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WHO IS THE MASTER?

From the very first moment that I met the Master, I felt the greatest ease in discussing with him any issue which was on my mind. The way in which he treated people made me feel certain that he would accept any misgiving on my part with simplicity, even if it was tedious, childish, or even irrational. Thus the dialectic between us developed quickly, without any pretexts on my part. We simply discussed my problems and my thinking about them together, without any obstacle.

I did, however, have one question which at that time I didn't dare to put into words. Ten years have passed, and I still remember my reactions over this matter. I wanted

to ask my burning question, but I didn't do so. Because it didn't have to do with me and my own affairs, but, on the contrary, directly concerned him. And so I hesitated to say what I was thinking, and we had known one another for at least a year before I dared to ask my question.

The question with which I was so concerned at that time was about the way in which the Master began the conversation and the analyses. As he embarked on explaining some matter, he would say to his interlocutors: "The Master says – ", and then go on with the analysis. This sentence, I have to admit, produced various reactions in me – reactions which were not very positive about the Master as a person. I wanted to interrupt him in the middle and say to him: "Who is this Master who says it? Isn't it you, my friend? If it's you, then why are you speaking in the third person? But if it's somebody else, why don't you tell us his name and set our minds at rest?"

These were the thoughts which never came to my lips; I considered them unacceptable and entirely inappropriate to my age. I was not spontaneous like the young people who were with the Master at that time, and I considered it unthinkable to offend – as I thought it would – someone with such a provocative question.

And so it remained without an answer, since it was not expressed so as to ask for my problem to be solved. There were times, I remember, when I was almost drown-

ing in my own curiosity. And if, moreover, for personal reasons, I objected to the things the Master said, I was even more hostile to this third person who was supposed to be giving us the teaching. I reflected that whoever this unknown person was, he didn't know what he was talking about. His words went beyond the limits of reason, and the things he said about the potentialities of man or about life in general were certainly groundless. That's the way I felt one day, I remember, when the Master said that life is a game. But then I did burst out against this view, and I said to him: "What sort of game is this you're talking about now? The world is going to ruin, people are suffering; in order to achieve anything, you have to endure years of torment, and you call this a game? Come on now, I can't accept that." He didn't insist any further, as he saw that I was unable to understand what he meant, and I calmed down somewhat. But at other times, such calmness didn't come to me, and I was opposed to this seen or unseen Master who went on talking, and talking, and talking.

Although I hadn't put the controversial question, the Master began on his own to answer it, and this he continued to do always as the years went by. Thus, the first answer which I heard was that the Master is conscience and knowledge. I liked this, and began to search within myself for the voice of conscience, which would guide me

to what was good and right. But the Master suddenly said that ignorance and error and imperfection are likewise a Master. I didn't like this, of course, because it is difficult to accept that wrong action can also lead to knowledge. But still I continued to work systematically in order to grasp these two opposing aspects of the Master's expression.

As I was taking the first unexplored steps within myself, I was given a new direction, which again disturbed me. The Master said that everything teaches us, all things are our fathers and teachers. In this sense, everything is our Teacher: a human being, or even an inanimate object can teach us something. Because I wanted to follow the Master's instructions, I began to study the forms in my surroundings, from the smallest to the biggest. Little by little, as this study continued, I discovered the truth of this teaching. I remember, many years later, when a new member of the Society also asked what 'the Master' meant, he replied: "Why, anything at all; don't personify the Master as one person, and don't become attached to him, because in that way you won't make progress. Look: I hit my hand against the wall and it hurts. Who is my Master? The wall is, because it teaches me not to strike my hand against hard objects. It's so simple!" I don't know, of course, whether this live performance conveyed the message and whether it could be understood that everything is our Master and Teacher. In my case it

took time for me to accept this broad range of the meaning of the concept of the 'Master'.

While I was working to discover – I am talking still about the early days – the Master in all things, we were suddenly given a lesson about ancient Greece. I can remember the Master's words well enough, and I will attempt to relay them. He told us:

"In antiquity, the concept of the Master – Didaskalos – had great importance and inner value. Artists, writers, philosophers, and schoolteachers were addressed as 'masters'. In our own times, there is an unconscious trend towards avoiding this form of address. Masters have become professors, or 'sirs', or even friends whom the children call by their first names. This conceals a negative need, an avoidance of the inner Master who is so necessary for us. If I accept the form of address of 'Master', I do it so that this word will begin to be heard in Greece. What we lack is the profound concept of 'Master', and this must be revitalised for the good not only of Greece, but of the whole world. There are countries where experts are addressed as Masters, and this is very positive."

I was naturally very ready to embrace this analysis, but it conflicted with the previous interpretations, and I began to worry about this. So in the end what was I to do? To think of the Master as personified, or impersonal?

‘Both’ was the answer which was generated within me through experience and meditation as the years passed, that is, by going deeper into the matter in thought. Because the Master is all things: what is expressed consciously by a person, but also what passes unconsciously into us. I realised that the Master is the whole of life, the universe and the particle, the good and the bad, the visible and the invisible. It is all beings and non-beings, overall unity, universality, God. The Master says that the sole Master of all things is the higher Self, the Super Ego, that which is everywhere present and fills all things – the Supreme One God.

The ever-expanding concept of the Master, which touches on the Absolute, is perhaps the greatest problem which man has. How is he to understand, or even approach, the Absolute? And even if he is disposed to work towards this, what place should be taken in his consciousness by a Master in the form of a man, with imperfections and biological needs? Is it remotely possible that these have some connection with the Absolute, when they seem to be so distant from it? The Master himself answered these questions many times: “Do not make a god out of the Master”, he told us. “All that he can do is to point the way, to broaden the consciousness, to speak about the Entity. All other ideas of human beings about Masters are their own projections; they are not the truth. Consciousness in man is a Master, but until this is re-

vealed to him, he needs guidance, and this is what the Master gives.”

The years passed and I steadily followed the discipleship for the revelation of the Truth. The veils of ignorance around me sometimes fell easily, sometimes with difficulty. The Master by his presence followed, as he always follows, the steps of all of us. He never changes; he remains the same, unmoving in the position which he has taken up. We, however, constantly change our stance towards him. We colour his words, his behaviour, and his actions in the light of our deficiencies. Sometimes we like him and sometimes we don't. There are times when we seek his teaching, and others when we avoid it, because we suspect that it will produce in us new causes for concern, which are often wearisome. However, whatever happens, I can now answer that original question: why it is that the Master speaks so often in the third person. The answer has come after many years of observation of this specific individual, and of other Masters whom I've happened to meet during this period. Deeper immersion in this issue, repeated meditation on the entity of the 'Master' have solved the problem for me.

A Master is not one who regards himself as some special person, with specialised knowledge and supernatural powers. He is, on the contrary, a person who has recognised in his individual existence the one and sole nature

of all beings, the true entity. United in his consciousness with the one nature, all that he does is to speak of unity, to teach homogeneity, to urge his disciples to undertake that intellectual development which leads to the Absolute. It is precisely this that the use of the third person connotes: that he does not regard his words as his own, but that they are those of the entity, the one consciousness which also manifests itself through him. In any event, he sees the same thing in everybody and everything, the one boundless self with many facets.

Firmly grounded in a position of union, the Master teaches his disciples two things in parallel: the path of their individual evolution, and the externalisation of this evolution, so that the teaching will spread to more individuals. Thus, from the very early days, while I was learning to know myself, I was also learning at the same time how to perform a task for others. In the course of the years, this task took on very specific forms of expression in the Society. It was not confined simply to what each disciple did for his or her immediate environment, but working groups were also set up which performed services in various spheres. The first of these was the group which was concerned with theatre and puppet theatre. The younger people at that time organised performances and visited various institutions for children, to provide them with a few hours of recreation, all, of course, entirely selflessly.

By degrees, many sections performing services developed. One of these was, and continues to be up to the present, spiritual healing. This section consists of members who have an aptitude for becoming healers and work systematically for patients who seek help; naturally, they receive special teaching on the practice of spiritual healing. It was through this section that the need arose for there to be regular blood-donors for the patients, so that we set up a Blood Bank, which works in co-operation with the Laïko Hospital.

There have been periods when we have been very much concerned with giving support to drug addicts, providing them with special relaxation exercises, and monitoring their treatment closely. At other times we have provided financial support for indigent people who are unable to work. The stance of service which the Master teaches us is always to respond to whatever need presents itself, both in the psychological and spiritual as well as in the material field.

As the older disciples acquired the basic knowledge, the writing of lessons began, and later I myself began writing the first books on the teaching. Newer members are also trained in the written word, so that they can support the work of the publishing house which we have set up, with the constant purpose, of course, of disseminating spirituality.

In parallel with all this, the older disciples take on groups of young members, to whom they hand on the teaching, instruct in relaxation, and provide with forms of meditation. And, naturally, they are prepared for the founding of other societies where the task of responding to the burning needs of our age will be able to find other means of expression, depending upon the particular gifts of each disciple.

I have spoken in the first chapter of the book about the work of the Society – in very summary form, of course – because I think that in this way the concept of the ‘Master’ is complemented. A Master is the consciousness of man, which, as it is broadened with the help of Masters, leads the disciples at the same time to broaden their way of life and action. To concern themselves with others as they concern themselves with their own selves, by means of the insight that others and their self are one, they are the broader ontological self. By the service which he performs for his fellow human beings, the disciple firmly establishes the teaching and advances to essential union with the Master-consciousness within himself, in order to give him expression in practice and in his life with ever increasing dynamism.