

INTERVIEW WITH LAURENTINO AFONSO: FROM THEOLOGY TO CONSCIENIOLOGY¹

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How was your childhood and how did you identify with the Catholic paradigm?

I was born in the interior of Minas Gerais, in 1938, in April. It was a rustic environment, with no modernity. My house had no plaster, no ceiling, only a roof, no running water, no bathroom, neither inside nor outside. I lived in that environment for 10 years. There was no school. At the age of 8, I would already take the horses and donkeys to run a cane jam mill, later also *cachaça*, owned by my grandfather. My childhood was focused on the things of the land.

At the age of 10 we moved to the city and I went to school. In April 1948, I went to see what a school was for the first time. I was illiterate. At the beginning I had problems because we spoke a dialect, it was not standard Portuguese, the boys in the city made fun of us and I never accepted bullying. It is good that I tell you so you know what my disposition was, my character.

Two and a half years later, I was playing on the street, when a boy I knew passed by with a priest, after a while I came to know his name: Pedro Balint². I stopped, looked at the boy and said: Aristide, where are you going? He said: I'm going to the seminary. I dropped everything, took the marbles and put them in my pocket: "I'm going too"! And I ran over to the priest. The priest paid attention to me, talked to me: "son, it will not be possible to take you now, as we are going tomorrow, but in January we will come back to pick you up, talk to your parents". He took note of my address, name, and left. A few months later, another priest appeared, but from the same place. He summoned me to the rectory, talked and arranged for me to be picked up in January.

In January, Father Balint came, my mother had just given birth and some of her friends arranged clothes to prepare me. Three days later I went to the seminary. I did well at the seminary, I liked to study, I did the admission, preparation for the gymnasium, because I was only in the third year of the elementary school. I did the fourth year and the admission all in one year. In August I had already caught up

¹ Interview kindly granted by videoconference on 18th and 19th March 2020.

² Pedro Balint (Romania, 1901 – São Paulo, 1984), priest of the Congregation of Sion, founded the Ipiranga Worker Circle in 1936 and the Hospital Leão XIII in 1942.

all the others and I started to get good marks. It is said that modesty is nonsense, so from that day on I took first place in practically the whole minor seminary, I left no place for anyone, studying became something passionate for me.

I stayed at this seminary for a year and a half and then an incident happened. We were playing, in the evening after dinner, and one of the watchmen, an older student, proposed a game for us to take one of the classmates and push them on a slope between the courtyards, and so we started to see who was capable of escaping. There was no danger, ok. The recess was over, we went to pray the rosary, study and then sleep.

The next day, we decided to do that game again. The watchman came angrily saying that we were playing a game that we could not. “Hand-play is villain’s play”, that was the saying they had. I only understood this when I was into Philosophy, which was to avoid pedophilia or homosexual contacts.

But he had started the game the day before and the next day, because he was not present, we could not, so he gave us punishment: precisely to write 50 times “Hand-play is villain’s play”. Anyone who read *Louis Lambert*³ knows that at his boarding school he also had this kind of punishment. So I said: “I’m not going to do this, no”. I wrote only once or twice, he came to check it and saw that I didn’t finish. And so it was one day, another day, and I wouldn’t write it. The sentence there had already accumulated up to 1000 times, and kept increasing. I had a great sense of justice and I thought that was unfair.

In the middle of the year, a senior priest called me and said: “You have a choice: you either do the punishment or you leave”. Then I said: “I would rather leave than stay in a seminary that gives unfair punishment”. I packed my little bundle and the other day I left.

When I arrived in São Paulo, the priest who had taken me and sponsored me asked what happened, because I had some of the best grades. I told him and he took the phone and called there, confirmed it, and said: “Do you accept to go to Castro (Paraná)”? And I said: “I don’t know where it is, but I accept”. Instead of going home, I went to another seminary of the same congregation. There, things got complicated for me, because the news I was badly behaved preceded me. I had to completely change my behavior, become a “little saint”, you know? For four and a half years I stayed there and then I went on to study Philosophy.

Why did you see the boy with the priest and wanted to go with him? What did you think and feel?

I had a cousin, who I didn’t know personally, he had gone to seminary and then left. He ended up living in my parents’ house for a while and I heard about

³ Honoré de Balzac’s book, classified in Philosophical Studies, exposes the phenomenon of the projection of the consciousness and proposes the designation of *Homo duplex* to the projector. Laurentino Afonso translated the work, published by Epigrafe in 2020.

saving souls, so my business was to save souls. Another point was to leave that environment where I was. A few months earlier there was a circus in Paraisópolis. I provided the horse for the clown to advertise it and then I had free ticket. I wanted to get away with the circus, but they didn't want to take me.

Another thing, when I was a child I wondered whose son I was, I thought I was not my parents' son. A stranger in the nest, an expression that quite matches my reality. The idea of studying was very important to me. I wanted to learn, to know things, to travel, to open my head.

And how was it in the Philosophy course regarding theological discussions?

In Philosophy we could read newspapers, have information, read other books, and my mind started to expand. During classes, we discussed religion, discussed a couple of things, and there was a problem that I didn't accept. It was precisely the idea that if one was not baptized, they would have no salvation, they would go to hell. I thought this was unfair, after all there are the Chinese, the Hindus, the Indians, etc. I argued with the Philosophy professor: "Is Abraham in hell?" Answer: "No, Saint Abraham". And Jacob? And Moses? No. A prophet, a king of Israel, David. No. Saint Joseph? He's not in hell, he's a saint. But he wasn't baptized, was he?

I argued that Jesus did not come to save, he came to hinder, because before he came, a person could go to heaven without being baptized. The priest dodged and had no answer. The question of hell started to disturb me, it didn't match my intuitions of justice. Naturally it was an environment where God was central, fair, good, father, etc.

By the way, I have to go back when I was 3 and a half years old. I had a brother 2 years older and a little brother 2 years younger. This little brother was sick and Dad and Mom hadn't slept well at night, the boy got better and they wanted to sleep earlier. We were playing at the foot of their bed, doing somersaults. Dad lost patience, got up, and hit the belt on my older brother and then on me. After he stopped, we went to the porch, we saw the stars, wept and shouted: "alas, heaven's father, come and help me". At a certain moment I stopped and said: Josino – he was my older brother – we are not going to shout heavenly daddy anymore, it was daddy who hit us, we are going to shout just alas.

At that moment, I linked the father archetype with the earthly father, and if the earthly father was able to beat up, to do that to us, it was no use asking the heavenly father, they were of the same ilk. I remember that my whole life, but very late I came to think about my way of looking at things, I would not accept imposition. With a treat you took me anywhere, but if you forced me to do anything that was against my will I wouldn't do it.

At the seminary, did you already have a formulation for the problem of hell?

Philosophically it was said that God was omniscient, omnipresent, fair, good in a supreme degree, etc. I couldn't, as I can't, admit that with that degree of knowledge, of intelligence, how would he create someone to put in hell? They taught us that it is a mortal sin if you die without confessing, you go to hell. But the 13-, 14-year-old kid who makes a trick, crosses the street and has an accident, goes to hell just because of that thing.

The proportion of the punishment did not fit my conception of justice, a punishment disproportionate to the crime. Let's call sin a crime. You demand someone to be baptized, to undergo a ritual of which they are not even aware of. After I got out of this salvationist paradigm, things got much easier.

How was the experience in the novitiate and what consequences did it have?

The novitiate is a place of the congregation, an isolation for 1 year in which you have no formal study, it is dedicated to spiritual life, readings, conferences, praying more and more, meditation. It had a literature teacher, he read aloud the material the entire class, he would not admit questions. All this forbidden time to be proactive left us without the habit of asking questions.

Luckily for us, the Superior General⁴ who had come from Canada was spending a season there. He had been in Brazil for a few years, a cultured person, an open mind, and he lectured daily to us in French so that we could train the language. One day he woke up a little nervous, angry, he couldn't stand the passivity of the students anymore and started to criticize us that we were passive, we didn't have a backbone, we didn't ask questions, to see if the morale of the class would raise.

He finished, I raised my hand and described our history: we never had the right to ask and do you want us to miraculously have the courage to ask a question? Few days later, on Sunday a Regional Superior came and asked to speak with me. I went to talk to him in a beautiful garden at the novitiate. I asked if they wanted me to leave and he said just the opposite. This Superior became my friend, when I went to Europe we exchanged letters.

Could you do a basic chronology of your life?

Born in 1938, in Conceição dos Ouros / MG. Moving to Paraisópolis in 1948. I went to the seminary⁵ on January 25, 1951, in São Sebastião do Paraíso. I went to Castro in the middle of 1952 and stayed until the end of 1956. There I did the minor seminary⁶, corresponding to the gym and classic (high school). From 1957 to the

4 Lino Caliarì (Romano, Italy, 1908-1973).

5 Seminary Nossa Senhora do Sion, ran from 1942 to 1976.

6 Seminary of St. Joseph of the Religious of Sion.

end of 1958 I did Philosophy in São Paulo, in the Ipiranga neighborhood, it was a seminary of the Fathers of Sion⁷. In 1959 I went to the novitiate of the Fathers of Sion in Guarulhos.

In 1960 I went to teach mathematics and Latin classes in São Sebastião do Paraíso, until the middle of 1961. Then I was sent to France, in Chaville, 9 km from Versailles, the first place I visited. We took the train every day, went to Montparnasse, near the Quartier Latin, and then walked to where I was studying, the Catholic Institute of Paris⁸. I stayed there for 4 years, until 1965, doing theology and studying oriental languages, from the ancient middle east. In addition to the French, which I improved, I studied Hebrew, Aramaic, Biblical Greek, Syriac, Ugaritic. The first vacation I went to Israel, the second I went to London and the third I went to Germany, to Vallendar and Gau-Algesheim.

In June 1965 I graduated and returned to Brazil. I was ordained in Conceição dos Ouros, there was a great party. Shortly after I was ordained, there was a General Chapter, a meeting every 4 years in which the heads of the Congregation came together to see the problems and make plans for another 4 years. It was more or less 1 month of meeting. There I was appointed to go to Jerusalem, to study Judaism in order to have a better dialogue with the Jews. The purpose of the Congregation, when the Ratisbonne founded⁹ it, was to convert Jews. After the Vatican Council, the question of converting disappeared, but there were still many people with this idea.

I was sent to Israel, but before I stayed 1 year and a half in São Sebastião do Paraíso teaching. I left for Israel in January 1967. When I arrived in Paris, there was a telegram redirecting me to London because a priest in the London parish had desomated. I wanted to improve my Hebrew to go to university, but as it was necessary, I said it was okay, but I asked for 15 days in Germany. I arrived in London on February 15, 1967, and stayed 5 months. I went to Jerusalem exactly 1 month after the Six-day War. I took advantage, until classes started, went to *Ulpan*¹⁰ and improved my Hebrew.

At the Hebrew University of Jerusalem¹¹ I attended Bible, archeology, Assyrian, Babylonian and Sumerian classes. That lasted about 3 years. I was still with the priests, but while I was studying there a crisis hit me, when I saw that from the data of the Bible in Hebrew, this story of divine inspiration, that it was God who wrote it, that no longer matched. It was clear that human people wrote it. And

7 Seminary of the Fathers of Sion, 444 Lino Coutinho Street.

8 Institut Catholique de Paris, founded in 1875.

9 The Congregation of Our Lady of Sion (*Congrégation de Notre-Dame de Sion*) was founded in Paris by Marie-Theodor Ratisbonne (Strasbourg, 1802 – Paris, 1884) and her brother Marie-Alphonse Ratisbonne (Strasbourg, 1814 – Ein Karem, 1884), Jews converted to Catholicism.

10 Hebrew school for foreigners.

11 *Hebrew University of Jerusalem* or *Ha-Universita ha-Ivrit bi-Yerushalayim* (HUJI), founded in 1918.

I got into a crisis of faith, it was no longer a question of religion, I was never a very prayerful person. And in that problem of the existential crisis, I said to myself: I will stop studying, otherwise I will lose my faith. That's the thought that came, today I'm sure it was an exothosene. That was the first year, in 1967. Right at the beginning we were already studying the various sources of the biblical narrative, the deal was clear.

I was at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I reasoned and at one point I thought: if my faith cannot stand the truth, it is worthless. So I continued studying and then I changed the concept of seeing the Bible as words of God and I started to see it as a testimony of the Jewish religion, the history of Judaism, the history of the Hebrew people, an important book as a historical and cultural witness of the Hebrew people. That calmed me down and I continued. But then the pope had died and Paul VI¹² was retrograde, it no longer matched what I had learned in theology with what they were demanding, they were returning to the middle ages in their conception. Absolute conservatism.

I was no longer feeling well, I did not hear a married confession, because I did not admit the condemnation of birth control, I found it absurd to impose on a couple that they have as many children as they can produce. Then came the question of celibacy, until then I had taken it to heart. The first woman I met was my wife. I also did not masturbate, my sex life was absolutely emasculating, there was none. This caused a lot of psychological problems, I had a lot of work to be able to rethink everything, to come to view sex as normal, natural, essential for life. Then I asked to leave. The priests would not allow, they said it was a temptation and that it would pass.

I had no money, I left home when I was 12. Writing to my father to ask for money at this point, I was over 30, I couldn't do it, so I stayed. In February 1970, the head of the Bible Department at the Hebrew University, my professor, called me and said: "Afonso, I have something here for you". He took out an envelope, I took it, opened it and it was a check. An example of how to have thosenic autonomy and consistency with your thoughts and actions, you need to have a minimum of financial autonomy. The check would allow me to live 6 months without financial assistance from anyone. He said: "this is to help you". To this day, I don't know how he found out about my situation.

I had a colleague from the United States, he was studying at the Hebrew University. I used to go to his apartment, a kitchenette, he decided to come back and passed me the apartment, the rent. I ended up using it from time to time, but I couldn't get out permanently, I didn't have a job.

On April 8, 1970 I was writing a paper for college and I wanted to quote this professor who was my friend, he had a bibliographic reference that he had written

12 Giovanni Battista Enrico Antonio Maria Montini (Concesio, 1897 – Castelgandolfo, 1978).

in the 1942¹³ *Tarbits* journal. I found the magazine, looked from the first page to the last and I couldn't find the article. I took the year 1942 all over and found no reference to Professor Menahem Haran¹⁴. I called him, explained, he laughed and said: "Afonso, you will not find it because at that time I used the Russian name Diman, not Haran".

He thanked the quote and asked if I was enjoying the encyclopedia. I didn't understand the question and he explained that it was the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*¹⁵, he had indicated me to work there. I didn't know anything. He asked me for the phone number, in 3 minutes he called back, gave me the person's address and name. I went there, got hired and the next day I started working. After a few days I took a suitcase with my clothes, an old Vespa I had, left and never went back to the seminary. I left without the Pope's license, without any formality. I simply told the priests that I was leaving and that was it.

I worked for 2 years and a few in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, it was a fantastic time, very productive, I had contact with the elite of Jewish, Israeli and world intellectuals. I left in the middle of 1970. I got married on August 18, 1970, I already knew Maryse, and I lived normally, independent, content with my life that I could do the studies I wanted, free.

Then I came back to Brazil because on the same day I received 2 letters, from a brother and sister, saying that my mother was sick, she was undergoing treatment in Pouso Alegre. It was the first time that they spoke of illness in a letter since I left home in 1951. It had been 5 and a half years since I had seen my mother, I said: "my mother is dying, I am going to see my mother". I asked for resignation from my position, Maryse agreed to go, we already had a 5-month-old son.

We arrived in Brazil on May 23, 1972. And to my delight, my mother lived for more 27 years. I was happy because for the last 10 years of her life, it was us, Maryse and I, who took care of her. And in the last 20 years, practically, we took care of my father. It was us who assisted, so I managed to pay, I believe, a debt to my parents and that did me good.

In 1972 I returned to Brazil to never leave again. My wife came back to Israel about 4 times visiting her family. But I, *primum vivere deinde philosophari*, had to supply the table for the children and the wife. I worked 40 years in a supermarket, in a grocery store, when it got a little bigger I had already passed it on to my children. I was a little lost, intellectual life practically null in contacts, I was lost in a small town in the countryside.

13 Periodical started in 1929, published by the *Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies*, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

14 Menahem Haran (Moscow, 1924 – Israel, 2015).

15 The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* was published between 1971-72, in 16 volumes, by the publishers Keter, in Jerusalem, and Macmillan, in New York.

I read a lot. Within a matter of a few months after I arrived, I received a statement from Keter, the firm that produced the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* that I had just left. They sent me 16 volumes by plane, it was the first time I drove in São Paulo, I went to Congonhas, but at that time São Paulo's traffic was much more passable.

How did your contact with Spiritism happen?

I would read, study at night, because during the day I had to work, but something was missing. In 1974 I joined Freemasonry and in 1975 I had some friends, Lauisa's relatives, who were spiritists. In contact with them I had already read about spiritism, I ended up watching some of their sessions and the first time I went to watch the session they put me at the table. It was at Lauisa's great-uncle's house, uncle Dito¹⁶. This was, unless mistaken, in March 1975. I sat down at the table, the work started and I started to shake, an internal tremor in the entire body, uncontrollable. They immediately said: "you are a medium".

Time passed, attending other meetings, at night I sometimes stayed up until late hours fighting noises on the ceiling, some very unpleasant phenomena. I even considered not going anymore. But shortly thereafter, in April or May 1975, a gentleman from São Paulo, a medium, came in, one of the most authentic, proven parapsychics, that I knew in my life, and look, I even knew Chico Xavier and Waldo Vieira. Total clairvoyance, a fantastic thing, knowledge of people's past lives, healing, and he was a simple guy. His name was Luis Main, he was a medium from Umbanda. He lived in a house that belonged to a cousin of Lauisa's mother, in São Paulo. They always invited him to visit the farm and he never came.

Until one day, he said, that José da Teia¹⁷ invited him. Pena Branca, who was his guide, his mentor, said him to go and take white clothes, everything for work, and he went. Before that, Lauisa's grandfather was very ill, undergoing tests and they took a photo of him to Luis Main. He had this kind of parapsychism, by the photo he said the character of the person, the state of health. He said it was a pity, too late, the cancer had already taken over the peritoneum, it was spread, nothing else to do. And in fact he went to São Paulo, took an exam, found out exactly as was said.

Then he went to the farm and I was told that the seer Main was coming and they were going to have a small meeting at night. Maryse heard about the seer, she quickly thought he was reading hands, a fortune teller, something like that, she was curious and told us to go. We arrived, we had a family reunion, Lauisa's family was one of the largest tribes in Conceição dos Ouros, it was huge. In that house the owner had 15 children, apart from his grandchildren. A large clan. I, like most people, thought Umbanda was only one thing. Then I discovered that

¹⁶ Benedito Barbosa Pinto, Fazenda Pinhal, Conceição dos Ouros, MG.

¹⁷ Giuseppe Maio and Maria Doroteia Barbosa Maio lived in the Itaim neighbourhood, in São Paulo.

it is an umbrella term and contains various types of mediumship, works, doctrine, it is not a single homogeneous unit.

The work started, the “caboclo” descended, but he descended with a very strong force and the medium hit one knee on the floor and I thought: “guys, really?”. I was in total antagonism. Does it have to be so humiliating to the medium? It’s like it happened yesterday, I remember details. He got up, hit his chest, wide-eyed, people were around him in a circle, he turned around and headed for me. I had never seen that gentleman, nor had he seen me. He took both my hands, pulled me to go to the center of the circle and I mentally said: “not Umbanda!”. When I thought that, he let go of my hand and went to take care of the others. I remember Maryse was on the other side, she asked me in Hebrew: did he hypnotize you? And I replied: I didn’t let it. At that time, Maryse hardly spoke Portuguese.

And he continued to work, there came a lady, he looked at her hand, pointed at her husband and asked: is she yours? The husband said yes, he called, talked, gave advice. And me listening, upset, but listening. At one point, after he described the life of a couple, I thought: “but does this caboclo live in their house or what?”. Because he knew the conflicts exactly. The husband has desomated for many years, they loved each other very much, but they fought all the time.

Then at a certain moment comes a boy of about 15 years old. Today he is bearded, he is from conscientiology, he has 4 daughters who are volunteers too. It’s Flitizelman, Luisa’s cousin. The caboclo reached into his pocket, there was a box of matches and said: “you are forming your lungs, your organism, it is growing, you must not smoke, it is bad for you”. His father came to them and said: “he carries matches, but he doesn’t smoke”. The caboclo said: “You don’t know, but the caboclo does. Do you smoke or not, son?”. The boy nodded. The father, red with shame, walked away and the caboclo continued talking. In a little while he calls again that father and asks him not to punish the boy.

And so it went on, when it was almost over, there was no one else left, then Luisa’s uncle asked me if I wasn’t going to take a pass. I accepted: “ah, it doesn’t hurt”. That was my state of mind: it won’t cripple me. I went and he measured me, running his hand from the head to the feet, he stood up and said: “this kid is not stupid”. That was the sentence. He started talking to me, saying the most secret things I had, concerns about humanity, my desire to help, in short, my modest thing, which I didn’t want anyone to know. I cried in anger and thought, “he has no right to undress me in front of everyone”. Then I came to know that nobody understood anything about what he had said. Later on, studying, I understood that we had a transmental conversation, for me who was a beginner I was talking and talking with my mouth.

I stood aside and sulked in the corner, went back to my place and he went to see a few more people. At a certain moment he turned to me and, almost crying, said: “is son hurt with Pena Branca?”. He spoke with a strong hillbilly accent.

I said I was upset, but it was nothing. When I said I was upset, all that embarrassment, malaise, disappeared and I was healthy, without any problem as if I took it out with my hand.

The work was over and I said I wanted to talk to the medium. He made an appointment for another day, a Sunday, in the morning. In the yard there was a small bank, we sat there and for 3 hours I asked him questions. At one point, I told myself mentally: "But Laurentino, after all, you went to university, lived abroad, studied and are learning from someone who is only a third grader".

That gave me a certainty that parapsychism is serious, I was interested. After a while, another uncle from Lausa went to São Paulo with me, to do some shopping, and invited me to go to the center of *Seu Luis*. It was in Butantã, a small center, with a capacity for 100 people. I saw the work, I didn't understand it very well, but I felt good.

I came back maybe a month later and there was a parapsychic phenomenon that I consider the most important of my life. It happened at 8:30 pm, more or less, inside *Seu Luis'* yard. I went to take a pass with Preto Velho. Since I was a teenager I had some very serious problems, from time to time I was sad for a day, two days, a week, I was not interested in anything, I was revolted against war, against suffering, diseases, injustices. They were things that made me lose interest in life, as if I were in a cul-de-sac, I saw no solution for the situation of humanity and that made me feel very bad. And on that day, Preto Velho put his fingers on my forehead and said: "make a wish". What am I going to order? I thought of my parents, to bless them, etc. When I thought that, I felt on top of their house, 250km or so from there, on top of Minas Gerais, feeling conflicts, pains. It was as if I was feeling what people were feeling, everything was bad, as if I had assimilated it all. Today I say that I went around the planet, I went through all the continents, that was the impression I had. I cried and cried, with anguish to feel all those sufferings of humanity.

At one point, I started listening to fantastic music and that malaise, feeling, pain, disappeared. An immense peace came and then a piece of information, I apologize, I always translate the same way, but it is much more: "all this will end one day, but it is neither today nor tomorrow. For that to happen, everyone has to do their part and you have to do yours". Translating, because I didn't hear a word, the closest I understood is this.

From that day on, I never felt negative again, neither pessimistic or in the "cesspool", as we called it, and always with the idea that I needed to do some things, do my part. Soon after we started at the [spiritualistic] center and we served people for 37 years. There were cures, a lot, lots of things.

Why were you antagonistic in the first contact with Umbanda?

What I knew about Umbanda is what I saw on television and had read. I had attended a lecture by a Franciscan friar, Boaventura¹⁸, who later became a bishop.

18 Carlos José Boaventura Kloppenburg (Molbergen, 1919 – Novo Hamburgo, 2009).

Quevedo¹⁹ wrote against Spiritism and he wrote and spoke against Umbanda. He represented Umbanda as an absolutely negative thing.

Candle issues, dispatches, I had already seen that. I was once told that cachaça from a dispatch was for exus. I took one of those glasses of cachaça, tried to set it on fire and it didn't. I said that the cachaça was *weak water*, the last one that came out of the still, it wouldn't catch fire at all. Only later did I understand that when they offer it, the consciex absorbs energy and does not catch fire. I actually did the experience afterwards. My image of Umbanda was more or less that.

Another time I had gone to talk to a Preto Velho, I said I had a kidney problem and he said I would have to remove a kidney. What a psychology, I thought, the guy has a kidney problem and he says he's going to have to take it off. I still haven't lost it. I did not feel firm with this medium, unlike Mr. Luís, who had consistency and was in fact a positive medium. So my image of Umbanda was absolutely negative.

What happened to Catholic indoctrination of not being able to ask, when asking so many questions about parapsychism? What did you feel and think at that moment?

It was natural, analyzing it later with other knowledge, during that work of Seu Luis I was acting [energetically] assimilated with what was happening, and I felt confidence. When I asked the questions and he answered, he advised to read Chico Xavier's books so I would have better notions on the other side, after all, that gave me firmness.

Another thing, in this White Umbanda, without dispatch, exu work, without any of this, there was something that neither Kardecism has and that I did not see in any religion: welcoming any type of person, no discrimination, whether poor or ignorant, smelly or not, miserable or not, doctor, judge, lawyer, whoever comes they treat them the same way. The time to pay attention to the person is the person's need and not the title they have.

Did this acceptance converge with the value of justice that you reported having since your youth? Was it a political bias?

My answer is yes, because I was a universalist since childhood. I had black friends, throughout my life I had friends from different religions, these differences never affected me. One of my greatest childhood friends was a black boy, the son of my grandfather's employee. When I moved from the country to the city, when I was 10 years old, I didn't miss my grandfather, nor my grandmother, my uncle

¹⁹ Óscar González-Quevedo Bruzón (Madrid, 1930 – Belo Horizonte, 2019).

or anything. I missed him who was the playmate. Then he got on with his life and moved to Campos do Jordão, São José dos Campos, etc.

And the paradigmatic transition beyond Umbanda?

Even in Umbanda, before each session, I talked to the public that in my time as a priest I didn't care much to pray, to celebrate mass. This story of repeating Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary, I thought it was damn absurd. Once is enough, each time dying again didn't make sense to me. Talking to the people, clarifying, was something I cherished.

When I was in England, in 1967, until Easter I wrote my sermons, an Irish student reviewed and I read. At Easter I decided that this business of writing, without looking at people, was not enough. I did the Easter sermon at the top of my head, without paper or anything. Masses began to fill with parishioners, and those of the head priest, the chief priest, had fewer people. Someone told me that people came to my mass more because they never knew what I was going to say, while the other was always a repetition of the same thing. There was no effort to be living what is being said.

I used to do that at Umbanda, from everything I knew, at that time, nothing better for a good contact with people than the gospels. I speak of the first three gospels, of John I leave aside, it has nothing to do, for me it says nothing. I commented on a part of the gospel and brought an understanding to the family's daily life, depending on the people who came to the center. If there were a lot of children, I said what they could understand.

As time passed I realized that the understanding of things was maturing within me. After having seen so many [parapsychic] events, especially healing, in the center or outside the center, proven healings, I concluded that the argument used in the gospels to say that Jesus is the son of god or is god or is the envoy, does not stand. The things he did, cures, etc., we do in the center, I do and I know my miseries, defects, errors, I know I am not a god, I am nothing different from other people, I am an ordinary person. This question of Jesus / God pacified, I no longer have this brainwashing, it disappeared.

In 1975, in the year of these facts, I also had an insight in which I understood the absurdity of dogma, a flash of clarity. It is absurd to put a sentence or more and say that it is the only way to understand that in relation to the truth, until the end of the centuries, there is no change, there is no other way of seeing it. For those who have been brainwashed since childhood, it is a liberation. And these things made me blossom.

My theory about a paradigm shift, I think it doesn't really exist. There is a blossoming of understanding of something that was confused, because whoever has no opening for new things does not change the paradigm, remains fixed, is

someone who seems not to be satisfied. I was never satisfied with how things were presented to me. For example, praying a rosary, I thought it was absurd to keep repeating, after all, I couldn't stand someone repeating things to me, asking for things from God. Even within the Salvationist paradigm, that didn't make sense to me.

It is the question of evolutionary autonomy which is the big difference. Of course, we do not claim to be autonomous, nobody is fully autonomous, but the person has to do their part to evolve. There is no way for someone to evolve for another, take them and transform them into evolved. We are not dolls, we are not computer programs that change and then the computer is beautiful and strong. We are not like that. It is a flowering, an awakening. This is probably called cons recovery.

Certain things for me were peaceful, others were not, others I gradually freed myself. A certain moment arrived in Umbanda that I asked myself: is it only me who thinks like this? And I went to the class that attended the center, taking it slowly and changing the way of talking, of presenting things. There came a point that, without using the terminology, I was teaching conscientiology without knowing it.

What about conscientiology? How did you get in touch with and how did it take up more space in your thinking?

I had access to [the book] *Projections of the Consciousness* in 1986. It has hitherto marked in the book: Laurentino José Afonso, September 20, 1986, Conceição dos Ouros. Someone told me about the book, I don't remember exactly who was, and I read it. Just when [the treatise] *Projectiology* was launched. As I had already had several projections, especially in the 70s and early 80s, some long, others less long, I really liked the scientific way of treating, noting, writing everything down.

And I heard that *Projectiology* was out. Then I sent a letter and asked them to send me a copy. A few days later, I go to the post office and there is a package, there was no invoice, nothing. But there was a phone number, I called and Professor Waldo's wife, Mrs. Elisa, answered it, very kindly. I asked how could I pay. She replied, I don't remember the word she used, it was a gift, courtesy. I thanked.

I read the treatise, did some techniques, but the time was difficult for the trader. Inflation started to break out, the *primum vivere* was pressing, there was no way to take care of anything else. So I never went to attend a conference by Professor Waldo when he was in Vale do Paraíba, neither in São Paulo, nor in Rio.

After a while, in 1995 or 1996, some 10 years later, I had contact with the [the book] *Penta Manual*, but I continued doing the same. In 2000 and so, I found out on the internet that there was a Conscientiology institute in Foz do Iguaçu. I entered the page, I found the language abstruse, strange, "para" this, "para" that,

a kind of neologisms a little strange, but why? I also did not keep in touch, it was not possible, my occupations, the time I had beyond the center was to rest a little.

In April 2010, something like this came to me, inside me: what must Waldo be doing right now? How is his work going? A curiosity: I searched the Internet and found the tertulias. I watched a tertulia, another and another. To sum up, at the end of April I was already doing penta, I continued doing VS [vibrational state technique] and watching tertulias.

In August my wife traveled again to France and Israel, and before leaving she said: “go to Foz, spend a few days there, you like it, go”. I replied that no, I would spend money and such. But she insisted and on the day she was travelling from France to Israel, August 15, 2010, I was arriving in Foz.

The next day, I got at the restaurant and Professor Waldo had already started to have lunch with that group that stayed with him, the closest students. I sat at the table opposite and had a quiet lunch, in my corner, I’m not to call attention.

The professor finished lunch, got up and came across my table. He greeted me, asked my name, where did I come from, asked a question or two and then put his finger like that on my nose and said: do you know who brought you here? I replied: I don’t know. It was Filippini²⁰, he said. By the tertulias I’ve heard of the [extraphysical] helper Veronesa, I did not know that her real name was Filippini, in another life.

He talked to me for a long time, then we went to Tertularium and in the middle of the tertulia he introduced me to the audience²¹. I stayed about 10 days. I really liked it, at that time they were advertising the Parapsychism School, it was going to start in January, and I ended up enrolling. Then I came back, did the pilot module.

I took the Projectiotherapeutic Immersion in Curitiba, April 2011, my first field course. During one of the fields I had a retro[cognition], a flash, in which I recognized someone who is now in Conscientiology and who was there in that course, as being my daughter, only in the flash she was about 14-15 years old. A few months later, in the second module of the Parapsychism School, that same person had a retro that I was her father, the deal matched and even today I consider her my daughter and she considers me a father and that’s okay, we are both in Conscientiology.

The Parapsychism School is interesting because the whole year it had daily activities. I did a cleaning in a small room where I received people at home, giving to those who came to me, advice, healing, guidance, psychological assistance, health. There were some images, some things, and I put them away. My wife was

20 Lucia Filippini (Tarquinia, 1572 – Montefiascone, 1632) was a Catholic nun, founder of the educational congregation of the *Mestras Pias Filipenses*, in Rome, 1607.

21 Tertúlia 1667 – Holopensene polivalente (Holopensenologia). Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-w0oJ7cwgI>>. Access in: 25.08.2020. Between 00:44:57 and 00:46:00.

surprised at first, but accepted. Slowly she started to see that I was changing, some things of mine improving and she also started to become interested.

In 2012 she came with me to Foz, she was delighted, as I was at the first time. When I said goodbye in 2010, in the last tertulia I attended, I said a phrase like this: “here I found that the legend of paradise is not so legendary, I found paradise here”. Then the professor said that they treated Laurentino very well, he was very happy that people welcomed me and that I felt good. And he told me to come back, that I didn’t have to wait for the Cultural Megacentre to be ready, I could come sooner. I hope the Megacenter will come out!

And then we made the decision, my wife and I, to come to Foz. We came to take a course and left 2 days free to look for an apartment, anything for us to rent. In those 2 days we found a place to build a house, we found ways to pay for that house, because in cash I didn’t have it. In 2 days it got clear and that was that. I hired a person to look after the construction for me and in 3 months and 10 days the house was ready. On January 8, 2013, at 11:30 pm, we were arriving in Foz.

What the contact with Professor Waldo Vieira meant to you?

Professor Waldo represented someone who made me feel confident in my own ideas, which were the theory of conscientiology, there was nothing new for me, that was all possible. Of course, the way to express it was his, but the essence for me is peaceful, I never had any difficulty with anything and he always treated me very well, with great affection, very kindness.

The second time I came to Parapsychism School I heard that someone had received a voltaic arc from Professor Waldo, so I went to talk to him at the Holocycle. He asked if I wanted anything and I asked if he could do me a favor. He asked what it would be. I asked him to arc me. He replied: “I am not going to arc you, no need, you have a clean aura!”. He scolded me.

One of the other times I came he called me an intellectual, that I was an intellectual. I replied that I was not an intellectual. After all, 40 years old buried in Conceição dos Ouros, how he called me an intellectual! He got mad at me and said, “Take on your condition!” I never said that again. And then he said: here we have 2 intellectuals. He spoke of two old people. One is from politics and the other is from literature, but you are a technician, so value it. He indeed called me for responsibility.

What do you evaluate about the articles you wrote for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, the theme of many being related to the extraphysical, transcendent? How does it relate to your evolutionary process?

I have always had the continuation of life as a peaceful thing for me, the other side, what we call extraphysical. I already thought about it a lot. The first article

I was asked about was Death, then the Immortality of the Soul, Geena – what we can call the baratrosphere, lower worlds, *netherworld*.

All of these matters came to me, not that I was looking for, it was asked. It probably had an extraphysical hand behind it, directing that. My going to the Encyclopaedia was totally supported. Starting with Professor Haran, I consider him one of my great intraphysical helpers, I have no doubt that without him I don't know what Plan B would be. And as it is a subject that interested me, I accepted to do it almost with joy, without any problem. I did several other articles, for example, the Golden Calf, but a rabbi did not accept one of the statements and I did not want to sign, I just left Ed (editor) signed.

Those themes are related to Kabbalah, they are more occult, but Gershom Scholem¹⁸ did not do it, it fell into your hands. To what extent are they more practical topics and did he stick with the more philosophical things?

That can be. One thing that fits is this: for me, theory without practice has no value. This has always been the case, if someone speaks very well, but does not act in a way ... I suffered a lot every time I made mistakes, each time I failed. I don't remember doing an injustice, but sometimes when you say something it ends up happening and it was a real torment for me. I talked to myself: "you have no right to do that".

Do you think you changed that trait?

I don't think so, because that's what self-unforgiving is all about.

One of the characteristics of the religious paradigm is self-guilt.

Do you think being self-unforgiving would be self-guilt?

One of the challenges of the consciencial paradigm is to deal with mistakes without self-guilt and with discernment. Self-guilt and self-unforgiveness are very different things.

If you don't feel like you've stepped on the ball, there's no way to be self-forgiving. For you not to forgive yourself, you have to look at your face, see that you made a mistake and say: "look, you disappointed me, don't do it again".

The problem is that the fear of error generates an adrenaline rush and a psychomotor response that does not go through rationalization.

Interesting point of view.

Did you meet Gershom Scholem personally?

No, not Gershom Scholem. We had access to the material he published in the Encyclopaedia, but he was not there. The article Kabbalah, for example.

So your first paradigm was the familiar, *Catholicism*, which you broke with in childhood. Then a more intellectualized paradigm, *Catholic theology*. In the Encyclopaedia Judaica you immersed yourself in *Jewish theology*. It doesn't mean that you joined, but you worked in it for a few years. It seems already more skeptical than religious, in a relationship of deconstruction, but without denying the possibility of something beyond matter. And in Brazil you adhered, for the longest time in your life, to the *spiritualist paradigm*, of white Umbanda. And finally to the *consciential paradigm*, of conscientiology. There were 5 paradigms. Is this reconstruction of your paradigmatic transition correct?

Yes. Now this skepticism, moderate, so to speak, has a lot to do with conscientiology. This conception of relative truth is right in skepticism. It leaves nothing as absolute, definitive, always gives an opening to something more, a greater understanding. To use a phrase from Professor Waldo that I endorse: if I find something better than this, I'd change to it immediately. I think this is the cherry on the cake. You are open to everything that is better than what you know so far and you are able to live within a concept, a paradigm, in your terminology, something that satisfies the most at that moment. I think that is the basis that supports it.

You then came deconstructing and building, cutting, for yourself, elements or principles that ended up converging with Conscientiology naturally.

I didn't really know, but I was a parapsychic since I was a child. As a little boy with 8-9 years old I healed people who had bubos. We had a spell that I had learned from Grandma and the bubo disappeared almost instantly. A bubo is a defense of the organism, in reality the inflammation would go away. I was a little boy then. The spell was a fun thing because it has a little ritual, it must be a thing of the past, really long past.

There was something else, Grandma had taught us when we went out on the farm and passed by a mad ox, we should say a phrase, so we could pass peacefully that nothing would happen and it never did. Today, as an adult, I would not teach this to a child at all, perhaps it would not work.

Do you consider that the concept of verpon would be transversal to this whole process of paradigmatic transition? An innate idea?

I was searching all the time, my life was of searching, like a traveler.

You started the executive phase of proaxis in Brazil, you returned at 34 years old. The preparatory phase would have been more theoretical and the executive phase more practical. You had a life as a merchant and the intellectual baggage was maintained, but you were forced to connect theory with practice. It looks like it's a way to draw some lines from your proaxis. Does it sound logic?

Yes, it does.

At the center, you remembered what you said when you were in a parapsychic trance. Has there always been this more autonomous process of filtering what consciexes said? And when the Parapsychism School started, what changed in your conception of parapsychism compared to when you worked at the center?

The expression I always use when I talk about it is that I was a passenger, watching the car go by, aware of everything, but it wasn't me driving. Then a person came in, asked a question, I had no idea what the answer was and the answer came out, an orientation. I learned a lot from the consciexes in those 37 years at the center, about the reality of life, how to behave, respect for others, something like that, but in the action, not just in theory.

In the concept of parapsychism, no, frankly not. The guide for me was always a companion, a friend, I never considered him as someone who rules over me or something. It is the same thing as a helper. When I hear someone talking a lot about the helper, my helper, their helper, seems more like religion than anything else. The helper is a co-worker, a friend, an advisor. It is the flight controller seeing things, he gives guidance but does not force anything. This was the conception I had, so much so that I did not accept incorporation from those who I did not know, had no confidence. I am tough, I had more difficulty to incorporate than to disincorporate.

How do you see yourself in the relationship between intellectuality and parapsychism?

I think that conscious or unconsciously it always worked, the way of understanding things. I once found in Jerusalem, at a used book store, the book *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*²², in the original. I took it home, read it and was delighted. There was a French teacher, who spoke English, he saw me reading the book and asked me to borrow it when I was done. I passed it on to him and after a week no comment. Then I asked him: what did you think of *Huckleberry Finn*? He replied that he had not understood a thing. I said it's a dialect, but it's written in English. He brought the book and I read it, passing the dialect into normal English.

²² *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain (pseudonym of Samuel Langhorne Clemens; Florida, 1835 – Redding, 1910), published in 1884.

I had never been to the United States. When I studied German, I was about 14-15 years old, going to São Paulo by train, a lady sat in front of me and spoke, but she spoke all the time. We were talking almost the entire trip, it was even nice. She was from Yugoslavia, “Yugoslovenisch” she said, and besides Yugoslavian she spoke a German dialect. She talked to me in the dialect. If I say that I understood word for word, everything she said, it will be a lie, but I kept talking, with 15 years of age, during the trip, calmly. We arrived in São Paulo, her children came to receive her, she introduced me and the people spoke the dialect. It seems that I understood, period. English I had a month of lessons in my life. It’s not that I’m a genius, I think it’s about simply remembering.

Would that be paragenetic?

Paragenetic ... to remember. So this for me has to do with parapsychism.

What languages do you speak or understand?

That I used to speak, because to speak you have to have a certain training, a certain practice. You start looking for the word and maybe on the second day that you are talking that the thing starts. My wife, for example, she spoke perfect Hebrew, she grew up in Israel. Sometimes she is talking to the sisters and in a little while she changes to French, stumbles in Portuguese, it is normal. After about 15 minutes of talking, it seems that the thing hitches.

I spoke in my life, let’s say, I celebrated mass in 6 languages. The first language I spoke was a hillbilly dialect that can be found in²³ Amadeu Amaral’s dictionary. Then Portuguese, French, German, English I started to study in Philosophy. Then I learned Hebrew, I even spoke Spanish when I was in France, Italian I understood a little. That’s basically it: Portuguese, French, English, German and Hebrew, the five languages that I spoke and wrote with ease.

And the ancient languages?

Latin in the time of Philosophy, I still read it today, I use a dictionary when I study Portuguese. Greek, I have a notion of modern Greek, but I ended up forgetting. I have some notions of Japanese, if I take something simple for 15 days I can read it. There are about 3 books here that I’ve read, in Japanese to foreigners, say level B, beginner and next to basic.

²³ *The Caipira Dialect*, by Amadeu Ataliba Arruda Amaral Leite Penteadó (Capivari, 1875 – São Paulo, 1929), was published in 1920.

And what about oriental languages?

I studied them, but more than 50 years ago. I even have books, I studied Babylonian, I studied Assyrian, we translated texts. Aramaic, I graduated in Aramaic, I knew it well. Syriac, we count as Syriac, but in reality it was an Aramaic dialect, a Christian dialect. The alphabet is different, it has up to two Syriac alphabets.

Did you ever read in cuneiform?

Cuneiform yes, when I was studying Sumerian and Akkadian, which is the Babylonian, Assyrian-Babylonian. Even an interesting curiosity about the gods, there is a poem of creation, from Cosmogony, called *Enûma Eliš*²⁴. If you read the Assyrian version, there's a small spelling difference especially in the end of words. In the Babylonian the noun ends in M "mum" and in Assyrian it is U, the M is cut. The poem is the same, but the name of the main god is Ashur who is the god of Assyria. And in the Babylonian version, which is the previous one, it is Marduk, in the bible he is called Bel. It's like Jupiter and Zeus. The story is the same. It is interesting to see how the ancients were flexible with these things, I think they did not take it very seriously.

What is the best that conscientiology has brought you?

Confirmation. Because it is hard to be in an environment where you think differently from others and do not find someone with whom you can exchange ideas. You have to hide, practically withhold information, because if you release it, it will be evolutionary rape. This is terrible, and I have lived for years and years like this, having to adapt language to be able to communicate, it is the language that the person can understand. It is a small part of the truth.

The verpon issue is wonderful because of that. A little understanding, another, another, like in maths you take the four basic operations, then there is algebra, infinitesimal calculus and so on. But that little one is a part of the truth, a way of understanding, the language of those who are at that level. That's why I have a lot of sympathy for the person who is still in the religion and who is sincere. If they have an opening, if I see they're looking for something, want to understand, I give them one more pill. If not, I just say that we think differently, but I respect, I let it go because it's no use, it's a waste of time. But slowly you can do it, one little pill today, another tomorrow, another one next month, go on, the person starts to assimilate.

I saw in the Umbanda center, everything changed, the concept, always bring the responsibility to yourself. It was always like that, the person came with a question, I clarified, but he wanted me to say what he should do. It's you who will know, you will make the decision.

²⁴ The Babylonian creation myth, dating from the 17th and 12th centuries BC.

And there was an interesting phrase that I heard the consciexes say: when you are in doubt, you don't know where to go, you have to take a path, if you stand still you don't get anywhere. You arrive at a crossroads, you know where you want to go, but you don't know the way. There is no sign, no one, no house. If you stand there, you will never arrive. So, for example, go right until you find where to ask. If it's to the left, you come back. At least you made a move and if you get it wrong, that's it, period. If you're afraid of making mistakes, you don't get anywhere, you don't evolve. And to evolve you must have courage.

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