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Interview

Bellybutton Power: Alternative “Integral” Perspectives in Peru with Father Vicente Santuc S.J.

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Father Vicente Santuc S.J. is dean of the Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya in Lima, Peru. The University is named after the first contemplative Catholic mystical theologian of the New World (a man who also saved the language and culture of Guarani tribes in Paraguay and the man after whom the movie “The Mission” was partially inspired). I think that, due to his clear vocation towards service and, due to his lucidly inclusive and educated open-mindedness, Father Santuc S.J. has many characteristics of a genuine ‘integral’ leader, perhaps one as specifically needed in the Peruvian context. For instance, his solid commitment to elevate educational standards and to promote intercultural education attests to this.



Father Santuc was born in France in 1936 and had a childhood within the context of WWII. In his youth he enlisted in the French army and participated in another conflict. Interestingly, his superiors wanted to promote him but, preferring to be close to the common people, he declined. For this reason, believing that he was a communist, they sent him to withstand some inhumane, life-threatening conditions. After surviving that ordeal he was involved in France with the attempted leftist and existentialist student’s ‘revolution’ of 1968, but also became a Doctor in Political Philosophy. Moreover, he holds a degree in theology, a Masters in Agrarian Economy and a Masters in Developmental Economics. Father Santuc became a Jesuit priest and, in 1970, arrived to Peru where he worked for 20 years in social development projects in the cities of Cuzco and Piura. He worked to strengthen “CIPCA” (a social research and applications NGO) and wrote or coauthored books, including some on the shamanic practices from northern Peru.

As a unique ‘reincarnation’ of previous Jesuit educational centers, the Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya opened in 2003, offering degrees in Education, Philosophy, Sustainable Tourism and Political Science. Today, it is considered an avant-garde educational institution, based on Jesuit principles that are progressively presented to the current world. The university (which arose from a long tradition of educational institutions) is now perceived as creatively independent and not particularly aligned with the expansion of the ‘Opus Dei’ or similar conservative movements also attempting to influence society and diverse higher institutions of learning.

Both inspired and disturbed by the informal and creative ways manifested in Peru and by the ways in which this multicultural country is rapidly changing, Father Santuc S.J. has, nonetheless, remained a humane,

visionary voice and a concerned, open-minded visionary activist. He has led symposia on politics, social issues, faith and ecology and written books on ethics and on what kind of philosophy might be possible in the current world. He has also spoken against the debasement of education, of local cultures and of the tacit social agreements that hold society together in an organic way, debasements occurring to gratify market demands as the mindset for voraciously selling goods and services takes over and becomes the one prevalent social bond.

Father Santuc S.J. educates others to think more inclusively and to generate greater respect towards our global ecological legacy and—indicative of his creditworthiness—has had the intelligence to use the questions raised by philosopher F. Nietzsche against the Catholic Church, not to neutralize them, but to turn them into a stimulus for amending the problems often not perceived within that Church.

Father Santuc S.J. has spent over 40 years in my effervescent, developing, frustrating and challenging country and –luckily for us all- has also chosen to become a full fledged Peruvian citizen.

Part One

Piacenza: A few days ago we saw on TV the incredible rescue of the miners in Chile. When they were first able to reach the exterior world, the first thing they said was “Viva Chile!” Supposing that a similar event had happened in Peru with great chagrin I believe that the miners wouldn’t have said “Viva Peru!” Peruvians are not considered nationalists. Nationalism is positive because it affirms our identity, but it is equally negative because that same national pride produces wars and conflicts. Do you think that an integral education should include the development of national sentiment or, on the contrary, it’s better not to have it in order to more easily reach an integration among human beings, eliminating nationalisms for all of us just to become Earth inhabitants?

Santuc: Well, in effect, what is raised in that question is the issue of one of the tensions with which we live today, inasmuch as we have come to realize different matters, like that the nationalism which has led to so many wars, in the end, is something negative. And we know it throughout history; human beings have died for multiple causes. The human being has died, for example, in Greece defending the polis, the city. Then again, he has also died to defend his religion. Moreover, in the XIX and XX Centuries we have seen many wars taking place to defend the country, for a nationalist defense and, I believe that we have reached a moment in which, on the one hand, we can recognize that human beings have been able to die for very different things. But we have also come to realize that, today, the only cause that merits dying for, is the defense of the very humanity in human beings; the defense of their freedom, defense of their justice, defense of their possible shared living as human beings on this Earth which is the only planet that we have. Thus, I think that we have made some progress even in that matter. It was said after the Second World War that such a tragedy (war) would never be repeated but we have continued making wars.

So, on the one hand, we are aware of the artificiality and damage that exacerbated nationalism causes and we are aware that the defense of nations and borders is no longer a cause that should mobilize us into war. We already know that. But, on the other hand, we are in an economy that, in great measure is supported by arms production. So, if we were to imagine today that the production of arms was annulled, both in the U.S. as in European countries, this would represent a great crisis. Therefore, we are *ad portas* or before a great reconsideration of (the meaning of) human coexistence and, until today, we know that the problem has been poised without knowing how to solve it. We don’t know how to live as human beings or only as “Earth inhabitants,” as you say: Belonging to the Earth. Also, as that collective belonging has become generalized for (sharing) different resources, we have simultaneously seen that various attachment needs have re-emerged. These are attachments for a culture, attachments for a tradition, for a history, for a religion, for particularities. Consequently, here we are

with a tension which we still need to envision how to manage. We have it in our hands, but what we causally have is not seen in order to know how to proceed.

Piacenza: Yes, and there's a resurgence of conservative thinking...

Santuc: It's like a kind of pendulum, isn't it? We move from universal perspectives to particular perspectives...

Piacenza: Yes, but generally, it has been believed that modernity and post modernity can lead to greater degrees of human freedom. Perhaps the positive side of post modernity is tolerance to different points of view, but also many intellectuals believe that we are falling onto a relativism in which the Meta narratives have died, one in which the great ideological causes have disappeared. What kind of education do you think is necessary today to surmount this (current) stage, this pessimism?

Santuc: In effect, it is a moment in which the horizons have opened in a totally different manner for human beings. And this is what, in a certain way, postmodernity points to, by inserting critical endnotes to modernity. These endnotes are critical of that which -during modernity- was also connected with inheritances from the past, (critical of) great narratives that pointed to what seemed to be the logical endpoints of a single history. For instance, as part of a belief in a previous history, was that belief in reason as capable of leading in all dimensions (of life). We have seen—during the war of 45'—that the concentration camps, both in the Soviet Union as in the Nazi regime, supposed the investment of much reason, of operational, technical reason, which is (a form of) reason nonetheless. Thus, the ambiguity of reason has appeared in all its nakedness, hasn't it? And, (the idea) that there was a logic within reason, a logic taking us to safe port, has also died.

Now, all these things resided within modernity as inheritances of a past, but modernity—in a certain way—represents an aperture, a criticism and also the statement that man only is freedom given to himself. And (in relation to) this great statement—which is the statement held by modernity, a statement through which nations, businesses and all kinds of organizations have been structured,—well, today, as humanity, we find ourselves with this inheritance. We also find ourselves with the assignment toward a self determination, to consider ourselves as one (single) humanity, knowing that the organizations that we are going to give to ourselves—whether political, social, collective—will be the ones that we are going to create, (knowing) that there is no guarantor outside of us. This is a novelty and it is the challenge that humanity has right now. So, what to do with that freedom? What creation will humanity know to formulate in those circumstances?

Now, evidently, that great statement of modernity based on freedom and self determination hadn't been completely experienced in all its nakedness until after (the advent of) postmodernity. So what does 'postmodernity' mean? That we are 'after' modernity. We are in a moment in which we have assumed modernity's inheritance. Hence, there's something to do and we find ourselves in a completely new situation. It is interesting and this compels us to turn to different parameters in relation to what our existence consists of. First, (we need) to know, to recognize, to become responsible for the fact that we are creators of the modes of human coexistence or of human living and (to know) that we are the only ones responsible for this. There is a life that was handed in to us and we have to know how we are going to live it in concert with others.

In this moment (the thesis of) "eco-ethics" is being spoken about. It is not an ecological ethics; it is not an ethics of ecology. "Eco-ethics" is an ethic of that "oikos," of that shared house which is the Earth for us human beings. Consequently, this "eco-ethics" possesses dimensions that we have to know and keep in mind. On the one hand, it has to do with our relations with others—all others. We cannot continue thinking of ourselves as human beings from this or that village, nation, culture or religion. We have to think of ourselves as human beings of the planet and that we have the responsibility of

finding paths of human coexistence for all. And also with a (kind of) human coexistence that is sustainable, sustainable for the Earth, sustainable for the 'others'. So, this is a perspective that we have at hand today while still not knowing how to walk with it.

Then, another exceedingly important dimension of that "planetarization" involves the products of techno-science. Techno-science doesn't have any direction. It gives us tools and—as all tools—they are ambiguous. A serving knife can serve to spread butter over bread or to murder. Technology is something similar. Therefore, we need to know that there's a question that is proposed: What do we do with such a sophisticated technology that we have at hand? We have to realize that we have to manage it and here's a political and ethical problem. Following this, we know that, in relation to the Earth, in relation to nature, we are not separated. We don't have a subject-object relation but are part of it. We are of this, we are of this, we are part of the Earth. Thus, we need to know how to recognize that. It is another kind of relation. The ancients knew it. The "Pachamama" said this, right? There isn't a subject-object relation. It is us. We are inscribed within a system.

Piacenza: It is considered that the Catholic Church exerts much influence in the values followed by people. What role could the church assume to serve as a transporting medium that could carry people towards considering values at a world level, or on an "ecoethical" level? What do you think that this Catholic Church might need to change to become a cultural leader today?

Santuc: I think that what the Catholic Church would need to do—as well as all Christian Churches in general—is to return to the Gospel. Return to the Gospel that continues to be "good news," a Gospel in which Jesus tells each of us "but the Father is in you" and "the Father is in the other." He tells us, "discover that, open up to His presence and live out of Him." And (in the Gospel) Jesus tells us that the important thing is not so much the ideas we might have about God, about the (religious) behaviors we ought to have. The Pharisees were full of preoccupations about what had to be done during this or that moment and under rules, but Jesus reduces these things to a very simple one. He tells us that, what in the end judges you, is the piece of bread, the cup of water you might or might not know whether or not to give to the 'other' in an anonymous way. Thus, Jesus limits us to a practice, a practice of attention to the other, a practice of exiting (or leaving) ourselves, a practice of knowing how to give life to others. We are in life; we have life if we give life. This is what Jesus says. This is God's gesture from His eternity which, coming out of himself, gives life. And Jesus tells us to let that life pass through. It is about possessing that gesture of God within you. Give life!

And Jesus also tells us another thing. Do not give so much importance to the differences among religions. There are texts in the Gospel in which we see Jesus recognizing, for instance, that the centurion has a faith he had never found among the children of Israel, in spite of the centurion having his head full of gods and not sharing in the beliefs Jesus might have. So Jesus invites us to be able to distinguish between beliefs or, in other words, the discourses, the practices, and the behaviors we might have stemming from a faith and what faith in itself really is. Faith allows an interpersonal relation of trust. So, Jesus calls for a life inspired or sustained by faith and a faith that effectively expresses in a way of conduct. Jesus returns to that. So, perhaps in relation to so many theological and physical 'cathedrals' that we have learnt to build across history, we should possibly know how to come out of them. God's life or the relationship with God doesn't happen within these privileged spaces. Jesus told us that the only 'privileged' place in which the encounter with God happens is found in the 'other'! There are no 'privileged' times or spaces. That which is 'privileged' is the encounter with the 'other', the service of the 'other'.

Piacenza: How does the Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya distinguish itself from other universities which also focus upon the humanities?

Santuc: Well, if other universities are truly focused upon the humanities, this is the best. Then, there

wouldn't be any major difference. The problem is that (the idea about) the 'focus' is not a mere declaration, it must be a practice. Thus, things distinguish themselves at the level of practices. That focus upon the humanities, for instance, in the Ruiz de Montoya (University) is indicated by the fact that every student, from the beginning, is going to be formed out of a historical perspective, under the assumption that history is the best way to form intelligences, to allow a young student—after a long journey across universal history, national history, the history of music, the history of art—to see human life from the historical perspective. This then allows him to know how to situate himself within human history.

History is not made of dates one has to connect. History is about knowing how today I am here thinking and being able to think (about) this or that matter because, yesterday, others thought (about) another matter. If today I am able to have one or another kind of prospect it is because yesterday others established the bases for (having) those expectations. That is exceedingly important. That is a humanist formation. The other (aspect of the) humanist formation consists of helping the student to explore his inner worlds and this is done through art, literature. (It involves) learning to recognize how human beings have explored what it means to be a human being together with others. Then, by going through different historical stages, the student can see that there isn't one single way to be a human being.

The (ancient) Egyptians were human beings and also the Greeks, the Assyrians, the Aztecs and the Incas. We don't have the privilege. They also loved, they also believed, they had anxieties, passions, and joys, just like us. So this is about effectively recognizing that there are different ways of being human together; and this prepares students to be present at this historical moment in which we have to coexist with other cultures, as we are so aware today. Thus, humanist education prepares for this (situation). Moreover, humanist education is also—above all else—about helping the student to learn how to inhabit his own life, and knowing how to inhabit one's life is not a minor thing.

Piacenza: Generally speaking, those of us who analyze the set of problems Peru faces today, assume reflexive and theoretical positions but very rarely 'land' with specific proposals. Do you think that an education created to form integral human beings would suffice if its foundations comprise human values, world religions and an education for peace?

Santuc: These dimensions are clearly necessary but not sufficient because every person in this society needs to have the capacity to take on a job and of being responsible. Thus, there is a professional training that is absolutely necessary. But this kind of training is often the exclusive aim, as in the last decades, there has been so much insistence on specialization. Specialized brains are the ones that have made this world the place where we are, so filled with violence. Consequently, that is not enough. We need to know how to educate boys and girls able to inhabit their lives. And being able to inhabit their lives means being happy about their lives and to be able to say 'yes' to past, to parents; to know the history where I come from, to know the moment in which I am, that moment which is quite complex and, therefore, there are many 'entrances' that need to be facilitated to the student, because he needs to know these different dimensions of the world where he is situated. And, finally, the question with which we have to escort him along—whichever it may be the specialization he takes—is, what do I do with this knowledge, what do I do for my self, my society and my country? It is the great practical question—one of attitude and not just of knowledge—that is also (about) knowing how to respond to that radical question which is: What do I do with my life?

Piacenza: Do you think that Peru can bequeath anything of cultural value to humanity?

Santuc: Well, yes! Peru has a great cultural heritage and, at this moment, has a way of being that any visitor immediately perceives. It is a kind of affection, a kind of being with the 'other' which comes from a pre-Columbian past that has endured, which hasn't been completely wiped out by the modernization of the country and which generates a great force within the primary kinship, spiritual or

blood relations. In the end, if we take a close look at Peru, with respect to the Law and the way it is formulated in different legal corpuses, we can grow in despair by noticing that Peru doesn't uphold the Law. But if we looked at things from another perspective, if we had a (perspectival) 'entrance' based on the kinship bonds that are the fabric that sustains all of that (social life), we would see that, perhaps, Peru has a kind of *sui generis* consistency that we should learn how to recognize and to theorize. Unfortunately, there aren't many studies about this, but, for instance, if we observe the (economic) development of the North Cone (the urban expansion zone in northern Lima), we can observe that that development, and also the development of micro enterprises—both in services and production—has been rooted on the basis of kinship spiritual relations, albeit perhaps with a marked level of self-exploitation, but also with a great capacity for saving and capitalizing. And there we have a kind of Peruvian capitalist model.

Piacenza: There's a kind of very *sui generis* effervescence towards being entrepreneurial. Practically, everyone wants to become an entrepreneur.

Santuc: And that within their families.

Piacenza: Yes, that is quite special and how good it is that you have taken notice of it.

Part Two

Piacenza: Can we transcend today the postmodern stage, the end of Meta narratives, in a metaphysical and philosophical or—perhaps—more humane way?

Santuc: Well, I think that human beings can basically transcend, to come out and move into another model in relation to their existence (because) this is what they have done throughout their history. Why? Because, a human being is essentially a creator, a creator of himself, a creator of the contexts in which he lives. We had (collectively) forgotten about this since, for a long time, human beings were afraid of their creativity and, for this reason, allocated this (creativity) to foundational heroes, sustaining long-lasting traditions over time. Today, in a certain manner, we are becoming aware that this life—within which we have been invited—has also been handed to us, and it is we who have to see what to do with it. And I also believe that, in relation to this matter and in relation to the creation of new forms, or of the laying of completely new ways of making sense of human coexistence, we have to return to anthropology, an anthropology centered in the sense of how life comes to us. Life always comes given to us by others.

We all have a belly button, don't we? This tells us that we have arrived cut from others. This tells us that the relation with the 'other' is not an alternative. In fact, we are 'assigned' to the 'other'. We are 'assigned' to the 'other' from the 'other's body that also carries the scar of the bellybutton, from the other's body that breathes, eats, depends on nature. We are also 'assigned' out of our own body, which speaks.

None of us has invented the word. We have always received the word from our parents with meanings and signifiers. We ought to return to this (fact). These are very simple matters, aren't they? So, (we ought) to return to these and not to think as that abstract being which, in effect, modernity had in some ways bequeathed to us, after breaking ties with previous worlds and launching us to a way of thinking in which we couldn't think of ourselves other than as isolated beings or as isolated consciousnesses. Furthermore, according to what we know of previous eras, this is a kind of falsehood toward which modernity has launched us.

For me, the path consists of returning to how life comes to us within a body that speaks, a body that depends on nature. In this (fact) we have all the dimensions that needed to return to life. And when

I say “return to the body in the way life comes to us,” well, (this means that) each human being is received in the arms of his mother or of his parents and—by this act—he is automatically told that they believe in him or her, that they believe in his or her possibility of being a man or a woman. As a result, we come from faith, from trust and we have taken these on credit. We come from faith and trust and cannot build anything that is not settled on that basis. And the first experience we had as children is that that was good. We have smiled, we have enjoyed that experience of the gift of life, and we have felt that it was good. So, the first experience of that, of the gift of life, was felt in our body as a good thing (because) we smiled.

So, before beginning to rent the words from our tribe in order to speak about things, we have altogether said “yes” to this life as it comes and as a good thing. This seems to very important to me, and this is something that we have to do today with the whole of humanity, with all of us. Life shows itself to the Chinese, to the African, to the Inuit of the north and, in the same manner, for everyone. There’s always a mother and a father and, normally, affection, kisses. That is the community of the good: We share the good of life. The first thing is to know that fact and the second thing is to know that, as soon as I speak, we share common goods.

The first thing that the child does when he speaks is to internalize the values, the referents, and the way of living of his group; therefore, all the way back from our birth we share two things: First, the community of the good—of how good life is! Second, it is the community of shared values, of the common good. So, (what we need is) to return to that. Do you see?

Piacenza: Quite interesting, and I don’t think that that way of thinking is divorced from a contemplative or non dual approach. Some would say that it is a regression to a tribal primitivism or to the body, if understood as a limitation, but it is not a limitation against the spirit but, rather, a liberation.

Santuc: By no means (it is a limitation). I’m a believer in incarnation...

Piacenza: Incarnation or reincarnation?

Santuc: Incarnation. Jesus has told us about his incarnation and we also are incarnated spirits. Therefore, we have to bring to life that, to have that in mind and to take it seriously. We aren’t just spirits and consciousnesses and neither are we only bodies. We are ‘that’ (wholeness?) and we have to make ‘that’ live. And we make it live together with others on this Earth. It is with this air that we breathe, with that Sun. We are in that (participation?).

Piacenza: Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya owes its name to a great mystic and theologian. Why is that? Has it been inspired on contemplation, which I call “non duality”?

Santuc: Hum, well, this man is a Jesuit... Well, there’s a phrase by St. Ignatius (founder of the order) which says that Jesuits have to be “contemplatives in action.” Thus, there’s no duality; there’s one moment for contemplation and another for action. It is the same in both. So, in effect, Ruiz de Montoya for us was or is a symbol of that. He is a Peruvian from Lima, someone who had quite a dissolute youth and since, at a certain point in his life he felt menaced by what he had done, he (temporarily) sought refuge in the (Jesuit) novitiate and, while being there, something occurred for him. After requesting to be admitted more permanently, he became a Jesuit. In an early stage, he requested to go to the missions, whic at that time meant Paraguay, meant being with the Guarani. So he went and, thus, became the organizer of the “reducciones” (reservations) in Paraguay.

He is a man of action, a notable man of action. For instance, when the pressure exerted by the Brazilians was excessive, he organized the migration of some 20,000 Guaranis to the northern part of Argentina, this to avoid the Brazilians capturing them and turning them into slaves. So, he organized all those reservations and—also to defend the Guarani—he wrote a book that remains as the first American

anthropological text. Then, he wrote a Guarani-Spanish dictionary, a Guarani grammar and, finally, a mystical text at the end of his life when, after returning from the Spanish court—where he had gone to intercede for the Guarani—and, while he was here in Lima waiting for the Viceroy to receive him (in an audience), he wrote that text, “El Sílex del Amor Divino” (The Silex of Divine Love). That text is, in effect, a text on mystical theology and it is interesting how, in that text, he clearly refers to all what has been received by the Christian mystical tradition, but also to all of what he received in his mystical experiences with the Guarani tradition.

Piacenza: How interesting! Could you explain a little more?

Santuc: I don’t have much more, but there we have a person for whom his experience of God recognizes that the path to this experience evidently goes through the tradition in which he was born, while recognizing that the Guarani have also known how to refer to God or of the contact with God made by the human being. Thus, the Guarani wise men were capable of speaking of their own experience about divinity. That is very interesting.

Piacenza: It is interesting because it is an integral attitude before the modern period.

Santuc: Yes, that is so, and that—at least—coincides with what the Vatican II Council said when it held that the Catholic Church recognized that, in other regions, it is also possible to have an authentic experience of God. He (Ruiz de Montoya) gives us a testimony about this.

Piacenza: Very few people even today know that the Church recognizes this.

Santuc: Oh well, because oftentimes others take (greater) care in establishing differences, but, nonetheless, Jesus recognized this.

Piacenza: Yes, and that is what is most important.

Santuc: That’s why I say that we have to return to the Gospel.

Piacenza: If you were in a position to be able to change education in Peru, a position of power, what would you do?

Santuc: Preferably, referring to an education for both Peru and the rest of the world, I believe that—and not just from a power position—what all of us need is an awareness in society in general, in civil society coming to realize that, with education, something quite essential is being played, and that this is not a matter for one or another government or only of modifications of this or that (educational) program. In fact, today, this is a question for all of humanity everywhere, isn’t it? Every society, every human group that we can observe has asked the question of how to reproduce itself, not just physically but also culturally. This is the question we have at hand as a human group today, as the ‘portion’ of humanity that we are today. The question of our own biological and cultural reproduction must be raised, and when we say “cultural” this encompasses other dimensions: the affective, the emotional and the one of attachment to a tradition and history. It also includes knowing how to administer a technology that we have in our hands, knowing what to do with that. Do we want to produce more wars or what else do we want to produce? Therefore, here is a very serious question for the ‘portion’ of humanity that we currently are.

As of today, we are a ‘portion’ of humanity that is unique in all of the history of humanity, (a portion) in which the majority of us is (chronologically) situated between the ages of 15 and 30, which means that the youth are the majority in relation to the whole. Thus, there lies a great responsibility for us. What are we going to transmit to them? Are we only going to transmit technology in order to make wars; technology to extract more goods from the Earth, goods that we know are limited; technology

in order to have others produce and to consume even more? So, there is something to reconsider. This is where the question on education lies. What kind of education are we capable of? This is a critical moment for education, isn't it?

The ancient ones were right when they said that the state has to oversee. In other words, what is the 'state'? It is the instance (or authority) that, for a human group, represents the space where that human group becomes aware of itself and decides about itself. That is the 'state'. It is not a mere 'apparatus' or such a thing as Hobbes said. It is the place where human group becomes aware of itself and decides about itself. Thus, in that sense, the state, in effect has a responsibility, but that authority has to be the place where there is a group of persons that can formulate onto themselves the question we have been talking about before, right? Therefore, what kind of education? It is in relation to this matter where, evidently, there has to be an education with an instructional perspective, one which, above all, is an education that serves the possibility of the (humane) reproduction of this human species and in the context in which we now are. And this is not going to be done while society in general denies in certain ways the responsibility of education at the expense of scapegoats found by each particular government, ministry or leading professor's term of office. This is not going to be done until all of us personally engage the significant question.

Piacenza: I have seen that, throughout history, there have been great discoveries. Sometimes these have been ideas and, sometimes, technologies. These have motivated social and cultural changes and ways of perceiving things have radically changed. Do you believe that something new is being unconsciously brewed here?

Santuc: Yes, something is brewing but we don't clearly know what. We don't have words for that. Well, 'something' is brewing. On the one hand we have the new awareness that we are but one humanity. Evidently, there're clashes between religions, between nations and so forth, but today we are aware that we are a single humanity in a single planet. On the other hand, we are aware that we cannot mistreat that planet and that, therefore, we need to know how to manage that. We're beginning to become aware that the impetus for more and more, for more production and more consumption is not the path to follow; that, perhaps, post modernity can be useful for this (recognition). That logic geared towards "more, more, and more" is not sustainable either humanly or in an ecological, Earth-based level. And we also have the new awareness that we cannot continue hurting each other in this way. And the misery we generate is also something that hits all of us. So, there are things (brewing) but we don't know how to manage that. Life is one and the problem has been raised and now we have to see what to do with that.

Piacenza: So you believe in human creativity?

Santuc: Yes, off course. We are that. We are creativity.

Piacenza: In an interview given to "Peru 21" (a local newspaper) in 2006, you said that the greatest kind of poverty is not the material one but a poverty of conversation. What did you want to say with that?

Santuc: Well, I wanted to say that what makes us human is not simply to eat, to dress up or to manage things. What makes us humans is the relation with the 'other'. To open ourselves together to ideas we can share, to feelings that we share, to shared perspectives about projects. In other words, that which makes us human is to share our humanity together. And we don't have an isolated humanity, as something that has to be kept in our interior. Our humanity develops in relation to others. And, yes, I have experience in a situation that I lived for some time, a situation in which the greatest poverty was found in the poverty pertaining to human relations. If you spend your life in a situation in which the only kind of words you can express are something like "pass me the salt, I'll pass you the pepper," said in different ways but with those sorts of contents, your humanity will show that it has

diminished. We must share feelings and ideas and frustrations. That is what makes us human.

Piacenza: One last question Father Santuc. What inspires you about Peru to remain here for more than forty years?

Santuc: Ah, as I have said many times, Peru is both a fascinating and an exasperating country. It is that fact which essentially seems to me to be extremely interesting. Peru is a fascinating country because, well, it is made of diversity at every level. For instance, at a biodiversity level it is one of the largest genetic reserves in the world, right? It also has a great cultural diversity where one doesn't necessarily have to go to the mountains or to the jungle to find. It's enough to walk around Lima and to observe –with adequate eyes- in the same (person's) face, the indian, the white, the black and the forest dweller. So, this country is fascinating because of this. It is (also) fascinating because we are living a kind of process in which all (developmental) periods of time converge. We have the time periods of the jungle, in which some cultures still live in the Neolithic. Then, in Lima, we have the time periods of banks which live by Wall Street's clock. So, all time periods are found and this creates a kind of 'magma' as there is a conglomerate of forces that cancel each other, that contradict each other, that strengthen each other and (in a place where) one is present to this. This makes Peru a fascinating country because things always happen, from the most sublime to the most aberrant.

Now, is it an exasperating country? Yes. For a long time I worked in an NGO up north, in CIPCA as, thus far, have been here (in Peru) for over forty years. Peru seems to me sometimes as similar to that which happens when one prepares mayonnaise. It may form or not form but, if it does, it may suddenly disappear. In like manner, the institutions of the country sometimes seem to 'catch on' (to appear and organize) and then they leave.

Piacenza: Here, enthusiasm doesn't seem to last for too long, right?

Santuc: But then, enthusiasm returns. I remember a dialogue held in the city of Piura with a general from 'SINAMOS' (a government institution formed during the de facto leftist revolutionary government of General Velazco Alvarado). He used to rebuke me on what we were doing in relation to the education of farm workers and blatantly declared that 'SINAMOS' would last for a very long time. Well, 'SINAMOS' has disappeared and CIPCA is still here. Thus, in like manner, we have official institutions that are born and that seem to be able to structure and hold the country's integrity but then, suddenly disappear. And this happens again and again.

Piacenza: What seems to be enduring is the sustained macroeconomic development of the country.

Santuc: Well I don't know, I don't know, but there is this kind of institutional fragility which is exasperating. What transpires is that Peru hasn't yet found the institutionalism corresponding to that which Peru is.

Piacenza: What do you mean?

Santuc: That for Peru we have imported institutions or institutional models from the north, but Peru is much more complex than (what is implied by) this. Thus, as I previously said, we have a kind of 'official' Peru expressed in the Law, in the Constitution and we also have another Peru, established on kinship, spiritual, blood relations, and so forth, relations which give consistency to Peru. We are still waiting to see when legality and informality are going to couple. Thus, if we can couple them and have a formula and institutions that express them, that will be lasting.

Piacenza: Could it be that, since formality has not been tied in its own way then, through informality, people seek to achieve whatever (they need) if it can be achieved?

Santuc: It is not that people seek through informality but (the main fact is simply that) that they seek and neither formality is the cause of that seeking.

Piacenza: And does this (situation) have any potential?

Santuc: This is an enormous potential.

Piacenza: Why?

Santuc: Because there is much creativity. One of the admirable facts is that, while in many countries situations of misery, poverty, violence and lack of respect can conclude in suicidal situations, there's no such thing here. Somehow, people believe and fight. How many youths I meet who come from harsh, catastrophic family situations! These (situations) don't belong to a particular social class but, nonetheless, these youth put in a fight. This is extremely respectable: their adhesion to life in spite of everything.

Piacenza: Exactly! And that can be an example for today for Europe and the United States. It is very interesting. Well, thank you Father Santuc for this interview. I do wish you much success.

Santuc: Will you send me the interview?

Piacenza: Yes, off course!

Santuc: I want to see what you'll make me say.

About the Author

Giorgio Piacenza Cabrera was born in Lima, Peru. From the age of 10, he began to question the nature of reality and what motivates human behavior. From the age of 12, he began to participate in Western esoteric and Oriental mystical groups, trying to synthesize knowledge while maintaining a critical perspective all along. In 1987 he earned a degree in Sociology from Georgetown University and, in 1990, two business certificates from John F. Kennedy University.

For several years, while working in a regular business, he researched the UFO phenomenon and offered lectures, and TV/radio interviews. Between 1999- 2000, he became one of the civilian founding members of OIFAA, the Peruvian Airforce Investigations Office on Anomalous Aerial Phenomena. Through the years, Giorgio has maintained a wide-ranging interest that impinges on various aspects of reality, aspects such as the mind-body problem, philosophy, cosmology and physics. He has been a life-long student of integrative theoretical models and, since 1981, of Ken Wilber's. He has completed a Certificate in Integral Theory offered by John F. Kennedy University, plans to write articles and essays, to pursue a Masters degree in Integral Theory and also the analysis of Meta Theories.

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