

PROLOGUE

"What I see, mainly, is that materialism is not enough for the vast majority of people. They are seeking something else."

Georges Duby

(An 1000 an 2000. Sur les traces de nos peurs)

Humanity finds itself once more under the sign of a great change. As in all threshold processes, hope here again awakens intense self-reflection, both individual and collective. Even so, all sincere, deep reflection is inevitably accompanied by disappointments. Some of these are directly proportional to the magnitude of the time frame, which in this case is on the order of the millennium.

In the cycles of human life, midday seldom fulfills the promises of the dawn. The twentieth century, launched under the aegis of the unlimited belief in progress, with its yearning to transform the world, presents a disheartening retrospective: almost two hundred million dead in wars, local conflicts, terrorist attacks, and other forms of systematic aggression, linked to crime in its diverse vicissitudes.

Throughout the past century, innumerable modalities of violence have arisen. Many of these are visible, such as social exclusion and the dismantling of ecosystems, both on an unprecedented scale. Others, though less conspicuous—for example, the dismantling of institutions, the dilution of local and regional identities, the progressive erosion of the intermediate bodies of society, the dissolution of national states (due to fragmentation or supranational integration), the shuffling of ethnic frontiers, the draining of substance from beliefs, rites, and values—are of no lesser importance.

Who, and how many, will become the victims of this massive disenchantment with the perspectives of salvation brought on by the technological, scientific, aesthetic, and moral conquests of the modern world? The hundreds of millions of people deprived of material comfort, for whom the welfare state has been but yet another unfulfilled promise of the modern world? Undoubtedly, if one gives credit to the words of Ortega y Gasset, who contends that it is only possible to be happy in the manner of one's own epoch. Those excluded from consuming in a consumer society contribute decisively to the critical mass of the frustrated and afflicted, yielding increasing unease, with no other remedy than the always doubtful effect of social policies.

This society, however, has not managed to please those who, on the other hand, are lavished with all comforts. On the contrary, its most obvious beneficiaries are just another category of wretches. Victims in a wider, more subtle and indiscriminate sense of exclusion, the apparently well-off also end up as members of the angst-ridden, resentful, suffering, restless, inattentive, inhibited, taciturn, lonely, somber, and frivolous multitude of unsatisfied people, since despite their material affluence, they lead lives deficient in inner

comfort. They are virtually prisoners of an existence deprived of indispensable moral plenitude and hence lacking any deeper meaning.

The Millennium with its anxieties, fears, and hopes is inevitably a time of questions about ends and beginnings, about the meaning and destiny of human life. An appropriate epoch therefore to seek once more answers to the big question: What is Man? What is human life?

Mircea Eliade declared that the “*center*” of every culture is the concept of life. The most diverse societies, distinct and distant in time and space, surprisingly coincide in this sense. Food, fertility and protection against enemies, illnesses and hunger are merely part of life. Subsistence, physical health and offspring, maybe prosperity or wealth, though necessary, have never seemed sufficient to man to guarantee an adequate life.

Human beings in all epochs and cultures have conceived a broader project. We might call it the search for a full life. To achieve this, demographic vigor, material abundance, shelter from the elements and protection against misfortune was not enough. The idea of fullness implies, moreover, and perhaps above all, a vigorous longevity, not only of the body, but also of the spirit, in both this and the other world.

This is the idea of life as we may encounter it in the Vedic texts, contained in the category of *amrita*, and in the Nahuatl mythology, where it is embodied in the divine character *Quetzalcoatl*, and even in certain African cosmologies, which circumscribe it by the notion of *axé*. In all of these, vitality is conceived of as a gradient. Life is something that one has more or less. Descendants, prosperity, physical health, good fortune, and encouraging prospects, on a social and spiritual level, make it tend towards fullness. A lack in any of these diverse dimensions leads to decadence, thus jeopardizing the most daring of human yearnings, the possible permanence of existence.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, throughout heated discussions, the founding fathers of modern social thought scientifically legitimized the thesis of the psychological unity of the human species. Then, the French school of sociology, under the aegis of Durkheim and Mauss, established the conviction that all social facts are psychological facts, representations that are present in the individual or collective consciousness.

These domains, though distinct, are thus presented as being interconnected, a condition which gives rise, in the sphere of anthropological reflection, to the entire problem of the relations between individuals and society. And, within that sphere arises the question as to the nature of these relations, the polemic between the sociogenesis and psychogenesis of social facts; the question as to the construction of subjectivity and consequently the discussion with respect to personality and its links to social structure and culture, a rich vein, explored by American Culturalists.

These considerable efforts, on different fronts and with varied strategies, have not managed, however, to dispel the existing relations of indetermination in the center of this polarity. Between this pair of opposites there undoubtedly exists a current of tension, perhaps it would be better to say *ad-tension*. That is, a tension of consciousness aimed, like a beam of light, at the other pole.

It is sometimes as if the avatar of an ancient and powerful metaphor were irresistibly drawing us, maintaining us, still, under its spell. Macrocosmos and microcosmos. What are the mutual correspondences? Who serves as a model to whom? Social construction of the *persona*, or *personae* constructing the social universe? To whom does primacy belong?

The positive appraisal of creativity, so notable among modern people, would lead us to believe in the effective existence of personal freedom. And, even so, discursive insistence seems more like the search for a counterweight for the enormous, anonymous constraints that individuals are subject to in present-day society

In fact, among the innumerable inventions of the twentieth century, one finds a whole battery of resources, elaborated by different social authorities, or sometimes under their auspices, to mold the hearts and minds of their constituents: conditioned reflexes, brain washing, psychological warfare, subliminal influence, control of the imagination, behavioral engineering, directed information, instantaneous hypnosis, and neurolinguistic programming. Thanks to the development and constant expansion of this paraphernalia, the Brazilian philosopher Olavo de Carvalho concludes that the twentieth century was not noteworthy so much for ideology, atomic physics, or computing, but rather for the “omnipresence of mind manipulation, in contemporary life,” a fact that suggests a disturbing question: Isn't it more probable [than the conservation intact of intuitive, evaluating faculties] that humanity thus manipulated, idiotized, mocked twenty-four hours a day, ends up entering into a state of chronic self-deception?

Without of course overlooking how many lies mankind has been told on a planetary scale, we must not forget that men also lie with respect to themselves, not only to others, but above all to themselves. They are therefore accomplices in some way, when not followers, of the universal cult of self-deception, given over to the perverse ritual of their neuroses, of which they are at one and the same time victims, due to suffering their consequences, and executioners, due to feeding them. And this appears to be the true source of all the dramas of existence, in accordance with which the vast majority of human beings remain condemned to what Emerson called “*a life of quiet desperation*.”

Dr. Claudio Naranjo has put all his erudition, his sensitivity, his therapeutic competence, and his energy into perfecting an effective antidote against this not always mute desperation. *The Enneagram of Society: Ills of the World, Ills of the Soul* is the recent fruit of an entire lifetime dedicated to what is, without doubt, the greatest and most perennial of adventures: inner conquest; knowledge, and mastery of oneself.

This exquisite book once more presents the algorithm of characterology that came to the West in Gurdjieff's baggage in 1917, and which has come to be known since then under the name of the Enneagram, a device for self-knowledge. Naranjo makes decisive contributions, both in conceptual terms and in applications of a therapeutic nature.

This time, however, the work is not only consecrated to the

hermeneutics of this map of ethical aberrations of the individual human soul. Beyond their peculiarities, he considers them within the sphere of amorous relationships, a paradigmatic expression of this anthropological universe that is the beginning of reciprocity. Not content with this however, Claudio Naranjo closes the book with an essay of social criticism, taking psychopathologies of the individual character—maladies of the soul—as a privileged viewpoint for identifying their counterparts on a social level—maladies of the world.

His argument, which is masterly in its execution and daring, has everything necessary to attract the attention not only of those who are interested (on their own behalf or that of others) in the secrets of the human soul, but also of those who are devotees of symbolic objects from an anthropological viewpoint. The latter, especially, will be able, thanks to this book by Dr. Naranjo, to consider and discuss very provocative hypotheses. One of these, surely the most daring, is that in the case of the Enneagram, we find ourselves face to face with a general tool for organizing human experience, face to face with a type of anthropological universal. The other hypothesis proposes that on the basis of the Enneagram we reconsider a possible homology between man and his social universe.

Whatever the findings and conclusions of this research may be, *The Enneagram of Society*, rather than material for active speculation, presents us with an invitation to rebuild the world, starting with our own transformation into beings capable of assuming responsibility for our own acts, both outer and inner, a condition essential to any flight of self-transcendence, and thus crucial to the search for the ideal of a full life.

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