatly, in polyester suits for those who could not afford more, or in compact worsted wool, with trouser creases that practically never disappeared.

What astonished me most is that Armani did exactly what he had announced.

This has always stayed with me, because it is anything but easy to do what we say we will do — especially when it is something new, revolutionary, never tested before, with no guarantee of success.

That X on the Life Line coincides with the moment when my life took a different direction. From that moment on, the things that happened to me were more or less the ones I wanted to happen.

The jobs I encountered shared common characteristics: there were no precedents left by those who had worked in that position before me, or the projects began with me, and I always found myself in a pioneering role.

This is why I am not surprised that today, even if it was not planned, I am the first to speak. It does not have particular significance for the continuation of the conference, but it is coherent with my path.

One day I was hired by *Fratelli Cecchi*. I was already working for the parent company, *Cecchi Lido*. When they proposed that I move to the small satellite company, they told me it was their last chance to avoid closing down.

I started working there, and things went well. I had found a way to realize part of my ideas.

It was there that I had the opportunity to truly meet Giorgio Armani and begin working with him.

We went to Milan with fabric samples. I remember that incredible Sunday. First his assistant came, then his niece brought him some things, and he developed an extraordinary sampling for those times.

That first year we did one billion lire in business — a considerable figure even today. *Fratelli Cecchi* became the most important supplier of Emporio Armani and other lines of the group.

One day, about a year later, Giorgio Armani himself called me, introduced me to his partner Galeotti and his closest collaborators, and told me:

“If one day you think of leaving Fratelli Cecchi, you know there is a place for you here.”

When I drove home that day, it felt as if the car were driving itself.

What I want to place on the table is this: there exists a point — the X — in the life of each of us, or at least in the life of those who know how to listen to themselves, when the direction of our life begins to change, moving toward a future that belongs to us as we become more aware of it.

This does not happen magically. It happens through *feeling* — not with the ears — and *seeing* — not with the eyes.

When we fail to listen, when we fail to see, when we do not use intuition — which is often cited and rarely practiced — we lose our route.

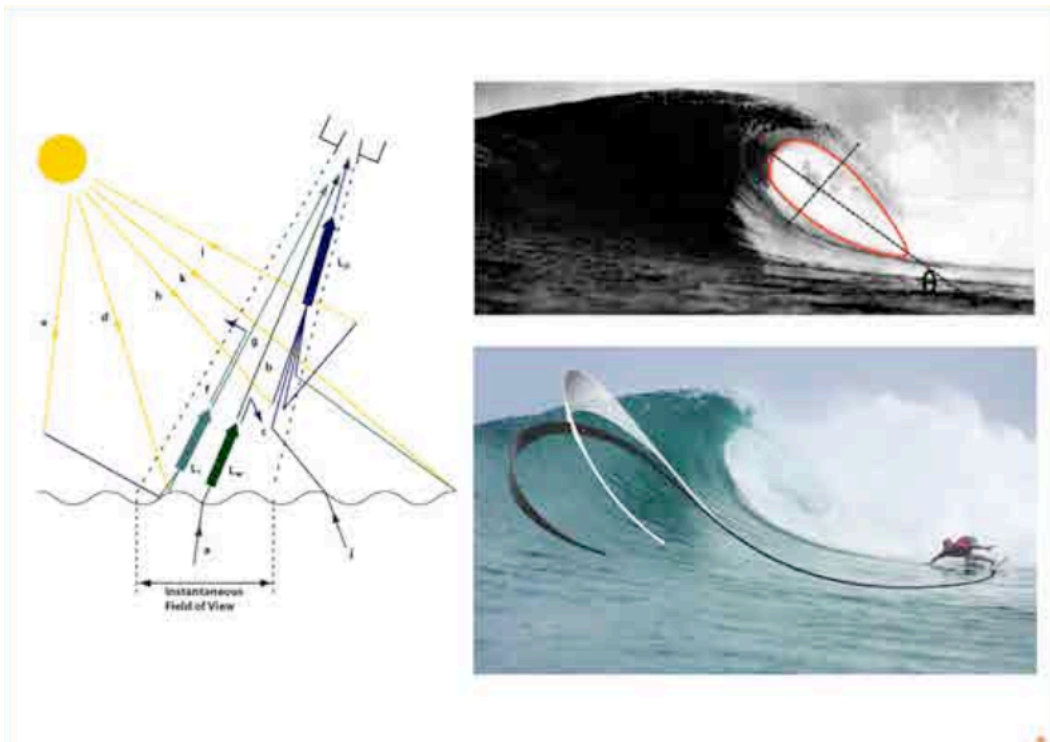
At this point, the journey becomes like a river.



[IMAGE 3 – Rafting on a river]

The river is our life. We will all reach the sea, but through different paths and futures. One possible future — the fastest, and perhaps to be avoided — is to crash into the first rock.

“Riding the waves of the future, in search of our route” is the title of my intervention because I am convinced that, to reach a future that truly belongs to us, we must do what a surfer does: hold the wave.



[IMAGE 4 – The surfer’s wave]

We must keep our inner direction, constantly working to maintain it.

The same applies to a ship — which can represent a company. There is wind, there are waves, and there is a helmsman who must keep the route, the buoy, the direction. That helmsman is inside us.

When I lost my route, it was because I chased something very attractive that passed near me — something that did not truly belong to me. I looked instead of seeing. I listened instead of hearing. I ignored intuition.

Yet intuition is present in the history of many individuals who created meaningful things. It is by following intuition — something intangible and difficult to explain — that one can build something solid.

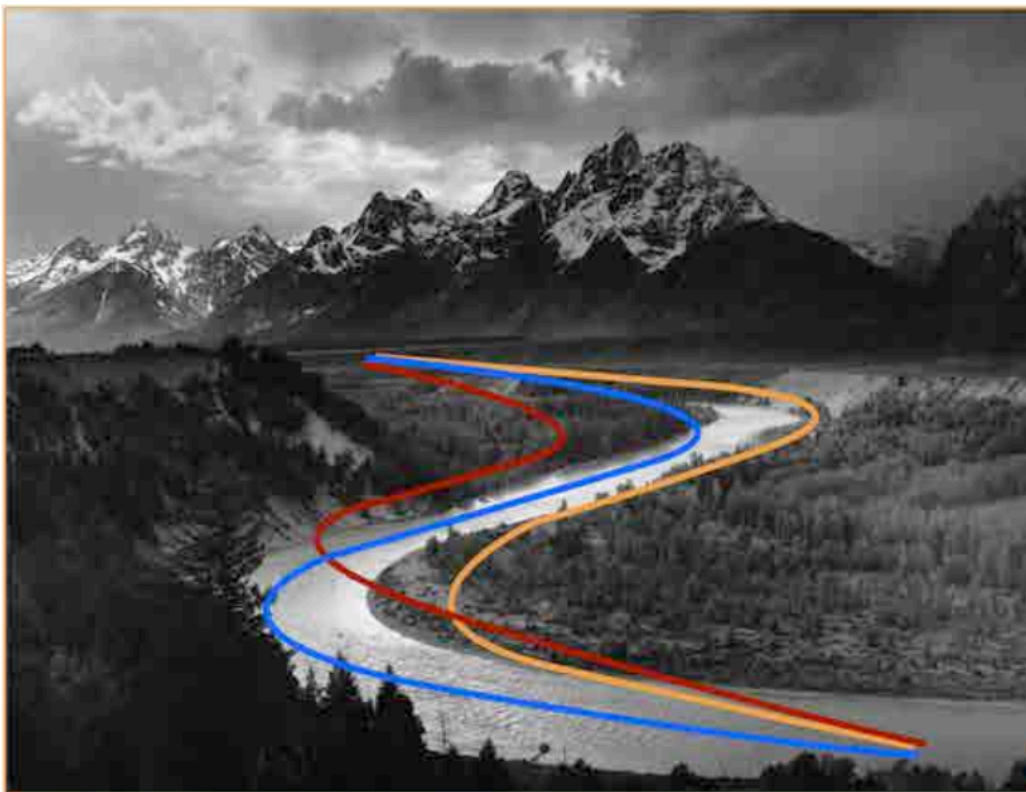
Today, many people are changing direction. Many are in the middle of new life projects. This is not only due to crisis — it is simply time to change.

To face uncertainty, we need a strong inner center — a *permanent center of gravity*, as Gurdjieff said.

This center is inside us. It is made of what we truly feel, not of false certainties imposed from outside.

The media destabilizes us. Everything pushes us away from ourselves.

Our strength, instead, lies in defending our point of view, understanding it, and surrounding ourselves with things and people that resonate with us.



[IMAGE 5 – Three routes, one destination]

There are many possible routes, but one deep attraction. Small movements can prevent us from crashing, from falling unprepared into a waterfall. This is how we change the course of our life.

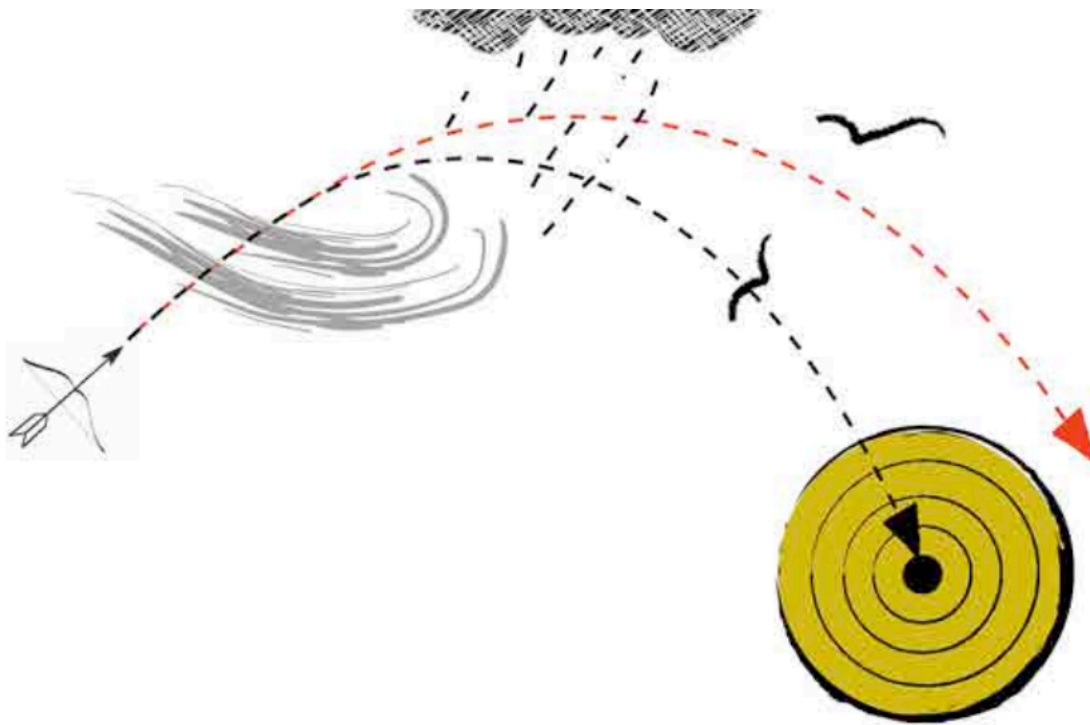
Reality itself responds to observation.

Quantum physics shows us that the observer changes what is observed.

Wayne Dyer said:

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”

When we are aligned, nothing can truly disturb us.



[IMAGE 6 – The archer and the target]

Like an archer aiming at a distant target, external factors may intervene. What makes the difference is *Intent*.

Our sincere will, aligned with the whole, helps us tune into the right wave.

I was born professionally as a textile technician, but I always cultivated visions of what I wanted to create.

I drew my studio, my furniture, my collections — and eventually they became reality.



[IMAGE 7 – Riccardo Rami's works]

Sometimes I anticipated the times too much. And I paid the price.
Wind, rain, birds in flight — all part of the journey.

What we feel — even if imprecise — is part of our future.
Not tomorrow, perhaps not next year. But it is there, waiting.

Facing a future that belongs to us, even with difficulty, is far easier than living a life that is not ours.

Riccardo Rami