

**FREE THOUGHT COLLECTION:
SPIRITISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

Series 2

Spiritism and Humanism

Jon Aizpúrua

Book 10

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Translation: Danette Lebrón and José Arroyo

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The ideas and arguments presented in this book are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of CEPA and CPDoc.

PRESENTATION

*"(...) free thought elevates human dignity;
it makes a person active and intelligent,
instead of a mindless believer."*

Allan Kardec (Spiritist Review, February 1867)

The International Spiritist Association (CEPA) and the Spiritist Research and Documentation Center (CPDoc) launched, in April 2021, the **Free Thought Collection: Spiritism for the 21st Century**.

The first series in the collection is set out to present, in a concise yet conceptually precise way, the theoretical foundations of the so-called secular, free-thinking Spiritism that has developed in several countries in the Americas and in Europe in recent years.

Published in four languages—Portuguese, Spanish, English, and French—the series aims to disseminate secular, free-thinking Spiritism broadly and accessibly.

This approach offers a fresh perspective on Spiritism, founded by Allan Kardec in 1857 with the publication of his inaugural work, *'The Spirits' Book*, and later spread globally through institutionalization and popularization.

As it spread, Spiritism was influenced by the historical, cultural, and religious contexts of each country and era.

In Brazil, for example, Spiritism met an environment shaped by Catholic tradition, which resulted in its assimilation as another Christian religion. This compromised the principles of rationality and free thought originally proposed by Kardec.

This syncretic process—observed in other countries as well—reduced Spiritism to a “smaller religion,” distancing it from its epistemological vocation and draining its potential to contribute to the field of knowledge, especially in the areas of science and philosophy.

In response, Spiritists gathered around CEPA and CPDoc proposed a rereading of Spiritist

thought, looking to recover Allan Kardec's generous proposal: a spiritualist, secular, free-thinking, humanist, and progressive philosophy aligned with advances in knowledge, ethics, and spirituality in the contemporary world.

Series 1 of the **Free Thought Collection** presented to the public several fundamental topics in Spiritism from this new perspective, seeking to clarify them both for Spiritist audiences and for those interested in the subject. The eight volumes that form it were prepared by intellectuals from the Spiritist movements of Argentina, Brazil, Spain, and Venezuela, and are available free of charge on the CEPA and CPDoc websites. The works follow criteria of clarity, concision, and precision, addressing the following topics:

- **Spiritism from a Secular, Free-Thinking Perspective**
Milton Rubens Medran Moreira (Brazil) and Salomão Jacob Benchaya (Brazil)
- **The Immortality of the Soul**
David Santamaria (Spain)
- **Mediumship: Exchange Between Two Worlds**
Yolanda Clavijo (Venezuela) and Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis (Brazil)

- **Reflections on the Idea of God**
Ricardo de Moraes Nunes (Brazil) and Dante Lopez (Argentina)
- **Reincarnation: A Revolutionary Existential Paradigm**
Mauro de Mesquita Spínola (Brazil)
- **The Evolution of Spirits, Matter, and Worlds**
Gustavo Molfino (Argentina) and Reinaldo Di Lucia (Brazil)
- **Spiritism, Ethics, and Morality**
Jacira Jacinto da Silva (Brazil) and Milton Rubens Medran Moreira (Brazil)
- **Allan Kardec: The Founder of Spiritism**
Wilson Garcia (Brazil) and Matheus Laureano (Brazil)

In the words of José Herculano Pires, an important Brazilian Spiritist philosopher, Spiritism is still “the great unknown.” Shadows of misunderstanding persist, obscuring its original brilliance as an innovative philosophical proposal centered on reason and facts in the light of modern thought.

Series 1 contributes to a comprehensive, counter-hegemonic view of Spiritism, seeking dialogue and

openness to otherness in the face of predominant currents within the Spiritist movement.

Now CEPA and CPDoc present to the public **Series 2** of the collection, with the central theme **Spiritism and Society**. This new stage aims to carry forward the successful publishing project by addressing contemporary issues essential to humanity.

The books in **Series 2** explore the relationships between Spiritism and sensitive, timely subjects such as politics, humanism, work, racism, the climate crisis, sustainability, religious fundamentalism, gender, sexualities, the role of women in society, ideology, and mass communication.

The authors were invited to engage in dialogue with Kardec's work, adopting a secular, free-thinking approach in counterpoint to religious Spiritism. Their contributions reflect post-Kardecist updates and seek to apply Spiritist thought to the dilemmas and challenges of the 21st century, also considering the updating of language and concepts.

The proposal is to deepen the process begun with **Series 1** and to strengthen the consolidation of a secular, progressive, and free-thinking Spiritism. To ensure diversity of ideas, nationalities, and genders,

authors from the first series were not repeated. Some works were written by individual authors, others by pairs, trios, or larger teams.

We are grateful to the authors and editors who generously granted the copyrights of their works to CEPA and CPDoc. Each book was guided by a terms-of-reference document intended to ensure thematic and editorial unity while respecting the authors' freedom of expression.

The ideas and thesis presented are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the institutional position of CEPA or CPDoc.

Series 2 is offered as reference material and didactic support for scholars, promoters of Spiritism, and organizers of courses, lectures, and study groups. Like **Series 1**, this new stage aims to foster healthy, plural debate on topics relevant to Spiritism.

The collection is published in a spirit of dialogue—not to show sectarian divisions, but to affirm identities, build bridges, and promote exchange with Spiritists from different currents and with non-Spiritists interested in the subject.

We reiterate the collection's target audience: Spiritists affiliated with CEPA, Spiritists from other

traditions, and non-Spiritists interested in the issues addressed.

If it fulfills this purpose, **Series 2** of the Free Thought Collection: Spiritism for the 21st Century will have fully achieved its goals.

Organizers

*Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis - Mauro de
Mesquita Spínola - Ricardo de Moraes Nunes*

During the year 2026, CEPA will have commemorated 80 years of existence. This is a milestone not only for us, as a collective, but for the entire global Spiritist movement. With this anniversary, an important chapter is marked in the history of the world's oldest worldwide representative Spiritist organization in uninterrupted operation.

These first 80 years unfolded in a turbulent twentieth century and a first quarter of the twenty-first that brings new challenges and opportunities. The Law of Progress, proposed in Kardec's outline presented in *The Spirits' Book*, serves as our point of reference. Not everything advances simultaneously or across all domains at once, just as not all individuals have their personal progress subordinated to the progress of others. Understood in this way—with a panoramic, expansive view—we see that progress, change, and movement are universal constants. Looking

to the quantum universe, the physical universe, and the moral universe that each of us embodies, we note how Progress is Law.

So too has been the progress of CEPA—International Spiritist Association. From an avant-garde representative and confederative movement to an association of organizations, collectives, and individuals aligned in agreement and heading in the same direction: to present and represent the Spiritist message in the language of our time, addressing present-day issues and always engaging in dialogue with contemporary knowledge and society. In other words, to stand for the ideal of Spiritism from an updated, fresh perspective—always.

Today, Spiritist thought is more exposed than ever to analysis, scrutiny, critique, and to encounters with people who thirst for a loving, empathetic, and solidaristic spirituality—one that does not keep chewing over the religious atavisms of yesteryear. That is the fertile ground that is not always cultivated, but which is our specialty. More and more women and men seek to find themselves and to identify as Spirits, looking for a language that satisfies their intellectual curiosity, their critical thinking, and their free-thinking disposition.

The fruits of the influence of CEPA—International Spiritist Association—are visible and ever-expanding throughout the Spiritist milieu. Increasing numbers of individuals and collectives are joining us, understanding that Spiritism, seen from a non-religious perspective, has much to contribute and indeed frees us from ancient, heavy cultural and behavioral chains. As an organization, we cannot claim exclusive credit for this. The fact that more people today continue to draw near to a comprehensive, free-thinking, progressive, and secular view of Spiritism also reflects the rising quality of the studies, analyses, and research being carried out in different fields of knowledge on topics that Spiritism addresses. In other words, as individuals progress, so too does the way ideas, discourses, arguments, and proposals are presented and developed.

This is where CEPA's editorial initiative—the Free Thought Collection: Spiritism for the 21st Century—comes into play. This second series of books will serve as a forum or resonance space from which we stand for and present to the world a Spiritist proposal that is:

1. *deistic*; finding in the Primary Cause—God—the starting point of everyone and everything.

2. *immortalist*; understanding the immanence of the existence of Being—individualized and enduring.
3. *progressive and evolutionist*; recognizing the importance of physical life, with its ecological, economic, and social responsibilities, as a learning arena and reinforcement for the Spirit.
4. developed through *dialogue* with *Spirits* — that is, with human beings without a physical body — who offer us their experiences, perspectives, and counsel or cautions in building a practical, fraternal, ever-living body of knowledge.
5. recognizing in *universal solidarity* something beyond personal experience or speculation—an undeniable reality: Earth is our current school-home, and the universe is full of workshops and stages that are likewise available to us and to those who have preceded us, as well as to those who are coming into consciousness.

Although it is not a guaranteed, assured, or linear process, we expect that, with the passing of time, individuals will mature their ideas, attitudes, outlooks, and assessments. These expectations are part of human dynamics; yet they sometimes collide with a different reality that apparently will

not unfold at the desired speed. We often notice people repeating old, worn-out sayings, clinging to childish attitudes, or striving to oppose change and progress, dismissing as utopian the ideas they do not understand.

Knowing this, we should not be surprised that organizations and institutions of any nature—social, political, philosophical, religious, economic, and so on—are an amplified reflection of it. After all, organizations, and institutions, like society itself, represent the sum of the individuals who compose them. That is why we see collectives marked by resistance, inertia, resentment, and disinterest when faced with changes that require reconsidering positions and maturing attitudes and ideas.

Does Spiritism, as a spiritualist philosophy with moral consequences, have this resentful, stagnant, immature character? The answer seems obvious: **NO!**

So, we invite our readers to do the following: enjoy this reading, analyze each book, take notes, write down questions, and take part in the events where the authors who contributed to each of the books that make up the Free Thought Collection will be present. Bring us your concerns and let us discuss

them. After all, that is how knowledge is built, how we grow, and how we learn.

We are fully confident that the Free Thought Collection will touch your life in a positive way. Thank you for reading us and allowing us to contribute something positive.

José E. Arroyo

President of International Spiritist Association - CEPA

CPDoc is currently one of the oldest Spiritism research centers in operation in Brazil. Its main goal is the development and dissemination of Spiritist-themed studies and research, using the method best suited to each topic and drawing on contributions from various fields of knowledge. It thus looks to contribute to the advancement of knowledge as a whole and of Spiritism in particular.

CPDoc was founded in Santos (SP) in 1988, born from the dream of young people keen to expand Spiritist studies. Today it includes participants from several Brazilian states and other countries. Works are published through its portal, in books, in the press, and at various events—especially the Brazilian Symposium on Spiritist Thought and CEPA's Congresses and Conferences, the organization it joined in 1995.

In a world dominated by superficial knowledge, shallow and uncontrolled information, and the absence of critical

thinking, CPDoc continues striving to offer students and scholars of Spiritism a probing gaze toward the future. It is always a utopia, always a dream, but that is how it began, and, despite the natural fatigue brought by the passage of years, the group still toys with the belief in knowledge that sparks reflection and changes in paradigms and attitudes—for the individual and for society.

Without claiming to point out a single path, we are certain that the light of critical, non-dogmatic, humanist knowledge—free of any institutional imposition—can yield something effective in this quest that began in 1857 in France and that we insist on keeping alive: the pursuit of happiness through understanding what life is.

Information on published books and articles, events promoted by CPDoc, and online courses are available on the group's portal: <http://www.cpdocespirita.com.br>.

Saulo de Meira Albach

President of Spiritist Research and Documentation
Center - CPDoc

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PREFACE

It was with the greatest honor and great joy that I accepted the invitation to write the foreword to this work by Jon Aizpúrua, the foremost symbol of genuinely Kardecist Spiritism, secular and free from any conditioning imposed by current times.

I know of no other person of equal intellectual stature who has accumulated, throughout life, such complete knowledge, both in the spiritist sphere and in general learning, together with the lucidity, critical capacity, balance, and discernment needed to withstand any scrutiny.

I consider the topic timely and extremely necessary in an age when many attitudes appear utterly devoid of reasonableness. The world is divided and, it seems, many people do not care

about what others feel, living instead around apparent interests, whatever the cost. Yet this is not what a human being should seek, especially when one is aware of Spiritism and sees this life as merely an opportunity. Spiritist humanism recognizes in the human being all the potential needed for the necessary changes; it believes in the human being as the only one capable of solving human problems and providing humanity with a life of peace.

Before delving into the content of the work, it is worth noting that this book appears as a true gift, since the stature of its author allows us direct contact with the most up-to-date thinking on humanism.

These are profound reflections, grounded in both ancient and modern thinkers, that allow us to reflect on humanism from various perspectives, beginning with education.

At the very beginning of the text, the reader encounters a list of principles and values that the author considers inherent to spiritist humanism, expressly citing the choice of virtues, compassion, justice, freedom, equality, solidarity, among others, all of which are part—directly or indirectly—of the body of human rights.

The author clarifies for the reader the concepts of humanism and humanitarianism, which merge but are not the same. While the former centers on the recognition of the value and autonomy of the human being, the latter is defined as a practical attitude or action that seeks to relieve human suffering.

He develops the concept of historical and universalist humanism, writing in a direct and simple manner, from around the year 1400—when it first emerged—to its full flourishing in the Renaissance, when it became an articulating axis for disciplines and fields of creativity. Universalist humanism encompasses various humanisms, commonly expressed under labels such as utopian humanism, positivist humanism, Marxist humanism, socialist humanism, libertarian humanism, existentialist humanism, Christian humanism, secular humanism, spiritualist humanism, and even explicitly proposed atheist humanism. These humanisms make room for all forms of knowledge and interpretation.

The author's conclusion that Spiritism is a humanism that upholds a transcendental anthropology is highly fitting. Although it has deist and spiritualist roots, it centers its ethical and social concern on the human being, whether incarnate

or discarnate, while also encouraging active participation in the ongoing struggle required to face the ups and downs of life.

Perhaps herein lies the great contribution of this book, since the author places the human being at the center, inviting us to think that Spiritism contributes to human evolution by transforming us into better people, aware of the responsibility we bear toward the evolution of the planet and of human relationships. He makes it very clear that one should not expect desired improvements from others, but rather fight for them and bring them about.

By detaching Spiritism from religious conceptions, the author conceives spiritist humanism as having its own identity, placing the spirit in eternity as a preexisting, existing, coexisting, and subsisting being that makes use of human capacity instead of acting on impulse or in ignorance; in short, neither religion nor materialism.

He speaks of a spiritist humanistic model that promotes action, discovery, and momentum, without valuing the human being as disconnected from his or her historical moment or insensitive to the demands of social progress, both in relations with others and in everything that binds us to living beings and

nature as a whole. Centered on humans, it promotes curiosity, study, and, consequently, evolution.

From an optimistic perspective, he presents a spiritist humanism oriented toward progress, focused on the human being of today, grounded in history and looking toward the future, without seeing fundamentalist theological conceptions—whose axis is the exaltation of spiritual life—as the only way out, as though it were dissociated from material life. He also pertinently clarifies that the authentically spiritist view does not agree with the religious one that sees the world as a “vale of tears,” where everyone suffers divine punishment for an alleged original sin and resigns themselves to pain as an unavoidable test for redemption.

It is gratifying to read this work, written freely yet full of substance, inviting reflection and expressing an altruistic vision of Spiritism in which the spirit builds its own path and is responsible for the consequences of its free decisions. In this way, the ethics derived from spiritist humanism promote commitments that shape a moral and spiritual culture capable of offering humanity a universalist, progressive, and loving alternative. Thus, it will be in divine, infinite love that humanity will find the resources necessary for its growth, with

new opportunities in successive incarnations until the construction of a better, fully civilized world, where its inhabitants enjoy an ever greater degree of happiness.

The work presents a set of general considerations intended to facilitate understanding of the essential theses of spiritist humanism in the contemporary world, organized into sequential chapters whose titles are themselves an invitation to read.

It begins with "the human condition and self-knowledge" and continues with "toward a secular spirituality," "spiritual sociology," "for an education grounded in humanism," "in praise of peace," "for an integral ecology," "happiness as a path," "Spiritism and progress," "humanism versus transhumanism," and concludes with "humanist exhortation to the practice of good," in which the author deemed it fitting to include the poem "The Pleasure of Serving," by the refined Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, as a faithful expression of humanism and spirituality.

According to the author, the verses are an invitation to overcome the culture of individualism and promote the culture of cooperation, forming a beautiful hymn to love, tenderness, and service—in other words, to the highest values proclaimed by a humanism with spiritual roots.

This is a work of great cultural and spiritist value, expressing the elementary principles of this philosophy and proposing a way of living life that dignifies the opportunity to be in this world, in search of the best possible self-construction.

I especially like to highlight the value of this book when it addresses social issues. Spiritism deals with the human being in his or her wholeness and, therefore, in relation to society. In the third part of *The Spirits' Book*, we find a true compendium of sound guidance for the construction of the human path. Since human rights are the basis of all others, the author does not fail to emphasize the value Kardec attributes to life in society, in which the principles of peaceful and respectful coexistence must be observed. And, in a magnanimous way, he reminds us of the duty not only to be moved by the problems of reality, but also to act in order to transform it, for it is not enough to be concerned about the evil that exists in the world: it is urgent to fight it.

Likewise, he highlights democracy as an integral part of Spiritism, recognizing it as an essential value for the current evolutionary stage of humanity, without which we would fall into authoritarianism. Freedom, equality, and fraternity appear in the

text as fundamental principles. He recalls Jesus of Nazareth, whose teaching that we should not do to others what we do not want for ourselves would by itself be enough—a teaching so important that, even after twenty centuries, we still have not fully understood its scope.

The work is truly enthusiastic; in addition to being highly instructive, it invites us to reflect on life in its entirety, providing knowledge in a pleasurable way.

May reading be as beneficial to you as it was to me, and may it enrich your many forms of knowledge.

Jacira Jacinto da Silva
President of CEPA International (2016-2021)

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INTRODUCTION

SPIRITIST HUMANISM: WHY AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

In responding to the proposal made by the Spiritist Research and Documentation Center (CPDoc) and CEPA–International Spiritist Association to write a brief essay on the relationship between Spiritism and humanism for publication in the Free Thinking Collection, I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the honor bestowed upon me and of joy at the opportunity to express what these two philosophical concepts have always meant throughout my life: knowledge of the spirit in its broad dimensions, whether incarnate or discarnate, and an understanding of human centrality, or rather, of placing the human being at the center of my concerns. Both references have served as my

guiding star in shaping and directing my thought in full harmony with a paradigm of free and open spirituality, situated in a global world characterized by diverse plurality.

I separate the notion of spirituality from any religious preaching, or at least I do not ground it in such preaching. Most religions, with their dogmas and condemnations, with an exclusivist discourse that has led them to proclaim themselves owners of the truth, with their attempt to impose uniformity in all spheres of human existence, with their institutionalization and attachment to power and the benefits derived from it, and with their fundamentalism, which often results in violations of human rights, have perverted the authentic meaning of spirituality as an elevated manifestation of concrete and close unconditional love, of sensitivity and service in the face of the suffering of others, having instrumentalized it for base purposes and erased it from its horizon.

I embrace spirituality from a **spiritualist** and **anthropological** perspective. First, I adopt as a premise the recognition of the spirit as an ontological and epistemological category that defines the intelligent entity dwelling within us, that animates life, thinks, knows, and feels, that continues after the death of the physical body and evolves through

successive existences. This spiritualist, and more specifically spiritist, view inclines me to sympathize with those who claim the right of every human being to feel an emotion of openness and reverence toward the Mystery that surrounds us and that, being ineffable, cannot be described in words, or to experience an intimate connection with the Divine that transcends us, with God, however one may conceive, understand, or worship Him, without the need for intermediaries, interpreters, or censors.

In keeping with an anthropological view focused primarily on the human being as a complex bio-psycho-socio-spiritual entity, it must be kept in mind that inherent to the spirit are corporeality, sociability, historicity, subjectivity, emotionality, affectivity, idiosyncrasy, as well as the variability and unpredictability of psychological inclinations and tendencies.

Principles and values that give meaning to spiritist humanism

From the spiritist and free-thinking conviction that defines me, born of my encounter with Kardec at the age of eighteen and cultivated without interruption to the present day, I am convinced

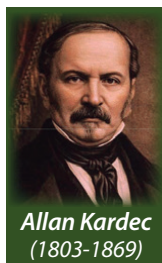
that humanism remains valid and current, not only as a venerable tradition from Petrarch and the Renaissance thinkers who devoted themselves to the study of the humanities and the cultivation of the liberal arts by placing the human at the center of their reflection, but also as a worldview that guides ideas and social praxis, as a concrete exercise of love and compassion, as the foundation of essential values and rights inherent to all persons, whatever their origin, sex, or age, and which I summarize here succinctly:

- **Love of life**, which must always be understood as an opportunity to grow, to make dreams come true, to face challenges, to overcome difficulties, and to advance toward the conquest of happiness, which is the natural goal of the spirit in its evolutionary journey. In harmony with a holistic vision, love of life corresponds to love of nature, understood as joyful encounter with and enjoyment of it rather than its exploitation; as a manifestation of respect and affection for the natural environment and not its devastation.
- **Commitment to the virtues**, understood in an ethical and philosophical sense rather than a theological one. Beginning with overcoming selfishness, pride, and harmful habits, the

cultivation of virtues in daily life constitutes the basis of authentic integral growth, which becomes evident in physical, mental, moral, social, and spiritual health.

- **Love of family**, the starting point of the human path toward maturity, a fitting setting for healthy reciprocal relationships, the backbone of society. In agreement with Kardec in *The Spirits' Book*:

"Social ties are necessary for progress, and family ties make social bonds stronger. Therefore, family bonds constitute a law of nature." (KARDEC, 1992, p.273).

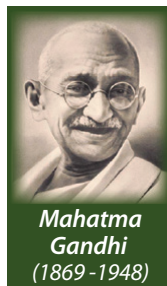


Obviously, this approach points to the formation of healthy families, namely those in which love is the key element in the relationship among their members, because otherwise they become groups of people bound biologically and legally who form a cold, distant structure exposed to profound ups and downs. A healthily constituted family, conceived as the essential cell of society, contributes to general progress and spiritual evolution by providing opportunities for the reincarnation of spirits.

Family and State are indispensable institutions in any society, each fulfilling its own specific purposes.

The family, followed by the school, is the first and principal channel for the transmission of values and attitudes, and defending it is not inconsistent with recognizing the role that necessarily belongs to the State in guaranteeing respect for and enforcement of the fundamental rights of all citizens, the validity of freedoms, and the balance between public functions and market powers.

- **Compassion**, as an attitude that mobilizes our most loving and supportive side and that, when practiced, gives us a pleasant sense of inner well-being. Being moved by another's misfortune implies recognizing that person as human and, at the same time, humanizing ourselves. In his teachings, Gandhi never tired of reminding us that love and compassion are the humblest forces, yet at the same time the most powerful ones the world possesses.
- **Progress**, grounded in a hopeful conception of the spiritual telos, of the evolutionary purpose of the human being as an incarnate spirit moving toward new achievements, without failing to acknowledge the possibility of human actions ending in failure, though not as a final moment but as a stage in the



journey from which one emerges strengthened. General progress is an unstoppable trend, and the great challenge remains achieving parity between intellectual progress and moral progress.

- **Justice**, interpreted as the universal longing that every human being receives what rightfully belongs to them. Despite its historical relativity and its being the subject of complex philosophical discussions, rational analysis of justice allows us to recognize that it fully identifies with the principle of equality, because true justice is dispensed only when it is accepted that all people are equal in rights. In a broad sense, social justice requires a reasonable and equitable distribution of the goods of this world, which are the common heritage of humanity and not the possession of a few. Consequently, the sense of justice is complemented by an attitude of peaceful resistance and non-submission in the face of injustice.
- **Freedom**, understood as a fundamental dimension inherent to the human condition. Although exposed to various internal and external, psychic, biological, and social influences, every person is an incarnate spirit endowed with free will and is therefore an autonomous and independent being, capable of thinking and discerning, of

choosing and rejecting, the owner of a creative and integrative power that allows him or her to exercise freedom above such conditioning factors. Therefore, every form of slavery violates human nature, and when a person, a family, a social minority, or an entire people is stripped of freedom, their dignity is taken away as well.

- **Freedom of conscience and thought**, encouraging the use of reason without dogmatic constraints. All human beings have the right to self-determination in the lifestyle we adopt, in our ideological orientation, in the religious or political belief that satisfies us, in the intimacy and sexuality we practice and enjoy honestly and responsibly.
- **Integral intellectual and moral formation**, involving learning, inquiry, research, reflection, and critical sense, fully embodying the motto with which Kant summarized the central purpose of the Enlightenment: *Sapere aude!*—dare to use your own understanding. It also implies the cultivation of moral values for the shaping of a healthy, honest, sensitive, altruistic, kind, and supportive personality. Nothing can replace education in the development of human potential, perfecting abilities and fostering one's integration into society and culture.

In the educational process, self-education—where the individual is both educator and learner—interacts reciprocally with hetero-education, which comes from external support provided by the home and schooling. In both paths, reading is crucial to the formation and maturation of personality, through an irreplaceable love of books, on the premise that books should not be read merely because they must serve some purpose according to the logic of material gain in a society where having is valued more than being; rather, they should be read for the pleasure of reading them, of learning, inspired by the desire to know and to know ourselves, to enrich ourselves spiritually.

- **Secularism**, understood as the defense of the civil interests of society shared by believers and nonbelievers alike, not as the denial or persecution of religious beliefs. In essence, secularism affirms the independence of human beings, society, and the State from all ecclesiastical or religious influence. A secular state guarantees citizens' freedom of thought and conscience and respects everyone's right to the free expression of their beliefs, with no restriction other than respect for the beliefs of others. In a secular society, religious beliefs are respected as a right of those who embrace them, but not as a

duty that can be imposed on anyone, as occurs in confessional and theocratic states.

- **Tolerance**, understood as acceptance of diversity, a willingness to eradicate prejudice, and the ability to coexist with what we dislike or disapprove of, as well as flexibility that facilitates dialogue. But tolerance must not be confused with insensitivity to evils that cause suffering, nor with indifference to ideologies that endanger democratic achievements, arising from authoritarian, totalitarian, populist, confessional, fundamentalist, or integralist conceptions. Tolerance is the most effective antidote to fanaticism, whether religious, political, or of any other kind, which generates so much misunderstanding and hatred. Defending concepts or ideas firmly and with reasoned arguments—always; fanaticism—never, of any kind or in the name of any doctrine or ideology.
- **Cosmopolitanism**, referring basically to the idea that human beings are citizens of the world because we belong to the same planetary community in which exclusion has no place. It calls for a new education for citizenship that is not reduced to notions of homeland or nationality—which must be understood and respected—but is guided by moral values of broader scope that foster coexistence, confront racist or xenophobic

tendencies, and recognize the human rights of all persons in societies where everyone has a place and difference is regarded as richness, not stigma. Cosmopolitanism ethically transcends nationalist or patriotic beliefs through its aspiration to an integrated and supportive humanity.

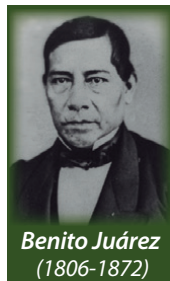
- **Equality**, as an inalienable attribute of the human condition and of the human experience as a social being, from which it follows that all persons must enjoy the same rights and opportunities, without discrimination of any kind, in order to live, coexist, and fully develop all their potentialities. In accordance with what is set forth in *The Spirits' Book* concerning the law of equality, social inequality cannot be regarded as God's work but rather as the work of human beings, and therefore it is a moral imperative to struggle to eradicate it. This does not mean adopting the position of radical egalitarianism that proposes absolute equality of wealth and ignores "*the diversity of faculties and characters*," as Kardec aptly pointed out, which is nothing other than recognition of human heterogeneity, which in no way should be taken as justification for inequality.
- **Fraternity**, as a choice in favor of friendship, dialogue, coexistence, enjoyment of life, and closeness. Beyond uniting family members, friends,

and acquaintances through the expression of affection, respect, and kind treatment, fraternity is proposed as the ideal bond that should unite men and women, viewed as members of a universal family and therefore recognized as brothers and sisters. To be fraternal means recognizing that there is an essential connection among all people, that all possess intrinsic dignity above any difference, and practicing values such as love, solidarity, fellowship, justice, peace, and common effort for the building of a more harmonious world for all.

- **Inner peace**, encouraged by spiritual seeking, the discovery of transcendence, serenity as the result of balance between mind and body, satisfaction born of a clear conscience, readiness to accept and value our own feelings, and enjoyment of the pleasant sense of depth offered by silence and contemplation.
- **Social peace**, among people, peoples, and nations, derived from dialogue, consensus, and good relations. The culture of peace never arises from military victory, nor is it reduced to the slogan "no to war," because it has a broader content born of the desire to build a permanent state of peace, one that does not admit violence, demands

coexistence among nations, rejects military conquests, promotes the peaceful resolution of disputes, and also requires respect for the diversity of cultures and ways of life, which translates into healthy pluralism. The maxim uttered by the Mexican statesman Benito Juárez will always remain valid:

"Among individuals, as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace".



- **Solidarity**, a deeply meaningful word with a universalist flavor, which sounds like the secular version of the term charity, the latter running the risk of being confined—and therefore limited—to the typically Christian lexicon. Of course, beyond semantic subtleties, the practice of solidarity represents the best of the human condition insofar as it springs from love of one's neighbor, compassion for human pain and suffering, and empathy for the humble, the poor, the outcasts, the discriminated against, the refugees, the most vulnerable, and all those persecuted on earth for defending their ideals or for trying to achieve their dream of a dignified life. The spirit of solidarity inspires the beautiful joy of serving and of being

constantly and unconditionally willing to help others, considering their needs as our own, and fostering cooperation and connection in society.

Humanism and humanitarianism

When they call for concrete and sustained effort to give real content to these just aspirations, humanism and humanitarianism merge, although they are not necessarily the same in terms of their definitions and objectives. They are related and complementary concepts, but different. Humanism is a current of thought and a cultural movement that promotes a worldview centered on the recognition of the value and autonomy of the human being and encourages personal growth, intellectual and moral education, and ethical and social reflection. Humanitarianism, for its part, is defined as an attitude or practical action that seeks to alleviate human suffering, especially in critical situations such as those affecting people harmed by severe deprivation or victims of natural disasters or armed conflicts.

I cannot conceive of humanism without humanitarianism, nor the reverse. As in everything concerning the human being, theory and practice go hand in hand and nourish each other. The body of ideas that supports the humanist conception

should serve as a foundation for humanitarian action so that it does not remain limited to charitable assistance consisting of donating food, clothing, medicine, or money, something that should never be underestimated, but whose impact is immediate and short-lived. Perhaps the famous metaphor that invites us to *“give a fish to the one who needs food and at the same time teach that person how to fish”* well illustrates the combination of both considerations: sometimes quick and direct solutions are necessary, but a deeper and more sustainable approach must foster education and the development of people’s ability to generate their own resources autonomously, in a society that opens paths for them and provides possibilities for them to work for their well-being. The moral duty that inspires humanitarian, charitable, or philanthropic actions must be linked to the development of a social consciousness capable of transforming society so that justice, equality, freedom, fraternity, progress, and other values that ennoble human dignity may prevail.

The “beyond” in relation to the “here and now”

A better world, envisioned in light of a dynamic understanding of spiritist humanism, must be the result of the concerted effort of the spirits incarnated

on our planet with the moral support of the discarnate, and it must be built here and now, in the "here and now," without postponing the search for solutions to the "beyond," or to a confused interpretation of reincarnational causality that seeks to rationalize or justify human tragedies or social inequities as though they were "expiations" or "debt payments," which are nothing more than sophisms used to silence the voice of conscience in the face of passivity or inaction.

Concern for the happiness of souls after death cannot mean a disregard for the integral well-being of people in the incarnate world, which is a fundamental element of the spirituality of life when viewed in all its dimensions. Since discarnate spirits are the very souls of the deceased, it responds to magical or naive thinking to suppose that their well-being and happiness are independent of the conditions of incarnate life. The happiness of the future is the result of the effort to achieve it within the societies of the present.

What does it mean to be a spiritist humanist today?

Spiritist humanism presupposes being grounded in reality and not escaping from it, with the honest

purpose of transforming society for the better, to advance in well-being and rights, and never to lose them, nor to replace one set of privileged beneficiaries with another from different ideologies, as has happened so many times.

To be a spiritist humanist today is to feel in the deepest part of oneself that each of our existences represents a fleeting moment in an infinite and extraordinary adventure: the complex and difficult struggle of the spirit in its unceasing evolutionary process of self-knowledge in order to advance toward higher stages of intellectual, psychological, moral, and social maturation—that is, toward greater fullness and unfolding of consciousness. It is necessary to carry out the great revolution of values, one that begins with the human being himself or herself but does not remain there and extends to social structures, thus verifying a dialectical relationship between the moral and the social.

Following these lines of thought throughout my life inspired a constant effort to cultivate a transdisciplinary mode of knowledge that made me forever allergic to fanaticism, sectarianism, and the religious or political falsehoods of self-proclaimed messiahs, saviors of souls who rely on the fears of believers, on threatening hells, or on a culture of sins

and guilt, just as it distanced me from self-proclaimed revolutionaries who present themselves as utopian saviors of peoples and in the end lead them to the precipices of horrible dystopias.

I have never ceased to be a learner, that is, to continue studying and reading eagerly, listening to those who have something important to say, meditating, reflecting. I became accustomed to turning to the widest variety of sources of information and knowledge and to taking into account, with genuine respect, opinions different from my own; to letting curiosity flow, to being surprised and asking myself questions; to frequently reviewing my worldview, which makes me a proud revisionist; to criticizing myself and correcting my mistakes; to reexamining my beliefs and rectifying them without embarrassment when there is evidence that new data invalidate previous concepts; to having doubts and not taking refuge in alleged absolute and timeless truths that feel comfortable only in theology and in the faith of fanatics.

Precisely as a spiritist humanist, and therefore a free thinker, I have tried not to give in to the temptation of believing myself the owner of truth, or of supposing that "truth" belongs to a particular doctrine, or that one comes into possession of it

by reading the books of any author, regardless of the recognition given to his or her merits and contributions. First, because such a truth does not exist in absolute terms. There are truths insofar as there is knowledge that can be verified and tested, but such truths remain partial, temporary, relative to a given dominant paradigm, and are therefore subject to tensions, revisions, and replacement if empirical evidence so determines. Second, because throughout history there has not existed, nor does there exist, any system of thought capable of encompassing the totality of human or universal knowledge, from which it follows that there is not a single path in the search for truths but rather a plurality of paths and options. And third, as a corollary of the foregoing, I do not believe in books regarded as sacred or unquestionable, presented as the epitome of universal wisdom or as the manifestation of divine will itself or the definitive revelation of superior spirits. Respectable ideas, no doubt, though sustained only by faith, dogma, or the good faith of believers.

I turn to the old Latin sentence *hominem unius libri timeo*, that is, "*I fear the man of a single book*", to remind us that from the worship of sacred books and infallible masters arise fanaticisms of the most

diverse kinds that so greatly harm harmonious coexistence in the world. In my spiritist formation, Kardec's texts were and continue to be my best reference, but I do not adopt them as infallible or definitive works, but rather as a starting point and a foundation for a formidable spiritualist worldview that offers an excellent approach to understanding God and creation, spirit and matter, the world and humankind, cosmic evolution. I also believe, with gratitude, that Kardec's valuable contribution allows us to think on the basis of what has already been thought and not have to start from scratch.

I believe that diversity is a value, a richness of life, of the human, of the spirit, of the cosmos. It offers ever new possibilities. There is greater richness in the multiple than in the one, in the plural more than in the uniform, in polyphony more than in monotony or uniformity. To seek to reduce the multiple to the one is to go against the very nature of things. Naturally, it must be understood that it is necessary to harmonize the right to diversity with the right to equality, the recognition of one's own dignity with the dignity of others, and the value of all cultures without exclusion.

Because I recognize the variety of people and of their ways of thinking, I reaffirm my belief in the

creative power of dialogue. Precisely, the more different opinions and beliefs are, the more necessary dialogue becomes. Dialogue among equals and without prior hierarchies. I value reasoned, honest argumentation, free from dogmatic impositions or appeals to an alleged principle of authority. I believe in the right to criticize any idea, but I do not like *ad hominem attacks*, because all people deserve respect and have the right to think without pressure or constraint and to express their opinions freely.

I owe a great deal to the spiritist humanism that nested early in my soul and became the compass that would thereafter guide my thoughts and my steps. It probably found resonances in the deep folds of my palingenetic memory, because from as far back as I know myself, I became aware that I am made for reflection and not for genuflection.

I often make a stimulating invitation to think—not to think as I think, but simply and plainly to think. If this book helps bring that about, especially within the spiritist movement, I will feel greatly pleased.

JON AIZPÚRUA

Murcia, España, otoño de 2025

1

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON HUMANISM

The term *humanism* can be understood if two meanings are taken into account. In the historical sense, it refers to the attitude that took shape between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, whereby classical antiquity, revived through the study of the *humanae litterae*—that is, the classical languages and the masterworks of Greco-Roman literature—was set forth as the ideal and model for the education of the complete human being and constituted the basis of his or her perfection.

The basic object of knowledge is the Human Being (a term adopted here in the generic sense of representative of the human realm), and the meaning of life; and in light of this task, anthropological, sociological, and cosmological questions must be

posed. The other meaning, broader and universalist, refers to the exaltation of the human spirit in its free activity, outside all constraint and all authority; that is, the subject endowed with the privilege of freedom, turned into the actor of himself or herself and of the construction of the world.

Both visions coincide in the essential core of their reflection on the problem of humankind, so it could be said that humanism has always existed, even if it has expressed itself in very different ways. It is true that there is no contradiction or exclusion between both meanings and that they could mutually integrate if classical antiquity is conceived as a paradigm elevated into a perennial reference sustained by the hopeful affirmation of the human faculty for progress in the realm of knowledge and in the domain of ethical, individual, and social improvement.

Historical humanism

A retrospective look at all cultural spaces and times leads one to understand the humanistic impulse as a constitutive axis of every major backbone of human cultures, translated into spiritual achievements, and to consider as a distant

antecedent of Renaissance humanism a varied range of philosophical and religious manifestations that, in one way or another, through more rational or more mystical paths depending on the case, affirmed the notion of the centrality of the human being and brought about genuine transformations in thought and consciousness.

One might note, for example, as a particularly significant moment, the sixth century BCE, when a plurality of voices emerged in different settings tending toward the configuration of new mental, psychological, or spiritual models to guide the beliefs and attitudes of individuals and peoples. That was the century of the Buddha, of the great prophets of Israel and the resulting transformation of that people's religion, of Zoroaster in Persia, of Confucius and Lao Tzu in China, of the Dravidian renewal in India, and, on top of all that, the beginning of philosophical splendor in Greece. However different the circumstantial causes that contributed in each culture and religion to the transformation of consciousness—among them the leading role of decisive personalities—the common fact was that there took place a revision of the prevailing religious foundations and a transition from the cosmological

to the anthropological, which made the human being the epicenter of society as both actor and responsible agent in his or her own improvement.

Although the beginning of the humanist course, with its highs and lows, took place in that period, it would take a long time before it found its most precise expression, once the dogmatism and rigid intolerance prevailing within Christendom had been confronted. It was six centuries ago that a formidable renewal on the plane of ideas took place in Europe, destined to have the greatest consequences and to profoundly modify the arts, letters, sciences, and the very conception the human being had of himself or herself and of the surrounding world.

That powerful revolution was not decreed by any public authority, was not conceived as part of a state's political strategy and had nothing to do with political demonstrations. It was truly the gigantic work of intellectuals without political or religious power who, with the audacity of pioneers, undertook the enterprise of rediscovering the human being and placing him or her at the center of their concerns and studies. Humanists is the honorable title by which these sowers of ideas are distinguished by posterity.

As a movement that shook the dominant way of thinking, humanism had important precursors in the fourteenth century, with authors such as Petrarch and Boccaccio, who claimed in their monumental literary production the right of every person to think freely and to formulate their own answers to the unknowns posed by philosophical or theological matters. Specifically, in contrast with the theocentric vision prevailing in the Middle Ages, they proposed to highlight an anthropocentric conception without implying the abandonment of the cardinal ideas of God and the immortality of the soul.



DID YOU KNOW?

Among the Italian humanists, Francesco Petrarch and Giovanni Boccaccio stood out for their far-reaching influence, as they carried out important work in recovering classical texts and opened new paths for literature and philosophy by vindicating the exercise of freedom of thought. Their writings and translations laid the foundations of the new humanist and Renaissance culture.



Emerging around 1400 in the Italian city-states, humanism spread through much of the European continent over several centuries until it reached its full flowering in the Renaissance. During those centuries there had been an impressive economic expansion, with the result that nobles and bourgeois alike were quite willing to support various cultural expressions, which until then had been the private preserve of the church and the great courts. In that agitated environment, there stood out the need for an education more closely linked to acquiring knowledge of greater social usefulness than that derived from theological studies, and this gradually translated into inventions and discoveries of notable importance for individuals and nations.

It is understandable, then, that the force of humanist ideals developed in an age of profound transformations: from feudalism toward an incipient capitalism in which craftsmanship and trade found greater freedom to extend their activities; from medieval Christendom to the Reformation, a movement that revealed the growing disrepute of the Western church, more attentive to its own material enrichment than to the spiritual guidance of its faithful; from the dispersion of political power to its concentration in the modern state; from rural

life to urban life; from the geocentric conception to heliocentrism; from the crystallized truths contained in the Trivium and the *Quadrivium* to scientific practice based on the experimental method; culminating in the expansion of the known world through the European discovery of America.

In need of a return to the sources of ancient learning, they so admired, humanists found inspiration in certain philosophical currents that had germinated in classical Greece: they recovered Epicurean approaches grounded in a balanced hedonism; resumed the critical values of skepticism; and made Platonic theses prevail over Aristotelian scholasticism. Continuing in this endeavor, they also reclaimed the principles and values of Neoplatonism. Within this revisionist climate, in which scientific discussion could be freed from the Aristotelian mold, they encouraged the creation of academies as places for the meeting and exchange of intellectual currents, and thus these centers of knowledge and freedom flourished in certain European cities located in Spain, France, England, Germany, and the Low Countries, but above all in Italy under Medici protection.

On that basis, humanism of Platonic roots, combined with Christian elements, would reach its highest point in the original works of thinkers such

as Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas More, Antonio de Nebrija, Juan Luis Vives, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Giordano Bruno, and of artists who won general admiration for their brilliant creations during the Quattrocento and Cinquecento, among whom it is enough to mention the glorious names of Filippo Brunelleschi, Donatello, Sandro Botticelli, Raphael, Titian, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Leonardo da Vinci, merely to refer to the best known.

With regard to their pedagogical orientation, it should be remembered that they rejected the rigidity of scholastic instruction and continued the guiding idea of Greek *paideia* and Latin *humanitas*, in the sense that the goal was the formation of the ideal human being, a fusion of wisdom and morality, embodied in the teacher-educator, responsible for an instruction presented not only as transmission of knowledge but also as an example of virtue and the inward assumption of values. These ethical considerations led those thinkers to reject the relativistic drift into which the pragmatic humanism of the Greek sophists was sliding, summed up in the principle that served as the axis of Protagoras's teachings, according to which man is the measure of all things. In contrast, they reclaimed the voice of

Socrates and Plato's dialogues to meet the need for a spiritual or divine center, a center of enduring values on which to structure the human universe.

The humanists, especially the Italians, exercised a powerful influence over elementary and university education in their country. Soon humanities became a well-defined cycle of subjects: grammar, rhetoric, arts, poetry, history, and moral philosophy. These were subjects devoted to worldly or secular matters, in contrast to the predominant subjects of the previous program, which taught theology, metaphysics, mathematics, and medicine. Although strictly speaking there was no incompatibility between the two curricula, they were independent, and the humanists' renovative purpose was clearly defined.

That admirable human being, in whom love of study, eager pursuit of knowledge in literature, philosophy, and language disciplines, passion for the visual arts and architecture, and interest in science were combined, prefigured the exemplary character of the Renaissance, whose broad education allowed him or her to move comfortably in intellectual, artistic, and political circles. Possibly Leonardo da Vinci, with his remarkable intelligence, recognized humanist vocation, insatiable curiosity, heightened perfectionism, and exquisite sensitivity, came to be

recognized as the paradigm of the complete human being idealized in that movement.

In the context of this historical panorama, Renaissance humanism translated into an essentially integrative culture that sought to harmonize the vitality,



Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519)

aesthetic forms, and intellectual assumptions of the ancient world with the conditions required by the new times, even though the changes desired and brought about did not disdain Christian tradition or imply a radical break with the guidelines established by the Catholic Church, the true center of religious, cultural, social, economic, and political power.

Universalist humanism

Assessed in its dimensions and potentialities, modern humanism possesses a kind of enduring relevance because it has succeeded in establishing a relation of continuity with the humanist traditions that preceded it and, on that basis, opening itself to new and vigorous renewals that allow it to transcend

the conceptual and temporal limits of those earlier phases until it becomes consolidated as a profound reflection on the meaning of existence and extends to our own day, claiming the right of all persons to make use of reason as the privileged instrument for knowing themselves and all that surrounds them, whether physical or spiritual in nature.

It is due to this renewing quality that humanism survived in rationalist and empiricist thinkers, serving as an example to be followed by the Enlightenment philosophers and encyclopedists until it permeated nearly all contemporary intellectual currents, often qualifying them and giving rise to a striking display of diverse humanisms commonly expressed under labels such as utopian humanism, positivist humanism, Marxist humanism, socialist humanism, libertarian humanism, existentialist humanism, Christian humanism, secular humanism, spiritualist humanism, and even explicitly atheist humanism. Each represents a particular approach, and among them there are marked philosophical and ideological differences, although all agree that their humanist perspective arises from a declaration of confidence in the centrality of the human being—that is, in human protagonism and responsibility in the construction of one's own destiny.

The universalism of today's humanistic project becomes an articulating axis of disciplines and fields of creativity, around which extends an arc that accommodates all knowledge and interpretations. From this broad perspective, the arts, literature, the natural and social sciences, technological applications, and other specialties such as cybernetics and information science, which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, are treated—and very well. Just as Renaissance humanism made printing a truly revolutionary means for the dissemination, consolidation, and expansion of the program it promoted, so too the digital tool now appears as a powerful and indispensable resource already incorporated into all scientific, economic, administrative, educational, and social activities and one that has transformed the totality of human activities.

One of the signs of our time—with its multiplicity of philosophies, schools, approaches, disciplines, specialties, methods, and techniques—finds expression in the urgent need for greater coordination, deeper union, and integration through fruitful dialogue among persons and groups who think and act according to different principles, ideologies, and projects, so that we may see more

clearly and discover new meanings amid the ideological fog enveloping humanity. With dialogue as an operative instrument, the aim is to assimilate, or at least understand, the perspectives of others, and also to develop jointly the conceptual and methodological tools that facilitate the construction of a new intellectual space and a shared mental and lived platform, whether within the family nucleus or in the social, work, business, or recreational environment. This is the meaning of the notion of otherness so dear to modern humanism: rather than trying to find the weak point in what the other has said and crush that opposing opinion, one should try to weigh its true value, strength, and richness through genuine exchange that promotes great openness and consequently notable intellectual, social, and spiritual enrichment.

With regard to its pedagogical proposal, the humanism of our time does not limit itself to teaching the humanities in schools and specialized faculties but rather presents a program whose contents fit readily into all forms of knowledge that address the needs of today's world. To that end, it recommends that educational institutions at every level form children and adults, women and men—in short, persons—with a total consciousness of

knowledge, of what is permanent and changing in human life, of their unity and solidarity, and of their significance and destiny in the course of planetary and cosmic evolution.

The universality of contemporary humanism, redefined as a constant of multicultural value that runs through the world of thought with an inter- and transdisciplinary approach, calls for fruitful dialogue capable of achieving unity within the framework of the cultural diversity inherent to human beings, peoples, and civilizations. It also calls for globalization that, until now posed only in market terms, should be redirected in terms of humanistic values, with the aim of overcoming the disorientation and deviations brought about by the decline of moral and historical consciousness. On this would rest the indispensable new life of humanism and the survival of its tradition as an instrument of action facing both the present and the future. The claim of the universalist meaning of humanism would thus not be merely an exercise in intellectual honesty, but also an urgent and timely demand of practical life as reflection and consequence of theoretical notions.

2

SPIRITIST HUMANISM

Given the plurality of humanisms indicated above, it is fair and appropriate to speak of spiritist humanism, since there are sufficient reasons to classify in this way the system of thought founded and organized by the French educator Allan Kardec in the mid-nineteenth century, which he called Spiritism and defined in these terms:

"Spiritism is at the same time a science of observation and a philosophical doctrine. As a practical science, it consists in the relations that can be established with Spirits; as a philosophical doctrine, it includes all the moral consequences that derive from such relations."

Paraphrasing a well-known statement made by Jean-Paul Sartre to characterize existentialism, one

may quite legitimately point out that Spiritism is a humanism that posits a transcendental anthropology which, while being rooted in deism and spiritualism, places the focus of its ethical and social concern on the human being, whether incarnate or discarnate, while at the same time encouraging active participation in the struggle that must constantly be waged in order to face the vicissitudes of life. In keeping with this line of argument, it may be added that, given the singularity of its essential postulates, grounded in reason and experimentation rather than faith or dogma, and in which there is no room for the supernatural since everything that exists operates in accordance with natural laws, Spiritism presents sufficient arguments to be accepted as a new humanism or an integral spiritualist humanism.

Spiritist bibliography gives ample testimony to this consideration. The books published by Kardec are followed by an extensive list of philosophical works whose content and orientation support the unmistakably humanist stance that emerges from spiritist theses, all centered, as has been said, on the promotion and ennoblement of the human being.

From the vast list of thinkers and authors who have bequeathed us an extraordinary body of intellectual

work aimed at affirming the humanistic vocation inherent in the Spiritist doctrine — from multiple philosophical, scientific, sociological, historical, and pedagogical perspectives — we shall mention only a few of the most distinguished: Léon Denis, Gabriel Delanne, Gustave Geley, Louis Lafourcade, André Dumas, Jacques Pecatte (**France**); Ernesto Bozzano (**Italy**); José María Fernández Colavida, Manuel González Soriano, Amalia Domingo y Soler, Manuel Sanz Benito, Miguel Vives y Vives, Salvador Sellés, Manuel Navarro Murillo, Quintín López Gómez, Humbert Torres, Josep Casanovas Llardent, David Santamaría, Juan José Torres (**Spain**); Antonio Joaquim Freire, Antonio Eduardo Lobo Vilela, Amelia Cardia, Isidoro Duarte Santos, João Gonçalves (**Portugal**); Cosme Mariño, Manuel Porteiro, Santiago Bossero, Luis Di Cristóforo Postiglioni, Humberto Mariotti, Natalio Ceccarini, César Bogo, Florentino Barrera, Dante Culzoni, Hermas Culzoni, Mario Molfino, Dante López, Raúl Drubich (**Argentina**); Luis Zea Uribe and Colombia de Martínez (**Colombia**); Rogelio Fernández Güell (**Costa Rica**); Ernesto Moog (**Chile**); Salvador Molina and Antonio Soto Paz Basulto (**Cuba**); Pedro Álvarez y Gasca (**Mexico**); Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, Agustina Guffain de Doittau, Lola Baldoni Pérez, Luisa Capetillo, Ramón Negrón Flores,

William Colón, Néstor Rodríguez Escudero, Luz Santana Peña, Pablo Serrano, José Arroyo (**Puerto Rico**); Jesús Enrique Lossada, David Grossvater, Pedro Barboza de la Torre, Daniel Guerra Iñíguez (**Venezuela**); Cairbar Schutel, Carlos Imbassahy, Deolindo Amorim, Pedro Granja, Herculano Pires, Ney Lobo, Hermínio Miranda, Nazareno Tourinho, Gelio Lacerda da Silva, Carlos Bernardo Loureiro, Freitas Nobre, Jaci Regis, Krishnamurti de Carvalho Dias, Milton Medrán Moreira, Dora Incontri, Wilson Garcia, José Lázaro Boberg, Matheus Laureano, Paulo Henrique de Figueiredo, Marcelo Henrique, Ademar Chioro dos Reis, Reinaldo Di Lucía, Luis Signates, Jacira Jacinto da Silva, Mauro de Mesquita Spinola, Ricardo Nunes, Elías Moraes, Alexandre Cardia Machado, Roberto Rufo, Bruno Lins Quintanilha (**Brazil**), and countless others whose names, if all were to be included, would fill many pages.

Here a special mention is due to the Brazilian thinker and writer Eugenio Lara, who died prematurely in 2024, an enthusiastic advocate of a secular, free-thinking, progressive, and decidedly humanist Spiritism. Eugenio left us a remarkable book born of the union of his broad culture and solid spiritist conviction, whose content gathers observations of great value and lucid reflections that reaffirm the

humanist character of Spiritism, in perfect harmony with the orientation set forth in the present work:

"Given its peculiarities, its singularity in relation to the various humanist currents, Humanism, from the perspective of Spiritism, would not require any adjective—spiritist or Kardecist—as a way of expressing its own identity: free, independent, and autonomous. In other words, when we think of Spiritist or Kardecist Humanism, we must consider its primary foundation, which is the very reason for spiritist philosophy: the experimental and reflective study of Spirit, the intelligent element of the Universe. Alongside Matter, also a basic, structural element of the Universe, Spirit, individualized, shows itself to be immanent and transcendent, perfectible, subject to natural determinism, to the evolutionary process, to intellectual, moral, and psychic evolution, to



DID YOU KNOW?

In his pioneering work *Brief Essay on Spiritist Humanism*, Eugenio Lara examines the philosophical, sociological, ethical, and aesthetic foundations on which Spiritism rests and reaffirms its clearly humanist character.



palingenesis, and to the laws that engender the process of natural selection. The spirit is man. Man is the spirit.” (LARA, 2012, p.3).

Neither religion nor materialism

The humanist version that emerges from spiritist spiritualism proclaims its distance from those other humanisms that are inscribed, some, within a more or less confessional religious worldview, while others lean toward a materialist, agnostic, or atheist interpretation—this without diminishing the merits of their theses and their genuine concerns in favor of human well-being. Yet spiritist thought clearly distinguishes itself from the dogmatism inherent in religious conceptions, Eastern or Western, just as it does from the no less dogmatic materialist skepticism, whether derived from the theses of Feuerbach or Marx, Nietzsche or Sartre.

It cannot be otherwise. Kardecist humanism escapes both extreme positions: one sustained by archaic and incomprehensible dogmas concerning the origin, nature, and destiny of the soul, and the other which, by disregarding and denying every notion of spiritual transcendence, reaffirms itself in a reductionist approach according to which *“the essence of man has no essence”* or *“man is*

a useless passion,” following Ortega y Gasset or Sartre, respectively. On one side the human creature is condemned to believe and accept without understanding, and on the other sentenced to die without hope. In the light of Spiritism, the perspective is completely different: the spirit precedes the physical organism; it preexists, exists, coexists, and subsists; it is, knows that it is, and understands why and for what purpose it is, making responsible use of the light provided by its reason and intelligence. With his proposal of reasoned faith, Kardec placed Spiritism in a dialectical perspective that allows it to overcome the antagonistic positions of religions and materialism through a synthesis grounded in the postulation of the spiritual condition of the human being in terms of reason and science:

“Unshakable faith is only that which can face reason at all times in humanity’s history.”

The incarnate and the discarnate

According to the perspective offered by spiritist humanism, there is no radical or definitive separation between the “beyond” and the “here and now,” these being situations or experiences presented as scenarios in which the spirit alternates through

innumerable phases as incarnate or discarnate, in accordance with the laws governing palingenetic evolution, the knowledge and understanding of which frees us from fear of death and from the pain caused by the belief that we have forever lost the beings we love. This has nothing to do with theological conceptions of heaven or hell as eternal and unchangeable destinations that, according to common belief, await people after death.

One can thus see that the center of concern derived from spiritist anthropology remains the human subject, whether reference is made to the physical human being or the extra-physical human being, incarnate or discarnate, visible or invisible. Death does not involve rupture but continuity, and consequently no spiritual being in the discarnate plane enjoys happiness if he or she has not previously striven to attain it during the incarnate stage. A greater degree of well-being or disturbance on the spiritual level depends on prior behavior in bodily life. Death or discarnation does not substantially change the spirit. Only the plane of its action is temporarily modified, whether linked to a biological organism or not. Incarnate or discarnate, the being is the same, with virtues or defects, beliefs, habits, tendencies, or inclinations.



DID YOU KNOW?

In the light of Spiritism, it makes no sense to speak of the “living” and the “dead,” but rather of incarnate and discarnate spirits. The same can be said of the “here below” and the “beyond.” Some constitute visible humanity and others invisible humanity, transitory dimensions that remain in permanent interaction and exchange according to the reincarnational process.

From this standpoint, the cardinal theses that make up the doctrinal body of Spiritism—concerning the deistic and non-anthropomorphic understanding of God as the “*supreme intelligence and first cause of all things*”; the existence of the spirit, created “*simple and ignorant*” and destined for perfection; successive reincarnational experiences linked by dynamic mechanisms of causality within the framework of an interexistential process; and the multiple relationships derived from mediumistic exchange between spiritual beings of both dimensions—do not translate into conservative ideas, behaviors, or positions. They do not represent forms of alienation of moral or social consciousness, nor do they aim to manipulate individuals into becoming domesticated adherents or aggressive

fanatics obsessed with mystical or fanciful beliefs, nor to distance them from the fulfillment of their personal, family, civic, or social responsibilities.

Spiritist humanism conceives of the incarnate human being as a substantial and indivisible unity of body and soul, endowed with psychological faculties such as thought, memory, or will, and with an affectivity far more developed than in the species from which he or she has emerged in the course of evolution; endowed as well with paranormal and mediumistic psychic faculties that broaden the spectrum of sensory perception so as to come into contact with suprasensory realities that transcend the known categories of time and space and allow communication, through sensitive persons—mediums—by different means and under different conditions, with discarnate entities, which are human entities temporarily participating in an extracorporeal dimension.

Spirit, history, and society

Through moral consciousness, the human being can choose and decide in accordance with free will; becomes the bearer of rights, duties, and responsibilities that the social order to which he or she

belongs must protect and that no one is authorized to violate; and when rising above imperfection, makes the virtues the cardinal principles guiding and governing existence. By exercising free will, assuming responsibility for one's actions, adhering to truth and honesty in thought, word, and deed, and experiencing love and forgiveness in relationships with others, the human creature will enjoy greater physical and spiritual well-being and attain new and higher steps in the upward journey.

The spiritist humanistic model and its holistic perspective do not promote a type of person detached from the historical moment in which he or she must live or insensitive to the demands involved in social progress, both in what concerns relationships with other people and in everything that links the human being to all living beings and to nature as a whole. Indeed, the Kardecist model moves considerably away from messianic proposals that guarantee "salvation" simply by adopting certain beliefs, or from any mysticism tending to turn the person into an apathetic, denialist, evasive being isolated from the social reality surrounding him or her and trying to justify an individualistic choice in the name of a path or method that would supposedly

lead to spiritual asceticism, which is nothing more than selfish evasion of the commitment the spirit has assumed for its improvement in the setting of incarnate life and to offer its contribution to the general progress of humanity. Therefore, there is no place in the spiritist view for fundamentalist theological conceptions that focus on the exaltation of "spiritual" life as though it were disconnected from "material" life and that consequently regard the world as "*a vale of tears*" in which every person suffers God's punishments for "original" sin and resigns themselves to pain and suffering, taken as trials that must inevitably be overcome for redemption.

With equal resolve, Spiritism distances itself from systems of thought that make the human being a pragmatic instrument for satisfying market interests, as well as from those that subject the person to materialist ideologies based on a reduced view of humankind, under which the individual is forced to serve a totalitarian state to the detriment of his or her own fullness as a free and perfectible being, consciously participating in the common task of attaining a more just and fraternal social coexistence.

Spiritist commitment

A fair-minded examination makes it possible to appreciate that the Kardecist doctrine constitutes a valuable source of teachings not only with regard to spiritual matters, or the “beyond,” as popular expression would have it, but also in all theoretical or practical matters, of moral or social character, concerning the incarnate spirit, protagonist of its evolutionary path, free to make decisions and responsible for assuming their consequences. For that reason, the general ethics derived from spiritist humanism promote certain commitments which, taken together, shape a moral and spiritual culture capable of offering humanity a universalist, progressive, and loving alternative in which the fundamental values aimed at building a renewed world are contemplated, one in which its inhabitants enjoy an ever greater degree of happiness. The profile of the ideal human archetype that Spiritism seeks to form is clearly drawn in the person who loves and serves others; studies and provides himself or herself with an integral education; adheres to the canons of a universalist, secular, and free-thinking morality; is free from fanaticism and superstition; and, in short, conducts all acts of life inspired by a spirit of generosity, solidarity, justice, and responsibility.

It is no coincidence that Spiritism, from its founding and development in the mid-nineteenth century, has spoken out in favor of the noblest humanitarian causes throughout the world. In the name of spiritist principles, publications and congresses have denounced injustices, inequalities, wars, slavery, discrimination against women and minorities, racism, xenophobia, illiteracy and backwardness in education, the death penalty, censorship and persecution of dissent, authoritarianism and tyranny, while at the same time upholding and promoting the inalienable right to life; freedom of thought, conscience, and expression; religious and political freedom; separation between church and state; secular education accessible to all; tolerance; healthy family and civic coexistence; workers' rights within a just relationship between capital and labor; pacifism and the nonviolent resolution of conflicts among persons and nations; cosmopolitanism; universal suffrage and the full force of the democratic system and the social welfare state; scientific advances; and, at the summit of these aspirations, the reign of universal fraternity.

In a brief essay later published in his *Posthumous Works*, Kardec reiterated his longing for a better world in accordance with the celebrated secular trilogy that came to identify the French Revolution,

containing fundamental and irreplaceable principles for reaching a new evolutionary stage, though they had to be illuminated by the moral principles taught by spiritist doctrine, especially those that exhort us to conquer and overcome pride and selfishness, the sources of human unhappiness:

"Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity: here are three words that by themselves constitute the program of an entire social order that would bring about the greatest possible progress of humanity, if the principles they represent could be fully applied. But let us look at the obstacles that, in the present state of society, stand in the way, and seek the remedy in view of evil. (KARDEC, 1995, p. 158)

In the chapters that follow, a set of general considerations is presented to facilitate understanding of the essential theses that shape the philosophical, cultural, and ethical proposal of spiritist humanism for the contemporary world.

3

THE HUMAN CONDITION AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Know Thyself!

By virtue of its unquestionable humanism, Spiritism presents itself as a rationalist and free-thinking philosophy that starts from the possibility of attaining true knowledge of being, as an ontological category, in its dual condition of spirit and matter, through the use of reason and the tools provided by science, whether theoretical or born of research and experimentation.

The exhortation to self-knowledge dates to remote times and became concrete in the anthropological period inaugurated by Socrates in Hellenic culture. In response to the concern of philosophers interested in understanding the nature of matter and the dimensions of the cosmos, the celebrated Athenian

teacher insisted that whoever seeks to discover the universe must first discover himself, thereby giving full psychological and spiritual content to the aphorism associated with the oracle at Delphi: *"Man, know thyself"*, which was an invitation to transcend sensory knowledge of bodily appearance and, through introspection, penetrate into knowledge of spiritual essence, thus facilitating self-discovery.

To know ourselves means to recognize ourselves as spirits in constant progress and evolution, as transcendent entities who are born, die, are born again, err, suffer, learn, correct us, change course, and gradually overcome ourselves. It implies discovering and understanding our past and linking it to our present condition, with a future on the horizon that will depend on us ourselves, on our greater or lesser willingness to turn away from evil and, consequently, move toward states of greater or lesser happiness. Victor Hugo expressed this beautiful notion of the eternal progress of the human spirit in these words:

"The cradle has a yesterday and the tomb has a tomorrow." (MARIOTTI, 2018, p. 49)

Being aware that we all travel along this evolutionary path, by deepening our personal self-knowledge we will understand why we are as we

are and act as we do; we will understand the roots of our thoughts, feelings, and emotions; we will discover our mistakes and learn to set aside pride and selfishness; we will identify our strengths and weaknesses; we will accept ourselves honestly and realistically; we will ask forgiveness and be forgiven; we will strengthen our relationships with others, knowing how to surround ourselves with kindred people who inspire the highest ethical values and motivate us toward a healthy and successful life.

God, Creation, and Cosmic Evolution

Like any other knowledge, knowledge concerning the human being must be contextualized: what and who we are must be understood as inseparable from where we are, where we come from, and where we are going. Spiritist doctrine, in its threefold construction as a scientific, philosophical, and moral system, responds precisely: a common evolutionary adventure has engaged the spirit, beginning with its creation by God as a simple and ignorant entity. Following an ascending and constant process of hominization, the spirit continues its unstoppable advance over millions of years until reaching the stage of homo sapiens. And it continues, achieving

its humanization through successive corporeal existences, establishing increasingly defined and complex family and social relationships.

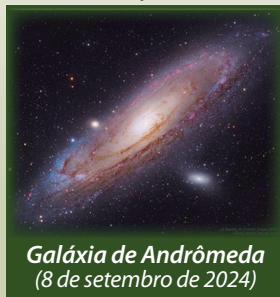
Because of this common origin, each individual must recognize himself or herself in the humanity of which all are globally a part, while also understanding and embracing the cultural diversity inherent in what is human. The I need the you and the we; that is, each person is strengthened through the reciprocal recognition of the other's full humanity. Selfish individualism must be overcome by solidaristic otherness, without that meaning a renunciation of spiritual autonomy. To know oneself means to advance on the path toward perfection, without attaining it in absolute terms, since that condition belongs to God alone, according to our limited ability to approach an understanding of the "*Supreme Intelligence and First Cause of all things*" (KARDEC, 1992, p. 47), whether by using the apophatic path, which refers through negation to what God is not and cannot be, or the cataphatic path, which uses positive affirmations to describe God's attributes. In either case, the limitations of reason and language inherent in the human condition do not allow us to go beyond recognizing God's existence as a meta-

empirical reality and therefore one not verifiable with the sensory and cognitive instruments at our disposal, and to which we draw near as an intuition before the overwhelming majesty of the Universe or through the application of the principle that “*every intelligent effect has an intelligent cause.*”

There exists, of course—and it is the belief that overwhelmingly predominates in the world—the acceptance of God according to the faith that characterizes each religious or theological doctrine, usually expressed in a theistic conception in which anthropomorphic attributes are used to identify divinity. For our part, we subscribe to a spiritist, secular, and evolutionist humanism, with its autonomous rather than heteronomous proposal regarding the human being and life, which favors a deistic conception that admits the existence of God as the creator of the universe, but does not accept God’s direct providential intervention in the world except through the natural laws that govern everything that exists. Instead of basing its conviction on dogmas or on the assertions of so-called sacred books, it makes use of reason, knowledge, and research in order to understand divine omnipresence in the general plan of the Universe.

From its anthropological and transcendental vision, spiritist philosophy moves, without interruption, to connect with an admirable cosmology. The enormous body of knowledge contributed by astronomy, especially over the last two centuries, compels us to situate planet Earth in a corner of the expanding universe, without any privilege whatsoever. The figures of distance and time escape our discursive capacity. The astronomical unit, which is the average distance from Earth to the Sun—that is, about 150 million kilometers—is still a very small unit for measuring stellar spaces. Our solar system, already gigantic by ordinary dimensions, is an imperceptible grain of sand in that universe of billions of galaxies, systems, stars, and planets. The fact that the nearest galaxy is two million light-years away leaves us stunned, especially if we consider that a light-year is the distance traveled by light in one year at a speed of 300,000 kilometers per second. Something similar happens with the billions of years that have passed since the initial explosion or Big Bang began. All this forces us to resize ourselves on almost minuscule scales and therefore to regard as foolishness and absurdity the wars, territorial conquests, genocides that have occurred throughout history, and all the damage caused by the human being because of grave moral failings.

The gigantic dimensions of the universe awaken reactions of wonder and admiration in the human being and move us to reflect on our true position or significance, on the very meaning of existence, on our greater or lesser contribution to general progress, and even on the possibility that there may be other and different manifestations of intelligent life, suggesting that we are not alone in that cosmic vastness.



A broad cosmic perspective is necessary in order to place us within a holistic framework grounded in the interaction between the material and the spiritual, between incarnate and discarnate humans; one that promotes the notion of cosmopolitanism and earthly citizenship as the general identity of all the inhabitants of the planet; and one that introduces into general education the principle that economic development and training for production and consumption must be subordinated to the integral formation of persons, fostering their intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual development.

4

TOWARD A SECULAR SPIRITUALITY

Secularism and the Secular State

The notion of secularism has accompanied Spiritism since its appearance in the nineteenth century, and it could not have been otherwise given the principles of freedom of conscience and tolerance that nourish its conception of the human being and society. Already at the First International Spiritist Congress, held in Barcelona in 1888, the following was recommended:

"Constant effort to spread secularism through all spheres of life. Absolute freedom of thought, integral education for both sexes, and cosmopolitanism as the basis of social relations. (SPANISH SPIRITIST FEDERATION, 1934, p. 15)

These principles are inspired by the premise that confessional affiliations are spiritual, social, and cultural experiences that deserve attention, study, and respect, insofar as they do not run counter to the ethical values shared in society. The adherence won by the various religious beliefs is entirely valid and gives rise to strictly private facts and rights that must be protected by current legislation. Therefore, no one should feel harmed in his or her right to choose and practice the worship of preference, while that same principle of freedom of conscience equally applies to the right not to believe in any religion or to take part in any of its rites and ceremonies.

Laicity refers to a conception of life that advocates the absence of an official religion in the governance of states, and **secularism** is understood as the historical movement that calls for the establishment of laicity. Based on its humanist foundations, it is assumed that laicity creates a common bond among people, making it easier for them to live together respectfully and cordially, processing their differing opinions in a civilized and harmonious environment. By virtue of this social climate favorable to healthy coexistence, the validity and application of the secular principles of freedom of conscience, thought, expression, and organization; equality of rights and

obligations; and social justice constitute the very essence of the democratic system.

It should be stressed that a secular state, and therefore a non-confessional one, does not mean that it is anti-religious or atheist. Every religious belief is worthy of respect, and its followers must always be guaranteed the right to live it intimately, share it with whomever they wish, and spread it without restriction. Clericalism, so widespread in Judeo-Christian traditions, and fundamentalist Islamist theocracies are different matters entirely; their claims to enjoy special privileges in the social sphere, to place themselves above or outside civil or legal norms, or to impose theological criteria in moral, legal, scientific, or educational matters run counter to basic human rights already won by modernity and especially harm women. Not infrequently, they also promote persecution of ethnic, sexual, or religious minorities and provide cover for violent political movements and acts of terrorism.

Secularism and Spiritism

As is well known, Spiritism, from its beginnings—from the founding act marked by the appearance of *The Spirits' Book* in 1857—raised the banner of

free thought, underscoring the inalienable value of freedom that allows every human being to order his or her beliefs regarding religion, faith, and transcendence in accordance with the dictates of reason and without fear of being condemned, punished, anathematized, or persecuted.

Of course, the secularism with which Spiritism aligns itself has an unmistakably spiritualist basis. Far removed from a materialist and atheist secularism that promotes indifference toward the radical questions of human existence—its origin and destiny—as well as toward any frame of reference centered on an exclusively physical, chemical, biological, psychological, or sociological explanation of life and death, Spiritism reaffirms the recognition of God's existence as the supreme intelligence and first cause of all things; of the spirit as a transcendent psychic entity that preexists birth and survives after death; of the ascending evolutionary process of the spirit unfolding through innumerable and successive existences; of the unceasing communication between the discarnate and the incarnate through a diversity of means; and from these principles it derives a humanist and progressive worldview that calls for personal and social transformation within the framework of the highest ethical principles.

For a Secular and Loving Spirituality

By inviting us to understand the spiritual meaning of life, insisting on full respect for the freedom of individuals and peoples, and grounded in reason and science, Spiritism fosters a secular spirituality, equidistant from the hopeless skepticism of materialism and the sectarian dogmatism of theologies alien to science and rationality. It is an open, affectionate, and tolerant spirituality that, on the basis of universal principles, promotes a culture of understanding, coexistence, harmony, generosity, solidarity, and fraternity. A spirituality that affirms itself in a culture:

- Of respect for life in all its forms.
- That guarantees the exercise of freedom of thought, conscience, and belief.
- Of nonviolence, promoting encounters and the peaceful resolution of disputes.
- Of solidarity, fostering the creation and consolidation of a just world order in which the ignominious differences between the privileged and the dispossessed are erased.
- Of truth, in the transmission of information and knowledge, eradicating falsehood.
- Of equality among peoples, nationalities, ethnicities, and sexual identities, where there is no room for discrimination.

- Of work, recognized as a fundamental instrument of social wealth, and properly remunerated within an environment of fair and honest relations between employers and workers.
- That promotes democratic functioning in the political exercise of nations, grounded in free and transparent suffrage, and advocates the eradication of authoritarian or tyrannical regimes, regardless of the ideological sign with which they identify themselves.
- Of love and understanding among human beings, committing us to overcome selfishness with generosity, evil with the practice of good, hatred with forgiveness, and aggression with tenderness.

Concepts like these, and many others that could be added, form what we call an ethical spirituality of spiritist orientation, grounded in the culture of the fullness of love. A spirituality that leads us to a state of inner liberation, of harmony with ourselves and with others. A spirituality that motivates us always to remain available and sensitized so that, from our inner melody, we may attune ourselves to all the melodies of life and nature.

5

SPIRITUAL SOCIOLOGY

Spiritist Concern for Human Problems

A proper understanding of Spiritist theses, from which a holistic knowledge is derived of the spirit-matter binomial, of the Being in its multiple incarnate and discarnate phases, and of man as a bio-psycho-socio-cultural-environmental-spiritual entity, makes it possible to grasp the vast scope of the human phenomenon and to refute those who confine Spiritism merely to metaphysical speculation on questions of the hereafter. The vast majority of Spiritist thinkers have undertaken this clarifying task. The Brazilian writer Deolindo Amorim, a notable figure in Kardecist and humanist culture, expressed it in these precise words in one of his best-known books:

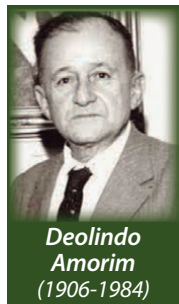
"Spiritism is related to all human problems. The problems that pertain, for example, to sociology, history, political economy, and others undoubtedly fall within the sphere of material existence, because they are linked to what on Earth we call 'relational life.' Even when they are not, strictly speaking, Spiritist problems—because the nature of Spiritism has already been defined by the very name of its doctrine—they still present points of contact with Spiritism.

It is for this reason that, just as man is spirit and matter, Spiritism is likewise a doctrine that has



DID YOU KNOW?

Concerned with giving the study of Spiritism a stronger philosophical and pedagogical foundation, with the aim of moving beyond elementary systems of "indoctrination" or "evangelization," Deolindo Amorim promoted the creation, in Rio de Janeiro in 1957, of the Institute of Spiritist Culture of Brazil, where teachers performed a didactic function through regular programs of Spiritist instruction, with bibliographic recommendations adapted to the topics being studied.



*Deolindo
Amorim
(1906-1984)*

two orders of thought: the spiritual and the human. And the two complement each other.” (AMORIM, 1951, P.31).

Chapter Three of *The Spirits’ Book*, a fundamental text of the Spiritist doctrine, entitled *Moral Laws*, may be regarded as a true sociological and political treatise. It begins with a discussion of man’s relationship with God and continues with an analysis of man’s relationships with his fellow beings within the context of the social organization in which they develop. It thus confirms that Spiritist philosophy is not concerned solely with speculating about God or spiritual immortality, but is eminently practical and normative, insofar as it sets forth general guidelines that orient human life in society.

With the sound didactic sense that characterized him, Kardec considered the general body of moral laws as divided into ten specific laws: the Law of Worship, the Law of Labor, the Law of Reproduction, the Law of Preservation, the Law of Destruction, the Law of Society, the Law of Progress, the Law of Equality, the Law of Freedom, and the Law of Justice, Love, and Charity. This division *“has nothing absolute about it, just as other systems of classification do not either, since they depend on the point of view from which a thing is considered,”* the author made clear

(KARDEC, 1992, p. 238), but it greatly helps to provide a panoramic view of the duties and aspirations of the human being in his relationship with God and with the world in which he lives. Knowledge of these laws confirms Spiritism as a valuable source of teachings not only with regard to extracorporeal life, but also in everything pertaining to the matters and problems of incarnate life, and it makes clear that, on this point, the Spiritist doctrine conveys a sense of freshness and relevance, since the concepts it presents are in keeping with the most innovative sociopolitical theories of a humanist nature, and many passages seem as though they had been written recently.

The Spiritist lessons derived from these laws lead us to think that the very notion of progress must be redefined, since technological and economic development that does not translate into a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress, if this value is understood as an evolutionary conquest of the spirit achieved through the convergence of intelligence and morality.

The movement toward a state of general progress for humanity is slow, unceasing, difficult, and uneven, because it entails overcoming selfishness and pride, the main obstacles placed along that path by human nature itself. For that journey to be accelerated,

commitment and will are required. The painful awareness of the persistence of hunger and misery, of inequalities, as well as the violation of human rights in the world, affecting primarily the poorest, morally compels us to form human beings who are sensitive to the needs of others and to the injustices they suffer. The selfish, isolated individual, who wants everything for himself, must give way to an altruistic, supportive citizen who is concerned for those who suffer and lack what they need, without neglecting his own needs. It is therefore necessary to replace the culture of having-possessing with the culture of caring-sharing. Having and possessing, as ends in themselves, have become the basis of the materialistic and mercantilist society in which we live, where everything induces us to consume more and entangles us in a culture of the disposable, of what is easily replaceable, in every sphere of life—and one might almost say that it even invades the realm of personal relationships.

A prominent contemporary scholar of Spiritism, Ricardo de Moraes Nunes, a thoughtful and learned defender of Kardecism as a secular, humanist, and progressive vision, speaks in this same vein:

"In The Spirits' Book we find several theses of a political and social nature. While we do not find a partisan book in the sense of taking sides in

disputes over power at that historical moment, we do find a work that addresses political and social issues that are extremely relevant and still pertinent today. The Spirits' Book is not a metaphysical book that seeks to remove man from his concrete reality. In the founding work of Spiritist philosophy, we observe the discussion of several important sociological themes. Issues such as freedom of thought, the equality of women, the right to property, social organization, and many others are present there through an advanced reflection on the part of both the Spirits and Allan Kardec." (NUNES, 2020, p.8).

The mission of Spiritism, in addition to knowledge and self-knowledge of the spiritual dimension of the human being, tends toward the integral formation of people so that they are not only moved by the problems of reality, but also move to change it, since it is not enough to be concerned about the evil that exists in the world; it is urgent to work to eliminate it.

Spiritism, Democracy, and Social Progress Without Partisan Ties

In line with the humanist and progressive perspective of Spiritist thought are the lucid reflections, charged with philosophical and

sociological depth of a humanist bent, that journalist and writer Milton Medran Moreira has made known in various chronicles published in the newspaper *Opinião*, which he so successfully directed for thirty years (1994–2024). In them, he made clear that Spiritism, as a comprehensive study of the incarnate human being acting within a given social organization, also addresses the study of political issues, but without adhering to partisan factions. In one of his guiding chronicles, headed by a title that leaves no room for ambiguity—“Spiritism’s Commitment to Democracy”—the author reviews the relationships and consequences derived from the Spiritist social vision and reaffirms his commitment to a future society in which freedom and justice will be combined and will mutually enrich one another, within a political system of a democratic nature, unequivocally opposed to any authoritarian or dictatorial regime:

“Spiritism is not a political doctrine. It is, rather, a philosophical-moral doctrine, born of scientific experimentation on the phenomenon of the communicability of spirits. In his vast body of work, Allan Kardec (1804–1869) showed no concern for political theories about the exercise of power, its forms, the division of responsibilities, methods of electing rulers, and so forth. But for that reason, he

did not fail to address the great ethical questions necessarily intrinsic to the exercise of power, such as the moral responsibility of those who may hold authority in all spheres of life and the virtues that should adorn the personalities of those who exercise it. With the metaphorical figure of the 'intellecto-moral aristocracy,' he envisioned the society of the future, guided by men and women endowed with elevated intellectual qualities, knowledge, and morality, indispensable to the order and progress of peoples.

It is in this context that Spiritism, while not being a political theory, has been situated since its birth. Democracy, therefore, is an integral part of the Spiritist proposal and cannot be separated from it, under penalty of opening a flank to authoritarianism, the antonym of freedom; to injustice, the enemy of equality; and to the primacy of pride and selfishness, which hinder the construction of the spirit of fraternity." (MEDRÁN MOREIRA, 2020, p. 2).



Basic References of a Spiritist Social Doctrine

Knowledge of the spirit in its different evolutionary phases, incarnate and discarnate, whose interexistential process unfolds within a bio-psycho-socio-spiritual continuum, represents the core and *raison d'être* of Spiritism. Within its central theses lies a well-structured worldview, one that possesses formidable possibilities for offering a correct understanding of the whole human being and of the complex and dynamic reality that surrounds him.

Within the framework of a holistic vision, concern for the varied conditions in which the incarnate being lives or survives constitutes one of the areas of Spiritist knowledge that possesses the greatest relevance and timeliness, and regarding which concepts have not always been presented with due propriety. Erroneous interpretations of a fatalistic or deterministic nature, linked to a biased interpretation of the notion of "trials" or "expiations," or of "karmic" justifications, in which recourse is made to the anthropomorphic notion of a god who rewards or punishes, have frequently appeared in Spiritist literature, coming from both incarnate and discarnate authors, significantly reducing the transformative and liberating potentialities of the Spiritist doctrine.

The Autonomous Profile of the Spiritist Sociological Proposal

It seems advisable to us—urgent, we would say—to recover for Spiritism the strength and freshness of its renewing message and to present it as a relevant and current option in the face of the demands that characterize twenty-first-century society. To that end, it is fitting to define the main lines or coordinates that guide what we usually call the social doctrine of Spiritism, and for this demanding task it is indispensable that scholars of this discipline make their utmost effort to reflect and combine, in a fruitful intellectual exercise, their solid knowledge, their social sensitivity, and impeccable honesty regarding the positions they uphold and the conclusions they reach. The Spiritist social doctrine should not be contaminated by positions or preferences nourished by ideologies or currents of political thought that are foreign to its authentic character and nature. A reading or rereading of the works of Allan Kardec, Léon Denis, Amalia Domingo Soler, Cosme Mariño, Manuel Porteiro, Deolindo Amorim, or Herculano Pires, among the most relevant authors, seems highly recommendable to us in order to align ourselves with the purpose of providing the Spiritist sociological

proposal with its proper spiritualist, secular, humanist, freethinking, plural, dynamic, transformative, progressive, and autonomous configuration.

Observing the general panorama of sociopolitical ideologies over the course of recent centuries, we find that the general directions of the proposed systems oppose one another with greater or lesser intensity depending on the weight they assign to certain principles in the political, social, or economic spheres, such as freedom, justice, and equality, or to the relations between the state and the market, as well as the greater or lesser weight attributed to these fundamental factors. In general terms, the spectrum of positions is so broad and varied that it extends from forms of extreme free trade, with the consequent minimization of the role of the state and of the public sphere, through a highly diverse range of alternatives linked to social liberalism, to interventionist conceptions of the state, with the consequent reduction or annihilation of private economic activity.

Economic Freedom, Equity, and Social Justice

In our opinion, clearly situated in the center and distant from the extremes, Spiritism speaks unequivocally in favor of individual and social

freedom; freedom of thought, conscience, expression, and lawful association; the full validity of human rights without exception; respect for the dignity of all persons regardless of their age, nationality, sexual identity, skin color, or cultural condition; and against any dictatorial system, whatever its political sign, categorically rejecting the dilemma that it is necessary to take freedom away from human beings in order to attain other, more tangible and immediate goods. Confronting this false option, which more than once has seduced large masses and caused severe consequences, calls for sustained reflective exercise and immense responsibility from all of us who do not want or accept that the human being should continue to find himself in the horrible alternative of surrendering his freedom in exchange for a piece of bread or for security.

At the same time, and on the same plane within the hierarchy of supreme values, Spiritism places the need to attain a full life sustained by equality and social justice. One cannot forget the panorama of the contemporary world, in which the enormous problems afflicting hundreds of millions of human beings who barely survive in vast regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America stand out. One cannot remain impassive before the contrast between the industrial

countries of the Northern Hemisphere, which, under different political systems, have achieved spectacular economic development based on indices of very high productivity, constant progress, and unlimited variety, bringing about an impressive change in the customs and conveniences of social life; and, in contrast, a significant portion of nations in the Southern Hemisphere, whose peoples seem resigned to vegetating in the most disturbing misery, to being confined to the production of a few vulnerable raw materials, to remaining stagnant and excluded from the possibilities of progress, collective well-being, and economic and political strengthening.

Will there be a solution? What is the path? There are no easy answers, but in the light of Spiritism, the appropriate proposal must come from a strengthening of effective alternatives of freedom, through systems of government that exhibit, as their supreme and indispensable aim, the preservation of the complete autonomy of individuals, but in order to build with it, as a fundamental instrument, collective economic progress and social justice. A freedom conceived in this way, which, through administrative efficiency, honesty in the allocation and management of public resources, the comprehensive use of natural assets in accordance with ecological principles, and

the raising of levels of production and productivity, manages not only to substantially reduce social inequalities, but also to constantly increase and expand the production of wealth and the well-being of all inhabitants. This path is the most suitable for providing greater happiness to people and for encouraging relationships based on the practice of fraternity and the living experience of fraternal love.

These objectives can only be achieved within the framework of free societies where the market and the state function in a balanced manner, and where capital and labor can fulfill their respective roles. As much market as possible, as much state as necessary! This principle represents the synthesis of what is usually called a social market economy, which can only be applied in democratic and plural societies. Extreme positions, for their part, whether neoliberal or those based on Marxist socialism, respond to mistaken conceptions in their theoretical foundations, when not to the obscure interests of individuals, parties, or movements; and every time they are put into practice in concrete exercises of government, they end in true catastrophes. Unlike fairy tales, the application of those models never has a happy ending, and all historical experience confirms that fatality.

Achieving political freedom with economic effectiveness, equity, and social justice constitutes the greatest challenge facing modern society at this hour. The most indispensable and precious of human goods is freedom, and the deepest of human aspirations are equality and justice. These are compatible terms that mutually enrich one another. It is not possible to admit, in the light of an ethical perspective such as that adopted by the Spiritist social doctrine, that they should be placed as antinomic categories. For if they were, the destiny of humanity would be irremediably tragic, and the final promises of all political doctrines and of the systems built upon their pillars would be no more than a cruel fallacy.

We insist: the challenge of Spiritist thought, of one that may legitimately present itself as humanist and progressive, is to reconcile political freedom with economic effectiveness and social justice. And to achieve it in the short term. And to these aspirations it adds the combination of material progress with moral progress, offering a reasonable expectation of a luminous future for humanity. Kardec confirms it with his customary optimistic and hopeful outlook:

"As civilization becomes perfected, it brings an end to some of the evils it has engendered, and

all of them will disappear with moral progress.”
(KARDEC, 1992, p.280).

What we learn in Spiritism encourages us to put an end to the socioeconomic trinity of unbridled consumerism, fierce competition, and cruel destruction of biodiversity, in favor of a bioethical trinity of consumption in accordance with real needs, one that promotes solidarity and fraternity among all and the loving care of nature, with its flora and fauna. If this new model, with deep humanist and progressive roots, were applied, the planet's natural resources would be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations, and a system of economic and social justice would be established, grounded in freedom, equality, fraternity, and democracy—indispensable for there to be understanding and concrete progress within the human community, understood as a brotherhood.

6

FOR AN EDUCATION ROOTED IN HUMANISM

Humanism and Technology

It is said again and again that the twenty-first century is the age of information, characterized by a dizzying expansion of digitalization, which in just a few years has transformed the world—from the emergence of cell phones, the internet, and social media to the advent of artificial intelligence, with all its enormous and unimaginable possibilities and consequences. In the face of these new challenges, it is essential to look to education and insist that it must not succumb to the pressure of being turned into an instrument of training solely for production and consumption, while ignoring or underestimating the fact that its inalienable objective is, and must continue to be, the integral formation of persons, bringing

together knowledge, science, and technology with ethics, humanism, and the longing for spirituality.

In no case is this a matter of setting humanistic education against the thrust of science and technology. What is sought is that educational institutions—primary, secondary, and higher—assume a renewed commitment to the teaching and promotion of humanistic and wisdom-based knowledge, linked to philosophy, history, literature, and the arts, in coexistence with education grounded in the knowledge provided by science and technology. The essential function of educational centers is to form cultured, supportive citizens, endowed with critical thinking, fraternal, service-minded, and willing to contribute to the general welfare.

Humanism and Economic Utility

In defending the universal value of education, humanism challenges the link that some would like to make primary between university education and economic utility, arguing that where there has been a great investment, there is a right to obtain a great benefit. In the face of a commercial conception that emphasizes the profit-driven interest of education, humanism first reaffirms the importance

of knowledge in itself as a defining element of personality. To that end, it is indispensable to foster a taste for reading, writing, and the arts; to invite people to think for themselves; and to take advantage of the potentialities of memory in order to argue, reason, and relate diverse ideas.

We must confront the tendency to turn educational institutions into businesses that sell titles, diplomas, and degrees with which young people will obtain immediate jobs and attractive incomes. This is not a matter of objecting to the proper and efficient management of budgets allocated to education, especially public education, nor of allowing waste or any form of administrative corruption, with which no one could agree. But it is necessary to insist that the essence of the educational spirit lies in the quality of research and teaching, and in conceiving education as a service to the population and not as a privilege of the most favored socioeconomic sectors. This conception should not be limited to public education but is also applicable to private education through the granting of scholarships and other incentives. What must indeed be reaffirmed as an unquestionable principle is that free access to education, from primary school to university, must be based on tuition-free education, and on this

key concept: for the achievement of educational objectives, the representatives of institutions should be interested not only in *quantitas* but also in *qualitas*.

Education should not be considered an expense but an indispensable investment, because even what has no price can have great value, and everything must contribute to making concrete the utopia of a better world for its inhabitants—one that is sustainable and productive, while remaining profoundly supportive.

However—and this must be said with absolute clarity—the preceding definitions must not be placed at the service of certain ideological tendencies that, because of the radical nature of their political vision, understand education as a laboratory of social engineering and indoctrination, distort the social progress that must be achieved lawfully and honestly through education, and end up plunging the population, particularly young people, into demotivation or mediocrity. A genuinely humanistic education is perfectly compatible with the culture of effort and merit, the desire for self-improvement, the pursuit of excellence, the reward of students who obtain the best academic results, the struggle to achieve the most difficult goals, and learning to begin again after failure. It is commendable to

hold as basic points of reference that no one be left behind and that everyone move forward, that each person have opportunities, and that the best students be inspired by solidarity, reject selfishness, and help their classmates.

To close these brief considerations on the prevalence of humanist principles applied to education, we mention a moving anecdote attributed to Socrates, the notable philosopher and educator, and recounted by the Romanian writer Emil Cioran in his striking work *Aveux et anathèmes*. It tells that while Socrates was waiting for the hemlock to be brought to him, he was practicing on a flute in order to learn a melody. One of his disciples asked him what use it would be to learn it, and his answer was a philosophical lesson of admirable simplicity about the meaning of existence and the understanding of what is truly useful for the spirit:

"To know this melody before I die." (CIORÁN, 1979, p.67)

What Does It Really Mean to Educate?

It is worth remembering that the word *education* comes from the Latin verb *educere*, which carries the meaning of "to draw out," "to bring out from

within," "to make emerge." Thus, the task of the genuine educator consists in polishing the rough stone that initially appears in each student until turning it into the work of art found within, making contact with his/ her innermost spiritual fibers. In this way, the educator becomes, inspired by the best Socratic tradition, a midwife of personality and a sculptor of souls: someone who understands and assumes the transcendence of his mission, aware that it is not exhausted when he imparts knowledge or fosters the development of certain abilities and skills, but is directed toward forming noble, honest, and authentic individuals.

The educational process involves the participation of the educator and the learner, each with their respective functions, constituting a teaching-learning binomial grounded in a dialogical activity: the teacher does not achieve the objective of teaching if the student is not willing to learn, and, in turn, while teaching, the educator learns, giving rise to a dynamic and interactive rhythm between them.

In education, as generally happens in any other activity of life, enthusiasm is the starting point. The teacher who conducts classes with passion often inspires many of his students, who in turn inspire

others. Although it is true that the current generation reflects a certain lack of motivation, students nevertheless retain the capacity to become excited about learning, and they easily distinguish between teachers who teach with coldness or apathy and those who do so with interest and even passion. Students detect which teacher cares about them, and which one does not, which teacher believes in them and which one expects little from them; they even understand that a teacher's lack of demands, rather than being a sign of benevolence, is one of convenience or indifference. In a few years, those who are students today will remember and thank the teachers who prepared them to adequately face the challenges of life.

Humanist-based education promotes a close and humble attitude on the part of the teacher, together with the reinforcement of esteem and authority without authoritarianism. It is assumed that the teacher knows more than the student and that his mission is to share his knowledge, but this must be done without humiliation or contempt, awakening curiosity and facilitating dialogue. Students expect their teachers to be competent, cultured, engaging, respectful, punctual, clear, simple, kind, reasonable, and willing to listen to and assist them. Evidently, the teacher

must command respect and recognize that he holds a certain investiture; he must maintain the necessary distance, but naturally, without false attitudes or arbitrariness. In truth, the educator who embraces the triad of “esteem-trust-demand” usually motivates and fosters in students a feeling of reciprocity that is essential in the learning-teaching dialogue.

The authentic educator directs his teaching toward lighting lamps within his students, motivating their autonomy rather than their submission, encouraging them toward creation and discovery born of questioning everyday reality and questioning themselves in a sustained way, instead of curtailing their creativity through the repetition of dogmas or formulas. The educator is a goldsmith of souls, a midwife of the spirit.

To be a teacher is also to be a student. The teaching profession requires continuous review and updating of knowledge. Probably one of the essential points that keeps the flame of this profession alive is well represented by that virtue the ancient Latins called *studiositas*, that is, dedication to constant study driven by the desire for knowledge.

Even so, it would not be enough for the teacher to succeed in transmitting his enthusiasm to

students, giving them proof of his confidence, and helping them see the meaning of the subject he is responsible for teaching, if he is not capable of using a methodology that truly places real learning within their reach and fosters their desire for self-improvement. So often one hears this complaint from students in the classroom: "The teacher knows his subject, but he does not know how to convey it." With the greatest humility, the educator must change methods when advisable, be more creative, improve his communicative ability, and make the transmission of knowledge useful, up to date, engaging, diverse, and rich in nuance, until he awakens the interest of his students, who will be the first to appreciate it.

Evaluation is an indispensable element of every teaching-learning process. It is necessary to evaluate and assign grades, through which feedback is obtained regarding the level of understanding and mastery of the educational content taught in a given course. That is beyond objection. But evaluation is never exact or completely objective. It is influenced by feelings and perceptions arising from the relationship between educators and learners, and it is subject to numerous imprecisions or mistakes. It must never be used as an instrument of power or coercion by the teacher, but rather as an instrument

of service. A humanist way of understanding evaluation as assessment makes it possible not to focus so much on the grade of a particular exam, but on the development of the process itself, ensuring that it does not remain a mere verification of results and their social sanction, but is considered an opportunity for new learning and a key element for removing the obstacles that may prevent success.

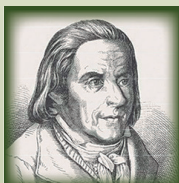
Spiritism and Education

Does Spiritism have a real possibility of making a significant contribution to contemporary education? Can Spiritist knowledge be brought into university classrooms? Are there sufficient conceptual and academic elements to configure a Spiritist Theory or a Spiritist Pedagogy? These and other questions demand answers grounded in studies, research, reflections, alternatives, and programmatic proposals.

It is true that excellent works have already been published, especially in recent decades, many of them presented as theses to obtain degrees, postgraduate degrees, and doctorates at universities of recognized academic standing, and they have received high marks. This has happened mainly in Brazil, the nation where Spiritism has achieved its

greatest quantitative and qualitative reach, and where it shows considerable social and cultural implantation. In addition, the operation of some Spiritist schools or higher institutions that directly or indirectly identify as Spiritist, and of university chairs where knowledge of Spiritist postulates is included in curricular programs, represents an important achievement in a society where materialist or religious preconceptions weigh upon these signs of openness toward non-dogmatic and nontraditional visions.

The pedagogical system that the young Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail learned in Iverdum, Switzerland, at the school created by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, he applied in his first books on education, arithmetic, and grammar. On that same didactic basis, he was guided in writing the texts, signed under the pseudonym Allan Kardec, that would give shape and philosophical support to Spiritism, as a result of the mediumistic experiences he carried out in Paris beginning in 1855.



**Johann Heinrich
Pestalozzi**
(1746-1827)



Allan Kardec
(1803-1869)

Since the founding of Spiritism, Allan Kardec was concerned with the question of education and wrote several texts on it, in which one can perceive the imprint left on the thought of the young Rivail by his teacher Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, a worthy heir to a pedagogical tradition that goes back to Comenius and Rousseau. In *The Spirits' Book*, one finds definitions of his own that recall his Pestalozzian formation: "education is the art of forming character" or "*education is the totality of acquired habits*" (item 685a), as well as categorical statements about the essential aims of teaching: "Only education can reform human beings" (item 796), or this maxim concerning the elimination of selfishness, denounced as the worst social sore, through education: "But it is not that education which tends to form learned men, but rather that which tends to form good men" (item 917). In these statements, the mission of education is established as the combination of general instruction with the practice of moral values; that is to say, the education of thought and the cultivation of feelings. In other works of his and in *The Spiritist Review*, Kardec presented ideas and reflections that would serve to establish the foundations of a necessary and indissoluble bond between Spiritism and education.

Experiences in Spain, Brazil, and Argentina

Convinced of the importance of Spiritism for education, a group of five deputies before the Spanish Cortes who identified with Spiritist postulates presented, in 1873, an amendment to the bill for the reform of general education in the Iberian nation that was under discussion, and proposed that the study of Spiritism be included in universities within the programs of the faculties of Philosophy and Letters. The overthrow of the First Republic in 1874 interrupted the discussion of that amendment, which for the first time placed the discussion of Spiritism within the political and educational sphere of a country. (MÉNDEZ BEJARANO, 2020, pp.360-361).

In Brazil, from the beginning of the twentieth century onward, quite a few Spiritist thinkers and educators have devoted themselves to writing valuable essays aimed at giving shape to a Spiritist Pedagogy that would serve as an academic basis for the founding of Spiritist schools, institutes, and universities, and also for incorporating chairs of Spiritist studies that could be included in official educational programs. The creation of the Allan Kardec School in the city of Sacramento, Minas Gerais, in 1907, probably constitutes one of the most

successful experiences in this direction. Conceived and directed by Professor Eurípedes Barsanulfo, this school fit perfectly within a model of spiritual humanism of Pestalozzian inspiration, in which the affective relationship between educators and students predominated, classes were participatory, there were no corporal punishments or humiliations, formal instruction was complemented by knowledge of the arts, sports practice, and contact with nature, and moral instruction was offered from Spiritist teachings and other spiritual traditions.

Among the Spiritist scholars who have devoted themselves to studying and providing a foundation for a Spiritist-oriented pedagogy, and to proposing a dialogue between it and academic culture, Analia Franco, Ney Lobo, Tomás Novelino, and Herculano Pires must be mentioned; and in our times, the most authoritative voice with regard to Spiritist pedagogy is found in the Brazilian educator Dora Incontri, whose solid academic and Spiritist formation, as well as her freethinking mentality and critical attitude, have earned valuable recognition in the Brazilian educational sphere for her extensive intellectual work and her effort to create institutions based on the Spiritist pedagogical model. We reproduce these

words, which appear by way of synthesis in her recent book *Kardec for the 21st Century*:

“Comenius Publishing House and the Brazilian Association of Spiritist Pedagogy have made efforts—the former since 1998 and the latter since 2004—to launch works, conferences, debates, and seminars, advising research and projects, and training people in postgraduate programs in Spiritist pedagogy. The creation of Pampedia Free University is also a project in this same direction, aimed at the production of knowledge and the formation of students within the Spiritist pedagogical vision, bearing in mind that this is not a proselytizing idea.” (INCONTRI, 2024, p.222)

It is also very fair to mention the effort carried out within CEPA—formerly the Pan-American Spiritist Confederation and today the CEPA International Spiritist Association—to promote Spiritist education in the home and the creation of Spiritist schools by institutions devoted to the study and dissemination of Kardecist philosophy. Throughout its existence, CEPA adopted the motto “Educating for the Future” as one of its main slogans, directed toward the creation of schools for children, for young people, and for parents, with the primary objective of transmitting

academic knowledge and moral principles viewed in the light of Spiritism, within a secular, freethinking, humanist, progressive, and progressivist vision, freed from models based on punitive criteria or mystical salvations.

In 1966, CEPA designated the Spiritist School for Children of the "True Spiritism Society" of Rafaela, Argentina, as a Pilot School. The programs drafted by Spiritist educators, as was the case with Professor Monserrat Plensa de Vercesi, are grounded in the compatibility that exists between the great pedagogical theories, such as those proposed in their time by Comenius, Rousseau, or Pestalozzi; the experiences of Montessori or Waldorf schools; the contributions of numerous philosophers, psychologists, or educators of humanist orientation such as John Dewey, Édouard Claparède, Jean Piaget, Paulo Freire, Laurence Stenhouse, Edgar Morin, and Fernando Savater; and the Spiritist postulates organized by Kardec, which are perfectly applicable in the best educational systems. The book *Educating the Spirit*, written by Spiritist teachers from Rafaela, constitutes a magnificent example of how much Spiritism can contribute to the education of humanity. (DRUBICH and CULZONI, 2012).

Educating the Spirit

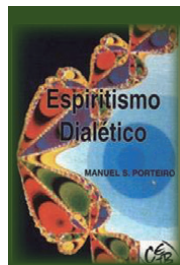
All Spiritist education centers on educating the spirit, the integral being that animates each human creature, a synthesis of thought, feeling, and will. Created simple and ignorant, the spirit begins its evolutionary trajectory with perfection as its horizon. It makes use of incarnation, occupying and animating different organisms on countless occasions over millennia, and develops its potentialities through the acquisition of knowledge and abilities, in a complex process of socialization. This learning is both exogenous and endogenous: from the outside inward, through what it incorporates in each existence, and from the inside outward, through what it reveals from the impulses and tendencies that spring from its ancestral memory.

The spirit preserves, in the unconscious depths of its paligenetic memory, multiple forms of knowledge born of its diverse incarnational experiences, which are expressed in synthesized form as drives, beliefs, vocations, affinities, tastes, preferences, orientations, antagonisms, prejudices, as well as traumas, pains, and sufferings.

In each new incarnation, the educational process begins in the cradle, with parents and other family members as the first educators; it continues in school

through the teachings imparted by teachers; and it expands and becomes more complex through social relationships. The ideal objective is that each person educate himself or herself in the search for truth, in the exercise of reflection applied to self-knowledge, in the strengthening of autonomy and freedom, and in the expansion of consciousness through the practice of love, goodness, solidarity, and fraternity, with the goal of one's own happiness fertilized by the happiness of others.

Spiritist education of the spirit, applied in the family, in school, and in society, possesses a broad outlook that transcends temporal and spatial limits. Through it, one can dynamically and integrative connect what the spirit brings with it to what the spirit acquires in each new incarnation, within the framework of a continuous process of shaping its personality, in which it gradually constructs itself on the psychological plane and, at the same time, becomes a social subject and an active, participatory citizen. This same idea was masterfully expressed by the great Argentine Spiritist thinker Manuel Porteiro in *Dialectical Spiritism*, his principal work:



"The individual is related to the family, the family to the people, the people to the nation, the nation to humanity, humanity to the Earth, and the Earth to the Universe. Man, as such, develops historically in human society, and, as spirit, develops cosmically through multiple existences, material or ethereal." (PORTEIRO, 1960, p.145).



DID YOU KNOW?

Manuel Porteiro (1881-1936) is an essential reference when one seeks to understand the vision of Spiritism from a dialectical perspective. And it is truly striking that, having performed the humblest jobs since childhood and having learned to read and write only at the age of eighteen, he developed an admirable passion for knowledge through the reading of Allan Kardec's works, followed by other Spiritist writers and authors from other philosophical currents.

He was a true example of self-education, which not only made him a person of singular cultural formation, but also led him to master the art of writing with correctness and beauty, both in prose and in verse, as attested by his books *Dialectical Spiritism*, *Spiritist Concept of Sociology*, *Origin of Moral Ideas*, and his beautiful poem *Palingenesis*.

El apotegma kardeciano: *"Nacer, morir, renacer, progresar sin cesar"*, sintetiza muy bien la relación de continuidad que se establece en la dinámica del espíritu, transitando por fases alternas de encarnación y desencarnación y sus respectivos intervalos. Tomando este principio como base, la educación espírita constituye todo un sistema de formación y orientación para niños, jóvenes y adultos, desde una perspectiva holística, ética y profundamente humanista, que conecta el pasado, el presente y el futuro de cada ser en el conjunto de la humanidad, para impulsar su progreso general.

The Kardecian apothegm, *"To be born, to die, to be reborn, and to progress unceasingly"*, very well synthesizes the relationship of continuity established in the dynamics of the spirit as it passes through alternating phases of incarnation and discarnation, with their respective intervals. Taking this principle as a basis, Spiritist education constitutes an entire system of formation and guidance for children, young people, and adults, from a holistic, ethical, and profoundly humanist perspective, connecting the past, present, and future of each being within humanity as a whole, in order to promote its general progress.

Although starting from different philosophical conceptions, many thinkers throughout the history of universal thought have agreed on the idea that life can only be understood by looking backward, but must be lived by looking forward. This notion acquires a fuller meaning when inscribed within the perspective of a transcendent and interexistent spiritual Being, in whose psyche his experiences in previous lives are connected and interrelated with the learning and acquisitions of the present life, forming the biopsychic basis upon which his future existences will be shaped, giving continuity to his eternal and ongoing process of improvement.

7

IN PRAISE OF PEACE

Inner Peace and Social Peace

In times of extremely grave conflicts unfolding in various parts of the planet, with countless losses of life, it may seem naïve to speak of peace; but in reality, it has never been more urgent, for reasons grounded in the most elementary feelings of humanity, solidarity, and fraternity.

Understood in all its dimensions, peace is not only the absence of war or the silence of weapons: it also means harmony of the soul, tranquility, happiness, freedom, equity, justice, and prosperity. These are very important values for existence, but unfortunately they remain absent in a large number of people who do not understand that social peace in the world is closely related to inner peace, and

that living together in peace will more easily become a reality on the day when each person, from his/her own uniqueness and in a conscious and motivated way, first seeks serenity within himself or herself and then places his/her spirit and will in the pursuit of general harmony.

It therefore becomes indispensable that education at home and in school promote a culture of peace based on the principles of nonviolence and cooperation among individuals, peoples, and nations; respect for international law; respect for the territorial integrity of nations; as well as the peaceful resolution of all conflicts through negotiation, mediation, arbitration, or other formulas that diplomacy may apply.

No to Wars

Now that five lustrums of the twenty-first century have passed, it is shocking and inadmissible that wars are being staged in various regions of the planet between countries or between ethnic, religious, or political groups, driven by expansionist or mercantilist ambitions or by deplorable ancestral hatreds, in which state-of-the-art weapons are used, causing massive destruction among populations that find themselves trapped and affected by all kinds of atrocities.

The humanist position of Spiritism, which has always condemned armed conflicts and the crimes committed under their cover, joins its voice to that of all sectors calling for the immediate cessation of these barbaric and cruel activities, as well as for social, health, and psychological assistance to children, women, the elderly, the sick, prisoners, and all those who suffer the consequences of these calamities.

The humanist voice of Spiritism exhorts campaigns for a general and lasting peace in the world to be proactive rather than reactive, within the framework of a great and sustained effort by all humanity to create a true globalization capable of engendering economic equality, social equity, political freedom, personal happiness, and, especially, a moral consciousness that promotes noble feelings of altruism, cooperation, trust, and empathy—the solid pillars upon which friendship and fraternity rest. Wars, whatever the reasons invoked by those responsible for them, are attacks against progress and civilization and must be repudiated. The great call is to work for peace, inspired by the higher ideal of a better future for all.

The daily exercise of tolerance, understanding, and dialogue, in order to affirm and consolidate

peace among persons and nations, together with the practice of a pedagogy that encourages the predominance of truth in thoughts, words, and actions, constitutes the foundation of democratic societies—the only ones that guarantee the rule of law; the validity of constitutional norms; free political action; multiparty systems; fair, honest, and transparent elections; alternation in government; the separation of powers; and respect for human rights. Because of all these requirements, which must be guaranteed in all nations, there is no place in full democracies for populisms and authoritarianisms, even when they mimic themselves under any ideological label.

Peace and Human Rights

Integral respect for human rights constitutes the strongest guarantee for the triumph of peace over violence. In keeping with its inalienable pacifist vocation, the Spiritist doctrine identifies unequivocally with the set of obligations contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved in 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, whose philosophical foundation is perfectly summarized in the Preamble of this charter of ethical claims that must be observed by all

persons and guaranteed by all governments:

"This Declaration is proclaimed as a common ideal for which all peoples and nations must strive, so that both individuals and institutions, constantly drawing inspiration from it, may promote, through teaching and education, respect for these rights and freedoms, and ensure, through progressive measures of national and international character, their universal and effective recognition and application, both among the peoples of Member States and among those of territories under their jurisdiction."



It suffices to quote here the first of the 30 articles comprising this precious document in order to highlight the human condition and the inalienable and eternal values that ennoble it. Ensuring that they are obeyed and fulfilled by all the governments of the planet, each with its own particular interests and ideological orientations, is a challenge that calls out to the conscience of citizens and to the commitment of institutions:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and, endowed as they are with reason and conscience, should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

The conquest of peace, both spiritual and social, constitutes one of the main axes around which the humanist teachings of Spiritism revolve, and it is in full accord with the moral preaching of Jesus of Nazareth and his call to social regeneration inspired by love of neighbor, a source of light for the minds and hearts of people of good will. His exhortations to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help the helpless, not do to others what one would not want done to oneself, or be free of guilt before casting the first stone, constitute a sublime code of love, peace, justice, solidarity, and fraternity of universal dimensions and eternal validity. Because of this harmony, Spiritism maintains that its moral doctrine is like that preached by the illustrious Nazarene, Renan's "incomparable man", and to whom Kardec referred in unsurpassable words:

"Jesus is for man the example of the moral perfection to which humanity can aspire on Earth".
(KARDEC, 1992, p.233).

8

FOR AN INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

Preservation of Nature

It is essential to emphasize that we all belong to the great human family, and that in order to continue existing we need to care for and preserve our common home, planet Earth. The starting point lies in the awareness that everything is related, that we human beings are part of the evolutionary process and, consequently, are intimately connected and influence one another. For anyone who feels truly united with all that exists, respect for life in all its manifestations, concern for nature, and commitment to the material and spiritual improvement of society constitute unbreakable principles.

Admiring and caring for the greatness and beauty of nature is vital because it is unacceptable

to continue considering it merely as a backdrop for what human beings do, or as a source of resources for indiscriminate exploitation, regardless of whether those resources regenerate or become depleted and extinct. Whether one likes it or not, the human being shares a community of destiny with nature; indeed, he comes from it and reaches the pinnacle of being its intelligent expression, but he cannot detach himself from it and abandon it to its fate, because he is part of it. It is therefore appropriate to give due relevance to the biosphere and not allow the technosphere to overshadow and ruin everything. It is imperative to join wills for the urgent solution of the problems involved in the pollution of water, air, and land; climate change and global warming; soil erosion; the loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas; the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions; the decline of biodiversity; unbridled industrialism and consumerism; the improper use of technological advances; the production of toxic substances; political and economic corruption; social and moral degradation; and the deterioration of quality of life—all of which have a profound impact on the exercise of certain essential human rights, such as the right to life, food, health, and development.

The solutions to these complex problems are known, and the urgency with which they must be

decided upon and implemented is also known. This is not a time for contemplation or excuses, but for action. It is up to governments and political, economic, financial, and administrative institutions to immediately apply the resolutions adopted at international events and not allow them to become dead letters because of the prevalence of obscure and selfish interests that jeopardize even our own survival as a species. High-sounding declarations followed by noncompliance can no longer be justified. We cannot wait much longer for polluting energies to be replaced by natural and renewable energies; proper and diversified management of primary activities is imperative; the expansion of green spaces and the rational use of all natural resources are urgent, as is the replacement of the habit of waste with a culture of recycling. It is also incumbent upon each citizen to commit to responsible conduct with regard to full respect for the environment and to lead life with moderation and austerity, avoiding waste and opulence. We are all called to make sacrifices. If these measures, and many others of different scope, are put into practice in time, they will contribute to the formation of a humanity made up of happy beings who will be able to live together peacefully on a healthy planet.

Climate change, global warming, and all the imbalances that threaten ecological equilibrium place us before an extremely demanding civilizational test. It is a major and highly complex problem, shared by all the inhabitants of Earth and by all countries, regardless of their size, population, income level, or degree of economic or technological development. This compels us to think in terms of global humanity and to seek shared solutions, since there is no real solution for anyone in a particular or isolated way.

Spiritual Ecology

In the light of Spiritist humanism, ecology is not only an environmental issue, but one with social, political, economic, biological, psychological, ethical, and spiritual dimensions, with a decisive repercussion on the sustainable development of life in general, and of human life in particular. In this sense, ecology must be understood as an interdisciplinary field that integrates environmental consciousness with the experience and practice of spirituality, beginning with an empathetic connection of the spirit with nature and the cosmos, the settings in which present, previous, and future incarnations unfold.

The perspective born of eco-spirituality calls all people to a process of review and purification of

feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, with the purpose of overcoming their lower passions, overcoming pride and selfishness, eradicating hatred and the desire for revenge, and cleansing the mind of old conditioning related to sin, guilt, and suffering, understanding that these constitute toxic elements that poison the mental, social, and spiritual environment. At the same time, it is an invitation to experience the pleasant sensation provided by freedom, inner peace, and serenity of spirit; to enjoy silence, the experience of relaxation, meditation, and the sense of transcendence, which places each individual in harmony with the whole.

To successfully face the difficulties posed by the ecological challenge in all its dimensions and give a vigorous impetus to environmental and human protection activities, a prompt modification of beliefs and attitudes must take place. To that end, the formation of a new consciousness is indispensable—one that passes through the recognition of the spiritual and transcendent condition of the human being; through uniting ethics with science and technology; and through an education that brings together knowledge and feelings, respect for nature and life with a profound and honest love of neighbor.

9

HAPPINESS AS THE PATH

According to a dynamic and renewed vision of Spiritism, happiness is conceived as a condition of personal, social, and spiritual well-being, and as the goal of the immortal spirit, which can only be attained gradually through intellectual advancement associated with moral improvement. In the understanding and application of both processes lies the key to the changes that the human being must experience and internalize in order to continue ascending on the journey toward progressive perfection.

When Gandhi was asked about the best path to happiness, he would often answer that *"there is no path to happiness, because happiness itself is the path"*. A clear path, linked to a life project with attainable goals through knowledge, will, and action.

Obviously, absolute happiness cannot be achieved in a world where violence, selfishness, injustices, inequalities, vested interests, arbitrariness, and despotisms of every kind prevail; but it is feasible to attain happiness in relative terms, proportionate to the effort made, when people become aware that each existence must be used as an opportunity for learning, moral rectification, psychological maturation, and growth in wisdom and spirituality. Necessarily, such realization must be not only personal but also social. **Intrahappiness**—being happy with oneself—must be linked to **interhappiness**—being happy in communion with others—since the state of happiness, although it begins within each one of us, only reaches its fullness in social experience, within the sphere of a good, free, and just society that serves as a guarantee for all.

Life must not be conceived as a gloomy experience that the spirit is forced to go through in order to expiate guilt and pay debts in successive incarnations, but rather as the ideal setting, full of opportunities, for progress. Each stage is an opportunity and must be used with optimism and hope. This is not a matter of denying suffering, whose presence is evident in all human and social spheres,

but rather of acting with a positive disposition and energy to overcome it instead of adopting a posture of resignation or justification based on its presumed origin in previous lives.

Reincarnation cannot be taken as a punishment from God, but rather as the continuous process that facilitates the progress of the spirit, animating different corporeal organisms in successive and interrelated existences, in accordance with evolutionary dynamics. Naturally, the law of spiritual causality operates in the interweaving of incarnations in such a way that fortune or misfortune are relative and transitory states of the spirit, according to each one's degree of perfection or imperfection, as direct or indirect consequences of his/her successes or mistakes, noble actions or faults.

Among contemporary Spiritist authors who have defended concepts of this nature with the greatest depth and clarity, we highlight Jaci Regis, an eminent Brazilian Spiritist thinker and writer, clinical psychologist, and declared humanist, whose reflections point toward a conceptual and semantic updating of Spiritism, for which he proposes the name "Kardecist Doctrine" or also "Science of the Soul", both with a clearly humanist connotation.

Thus he says in one of his works regarding happiness as the object of life:

"In a new dictionary of understanding, there is no place for sin or for a painful view of life. There it is recognized that the human soul advances, with its ups and downs, toward a destiny of self-overcoming, apprehension of knowledge, and development of virtues, through the very fact of living, dying, and reincarnating."(REGIS, 2010, p.).

Writer, journalist, and psychologist. A fundamental reference in secular and humanist Spiritist thought.



Jaci Regis
(1932-2010)

What has been set forth makes it clear that the humanist, transpersonal, and positive psychological orientation that emerges from the Kardecist doctrine motivates human beings to undertake permanent inner work that enables them to enjoy a happy, pleasant, optimistic, and healthy life—an unsurpassable condition for the perfection of the spirit through its multiple incarnations, making use of its moral autonomy and driven by the dictates of its

conscience, with a view toward a new civilization as the foundation of a regenerated world.

Through the broad horizons it opens, Spiritism encourages us to glimpse the ray of light that will allow us to travel a worthy path throughout our existence, and to keep alive the hope that by making humanity more humane, we will achieve greater happiness for all. It makes no sense to postpone the legitimate aspiration to happiness so that it may be enjoyed in heavens or spiritual colonies. The purpose of life is to be happy. The place to be happy is wherever each person is. The time to be happy is now.

10

SPIRITISM AND PROGRESS

Progressive Spiritism

It has already been said and reiterated that the ideals upheld by Spiritism—connected to the exaltation of feelings of solidarity and fraternity among the men and women who populate the planet, and to the hopeful and optimistic conviction that the evolutionary journey of the human species points inexorably toward a higher world, ever more advanced in intellectual and moral progress—clearly define Spiritist doctrine by its progressive and progress-oriented character. Both descriptors are etymologically built from the term progress, which serves as their root and generally denotes everything that advances or promotes advancement.

Both designations suit Spiritism very well. Obviously, they must be detached from any ideological bias that could create confusion if they were linked to certain contemporary political or partisan currents. In its legitimate philosophical and sociological conception, Spiritism is progressive because its reason for being is nourished by an innate disposition to foster the individual and social, intellectual and moral progress of individuals and of society as a whole. And it is progress-oriented because its ideas are not supported by dogmas of faith, nor do they constitute absolute or unchangeable truths; rather, they are susceptible to correction when convincing arguments arise to modify them or adapt them to the demands of new times.

Regarding the progressive character that identifies Spiritism, based on an objective reading of its doctrinal foundations and a proper understanding of its regenerative mission in the world—detached from foreign beliefs, mysticisms, and even superstitious practices that have often been added to it—the transcription of the ten considerations contained in the so-called “*Progressive Manifesto*”, presented by the Brazilian Association of Spiritist Pedagogy, a highly regarded academic organization

brilliantly and aptly led by Professor Dora Incontri, seems very appropriate and timely:

- 1– *We accept as Spiritist principles the existence of God, the existence of Spirits, communication with them, and reincarnation, from a perspective of individual and collective evolution.*
- 2– *We consider Allan Kardec the fundamental reference point of Spiritism, understanding that there are different readings of his works and that these differences must be respected and debated fraternally.*
- 3– *We view Spiritism as a progressive philosophy, one that does not lose its identity and specificity as a rational spirituality through dialogue with other philosophies and with the culture of each historical era.*
- 4– *We understand that Spiritism is in permanent construction, in dialogue with scientific research, philosophical reflection, and communication from the Spirits, provided that Kardec's critical spirit, empirical observation, and ethical principle of selflessness are maintained.*
- 5– *We understand that Spiritist ethics—which is the ethics of universal love, inspired by the ethics of Jesus—must guide our individual and*

collective actions toward social transformation. Therefore, we must take a stand against violence of any kind, working for human dignity and justice, and combating the abuse and subjugation of people of any age or condition.

- 6– We consider that the statements of mediums, Spiritist leaders, and directors are free and can and should be analyzed and discussed respectfully and rationally. The exercise of mediumship and positions of leadership do not confer incontestable authority on any matter.
- 7– We reject the idea that Spiritism is an institutional religion. We understand that it offers a free and open spirituality, with possibilities for dialogue with other spiritual traditions.
- 8– We reject any institutional guardianship over Spiritist thought: the practice, study, productions, and representation of Spiritism are free and are not the monopoly of any national or international institution.
- 9– We consider that dialogue among all Spiritists must be open, empathetic, and constructive, without any loss of critical thinking or of freedom of conscience and expression.

10–We understand Spiritism as a pedagogical proposal that works toward an emancipatory education for everyone, for peaceful coexistence, justice and equity, and the practice of a loving and critical spirituality. BRAZILIAN ASSOCIATION OF SPIRITIST PEDAGOGY (ABPE). 2019.



DID YOU KNOW?



ABPE Associação Brasileira de Pedagogia Espírita

The ABPE constitutes the most qualified reference among high-level academic organizations devoted to studying, researching, applying, and disseminating Spiritist Pedagogy, within a universalist approach that proposes a transformative, comprehensive education, open to dialogue with the various fields of knowledge, and in pursuit of a free, open, critical, and fraternal spirituality.

Through the Free University Pampedia, it regularly offers academic courses and seminars at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels, and it has a bibliographic collection managed by Comenius Publishing.

Spiritism as a progressive doctrine

Since its founding, Spiritism has acknowledged the progressive character of its teachings, which should always be measured against every scientific and cultural advance that may arise. As a thinker inspired by rationalist and Enlightenment values, Kardec clearly argued that Spiritism should be reviewed and updated in accordance with scientific discoveries and the general progress of knowledge achieved in each era. In his "Project for the Constitution of Spiritism," published in *Posthumous Works*, he referred to the "essentially progressive character of the doctrine" and proposed the holding of Spiritist Congresses that could meet every 25 years to "study new principles capable of being adapted to the doctrinal body" (KARDEC, 1995, p. 240). He had already made concepts pointing in the same direction very clear in various texts, such as this one found in *Genesis: Miracles and Predictions According to Spiritism*:

"Spiritism, advancing with progress, will never be left behind, because if new discoveries were to show that it is mistaken on any point, it would correct itself on that point; and if a new truth were revealed, it would accept it." (KARDEC, 2017, p. 47).

Consistent with this conviction, from the very beginning of the reflection that would lead him to the founding and systematization of Spiritism through the exploration of the world of spirits by means of dialogue with them, Kardec warned that spirits are not predestined revealers, but rather discarnate human beings, with their insights and errors, and that, therefore, their messages must be taken as their personal opinions and subjected to objective and critical analysis. Likewise, he pointed out that mediums are not people endowed with divine or supernatural gifts, but intermediaries who facilitate contact between incarnate and discarnate beings through the use of a varied range of extrasensory psychic faculties.

Understood as a human and not divine work, natural and not supernatural, dynamic and not static, capable of being rethought, revised, reinterpreted, updated, and expanded, Spiritist doctrine—the fruit of Kardec’s painstaking and admirable effort, together with the formidable contribution of a group of spirits of singular wisdom and morality—did not encompass, nor could it have encompassed, the entirety of spiritual or material knowledge. Thus, a broad field remained open for the later work of Spiritists and spirits regarding what could be

achieved through reflection, observation, research, and experimentation.

More than a century and a half after the codification of Spiritism, a deep and unbiased examination of the ideas set forth in its foundational texts requires distinguishing those opinions that unequivocally reflect the sociocultural context of that era—and therefore no longer satisfy the demands of contemporary knowledge—from the cardinal theses that make up the central core of Spiritist thought, such as God, immortality, evolution, reincarnation, spiritual exchange, and universal life, which retain their validity, vigor, and freshness, as well as from related concepts such as the perispirit, personal magnetism, spiritual obsession, and animism, among others.

Because it is not a religion—although many of its adherents think of it as such and have devoted their greatest efforts to shaping it that way—but rather a scientific and moral philosophy, an open doctrine with no exclusivist or sectarian pretensions, one that does not present itself as the owner of absolute and unchangeable truths, Spiritism is willing to engage in respectful dialogue with all currents of philosophical, scientific, religious, educational, psychological, artistic, ethical, sociological, and political thought in

each era. If such an exchange of views takes place in an ecumenical spirit, it will surely contribute to the cultural enrichment of all participants and to a fraternal and healthy coexistence.

On this basis, Spiritist humanism extends an open and plural invitation to all wills that declare themselves in favor of a paradigmatic change in the world in which we live—one reflected in social and moral, economic and political spheres, as well as intellectual, scientific, and educational fields. It calls for a change in epistemological models that, according to the Kardecist vision, will generate advances in the production of knowledge and in its directionality, moving from analysis to synthesis, from single-track thinking to critical thinking, from reductionism to holism, from brain-centeredness to spirit-centeredness. In short, it calls for a new paradigm that closes the gap between scientific and spiritual understanding—a gap that not only hinders the identification and comprehension of true human nature as a bio-psycho-socio-spiritual entity, but is also one of the main causes of the ethical and social problems that seriously affect planetary balance and the general progress of humanity.

11

HUMANISM VERSUS TRANSHUMANISM

The Spiritist vision proposes a spirit-centered humanism that calls for dialogue among scientific and technological knowledge, reflection in the human sciences, and the promotion of spirituality. It is not possible to face the present and future challenges confronting society without this indispensable relationship, through which the world's main centers of political, economic, educational, cultural, and social leadership—and governments of every orientation—would make better decisions. According to the Spiritist criterion, humanistic critical analysis and its ethical standards must be integrated with scientific and technological momentum in order to achieve an overall approach that places the human being at the center of attention. A human

being who, viewed comprehensively, is a spirit incarnated in a biological organism in order to shape a new existence, in continuous interaction with a social environment that it influences and from which it receives all kinds of influences. These are added to its psychic archive, the synthesis of its experiences and life events across multiple previous lives—to shape a new personality and continue advancing along its evolutionary path.

Whether out of fear that a singularity may arise—that is, an artificial intelligence that could wipe humanity from the face of the Earth—or out of the aspirations of so-called transhumanists, who are convinced that technology will make it possible to overcome the biological limitations of the human being, including death, the truth is that the advances achieved lead us to think and reflect on what makes us human, what is uniquely ours, and what cannot be artificially reproduced or transferred into a more durable vessel: namely, the spirit, the psychic entity that grants us individuality, immortality, continuity, and transcendence.

The affirmation of the spirit implies, above all, taking consciousness into account. Although its nature remains elusive even today, it has been

established since Descartes that the human being is a thinking subject, capable of developing independent thought and expressing it through language; a being conscious of itself and of the world around it, and as such, one who feels unique, original, and self-possessed. As conscious and also sentient beings, we have forces that motivate and drive us, make empathy possible, and express love—the most powerful of all known forces.

We think, feel, love, and, consequently, create. We have the capacity to create, to imagine, and to build other worlds that are sometimes as real to us as the physical world, as it occurs with art or literature. It is true that artificial intelligence can produce texts by feeding on previous ones, and that, using certain algorithms, it can make decisions; but it cannot replace the spiritual essence that defines the human being. It is true, for example, that there is already artificial intelligence capable of creating a symphony in the style of Beethoven, which is undoubtedly very meritorious; but creating is not the same as imitating. Beethoven composed by interpreting in his music the spirit of his century and prefiguring the next. That requires much more than a set of combinatory commands. It requires a "soul," which machines do not possess.

It must never be forgotten that freedom is an inherent principle of the human condition. The human being is essentially free: a project in continuous construction, a set of constant choices and decisions in which the spirit's free will prevails, while still acknowledging degrees of genetic or social-environmental conditioning. And no machine, however sophisticated it may be, enjoys the marvelous attribute of freedom.

Being conscious of life also means being conscious of death and of spiritual transcendence beyond its boundaries. Even many who are materialists from an epistemological perspective—because they believe we are made only of matter governed by fundamental laws—acknowledge that on certain occasions they are protagonists or witnesses of transcendent experiences in which they come to feel and think, as any spiritualist would, that they are part of something greater and ineffable, leading them into communion with others, with nature, with the cosmos, or with God. These are experiences that cannot be reduced to zeros and ones, nor subjected to quantitative analysis, and that could be integrated under the general notion of spirituality. In some people, this is identified

with their particular religious feelings; in others, it is expressed as an intimate attitude of connection with the supreme creative intelligence of all that exists, apart from dogmas and ecclesiastical structures.

After all, spirituality is a constitutive dimension of the human being, which means it is not subject to religious traditions, although it frequently derives from them. Basically, it is connected to feelings and behaviors, although it may find its source of inspiration in paradigmatic figures who leave their imprint on peoples, cultures, and beliefs in different regions and eras of the world, as is the case with Moses, Jesus of Nazareth, Siddhartha Gautama, Confucius, Rumi, Saint Francis of Assisi, Mohandas Gandhi, Teresa of Calcutta, and others.

There is no way to ignore that we are in the age of cybernetics, information communication, and genetic engineering; that we find ourselves in the midst of a scientific revolution that produces vertigo. Even so, we reject the transhumanist pretensions that predict and promote the robotization of individuals and of society as a whole as a consequence of technology turned into technocracy. We reaffirm our confidence in a humanist proposal centered on the recognition of the spirit as the essence of all

that exists in its different evolutionary phases, and on the affirmation that science and technology must always be placed at the service of Man—that is, the incarnate spirit—in order to answer humanity's great questions and respond to the challenges posed by the current civilizational, food, educational, ecological, and energy crises, as well as those arising directly from the poverty and inequality afflicting millions of human beings, from bloody armed conflicts, and from violations of the legal and political rights of citizens subjugated under authoritarian and dictatorial regimes that disguise themselves behind deceptive ideological masks.

CONCLUSION

A HUMANIST EXHORTATION TO THE PRACTICE OF GOODNESS

The main purpose of this brief essay is to offer a coherent set of arguments that lend credibility to the thesis that Spiritism is indeed a humanism and that, in any case, from any critical perspective, it should be recognized as representing a particular branch within the broad spectrum of contemporary humanistic varieties. It converges with them in the core idea of a worldview grounded in the centrality of man, but diverges from them by recognizing the human being as an incarnate soul that transcends the limits of earthly existence: one that preexists the birth and formation of the physical organism and survives its destruction at death. Because of the principles on

which it is based and the values it promotes, certain terms aptly help to define it with greater precision; therefore, it is acceptable to reiterate that Spiritism is a deistic, spiritualist, universalist, reincarnationist, evolutionist, mediumistic, integral, secular, freethinking, progressive, and progress-oriented humanism.

From its concern with both incarnate and discarnate man arises the admirable ontological, epistemological, and axiological originality that distinguishes it. In any of the inter-existential phases in which a human creature may find itself, every human being progresses unceasingly, gradually conquering ever higher steps in intellectual ascent, as well as on the moral plane, until becoming that good person whose traits were accurately outlined by Kardec:

"The truly good person is one who practices the law of justice, love, and charity in its greatest purity. If he questions his conscience about the actions he has carried out, he will ask himself whether he has violated that law; whether he has done wrong; whether he has done all the good he could; whether anyone had reason to complain about him; in short, whether he has done for his neighbor everything he would have wanted done for himself." (KARDEC, 1992, p. 319).

A human being won over by the idea of goodness is one who knows himself as a person endowed with reason and dignity, while also recognizing his fellow human beings as possessing the same conditions and rights. Traveling along this path, all united by the illumination provided by respect and love, charity and compassion, human society will become possible as a solidarity-based communion of persons and not merely as a functional assembly of individuals, thus forming a true community of spirits willing to build the longed-for kingdom of universal fraternity.

Here lies the colossal challenge that calls upon contemporary humanism, and that Spiritist humanism in particular assumes with determination, enthusiasm, and hope in the future.

As a colophon to this work, nothing seems more appropriate than to transcribe the celebrated poem "*The Pleasure of Serving*" by the exquisite Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, as a faithful expression of humanism and spirituality. Its verses invite us to overcome the culture of individualism and promote the culture of cooperation, and they constitute a precious hymn to love, tenderness, and service—that is, to the highest values proclaimed by a humanism rooted in spirituality:

All of nature is a longing to serve.

The cloud serves, the wind serves, the furrow serves.

Wherever there is a tree to plant, plant it yourself.

Wherever there is an effort everyone avoids, accept it yourself.

Be the one who removed the stone from the road, hatred from hearts, and difficulty from the problem.

There is the joy of being healthy and of being just. But above all, there is the beautiful, the immense joy of serving.

How sad the world would be if everything in it were already done, if there were no rosebush to plant, no endeavor to undertake!

Do not let only easy tasks call to you.

How beautiful it is to do what others avoid!

But do not fall into the error of thinking that merit is earned only through great works.

There are small services that are good services: setting a table, tidying a house, combing a child's hair.

That one is the one who criticizes. This one is the one who destroys.

You be the one who serves.

Serving is not the work of inferior beings.

God, who gives fruit and light, serves.

He could be called this: The One Who Serves.

And He keeps His eyes fixed on our hands and asks us each day:

Will you serve today? Whom?

The tree, your friend, your mother?

(MISTRAL, 2019, Vol. V, p.183)

The Chilean writer **Gabriela Mistral** (1889–1957) received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1945. She was the first Latin American writer to receive it, and the award represented recognition of a poetic body of work marked by profound humanity, sensitivity, and spirituality.

In her verses, she favored the use of simple, clear, and moving language, one that moved away from intellectual abstraction in order to be easily understood by all readers, especially the humblest.



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