

MY ENCOUNTER WITH A MESSAGE OF THE BEING AND WITH *UN CASO DI COSCIENZA*

In May of 1982, a *Documentation* published in Jerusalem, Israel, came into my hands. This publication, *Un Caso di Coscienza*, offered the entire documentation concerning the *coming-to-consciousness* of three Franciscan friars of the Custody of the Holy Land, with whom I have had the opportunity of becoming well acquainted. The last document reveals the firm decision of the three friars to leave the Order to which they had belonged for several decades. Here is the plain and simple fact: three religious priests of the Roman Catholic Church leave this Institution.

From the very moment I had the publication in my hands, I realized the extraordinariness and transcendency of the event. At first glance, this event could be taken as just one more case, among the many that occur daily, of one or more religious leaving the Orders to which they belonged. I quickly realized, however, that what was being staged here was one of the most singular events of this 20th century. What the three friars call *a case of conscience* was a bringing to light the disqualification of *all* that previous humanity has been – the “old man” – and at the same time, the friars were offering us the only valid way out, in the face of the historical and spiritual crisis we live today: the

way of *total, unconditional, direct* surrender to the Being.

I was deeply moved by this *coming-to-consciousness*, and one of the things that most surprised me was the fact that it should be precisely religious belonging to the Roman Catholic Church who have such a profound lucidity and, at the same time, that this lucidity should have led them to make such a resolute decision as was that of taking a leap into the void. The more I entered into the details of the drama that had been enacted between the three religious and the Custody of the Holy Land, the more I became convinced that this *event* had to be launched to the four winds, divulged in all corners of the planet. The more I read the publication, the more I was discovering within me a profound affinity with the three religious. I have never belonged to a confessional faith, nor have I felt bound to any doctrine. The awareness that *I am nothing* has freed me from belonging to any group or institution. Now then, the three friars, already in the full maturity of their lives, were coming to a conviction similar to my own. I immediately felt that I had to put all my efforts into widely diffusing this *decision* of the three friars. I have always been a loner. Well then, the Being was now offering me the opportunity of living a life in common, based on the assumptions that have always inspired my life: the fact that this *I* that I am is nothing, and that the assuming of this nothingness is the only path for discovering the definitive essence of man – the Truth of the Being.

I have traveled many paths. I have been passionately fond of Buddhism, of Taoism, of the pre-Socratics. I have been deeply interested in Krishnamurti. The teachings of *Don Juan* of Carlos Castaneda have had a great impact on me. In these last few years I have let myself be fascinated by Christian mysticism: Meister Eckhart, Francis of Assisi, John of the Cross, Theresa of Avila. I made all

these encounters guided by the perspective of the ontological difference, taken from Martin Heidegger, according to which man's absolute truth is his real identification with the Being. It was this identification with the Being, this clarity about the fact that the Being is ineffable, that freed me from adhering to any system, from belonging to any organization. In all my wanderings through the great mysticism, I have found the same common denominator: the conviction that the *I* is nothing, and alongside this nothingness, it is revealed that the true essence of the *I* is the Being. I have also had the good fortune of having existentially identified myself with the movement of the *absurd*. I understood that the absurd was not a chance movement, just another literary trend, but precisely the culmination of twenty-five centuries of this Western culture. In the literature of the absurd, the failure of rationality is clearly shown; no longer is it a failure reserved to the intellect alone – to the academic – but applies as well to our ordinary living. With the absurd, the disqualification of reason penetrates even to the minute details of our everyday lives. It has always surprised me that in this Western culture those responsible in the arts, in science, and in thought in general, have not seen what the movement of the absurd has really represented.

In the last four years I have taken an interest in a Message in which the Being reveals Himself through a specific person, through Josefina Chacín, *the slave of the Lord*. Although it is in fact a matter of a *message*, what is most singular and unusual about this Message is that it reformulates and restates, with new words and in an even more eloquent manner, that the essence of man is the nothingness, and that this nothingness, or leap into the void, is the only legitimate path toward the house of the Being.

*“The ‘Nothingness’ is what is closest to the Being
and is what we are:
we are ‘Nothing.’
The ‘Nothingness’ is beyond thought,
it is above understanding.
Therefore, it is not reached through knowledge,
but through ‘renunciation’.
In order to reach the Being
one must take a leap into the void,
this ‘void’ is the ‘Nothingness’.”*

The foregoing quotation is taken from one of the books of the Message. As is easy to note, there is no essential difference between this Message and the great mysticism. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that this Message befits the man of today: it is precisely the call that the Being Himself makes to the men of this age so that they may come to *consciousness* of Him.

My progressively deeper involvement in the Message is due to the fact that I have found expressed there the profound motivation that has accompanied me for more than three decades. But the Message represents for me not just the possibility of sharing a doctrine, an intellectual position, but it has also presented itself to me as the most concrete and attainable opportunity for putting into practice what for many years has been the main content of my classes and lectures and of my books. Until just a few years ago, I felt that my dedication to Philosophy, my identification with the nothingness and with the Being had to be translated and made concrete in the simplest acts of my everyday living; nevertheless there was a duality in me: on the one hand, a deep interest in the themes of the nothingness and of the Being, an interest that was shaking the foundations of my life; on the other hand, however, I noticed that apart from the moments in which I was

engaged in the themes of the Being and the nothingness, I was a prisoner of the conditionings of this essentially self-worshipping society. Despite the fact that I had likewise attained a great intellectual clarity about what the *I* is, it is true that all this knowledge remained nothing but pure theory. Now then, the attraction that the Message had for me was that I saw in it the possibility of *making a life* of what I had so often talked about. What most captivated me about the Message was the fact that in the people whom I knew to be identified with *it*, there was real correspondence between their words and their deeds. Not that these people had already reached perfection, but they certainly had in them the firm purpose of being faithful to their surrender, to their self-denial. Above all when one knows close at hand the person who has received the Message, one can come to realize how completely faithful she is to this total, unconditional, and unrestricted surrender to the Being. . .

As one can see, it was not for superficial reasons but for substantial ones that an interest has been awakened in me by *A Case of Conscience*. For me, it was a living example of fidelity to and consistency with what we believe we are called *to be*. What is most valuable about *A Case of Conscience* is precisely its fidelity, a fidelity that entails not only the risk of breaking with the institution within which one had lived one's life, but also running the risk of the most spectacular adventure that can fall to a human being: to disidentify with himself and to place himself totally and unconditionally in the hands of the Unknown – of the Being.

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS, AND CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BEING

“History is the treasury of errors” (José Ortega y Gasset). There are two great roads that lead us to the same conclusion of the failure of the human in man: reason and history.

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In the face of this apparent total disaster, let us pause for a moment of silence; let us gather up all the courage and patience we can and let us be still. Could silence and stillness be perhaps a way for drawing near to the absolute Reality? Let us see. Let us truly remain silent. What happens? Things are still there; here am I, without the possibility of resorting to either reason or history, but I continue to be me. It seems that this apparent total failure doesn't completely drag me down; there is something in me that is not affected by this failure.

What is there within me that is not affected by either reason or history? When I remain silent, when I am able to surrender myself to the stillness, in this silence, in this stillness, the brilliance of the Being irrupts, we hear the voice of conscience. The Being, the Conscience, have always been there, but it was necessary that man go through the trauma of breaking away from reason and the historical so that the Being could unveil Himself. Reason and history were the obstacles, and man had to dramatically undeceive himself about these obstacles in order that the path might be freed. Today the path is free.

Error and failure are not of themselves negative. In this case, they have been highly positive, enlightening. It was

necessary, and it is necessary to go through error in order to discover Truth. Error is not, as is traditionally thought, the opposite of Truth but an essential part of it. The same thing is said to us in the Message: it is necessary to live the fact that identification with the *I* is *not*, so that the true surrender to the Being might take place in us, thus enabling us to undertake the journey as *pilgrims of the Truth*.

Someone could argue: if history is error, might this not likewise mean that the Message is also error? Isn't everything that history produces consumed by history itself? Let us pause and ponder over the question carefully: the word of the great Masters – of a Buddha, of a Lao Tzu, of a Jesus Christ – and this Message, do not come from the human, do not bear the seal of the historical; history, therefore, does not consume them. The messages of these great Masters are not the fruit of human effort; they are not the result of the activity or play of the human faculties. The message of Buddha, for example, is a gift that Gautama receives. Gautama learned to be silent; he realized that he could not count on his mere human possibilities; he remained still, and in this stillness he was surrendering himself, denying himself, and as fruit of this denial, the voice of the Being shone forth in him: the Being, That from which all things come and to which all things return, That which is before and after, which always is, That which nothing consumes. From the moment in which man transcends the boundaries of the human, he becomes one with That. “*The Father and I are one*” (Jn 10:30).

*“When we arrive at the ‘Nothingness’ we are ‘Liberty’
and we are on our way toward the Being.
We are all necessarily headed toward the Being.
With our backs to the Being
the ‘Nothingness’ is negative because it ‘is not’.
Facing the Being,*

the 'Nothingness' is the most positive thing about the human being." (The "New Earth", p. 240)

It can be said that the nothingness is one of the most extraordinary rediscoveries that take place in the man of the 20th century. With the consciousness of the nothingness, one transcends what reason and history were able to offer us as pathways toward the Truth. The nothingness is that atmosphere of silence, of stillness, which we must learn to enter. The nothingness, as has already been said, reveals itself to us today as the great governess of man. The nothingness is beyond all academies, beyond all universities, beyond all laboratories of scientific experimentation, beyond all mental power, beyond all esotericism.

"When we arrive at the 'Nothingness' we are 'Liberty'." The *nothingness* liberates man from all possible holds, from all possible attractions coming from the human world or the invisible worlds: *"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head"* (Mt 8:20). Radical indigence is the richest treasure man has at his disposal. This is why when we see that this man of the 20th century has been tossed by the waves of history onto the shores of indigence, it is time to sing, Alleluia!

The revolution is on the march; man has already caught sight of the Promised Land, the "New Earth". We need only learn to be faithful to the voice of conscience. But it is also true that present-day humanity is left with only one alternative: either it sinks into the swamps of desolate solitude or it learns to discover that *sonorous solitude* of which John of the Cross speaks. Either we remain in desolation or we enter into the house of Bliss. . . .

For man, a new era, a new history begins. Until today, man was in the hands of the gods and under the power of

the human free will – the *I*. Today, the luminous possibility opens up that we learn the lesson of complete humility: that we recognize the imperative necessity of surrendering ourselves *totally, unconditionally, and directly* to the Being – to the Being who is ultimately our true Essence.

(From the *Essay* of Guillent Pérez, pp. 3-7)