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**WHERE IS MY WAY**

**?**

ISBN

## INTRODUCTION

Between the extreme egoism and extreme altruism, the real man finds himself his own way, depending on his personality, environment, education and many others. From those two, the egoism is natural. The Bergson's "Free Will", the "Inner Will" as source of life at Schopenhauer and many other similar ideas reflect what nature makes in every moment, starting with the smallest cell and finishing with the biggest and complex biologic systems: want to develop himself to the detriment of environment. The altruism, instead, even if it exists naturally, it does not reach high values. Life teaches man to keep account of the others, becoming in this way altruist in a bigger or smaller measure. "*The enemy helps you, because he limits you, gives you form and founds you*" (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Citadel*).

The struggle for existence is the main condition for any being, human or animal equally. From the smallest cell to the most complex organism, life is an endless endeavour for an individual's betterment based on his environment. It stops only when he exhausts his resources, or meets with a similar individual with whom he has to share the same resources ("*My freedom stops where others' freedom begins*"). An individual's ideal is a selfish one. It is so obvious that the previous phrase seems a truism. Nature is interested in our existence, not in our happiness. Even Jesus said "*Love your neighbour as yourself!*" He confesses here that egocentrism is foremost. Accepting the other is subsequently; it comes from the contact with the environment and man learns it, while egocentrism is

genetic. There is no use for us to pretend that it does not exist. We can put it under the control of the reason, which is something much different.

Realizing the limits of his aspirations, limits that bring his unhappiness, man has built an ideal opposed to the egoism, one that is altruistic until the abandonment of oneself. In this way, religion appears. It wants to make us better, impeccable people, but just here the fault lies, because such a thing is impossible. Why does it still do it? Because it wants to counterbalance our malefic tendencies. However, being an ideal, this is not really followed by anyone, and, remaining a theoretical idea, the religion that preaches it becomes obsolete in time. The real man adopts an intermediate attitude, between the unscrupulous selfishness and the absolute altruism (if it really exists), in accordance with his personality. Contrary to expectations, the wit of choice does not belong to the theory - in this case to religion - but to the common person. The question we ask almost naturally is “why does not the theory achieve it by itself, suggesting a clever way, between the two absolute ideals?”

*“Beings without reason live in harmony... What about the good understanding existing just between the wildest animals? The cruelty of lions does not manifest among lions... The snake does not swoop upon other snake, and good understanding between wolves has become even proverbial. Only on men the education does not join.”* I quoted a whole paragraph from Erasmus, in order to show that this dilemma existed in all epochs.

The same attitude is to be found in politics as well, especially when we talk about democracy. An audacious propaganda makes us to believe that the political system in which we live is the closest to perfection, or at least approaches it. Democracy is an ideal, and the pretension of achieving it is similar to ignorance. Why cannot we find a political system in which the leading principle is a rational way, and not an ideal one? I said a rational way, but mean reasonable, not the Rationalism, because it last appeared as a philosophical current in opposition to theology, destined to take Europe out of the darkness of the Middle Age, dominated by religion, but the consequences of which led to exaggerations too, among which is communism. (I will develop this idea later.)

Logically, through education, we should learn the correct, reasonable way, avoiding the errors due to the exaggerations of one or the other extremes. Unfortunately, in most cases, we are misdirected toward that extreme opposite of the natural one, hoping that we will find the correct way. Christianity speaks about the good man, the one who offers the other cheek when someone slaps him. In politics, even if ownership is the source of progress, we pretend to have a democratic society, where people are equal to each other. A greater hypocrisy does not exist, I think. Naturally, any young man will conclude that this sort of education is of no use for his life, especially because this conclusion comes after he has just learned that it is not the stork that brings the children in the world, Santa Claus does not come with reindeers from far away and so on. Consequently, he shall find his way by himself, which he will do, but no-one says with what

results, because, meanwhile, he has lost his trust in educators.

I retook here some ideas dispersed in other books, articles, Internet, etc., for upholding the main idea of this essay.

## **I am not Harper Lee or Charles Dickens**

The only aim of the happenings related here is to retrace the condition in which some questions appeared to me and, consequently, how I tried to formulate some answers, even provisional, partial or wrong. They do not have autobiographical intentions.

Here is one: Toward the end of the Second World War, my family was obliged to move temporarily to a small village, far away from the town where I used to spend my childhood. The cause was the profession of my father. He was an officer and, for their peace of mind, the authorities put officers' families safe from the front fury. It happened in Romania. Several years later, I fully learned the disaster that happened under the Soviet Army and the new regime imposed by it. Now, I wonder how it is that the peasants from that small village knew better our future than some educated persons from my town, persons who took wrong decisions for themselves.

*“Animal Farm”* by George Orwell is a pertinent description of what occurred in the former USSR and was to follow us. He knew it in 1945, when his book was published, but our intellectuals were hoping for something different. A naivety!

Immediately following that period, I remember the slogan “*The Americans come!*” Certainly, it might be a hope for some people, but a new query for me. Why would they do it, if they did not do it until now? Is a new war ready to start, this time between the USA and USSR? Is someone interested in it? The question was beyond my understanding. Still, something was telling me that the answer was negative. Today, we know the hearsay was false. The Martians would come sooner. Europe had been divided into zones of influence, we were - unfortunately - under the Soviet one, and nothing would change for a long time. Clearly, the Americans and Occidental Europe abandoned us. The only preoccupation was survivorship. It remains the question: why did they launch that rumour, because of which people died or destroyed their careers? I still do not know. Surely not the communists! I remember, because I knew some persons propagating the hearsay, and they were intellectuals with pro-occidental orientations. The single conclusion is they were not realistic persons at all. Again, the same question: how is it that educated people could fall in such errors?

Some years later, I knew a very interesting gentleman, who was important to me. He taught me English language in a time when this idea was at least odd, as eccentric as dangerous. Before the war, he had been cultural attaché of Romanian Embassy in Paris and London. Someone said, “*in major political events, man oscillates between heroism and cowardice*”. He chose the first variant and, immediately after the war, came to Bucharest, thinking that he must be here, not abroad. In the following fifteen years, he experienced

was imprisoned and under house arrest in a very small village, surviving thanks to people's charity. I met him just when they had set him free. As nobody wanted to give him a job, I helped him and, as recompense, he offered to teach me English. Again the same question, "how is it that he did not know what the Russians are able to do?" He used to be, not only an educated person, but also an expert of politics. Very odd!

A particular happening remained in my mind for its evocative power. I was about eight or nine years old, when, one evening, I was to go toward one of my aunt's home, only a few blocks away. Another aunt of mine was visiting us. Before leaving, she asked me, "You are not afraid of walking alone in the dark?" I had never thought of it before. It was not just dark, but some trees with large crowns made the street even darker. In the quiet of the evening, I could hear faint noises caused by birds, falling leaves, twigs etc. That was when I realized that fear is an induced sentiment. Of course, my aunt's question to a child was stupid. Yes, fear is a sentiment subjective and inoculated. Even as reflex, it is acquired and not innate. A child first burns his fingers, and then learns to keep himself away. Why do we need to be afraid? Who invented fear, and why? Religion uses it at the highest level. The politics do it too, obviously for manipulating people! Fear of evil divinities, fear of the Inquisition, fear of political police during the communist regime in Eastern Europe, or of the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 50's years and so on.

From my childhood too, I remember a scene in the middle of the street: a gipsy woman showed her back to



a gentlemen who had criticized her for I-do-not-know what. I remarked then the helplessness of a civilized person face to an uncivilized one. So then, what is the use of the education?

These were some questions from a child's mind. Are they important? The questions no, but the answers yes, because they will form him as citizen.

## **In the Beginning was the Word**

It is the Bible from where we learn that, "*In the beginning was the word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God*". There was not a language, yet, because it would be absurd to think that God first invented a language and, only afterward, he created light, earth and water, plants, animals, all the others and finally Adam and nobody to talk with. Here, the meaning of "word" is "project". We may suppose that God had in mind a project. It is interesting that, in other languages, instead of word, they use something similar with the English for "verb". They suggest the idea of action. However, before any action, it must be an intention, which I named here "project". Any project, we know, needs some amendments, as it could not be perfect, not even God conceived it. The proof is to be found in the Bible as well, where one describes more situations when God himself observed that, either his project might be improved, or something is not all right with it and he must operate some modifications. Thus, even since the beginning, we learn that "*God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness*". There are many phrases like this.

Even after he created Adam, thinking, “*it is not good that the man should be alone*”, God gave him a woman, albeit he must break his best work for extracting a rib from it. The Deluge, sending his son on the earth, are “manoeuvre for rectifying the trajectory”, as well. After the Deluge, he rebuilt the whole humanity in a new tree. Therefore, he went forward step by step with his project, not having a complete imagine of the finished product for the beginning.

A first conclusion ensuing here is the lack of any finality. The initial project is to be improved ceaseless, probably still today.

A second conclusion is that such revisions will occur in the future and they will be even more radical.

This is why, the church is wrong every time it clings to some anachronistic ideas or situations.

I started from the idea that, at the beginning, it was the Word. Is it important? It is! Not the Word as it is and not because it was at the beginning, but because the Bible says it is so. The Bible is our fundamental book, which has led us during the last years (several thousands), no matter if we are or not believers. We cannot neglect this book, because it means we would neglect ourselves. We are the product of our history and our history was dependent on religion, no matter whether we like it or not. Could it be different? Certainly, not! With another fundamental book, we should become somebody different. Why? Let us see!

People act, in a great measure, based on habitudes acquired early their childhood and it depends on their education. By education, I do not mean the knowledge about Shakespeare or the structure of the atoms, but those activities with which they are accustomed to, because they were taught in this way, especially by parents. A man does not think every time what would be the sagest proceeding. He acts as he has gotten use to it, and it come from the tradition. Therefore, he is a product of tradition. In the past, religion was that what had the most important role in setting up the tradition. The great majority of people keep up the rules of cohabitation, because religion taught them so, because any believer proceeds in this way. Dead persons are entombed, because it is Christianly to do that way, a Christian will say, even if they are buried throughout the world, no matter of religion, from sanitarian reasons.

We must not expect that priests think in all religious dogmas, but we expect that they be good educators in the idea of keeping common persons with the most useful traditions, according to that epoch. We could say they are even good pedagogues, particularly if we have in view that first schools came into existence beside the churches and monasteries.

I mentioned the Deluge. It exists in all religions, no matter if they recognize God or not. It is true, between them, there are small differences of interpretation. Well, just these “small” differences make the distinction between different life philosophies staying at the base of every social construction. And not only between religions, but also inside of the same religion.

The difference may go from the assertion of one idea to the assertion of the opposite one, which unfortunately is valuable even inside Christianity. Which were initial principles of Christianity and which were those practised by Catholic Church during Middle Ages and even after it? For analysing them, we should set up what we understand Christianity is, obviously beyond the level of stories. This is not my objective at this moment and, supposing the reader understands to what I refer, I will point out several main ideas, for getting beyond this phase. The Deluge was an example.

The question is “how was it possible to have so many differences?” A little history, even just a little, would be necessary for understanding the evolution, but not here. For the moment, we shall observe that, in order to attain its aims, the church used a huge propagandistic machinery. During the Middle Age, one almost confuses it with what we name today as culture. Painting, philosophy, architecture, everything has religious subjects and aim the parishioners’ indoctrination toward obedient, sheepish high prelates’ servant.

Not keeping account by the evolution of the society, by the development of knowledge, in time, any sheep realizes more and more that aims are false. Strong people took their fortune in their own mains. The Faustic European culture arose in this way. Weak-willed ones still need religion. For both of them, a turning point is around the corner. Let us hope that it will not be as radical as a deluge. Anyway, the amplitude of change is in our hands, because a small correction made

in time is more efficient than a great forced one, after a catastrophe.

In fact, at the beginning, the Chaos was, namely something without form, therefore without limits, something in which everything was possible and in which - just because it - nothing important occurs. But, God came! He first divided the light from the darkness. Therefore, he traced a limit between them. Up till here, he did not create, but delimitate. And so, he did with earth, waters and so on. They do not say in the Bible or anywhere else that someone would create the Chaos. (It seems that we are going to create it.) In all religions, Chaos existed before anything. The All-creator is improperly named so, as he did not create, but separated. Maybe more correct would be to say he organized, if this word would not be almost compromised by too many human activities wrongly organized. Tracing a line of demarcation between earth and heaven, the divinity created two restrictions: the earth could not be heaven and heaven could not be earth, any longer. And he did not stop here. Going on, he imposed limits after limits, restrictions after restrictions, organized materiel in entities odder and odder, making small monsters, among which we are, human beings, obliged to fight with everything around us, even between us, because the limits imposed by the creator became more and more stifling.

At this point, an interesting virus appeared; we do not want to dissolve our limits. On the contrary, as the limits give our identity, we love them and want to push them as far as we can, over the neighbour's ones, and

in his detriment. As this idea belongs to him too, our facing is ready.

In primitive societies, the link man-divinity was one of a mercantile sort, something like if you give to me, I will give to you. "Make to rain and I make an oblation". Morality did not have a religious character. It belongs to people, as a summation of behaviour rules, imposed by cohabitation between people first and less by their rapport with the divinity. The shamans appeared just for acting as go-between between people and divinities. They did not belong to divinities, but pretended to be able to communicate with them.

In Christian religion, divinity has the initiative and send messages to people, messages from which they learn how to comport in order to please the divinity. The relationship between man-divinity is no longer one of small-agreement, you give to me - I give to you, but an authoritarian one. The moral rule comes from God, who pretend and does not haggle in bargain. The mediator is no longer a shaman, but the priest.

In oriental religions, the individual comes from an unchangeable Universe and, after a smaller or greater number of reincarnations comes back to the Universe. Humanity is only a summation of solitary individuals, incidentally living together. In Judaism and Christianity, humanity has a history, beginning with the conversation between Eve and devil and finishing with the Last Judgement. Here, the individual does not matter, but the humanity, in finality will happen simultaneously for all the people, because we inherited Eve's sin.

As regards Christianity, we observed that it did not appear as suddenly and unexpectedly as bigots like to think. Most philosophers, even some theologians, beginning with St. Augustine, recognize in Plato a precursor of Christianity. M. Louis considers Plato as *“the first systematic theologians”*. Still, he says: *“Plato’s theology is not the same with nowadays theology. Plato makes only dialectical speculations with phenomena and people’s way of life. If, from time to time, his philosophical syllogisms know the divinity, it is only a result of the thinking system and not a precise aim. Plato analyzes the idea of God. Also, he deal with the relations between an earth-born and God. But Plato, when speaks about divinity, as peak of the idea, he does not refer to God as being of creed, and often confound it with all-embracing idea of Well. Plato’s religion is not just a belief, but an invitation toward the worship... For Plato, it was more an invitation to dialog, a talk on a topic of high elevation between educated Greeks, a searching of truth about the unknown, when the mind has to choose between metaphysics and materialism... From here, probably, for some searchers one created the confusion that Plato deals with divinity.”*

Greek mythology, full of contradictory ideas, proving Geeks’ pleasure of philosophizing, contains many Christian ideas, including that of democracy. Yes, democracy is a Christian idea as well: if all people are God’s children, they are equal in his face, then they are equal with each other. Whether the equality cannot be implemented immediately on the earth, then we must be content with the idea that, at least in Paradise, it exists and, maybe, sometime it will come on the earth.

Anyway, the idea of democracy certainly belonged to Greeks, first. They did not create a history, yet, in the sense of something with beginning and necessary end. To them, the Eternal Returning Myth was in the centre of their philosophy. For them, the substance is finite, while time is infinite. Consequently, the same forms will be reproduced after a time, no matter how long it takes. Natural cycles as if day-night, winter-summer etc. emphasized this philosophy. Nietzsche realized this idea too. Amusing enough is that he thought this discovery belonged to him.

Because we entered a little mythology, I allow a small comparison between those two variants of the Deluge: mythological one and biblical one. In mythological variant, the survivors of the Deluge were Deucalion and his wife, Pyrrha. After water's withdrawal, the goddess Themis advised him that, while they will go down from the mountain, to throw back in their trace all the stones they found in the way, as stones symbolize the bones of their great grandmother, Gaea, who is the earth itself. From every stone, immediately, a man or a woman rose. Consequently, there are two categories of people: the natural heirs of Deucalion and those born from the stones. It was natural to think so in a slave society, where democracy is only for the first category. Deucalion's first son was Hellen and he is considered Greeks' ancestor (Hellenes)

In the biblical version, the Deluge has not such interpretations; instead, Noah's descendants, organized in familial clans, want to overrule the world. The idea of ownership is fundamental, and hereditary monarchy



became the characteristic type of social organization for European Middle Eve. Of course, not the Deluge induced the theory, but inversely, the theory invoked the Deluge as doctrinal justification. (By the way, as anywhere a deluge appears as a solution for purification of the society, what would today's society look like after a new deluge?)

Prometheus, the one who is so much eulogised today, did not have the same resonance in the old Greek world, and was not seen merely as a positive hero, but only as a subject for discussions, his indiscipline face to Zeus being his characteristic feature. Here is what Zeus says to Prometheus: "You gave to the people only the ecstasy of victory. Do they know what to do with fire until you teach them? Some will, but those are few. And they will become despots for those who do not know and will become unaware slaves. You have given the fire to several for enlightening the others. I would want to give it to all the people. Of course, you wanted it too, but your impetuous and unabated temper did not let you to do the work with moderation and embroiled me." Zeus is a deity of progress, not one of the revolutions. "People did not receive progress from you, but protest instead. They have not the disquietude of tomorrow. Their mind was filled only with hatred for the boss". (How well would have been if the hanger-on of communism had read a little mythology!) Along with Prometheus a kernel of revolt appears against too stern rules and despotic lord. The wish for change is obvious, and the merciful and righteous God is the expected solution. And he has come! We realize now that the later apocalyptic God was the reaction of some priests for which the old doctrine of a punitive divinity, maybe

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