

**Opening Remarks from Göran Carstedt**  
**at the Socioperception conference in Paris on October 20, 2021**  
**on a panel sharing memories of Alain de Vulpian**

*Alain de Vulpian, a humanist tuned into and thrilled by sociocultural currents and neuroscience.*

*What did you learn from him?*

I have had the pleasure to know Alain for more than 40 years.

When I arrived in Paris in 1982, to lead the poorly performing car operations for Volvo France, I contacted Alain very early. We had met some years before at an international conference on Sociocultural change patterns.

We immediately found each other, and we started to meet as families, invited to visit at their family chateau, outside Paris. Workwise our collaboration became very rewarding. With the richness of Comfremca's social culture database and Alain's personal commitment and curiosity, we developed many creative socioperceptive approaches.

He helped me to understand this country, and the weaker signals underlying the decisions, when people in France, choose their cars. A story that I have briefly described in a SOL letter of remembrance. This was the beginning of a long collaboration, full of fun and excitement and leading to a lifelong friendship. Alain was also well informed about Sweden and a big admirer of our country, in many aspects.

Over the years our conversations have moved towards more general reflections on Leadership and the ongoing transformation of our societies. We both were excited by trying to see the world as open living and self-organizing systems. When doing so, **emergence with bifurcations** instead of **planned futures**, do become our focus of interest. Development as an emerging learning process, not predictable and not controllable. We shared a lot of thoughts and theories from other thinkers like Bateson, Prigogine, Maturana, Varela, Capra and others of that kind. Alain was always enlightened and well informed and the perfect listener, as a conversation partner.

His curiosity and openness for new ideas, had no limits.

In this opening 5 minutes of our day, if I would pick **one** example of where Alain had a very special focus and a very unique capacity, was his deep interest in **Listening to ordinary people**

Taking a bottom up/ outside in perspective, instead of the traditional top down/inside out perspective

How ordinary people constantly prove to know more than their authorities

How authorities underestimates ordinary people

Ordinary people, not only being ordinary. They are potential Don Quijotes, Nelson Mandelas, Greta Thunbergs

This is linked to a Leadership philosophy, where the importance of Listening and Learning takes a center role.

Like Soren Kirkegaard told us, the Danish philosopher

“ If I want to succeed in moving a person towards a certain direction, I first must find her where she is and start just there. Being able to help someone, I do admittedly have to know more than her, but primarily I have to understand what she understands”

This bottom up and outside in perspective , has profound implications for how we see leadership and how to facilitate transformational change.

His insatiable interest in discovering weak signals out there, always opened up for very rewarding conversations.

So, for example, if we would have met today, I would probably have come to him with a couple of current examples of transformational signals.

Examples of leaders today, with courage to take a clear stand on the need for a radical transformation towards more sustainable and more just societies.

I would have mentioned the newly released book by Paul Polman, the former CEO of Unilever, and now Chair and founder of Imagine, a social venture. They are mobilizing business leaders from around the world, around climate change and global inequality – The name of his new book is “Net positive : How Courageous Corporations Thrive by Giving More Than They Take”

I would have giving him a copy of my friend Jonathon Porritt’s latest book, called “Hope in Hell – A Decade to Confront the Climate Emergency”

Jonathon, with over 30 years of experience from being deeply engaged in the climate agenda, as a UK green activist, as an advisor to key global leaders in politics and in business, being no doubt one of the most knowledgeable in this domain.

Jonathon confronts this crisis head on, demanding an unprecedented sense of urgency, courage and shared endeavor. He believes that we still have time to do what needs to be done, but only if we move now, and move together.

So while laying bare the disturbing truth about climate science, he goes on to explore the reasons to be hopeful – new technology, the power of innovation, the mobilization of young people and a sense of solidarity as older citizens come to understand their own obligation to secure a safer world for future generations.

An approach and agenda that can easily fit into the landscape of Alain’s Metamorphose

I would also have brought up another example of a necessary part of metamorphoses under way, the importance of the Spiritual dimension of the integral human being.

The archbishop of the Swedish Lutheran church , Antje Jackelen, declared last week in a Swedish radio program, that the interpretation of the creation story in the bible, has to be reconceived, and expanded.

The biblical creation story has too much focus on the creation of Man as the image of God. The story is and should be as much about the creation of land and heaven, birds

and fish, flowers and plants. We are all living in an interconnected symbiosis with nature and within a spiritual community.

In the archbishop's conclusions, there is a need for more theology, not less, to complement science. The church, with all denominations, has a very important role, to side with the most vulnerable in the necessary transition to come.

Religiously believer or not, justice has to be in the center of solving the societal and environmental challenges of our time.

The Nobel peace prize laureates, from two weeks ago, being two journalists fighting for **Freedom of speech** and a **Free press**, would have been another subject of our conversations. Examples of the dark time and threats to our democracies, a subject also very close to Alain's heart.

Well, you can imagine , what interesting conversations with Alain would have come out of these types of signals and subjects, if I and we could have met him today.

He is unfortunately not here with us, but his ideas, his reflections and his foot prints as we carry them, are very much present indeed.

Looking forward to an interesting and meaningful day, in Alain's spirit.

*Göran Carstedt*

*October, 2021*