

Volumen 2 - Número 2 - Abril/Junio 2015

REVISTA INCLUSIONES

REVISTA DE HUMANIDADES
Y CIENCIAS SOCIALES

ISSN 0719-4706

Homenaje a

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Revista Inclusiones, se encuentra indizada en:



Information Matrix for the Analysis of Journals



ISSN 0719-4706 - Volumen 2 / Número 2 / Abril – Junio 2015 pp. 34-47

THE MAN: PURPOSE AND DIRECTION OF HISTORY

EL HOMBRE: PROPÓSITO Y DIRECCIÓN DE LA HISTORIA

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Fecha de Recepción: 28 de febrero de 2015 – **Fecha de Aceptación:** 15 de marzo de 2015

Abstract

Man has long been regarded as a measure of evolution. The 'humanization' of man has become a criterion of civilization. Economic growth has gradually become the only engine of development and, nowadays, of democracy. When speaking of evolution we continue to claim that it is 'in the name of man', yet in practice everything is done in the name of wealth and profit; but humanity's successive failed attempt, socialism, does not mean that we should uncritically throw ourselves into the opposite extreme. Humanity should be able to invent, choose and achieve the best variant of its own development.

Keywords

Man – Purpose – History

Resumen

El hombre ha sido considerado como una medida de la evolución. La "humanización" del hombre se ha convertido en un criterio de civilización. El crecimiento económico se ha ido convirtiendo en el único motor de desarrollo y, en la actualidad, de la democracia. Cuando se habla de la evolución y se sigue afirmando que es 'en el nombre del hombre', nos damos cuenta en la práctica que todo lo que se hace, se realiza en nombre de la riqueza y las ganancias. El socialismo, intento fallido de la humanidad, no significó en todo caso que debamos lanzarnos en el extremo opuesto. La humanidad debe ser capaz de inventar, elegir y lograr la mejor variante de su propio desarrollo.

Palabras Claves

Hombre – Propósito – Historia

Man has long been regarded as a measure of evolution. The 'humanization' of man has become a criterion of civilization. Economic growth has gradually become the only engine of development and, nowadays, of democracy. When speaking of evolution we continue to claim that it is 'in the name of man', yet in practice everything is done in the name of wealth and profit; but humanity's successive failed attempt, socialism, does not mean that we should uncritically throw ourselves into the opposite extreme. Humanity should be able to invent, choose and achieve the best variant of its own development.

Today globalism is imposing a unipolar model of the world and bipolar evaluation of it. In addition to the unquestionably good changes resulting from the unification of humanity, we are witnessing an extreme trend in the evaluations of globalization: proglobalists defend it as a 'world good' while anti-globalists automatically define it as a 'world evil'. It is difficult to break with stereotypes, even though every generation destroys the hitherto framework of human history into which it wants to pigeonhole events so as to be able to control them more easily. The contradiction between our notions of the world and actual reality reflects on our expectations of the world and our living in it. Our attempts to adjust reality to the official notions 'of the purpose and meaning of life' are failing in the face of growing discontent born of the uneasy awareness that life should have a higher meaning than that of being cogs locked in an eternal circle of production and consumption. The old mechanical order of Newtonian physics is no longer sufficient to explain things *as they are* but, by force of habit, we continue to accept them as *they ought to be* according to the official 'scientific' concepts. Tradition has indeed proved to be strong. Our inability to unite reason and matter determines our unidimensional life, locking us into a world of selfishness and calculation, of lack of spirituality and sensitivity, in which there is less and less **humaneness**.

Black-and-white thinking is incapable of noting the deep processes in society and the motives that drive human relations and determine the behaviour, purposes and direction of the future of civilization.

The simplistic model, *barbarianism vs. civilisation*, represents contemporary humanity as the acme of historical evolution and does not allow us to understand the inhumane methods of contemporary 'civilized' politics by means of which we often try to resolve international conflicts.

Paradoxically, the more the **human factor** disappears from the analyses of the global economic system, the more the questions are posed as to the meaning of human life, the material and spiritual values, the direction of development and the understanding of human happiness. The more globalism imposes **wealth** as its main driving force, the more the debate on *the role of man* in society, on the projection of his inner world onto events, on his possibilities of influencing and controlling the systems -economic, financial, military, global-he creates. The problems of civilization are not decreasing. They reflect the conflicts in international relations which are the natural result of the absolute co-existence of the economic factors in the world. At the same time, however, it is precisely in the international system that the human face of civilization is sought.

The growing problems in the world and especially in the developing countries are lending a new urgency to the debate on the *social function* of the system of international relations and, more specifically, on the question of whether these relations can be a guarantee of human happiness in the same way as they can be a guarantee of human wealth. We agree that they allow people to communicate freely, overcoming their

geographic, political, economic, religious and cultural differences. The imbalance in the world, however, is growing. If we were sure that the present tendency in the world shows real chances of overcoming human misery and guaranteeing human rights, the creative realization of individuals and their satisfaction with their personal improvement, this question would not have been pertinent. However when a civilization which has evolved over thousands of years and accumulated countless of billions of money is still incapable of ensuring normal human living conditions for at least half of its population, we have to think about the true causes of the poverty and misery of the overwhelming majority of humanity: do they come from economic reality or from human selfishness? 'One cannot but be disturbed -unless one is totally ignorant, which is rare today, or oversated and cynical, which is more common- by the dramatic conditions in which the majority of humanity lives.'¹ Is it normal, natural, necessary and justified for billions of people across the world to live in growing poverty, given that the propagated global economic model is claimed to be 'successful'; how can a 'civilized' humanity allow the marginalization not just of groups and communities but also of dozens of countries across the world -these are questions that need answers.

This article proposes the thesis that ***man himself, his self-improvement and acquisition of ever more human qualities is the purpose and direction of history***, even though the global economy is imposing wealth as the most important purpose in life. Unfortunately, noble-mindedness and wealth do not always go hand in hand. Very few of us try to understand why individuals have such a limited notion of their evolution; why they cannot realize that their perfection as ***human*** beings is of prime importance both for their existence and for their spiritual life; why they cannot combine the perfection of the environment with improvement of their inner world.

The two most common views on man and his behaviour are well-known: one holds that man can improve himself and that is the meaning of life, and the other that man cannot improve himself or the environment he lives in.

The second proposition is prevalent and it deprives individuals of the hope of doing anything about their spiritual evolution understood as the acquisition of higher human qualities and the possibility for recognizing worlds more subtle than matter. Indeed, at first glance the constant crises -financial, economic, political and social- that occur on all continents show that man is not capable of improving the systems he creates and the rules he himself has written, or of learning from his own mistakes. Although man declares that he 'holds the future in his hands', it turns out that he can control neither himself nor his present. Lack of knowledge of the laws governing human thinking and behaviour reflects on insufficient knowledge and explanation of human life. The very act of declaring particular forces -economic and financial- to be 'objective', 'natural' and 'independent of man' shows an unwillingness (or impossibility) to analyse the interconnection between individuals, their will to choose a solution and the effects of this subjective activity on economic models, financial strategies, social programmes. It is much easier and more convenient to argue that economic laws are 'natural' than to seek and analyse the ***reasons*** why these laws are placed outside the context of humanism, humaneness, morality and justice. The fact that

¹ P. Boniface, *Le monde contemporain: grandes lignes de partages* (France: Press Universitaires de France, 2002).

the economy and free market can be left without control does not mean that man is incapable of controlling those processes if he wants to. Crises in international relations are the result of arbitrary human acts and they prove the urgent need for rational human action for their resolution.

Many analysts of human evolution think that people are as if in a deep sleep and have forgotten that man has huge potential to influence the world he creates. People are commonly viewed as sheep or wolves, not as beings who develop and control themselves and who are responsible for their own evolution. 'Those who propose that men are sheep have only to point to the fact that men are easily influenced to do what they are told, even if it is harmful to themselves,' writes Erich Fromm; 'It seems that the majority of men are suggestible, half-awake children, willing to surrender their will to anyone who speaks with a voice that is threatening or sweet enough to sway them.'² It is on this assumption -that men are sheep- that the Great Inquisitors and the dictators have built their systems, he adds. Therefore, leaders believe that they have a moral duty to lead them.³ The problem facing contemporary humanity, writes Erich Fromm, is that if we are convinced that 'human nature is inherently prone to destroy, that the need to use force and violence is rooted in it, then our resistance to ever increasing brutalization will become weaker and weaker.'⁴ This is precisely what is happening today. Humanity is becoming dehumanized. We accept violence and atrocities as normal, wars and famine as political realism, and irresponsibility in the behaviour of people and especially of political leaders as the norm. ***Self-perfection as higher human beings is not a purpose for us*** at all. All discussions on this issue are declared to be utopias and idealism. Hence, our activity, based on a ruthless materialistic realism is not judged through the prism of individuals, their dehumanization is not understood, and man is not seen as a purpose and direction for the development of civilization.

The meaning of human life today is limited by material rationalism and the ***quality of the person*** is irrelevant to the system (socialist or capitalist) to which we are subordinated. Often, this subordination is not recognized; nor is the fact that people create their own systems – economic, financial and social. The appearance of some processes in the economy which are declared to be 'natural' or 'normal' only deprives people of the possibility to see the process of their own creation and its results. This relieves them of responsibility for their conscious or unconscious participation in life-processes. The link between man, humanity, Earth and the Cosmos is not even mentioned in discussions on education. It is only at times of crisis that human intervention, regulation and control become visible. Even then, the decision-making process is determined by the *qualities of the human factor*, by its competence (or mediocrity), wisdom (or arrogance) and humaneness (or selfishness). All human decisions carry the individual characteristics of the leaders that have made them. History offers many eloquent examples that invite reflection, but even Hitler alone is enough to remind us that sometimes personal obsessions, passions and ambitions may shape the destiny of a whole country, a whole continent or the whole world.

Recognition of the principle that 'as you sow, so shall you reap' (which is one of the seven laws of Hermetism) can change the behaviour of the individual and become a basis for more rationality and responsibility, more care for the whole world and not just for individual well-being. Wisdom in behaviour follows from wisdom of the mind. If we ignore

² E. Fromm, *The Heart of Man* (Sofia: 2000), 13

³ E. Fromm, *The Heart of Man*... 15-16.

⁴ E. Fromm, *The Heart of Man*... 15-16.

selfishness, envy, revenge and international relations instead of ethics, nobility and compassion, the international relations -the common field where the problems of humanity are resolved, will reflect the same *higher principles* that make us proud to be human. The possibility of governing ourselves and events on the international scene from the position of an innate wisdom is preferable to the unpredictability of an uncontrolled market (financial and economic) driven by greed and selfishness. 'Common sense will always opt for control and order over chaos and anarchy,' notes Pascal Boniface, and we could govern 'in the name of the universal human interest.'⁵ Placing the interests of humanity above corporate interests will be a criterion of humaneness and civilization. Why, then, aren't we doing it?

There is another serious problem here. How do we define which interests are the leading ones: corporate or universal human interests?! Today the term 'universal human interests' includes corporate interests. Support for globalization is becoming a 'universal human' value, and criticism against globalization -'anti-globalism', which is equivalent to socialism. In practice, corporate interests reflect the economic and financial interests of a handful of people holding the levers of the global economy. They do not reflect the criteria of human perfection even if just because the ability to make maximum profit is not always achieved through noble-mindedness, integrity, respect and compassion, mutual help or magnanimity. The market is governed by unscrupulousness, lack of compassion, aggression and pressure, theft and deceit, violence and even murder -and everything is justified 'in the name of profit'. Its centrifugal force throws overboard dozens and dozens of undeveloped economies, transforming them into 'global resources', while people in such countries think they have lost all control over their lives. They cannot cope with the crises on their own. International organizations intervene in order to protect their own interests, and this is their primary task. If, together with that, some of the problems of the poor countries are solved, then the international organizations can declare themselves to be benefactors; if not, then this is simply blamed on the global combination of events. The aggressive conduct and even the unlawful practices of international organizations are the result of their monopoly positions. The essence of capitalism is to liquidate inefficiency and ineffectiveness -of companies, banks, countries. Capitalism is not interested in the individual human destinies in those companies, banks or countries. Capitalism is interested in the profits. Globalism is interested in super-profits.

Can we choose between wealth and human perfection, can we distinguish between gains and virtues? The two purposes are becoming increasingly incompatible. However it is precisely man who chooses what purposes to pursue in his life. The global principles upon which the economic model of society is built exclude higher human qualities, which have always included: compassion, mutual help, noble-mindedness, honesty, magnanimity, sacrifice and self-sacrifice, love and forgiveness...

Do we have reason to believe in the acquisition of such qualities by man? Probably yes -considering that this possible ideal of man has been preserved and continues to be present in our lives, we can conduct dialogue on its existence or disappearance.

The idea that *man is the purpose and direction of history* exists in the entire evolutionary chain of humanity, in all ancient worldviews and in the works of the greatest thinkers. On different continents and in different periods, we find the same idea: that the

⁵ P. Boniface, *Le monde contemporain...*

meaning of human life is in the self-improvement of individuals that will allow them to overcome their suffering and aggression, their envy and greed, their jealousy and weakness. Only when individuals achieve harmony with themselves will it be possible to improve human relations and to create the harmonious society we dream of. Individuals and individuals alone are responsible for the decisions they make in their lives and the consequences of their decisions -at all times and on all continents.

Let us recall that all myths refer to a 'legendary primeval time in which all people had direct communication with the skies and the power to forge their own destinies'.⁶ The knowledge that man also knew another reality, another order beyond our senses and beyond death attached great importance to burial rites – this is the contact with a transcendental reality in which man continues to exist. The knowledge that man belongs to two worlds, the visible and the invisible one, determined his behaviour in life and the direction of life after death. This knowledge changed the patterns of thinking, provoking responsibility for every choice of behaviour. This ancient knowledge, however, was abandoned. It does not fit into contemporary economic models. As Montesquieu put it so aptly, 'Knowledge humanizes mankind, and reason inclines to mildness; but prejudices eradicate every tender disposition.'⁷ Today everything that may reduce super-profits is labelled a 'prejudice'. That is also probably why there is a shortage of *humaneness or mildness*.

It is interesting to note that according to the teaching of the Toltec, the Christian postulate about the *expulsion from Paradise* 'is a sort of allegory of the loss of our wordless knowledge -the knowledge of the *intent*,⁸ of the original cosmic plan which humanity knew. This knowledge determined the meaning and purpose of human life. As this transcendental connection was severed, man lost his knowledge of his higher predestination, of the direction of his life path and the connection between his earthly and cosmic destiny. This knowledge became a myth, whereas the responsibility for human actions was diluted in the group models of existence. That is why we do not see the guilt of the individual in the creation of a social order, be it socialist or capitalist. We denounce the whole order, failing to understand that a social order is determined by the quality of the individuals who have determined its parameters and laws. Not even the most perfect programmes can compel the individual to improve himself unless the *knowledge* that he is responsible for the consequences of his actions in both this and the other reality *passes through his heart*. The mechanism of human perfection *is within us*. The realization of this truth can change the traditional ways of thinking and influence human behaviour.

We can take the side of 'goodness' because, as Kant says, 'a seed of goodness'⁹ remains within us in its entire purity, which is incapable of being eradicated and which is the determining ground of our endeavour to do good. The restoration of the original predisposition towards good in us is the purpose of every human life. This spark of goodness is also a means of 'the establishment of the purity of the moral law', while this moral law 'is an incentive adequate in itself for the determination of the will'.¹⁰ Original goodness is the holiness of maxims in doing one's duty and overcoming fate. I am convinced, writes Descartes, that the first seeds of truth, sown by nature in the human mind, but which we stifle in ourselves by reading and hearing every day so many errors of every kind, has such

⁶ N. Classen, *The Toltec Knowledge* (Sofia: 2000), 84.

⁷ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws* (Sofia: 1987), 327.

⁸ N. Classen, *The Toltec...* 84.

⁹ I. Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/rbbr/rbbr1.html>

¹⁰ I. Kant, *Religion within the...*

force in that crude and simple antiquity that ‘the same light of the mind ... made them see they ought to prefer virtue to pleasure and the good to the useful’.¹¹ Knowledge of the true essence of man and of the principles guiding his life determines his choice: virtue and humaneness or rationality and inhumaneness.

Hermetism, Toltec teachings, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Buddhism teach individuals that to know **where they are going** they must understand **who they are**. Humanity’s most ancient worldviews are based on higher principles which define man as a ‘god-like’ being. These *spiritual principles* were known in antiquity as ‘ways both on Earth and in Heaven’. They are not the conditioned morality that appears ‘good’ at a particular moment but changes over the centuries. The supreme moral principles are invariable for all time. They are the rules that few achieve but many follow precisely because they set the standard of human behaviour and are impossible without: *honesty, empathy, compassion, magnanimity, generosity, noble-mindedness, love, self-sacrifice*. Although they are extremely rare today, these qualities are always universal human qualities as in all times and ages and on all continents they have one and the same meaning and content -they stand for the concept of ‘**human**’. It is precisely this content that determined the actual passage from barbarian relations between people to a higher, more reasonable and ‘civilized’ conduct.

The few individuals who embodied the qualities of the perfect man and lived according to the higher principles of the Heavens were the ‘heroes’ of humanity. They were the ideal role model. Human behaviour had to be based on these qualities, and it must be based on them today too! However as humanity sunk deeper and deeper into matter, its memory of the perfect man, of the perfect models of thinking and action faded away. Its role models changed, and so did its models of behaviour. Humanity chose to be ‘conditioned’ as Arnold Toynbee explains; it created society through emulation. Mechanizing social relations was convenient and did not require efforts to find an original, personal way. The personal expression of individuals was not accepted if it deviated from the common model. It had to conform to the social norms and morality of the time. As man stopped striving towards perfection and forgot his uniqueness, humanity sunk into a deep sleep. Let us recall how many heroes during the Middle Ages dared to be different, to voice truths ‘dangerous’ to the universally accepted order, to think individually and to take the risk of changing the fate of their tribe and their people -their number is insignificant. Let us recall what happened to the brave minds that questioned the dogmas of an ecclesiastical ‘truth- they were burned at the stake. Faced with the choice of breaking ‘the cake of custom’ (as Toynbee put it) or following the herd that makes up for one’s weakness, the overwhelming majority of people will opt for the comfort of the group. Being in a group gives one’s life ‘purpose and meaning’ as well as a false sense of security, of truth, of right and wrong, of good and evil.

The course of spiritual history is determined by those historic individuals who are capable of separating themselves from the herd. They are the ‘world-historical individuals’ who, according to Hegel, did not do something imaginary but something right and necessary that was revealed to them in their inner world. They are capable of understanding the knowledge of human predestination. They perform their deeds because their time has come and they know it; they draw their knowledge from an inner source to which they have access

¹¹ R. Descartes, *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence* (Hackett Publishing: 2000), 9.

-intuitively; and the changes are made in the name of man, in the name of humanity, in the hope of a better life for humankind at large.

Deep within its imperfect being, humanity preserved a model of human perfection and did not forget that it had a possibility, even if a small one, of following that model -this is how *law* arose. The need to protect the higher human qualities led to the creation of secular laws. It is precisely secular laws that came to protect society against the bad- against murderers, thieves, liars, slanderers, abusers. The compulsion of the law is the means whereby imperfect individuals are 'reminded' of the existence of higher human qualities, of a universal human ethic valid for all time and on all continents and supplemented by tribal, national, religious and cultural rules and mores. Law is based on the primordial (cosmic) truth that reminds humans that there is a perfect model, an eternal model, an example that serves as a corrective. The path of humanity, writes Kant, ought to be a 'path of continual progress from bad to better',¹² and it is only the knowledge that this cosmic (divine) principle of perfection may be restored and developed within individuals that keeps alive the spirit of the laws. The **awakened mind** is aware why life is sacred and why you have no right to take life, why stealing and lying humiliate the human in individuals and obstruct their evolution, etc.

The most ancient sages knew the nature of both the divine and the earthly world, they knew the path of man through the different life spheres. Let us recall that the Hermetic texts tell us how man deviated from an original (divine) plan and became 'subject to Fate' - 'So though above the Harmony, within the Harmony he hath become a slave.'¹³ The knowledge in the Hermetic texts reveals that the Creator has accepted the 'deviation' or 'the Fall' as man's free will, but has nevertheless given man the opportunity to remember his higher human nature, its cosmic essence, and to learn to live according to its predestination. The ***purpose of man's life on earth*** consists in restoring this perfect and immortal nature in the conditions of material being, and the direction of his life path is 'the return Home' - restoring lost knowledge and possibilities. All cosmological myths (and, later, religions) keep alive the memory of this transcendental contact with the Cosmos (although not all are capable of restoring it).

We read even in *Corpus Hermeticum* that knowledge (Gnosis) can save the soul from its ignorance: 'And the soul's vice is ignorance. For that the soul who hath no knowledge of the things that are, or knowledge of their nature, or of Good, is blinded by the body's passions and tossed about.'¹⁴ This means, then, that only through knowledge 'the soul becometh good, not whiles is good, whiles evil, but [good] out of necessity.'¹⁵ At the beginning of time the good was identical with God and that is why human self-realization was understood as the improvement of one's personal qualities. Their characteristics determined the motives for every action: 'Good, O Asclepius, is in none else save in God alone; nay, rather, Good is God Himself eternally. If it be so, [Good] must be essence, from

¹² I. Kant, Religion within the...

¹³ The Hermetic texts reveal to us a perfect archetype of man towards which the individual must strive -this is the **Path of Liberation** from the mortal world of matter, the breaking away from the circle of rebirths and returning 'Home'. Those born of Life return to it: 'If then thou learnest that thou art thyself of Life and Light, and that thou happen'st to be out of them, thou shalt return again to Life.' <http://www.gnosis.org/library/hermes1.html> (Book I, Poemandres, the Shepherd of Men, verse 21).

¹⁴ <http://www.gnosis.org/library/hermes10.html>, Book X, The Key, verse 8.

¹⁵ <http://www.gnosis.org/library/hermes10.html>, Book X, The Key, verse 15.

every kind of motion and becoming free... for what supplieth all is Good.¹⁶ The most elementary education means change from an imperfect behaviour to a better one, overcoming of instincts and attainment of an inner harmony that will also reflect upon the behaviour of the individual. Individuals' **moral growth**, the great thinkers of humanity believe, ought to begin **not** in the improvement of their practices but rather in the transformation of their **mindset** and in the grounding of a character; even though, as Kant thought, 'customarily man goes about the matter otherwise and fights against vices one by one, leaving undisturbed their common root.'¹⁷ That is why all religions, he writes, can be divided into those which are endeavours to win favour (mere worship) and moral religions. In the first, man relies on God to make him eternally happy and does not need to make efforts to become a better person. In the moral religion (Christianity) man must do as much as lies in his power to become a better person, using his 'original predisposition to good'.¹⁸ According to Kant, in this striving towards self-improvement it is not essential for everyone to know what God has done for their 'salvation', 'but it is essential to know what man himself must do in order to become worthy of this assistance'.¹⁹ The symbiosis of one's personal choice and recognition that one's deeds should be good and honest because they follow a supreme cosmic order forms the worldview of the 'good' man. The masses, however, follow the mass model which is invariably limited to an *earthly order*.

Humanity's ideal is complete moral perfection, writes Kant, and 'it is our universal duty as men to elevate ourselves to this ideal of moral perfection, that is, to this archetype of the moral disposition in all its purity -and for this the idea itself, which reason presents to us for our zealous emulation, can give us power.'²⁰ Kant arrives at the idea of 'practical faith' as a means of transforming individuals. According to Rudolf Steiner, the creator of Anthroposophy, this is not sufficient because religion is **knowledge**, and not only faith. Even a great philosopher like Kant, writes Steiner, 'did not get beyond this concept of Faith'. Kant's moral faith is not sufficient, as everything man can attain concerning such matters as God and immortality can be attained *through knowledge*.²¹ Steiner cites the Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, who perfectly understood the human soul and its longing for immortality and wisdom, as well as the perception of Christ not as an idol but as a cosmic principle, as a real way for the transformation of man and as a remedy for 'pride and despair'.²² It is precisely knowledge that gives freedom to human thought and enables individuals to rediscover themselves **as a conscious particle carrying the wisdom of a cosmic entity**.

The idea of the perfection of man is vested in the human spirit as it carries the **divine principle and predestination**. The ancient priests knew this truth. We read the following in the Hermetic texts: 'Repent, O ye, who walk with Error arm in arm and make of Ignorance the sharer of your board; get ye out from the light of Darkness, and take your part in Deathlessness, forsake Destruction!'²³ It is difficult for the mass consciousness to understand the necessity of such perfection -the mass 'good' is the average morality of the masses. That is why few have followed the path of the 'elect'- of those who have embodied

¹⁶ <http://www.gnosis.org/library/hermes6.html>, Book VI, In God Alone Is Good And Elsewhere Nowhere, verse 1.

¹⁷ I. Kant, Religion within the...

¹⁸ I. Kant, Religion within the...

¹⁹ I. Kant, Religion within the...

²⁰ I. Kant, Religion within the...

²¹ R. Steiner, From Jesus to Christ, Lecture III, <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/FromJ2C1973/19111007p01.html>

²² R. Steiner, From Jesus to Christ ...

²³ <http://www.gnosis.org/library/hermes1.html> Book I, Poemandres, the Shepherd of Men, verse 28.

in themselves the supreme human qualities of the mind, of those who have separated themselves from the herd in order to follow the Path. The true direction of human history, the meaning of human evolution, the ultimate purpose of humanity have always been the same, but their achievement is hindered by the unevolved (after the 'Fall') human consciousness itself.

The world spirit, writes Hegel, 'progresses from lower determinations to higher principles and concepts of its own nature', while the aim of world history 'is that the spirit should attain knowledge of its own true nature, that it should objectivize this knowledge and transform it into a real world, and give itself an objective existence.'²⁴ The objectivization of the world spirit through life on earth is part of 'the plan of providence'. This enriches the world spirit. Even those who have 'dropped out of the plan of providence' are free to 'return', if they so wish, to the Creator, enriched by their experience. 'The spirit is such that it produces itself and makes itself what it is,' writes Hegel.²⁵ The spirit is the personification of the cosmic primal source that constantly gives birth to life. The fundamental principle in the Hermetic texts is that the universe is reason -and that in His infinite reason, God has created countless universes, material and immaterial. The superiority of the spirit over matter is manifested in the evolution and strengthening of the divine human essence. Hegel reveals this Hermetic principle: man carries the cosmic principle of harmony and perfection, therefore just as divine reason, so he, too, has the power to 'realise himself'. This good, this reason, in its most concrete concept, is god: Good as an activity, writes Hegel, is God.²⁶ The concept of divinity as perfection can illuminate the earthly path of humanity and its connection with the so-called 'celestial' paths. Then world history will be realized as part of a cosmic history.

The recognition that the world is governed by a Cosmic Principle makes it possible to reveal -or, more precisely, to bring us closer to- the content of its government. World history is the execution of its (the world spirit's) plan, writes Hegel: '**To comprehend this [plan] is the task of the philosophy of world history**';²⁷ '**world history is nothing more than the plan of providence**'.²⁸ We find the same idea in Steiner. Yet few people are capable of understanding the meaning of life in its cosmic entirety. As Steiner writes, 'we are experiencing how history is being made and politics carried on with words that have no content. What is depressing is that there is so little inclination to realize this very thing.'²⁹ The lack of cosmic wisdom on the part of the majority of people is the reason why humanity has created a world that follows the laws of unenlightened reason, and not the laws of the heart. Purposeless existence in a three-dimensional world can be justified by 'profit'. Conscious existence in the Universe, however, requires alertness, wisdom and life according to the cosmic laws.

When man does not recognize himself as a **cause** of historical events, he plays an insignificant part in his own drama. In our 'scientific' histories, man is relegated backstage as a common toy of blind forces – at that, a toy that is totally unattractive. Deceiving himself

²⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction: Reason in History. Trans. H. B. Nisbet. Ed. J. Hoffmeister (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), 63-64.

²⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of... 64.

²⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of... 66-67.

²⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of... 67.

²⁸ R. Steiner, The Karma of Untruthfulness. Trans. J. Collis. Rudolf Steiner Press, 2005.

²⁹ R. Steiner, The Karma of Untruthfulness... 3-4.

that he is in control of his destiny, man is in fact merely a puppet in the hands of blind biological evolution which dictates his actions and thus steers the course of his history, writes Pitirim Sorokin.³⁰ People's habit of thinking like the majority brings them to complete degradation. Sorokin sees materialism as the reason for the diminution of human worth, for the identification of individuals with materialistic cultural values and the impossibility of humans to recognize 'their unique position in the world'.³¹ As a result of the degradation of truthfulness, man is degraded to an animal whose purpose is to extol its greed, its appetites and its selfishness through various 'ideologies', 'rationalizations' and 'derivations'. When man does this unconsciously, he becomes a fool; when he deliberately resorts to such rationalizations, invoking 'the truth' and other pompous terms, he becomes an absolute hypocrite who uses 'the truth' only as a smokescreen to excuse his complexes.³² The selfish interests of individuals who are not aware of the consequences of their actions turn them into desperate individualists who have lost touch with their peers and have become hypocritical moralists.

It is precisely hypocrisy which shows that the hidden memory of the possible 'Human' behaviour is still alive. That is why individuals will declare every 'unrighteous action' of theirs to be 'good', claiming to have done it in the name of 'justice', in the name of the 'prosperity' of all humanity. Such conduct in politics hides private interests behind public ones. Ethics has long since stopped being a criterion for political activity, even though diplomacy is based precisely on ethics. Once man and his values are deprived of the halo of sanctity, writes Sorokin, human relations and cultural life degenerate to an elemental skirmish (as seen in the endless series of wars and revolutions in the contemporary world!) whose outcome is decided by brute force.³³ Linking your life to the existence of all humanity, taking responsibility for your actions and directing them towards the well-being of all humanity -this was the understanding of the great thinkers and enlighteners.

If the life of unenlightened reason is perceived as a single act, then it does not matter **how** individuals live and what principles guide their lives. They do not feel responsible for their actions because they have lost the sacred connection with the World Spirit. They do not see the consequences of what they sow because they have lost the knowledge that it is they themselves who have sown 'the crop' they reap!

If life is recognized *as an immortal act*, as an endless series of incarnations (of life in different realities), it must be governed by cosmic laws. Then the responsibility of individuals becomes a conscious act of choice because it determines the quality of their lives as a prerequisite for the quality of every subsequent incarnation. It is only when the individual no longer believes that '[w]hat I have done will die with me' but knows exactly that '[m]y action will not die when I die; it will have a consequence which will live on with me' will people be able 'to participate in the spiritual world,' writes Rudolf Steiner.³⁴ If we look at the course of history, he adds, we will see how newer and newer cultural achievements periodically occur in its development, eventually bringing progress to all humanity.

³⁰ P. A. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age* (Sofia: 2004), 111.

³¹ P. A. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age*...111.

³² P. A. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age*...112.

³³ P. A. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age*... 112.

³⁴ R. Steiner, From Jesus to Christ, Lecture X, <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/FromJ2C1973/19111014p01.html>

Viewed through the prism of a single human life, the problems can look insoluble. History has also seen sacrificial generations which failed to understand the great principles of life. Human beings, however, have always learned on the basis of their mistakes, no matter how long they have to repeat one and the same lessons. They have overcome slavery, renounced revolution and dictatorship, recognized the importance of the rights of the person and succeeded in discovering quantum laws.

Sensory knowledge is being accumulated so fast that it has begun cracking the old ways of thinking because it has proved to be less comprehensive than it was presumed to be. More and more people are overcoming the crisis of reason and realizing that prosperity and happiness are two different purposes. The purposes of the mass cannot be the purposes of the individual when it comes to the individual's evolution as a **Human** being. The mass is mediocre, 'medium altitude', as Gustave Le Bon noted as early as the nineteenth century. Individuals can evolve only outside the mass and the mass models that compel them to emulate what is universally accepted.

The supreme levels of human perfection are attained through evolution of the mind and soul. Then individuals attain, out of inner necessity, honesty, virtue, justice, solidarity, noble-mindedness, goodness, love. The realization of such a 'supreme man' is a justified purpose of history.

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Para Citar este Artículo:

Pencheva, Eleonora. The Man: Purpose and Direction of History. Rev. Incl. Vol. 2. Num. 2. Abril-Junio (2015), ISSN 0719-4706, pp. 34-47, en <http://www.revistainclusiones.cl/volumen-2-nba2/oficial-articulo-2015-dra.-eleonora-pencheva.pdf>

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