Ricardo de Morais Nunes Dante López

> THE FREETHINKING COLLECTION: SPIRITISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY 1st SERIES

Reflections on the idea of God





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Ricardo de Morais Nunes Dante López

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THE FREETHINKING COLLECTION:

SPIRITISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



1st Series - Book 4



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1. Spiritism

PRESENTATION

"(...) freethinking elevates the dignity of man; through it he becomes an active, intelligent being, rather than a machine of beliefs." Allan Kardec (Spiritist Magazine, February 1867)

The CEPA - International Spiritist Association* and the Centre for Spiritist Research and Documentation (CPDoc) have the honor of presenting to both spiritist and non spiritist readers *The Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st century.*

The first series of *The Freethinking Collection* aims to present, in a summarized way, but without prejudice to conceptual precision, the theoretical positions of the

^{*} CEPA is the acronym, both in Spanish and Portuguese, for the previous name of the International Spiritist Association. CEPA used to stand for Confederación Espírita Panamericana. Its initials also created a word that reminded us of the symbolism suggested by the Spirits and used in the Prolegomena within *The Spirit's Book*.

so-called secular and freethinking spiritism, which has been developing in several countries in the Americas and in Europe, during recent years.

Edited in four languages - Portuguese, Spanish, English, and French - it aims to disseminate lay and free thinking spiritism as comprehensively as possible.

This perspective has been characterized by being an alternative look at spiritism, which was founded by Allan Kardec in 1857, as published in his masterful work *The Spirit's Book*, and its institutionalization and popularization in various regions of the planet.

As it spread, spiritism was subjected to processes of absorption and syncretism with the set of religious beliefs and practices specific to the historical and cultural context of each country and of each era.

In some countries, such as Brazil for example, the historical and cultural process of a catholic nature faced by spiritism resulted in the formation of another Christian religion, to the detriment of the principles of rationality and freethinking proposed by Allan Kardec for spiritism.

This phenomenon of syncretism has occurred with spiritism in several countries making it a minor religion, shifting it from its natural epistemological positioning, and causing it to lose its potential to open perspectives in the fields of knowledge, especially in the areas of science and philosophy.

Hence the need for spiritists gathered around the CEPA and CPDoc, for a rereading of spiritist thought in an attempt to rescue the generous proposal of Allan Kardec, who sought to build a spiritualist, lay, freethinking, humanistic and progressive philosophy. These are fundamental characteristics so that spiritism could walk along the progress of knowledge, ethics, and spirituality in the contemporary world.

The Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st century intends to present to the reader some fundamental topics of spiritism from the perspective of this rereading, with the aim, therefore, of clarifying spiritist readers in general and those who are interested in these subjects.

The collection presents and elaborates, in this 1st series, a set of fundamental themes, which will allow a comprehensive and full-fledged understanding vis-à-vis the hegemonic thought prevailing in the spiritist movements of Brazil and the world. This gaze is proposed within the greatest spirit of otherness possible.

All topics were elaborated with a method that seeks clarity, conciseness, and precision with the aim

of providing fundamental introductory information on spiritism and the spiritist movement, from a lay and freethinking perspective.

The Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st Century also aims to offer scholars and communicators of spiritism, as well as those engaged in the organization of courses, conferences and coordination of study groups, references, and support material to be used in didactic activities carried out by spiritist associations in general.

We believe that this initiative will contribute to a healthy debate on important issues of spiritism, as reflected in the transcendental spiritualist philosophy founded by Allan Kardec.

The authors of this 1st Series - Fundamental Themes - from *The Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st Century* are intellectuals originally from the spiritualist movements of Argentina, Brazil, Spain and Venezuela who developed the following topics:

- Spiritism in the lay and free thinker perspective Milton Rubens Medran Moreira (Brazil) and Salomão Jacob Benchaya (Brazil)
- The immortality of the soul David Santamaría (Spain)

- Mediumship: exchange between two worlds Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis (Brazil) and Yolanda Clavijo (Venezuela)
- Reflections on the idea of God Ricardo de Morais Nunes (Brazil) and Dante López (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 morals Jacira Jacinto da Silva (Brazil) and Milton Rubens Medran Moreira (Brazil)
- Allan Kardec: the founder of spiritism Matheus Laureano (Brazil) an Wilson Garcia (Brazil)

Spiritism, in the words of the important Brazilian writer and spiritist philosopher José Herculano Pires, remains as the "great unknown". The shadows of misunderstanding fall upon it, preventing its original brilliance from being appreciated as a philosophical proposal which reveals the horizons of the Spirit over modern thought, emphasizing the importance of reason and facts.

The Freethinking Collection: Spiritism for the 21st century aims, therefore, to shed some light on the spiritist philosophical proposal, with the purpose of illuminating its understanding by spiritists and non-spiritists as well as rescuing its revolutionary potential contribution to a new vision of the human being and the world.

This is a bold but necessary task.

Ademar Arthur Chioro de Reis Mauro de Mesquita Spínola Ricardo de Morais Nunes *Organizers*

CEPA - INTERNATIONAL SPIRITIST ASSOCIATION

In *The Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the* 21st century, CEPA unfolds, in the various volumes that make up the 1st Series, the fundamental themes of spiritism. In the series that will follow, current issues of equal importance for societal living will be addressed.

CEPA - International Spiritist Association, was founded in Argentina in 1946. It was strongly influenced by the freethinking tradition that arose in the Spanish spiritist movement, shortly after the mid-19th century advent of the Spiritist Philosophy in France, under the direction of Allan Kardec.

Argentine spiritists, whose main characteristic was the defense of the progressive, secular, and freethinking character of spiritism, played a leading role in the basis of thought that always guided CEPA members.

Since its founding, CEPA, initially called the Pan American Spiritist Confederation, has been working for the construction and consolidation of the philosophical and scientific nature of spiritism, as proclaimed by its founder Allan Kardec.

As an interpreter of spiritism in its original form, CEPA defines it as "a science dealing with the nature, origin and destiny of spirits, as well as their relationships with the bodily world" and as "a spiritualist philosophy of moral consequences".

Its nature today is that of an International Spiritist Association, comprised by individuals and spiritist institutions from different continents. It is characterized by being an alliance of people and institutions sharing the same freethinking ideal, not compatible with vertical and authoritarian organizations within the spiritist movement.

Its main objectives are:

- (a) promote and disseminate the knowledge provided by spiritism, based on the thinking of Allan Kardec, under a lay, freethinking, humanist, progressive and pluralistic vision.
- (b) promote and support efforts for the permanent updating of spiritism.

(c) promote integration between spiritists and spiritist institutions of all continents, sharing these same objectives.

Valuable scholars and thinkers gathered around CEPA have been expanding the scope of the Spiritist Philosophy, adding their efforts to restore its original progressive sense, unfortunately minimized when it is mistakenly read as a religious doctrine.

Spiritism free of adjectives is a universalist philosophy with liberating potential, and thus the reason for CEPA's commitment to its earliest postulates, upholding the historical context in force at the time of its birth.

The association of people around the study of spiritism, in its purest expression, has served for the aggrandizement of the spiritist philosophy, which can serve everyone, regardless of their beliefs and visions of the world.

In honor of the work and dedication of the authors, I leave an affectionate invitation for the reader to study and critically analyze their contributions, as a true freethinker.

> Jacira Jacinto da Silva, President of CEPA

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CPDOC - SPIRITIST RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER

CPDoc is one of the oldest working spiritist research centers in Brazil. Its main objective is the development and dissemination of studies and research of spiritist themes, using the appropriate methodology for each topic as well as the contributions of the various areas of knowledge. It seeks to contribute to the improvement of knowledge, as a whole and of spiritism specifically.

CPDoc was born in Santos (Sao Paolo, Brazil) in 1988, the result of the dream of young people interested in reinforcing their spiritist studies. It has participants from several Brazilian states and other countries. The works are published through its website, in books, in the press, and they are discussed in various events, especially at the Brazilian Symposium of Spiritist Thought as well as at the Congresses and Conferences of CEPA, which it joined in 1995.

To date, CPDoc has in its collection the following books published or to be published:

- Magnetismo e vitalismo e o pensamento de Kardec, by Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis
- Um Blues no meio do caminho, by Paulo Cesar fernandes
- Centro espírita: uma revisão estrutural, by Mauro de Mesquita Spinola
- Teleco, by Geraldo Pires de Oliveira
- Igualdade de direitos e diferença de funções entre o homem e a mulher, by Marissol Castello Branco
- Mecanismos da mediunidade: Processo de comunicação mediúnica, by Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis
- Criminalidade: educar ou punir?, by Jacira Jacinto da Silva
- Ensaio sobre o Humanismo Espírita, by Eugênio Lara
- Os espíritos falam: Você ouve?, by Wilson Garcia

- Doca e o menino O laço e o silêncio, by Wilson Garcia
- Perspectivas contemporâneas da reencarnação (several authors), organized by Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis and Ricardo de Morais Nunes
- Os livros dos espíritos, by Luís Jorge Lira Neto
- Freethinking Collection: spiritism for the 21st century (several authors), organized by Ademar Arthur Chioro dos Reis, Ricardo de Morais Nunes and Mauro de Mesquita Spinola

The CPDoc also offers online courses presenting spiritism within a secular and freethinking vision, using modern distance learning techniques.

All those interested in research can participate in the CPDoc if they know the fundamentals of spiritism and are hosted by a member of the group.

Information, published articles, CPDoc-promoted events, and online courses are available on the group's website:

http://www.cpdocespirita.com.br.

Wilson Garcia President of CPDoc

PREFACE

Without shadow of a doubt, the issue of God is among the most controversial questions. From the very beginning, humankind has had the idea of something superior. And such idea or sensation stemmed from different expressions, as shaped and comprehended by each culture. Multiple related studies have sprouted in the areas of philosophy, theology, anthropology, psychology, sociology and even science. In this connection, and because of its nature, the study of God may also be addressed from the Spiritist view. This time, two relevant Spiritist writers, Ricardo Nunes and Dante López, embarked upon the task of making some reflections on the idea of God. Their love for the guest for truth, their unswerving open mind to study and conduct research into different contexts and their human sensitiveness in favor of solidarity, justice, peace and free thinking allowed this work to standout in view of their savviness.

The issue of the existence or inexistence of God has been a divide throughout history. Some say that God exists, either from the monotheistic or polytheistic view. Some others think that God is a human invention. Some feel, from their religious view, that God may not and should not be studied; God simply exists and should be taken as such. Nonetheless, as human beings have been consolidating major conquests, including freedom of thought, their horizons expand and the possibility of advancing and delving into diverse areas increase. Based on this rationale, the authors of this book submit that "the issue of God may and should be subject to rigorous insight and even today is a relevant one."

Dear reader, in the following chapters, you will find interesting inputs, which, with sound arguments, discard the idea of some God with human features, favoring some and damaging others, choosing some and rejecting others; in other words, intervening at will in the human destiny and acts. Rather, the conception of a fair and good God will be reasserted as "the supreme intelligence, the first cause of all things," as stated in *The Spirits' Book*. The way of definition has significant personal, social and spiritual repercussions, as it will be demonstrated afterwards.

A second notable characteristic of this work involves the absence of dogmas or preconceptions. Some questions are analyzed, namely, what is the Spiritist view of Jesus? A divine being, the incarnation of God? Because of God's plan, are humans doomed to endure and go through untoward, suffering circumstances in their lives? Or are they the builders of their own destiny, which would allow them to change their life conditions? Do we reincarnate and suffer because of our sins? Is God the property of a certain religion? Where is God amidst the evils that enrapture humankind? Are such evils imposed and even promoted by God? Or do they come from other sources? What do the illustrious scientists think nowadays about the issue of God? Is the traditional mechanistic and materialist view still effective in the scientific world? Has scientific research restated the issue of God, thus breaking ground towards a new paradigm, with a view to finding a new way of understanding life and coming closer to the idea of a supreme intelligence? In any case, dear reader, you will find a fascinating contribution to these and some other queries.

The historical path, the proposal of philosophical discussion and the inputs of multiple thinkers and scientists in this regard turn this work into a valuable contribution to culture.

Daniel Torres Grupo Espírita Nueva Generación-Guatemala

OPENING REMARKS

It is a great honor to introduce to the public these Reflections about the idea of God - A complex theme of enormous importance for humankind, subject to fiery affirmations and negations.

I and my dear friend Dante attempted to deal with the issue even-tempered, with a sober approach.

We made it clear in our book that, rather than believing or not in God, our stance on life is most important, for it defines us.

Quite a few atheist throughout the history of humankind have made an enormous contribution to the development of civilization. We owe them a lot.

For their part, some mystic persons and missionaries trusting in a major power as the basis of reality brought fundamental ideas on the sacred character of life and pointed to the road of transcendence. They also taught that the term love summarizes and translates the best idea of God.

Undoubtedly, the idea of God has been used for numerous abuses. There is no way of negating such fact. Many have spoken, and still speak up, in the name of God, as if they were entitled to represent God on planet Earth.

Certainly, acting as the divine proxy among persons is comfortable indeed.

If anything goes beyond human knowledge is the issue of God. There is no way of proving the existence of God.

Nor is it possible to prove the inexistence of God. It is a metaphysical theme par excellence. It seems that Kant was right when talking about the possibility of producing knowledge on this matter.

All that remains to us is to meditate, philosophize...

In spite of such difficulties, we need to affirm that the Spiritist philosophy, founded and coded by Allan Kardec in the middle of the 19th century, postulates the existence of a "supreme intelligence, the first cause of all things." Therefore, the idea of God is present in Spiritism.

As for me, I would like to thank specially my fellow traveler, Argentinean Dante López. I got to know him

during our discussions in the work in process. I could feel in my friend a great heart and extensive Spiritist and general culture.

It is not by chance that he presided over the International Spiritist Association, CEPA.

Truly, the opportunity of having Dane as my fellow when reflecting and writing this book has been an immense honor to me.

This book forms part of the *Free-Thinking Collection: Spiritism for the 21st Century,* an excellent initiative of CEPA and CPDoc.

Surely, there is the need to bring the major topics of Spiritism in the 21st century.

That was the sense of progressivity given to the Spiritist philosophy by its founder, Allan Kardec. He used to advise that the Spiritist thinking should escort the development of humankind in the field of knowledge.

Finally, my thanks.

To all my fellows of CEPA and CPDoc. Together with them I have learned a lot about Spiritist philosophy.

To my fellows in the organization of the *Free-Thinking Collection: Spiritism for the 21st Century*, namely Ademar Arthur and Mauro Spínola. They are the masters of the Spiritist free-thinking; I am lucky to have them as friends in this existence.

To Luciana, my wife and love. She, who carries out a restless activity in the lay and free-thinking Spiritist movement, lent me a helping hand in dealing with the technical and IT issues when working on this book.

To Sofia, my daughter and source of happiness. Her name reminds me of the necessity of wisdom in life.

To my friends in the spiritual world, the extraphysical plane. I am positive that they are happy with the publication of this work.

Dear readers, may these Reflections on the idea of God spur you to further investigate and meditate on an extremely complex, yet fascinating, topic.

Ricardo de Morais Nunes

I started to write down my part of this book ahead of knowing that I would be requested to do it.

Just by chance, and because surely many things happen even before becoming aware of them, about six months before learning about such possibility, a fellow and friend of the SEV asked me to prepare a presentation on the conception of God for the Spiritist School for Adults.

"We need to work on some updates about God, an abstract theme, hard to be conveyed to the people who visit the Center, without falling into the idea of the anthropomorphic God of religions," he said to me. So, I went there, armed with a speech entitled, "Some reflections on the idea of God." After revisiting the issue in Kardec's books and comparing it with the new conceptions that have emerged lately, once again I realized the difficulty implied in tackling it.

It seems to me that, in the absence of such background, I would not have accepted the invitation from the editors of this collection, Ricardo and Mauro, to write down, in partnership with Ricardo Nunes, a book on God from the Spiritist view, able to mirror the current thinking of CEPA, updated to the 21st century.

Be that as it may, I think that such decision had an unwonted, bold component. While such topic was always present in my meditations, and touches all other topics studied by me all my life, I believe this is "the" theme to elucidate in order to explain something as important as the profound meaning, not only of existence, but of every existent thing.

What exists makes sense and takes shape when thinking about something "before" the Universe. Another, different thing is thinking that "what exists" has appeared by autogenesis.

Indeed, it is a complex theme, difficult to address and cover. Knowing where to start is not at all easy. We began by thinking and reflecting on the clout of beliefs of individuals in their attempt at putting themselves in context.

Our personal beliefs condition us, as well as the culture where we grew up, the words we listened at home early in our childhood, and our intellectual, moral and social education. All our experiences form a series of concepts on which we rely and take action. This set of beliefs rules our existence.

If we are flexible enough and try to learn all the time, open-minded, our mindset will evolve together with us; otherwise, we could get to a point of changing not a single belief, because doing it would mean taking us outside our comfort zone. Thus, we become stiff, which arrests our conscious evolution.

Cognizant of the individual mindset and the fact that nobody holds all the truth, I agreed with Ricardo that this book should be an invitation to meditate, for the readers to arrive at their own conclusions.

This work by no means is intended to be a "Treaty on God," but a collection of ideas from multiple thinkers, philosophers, scientists, sociologists, and some other scholars to feed and contribute to the Spiritist idea of God contained in Allan Kardec's work.

Coming to terms as regards the method of writing was a hard work. At the end of the day, we opted to write it down four-handed. It was a wonderful experience, so such an extent that, today, as I read something again, I have trouble distinguishing which part was authored by me or by Ricardo.

I learned a lot from my fellow in this adventure. He is a wise, kind man, with strong convictions, yet flexible. My admiration and gratitude to him came to light as a result of this joint task.

Further, I would like to thank all the influential persons in my life and helped me shape my own mindset and trigger my actions.

I have a sensation of being learning always and willing to grab new knowledge. I owe this particularly to all my Spiritist fellows at SEV, too many of them as to be numbered. But, in the words of renowned singer Joan Manuel Serrat, they know who I name.

In addition, and to a larger extent, I thank the extraordinary human beings I have met during the Spiritist activities at CREAR and CEPA. Each one of them have expanded my horizons of knowledge and experiences.

To my parents, who taught me the value of perseverance, honesty and generosity, and also gave me the most important thing I have – life.

To my partner, girlfriend and love of my life, Mónica. I have learned a lot from her in this trajectory of living together, with whom I created, as gods, a beautiful family and we are proud of them.

To my children, who made me a father and give me lessons every day.

To my children in law and grandchildren, an incredible family, sharing knowledge useful to experience good and bad times, always learning.

Special thanks to my co-worker and friend Adriana Manera. She assisted me with her efficiency in doing as many translations and corrections as necessary. To my friends Roli and Gustavo, for their long conversations about life.

To all the persons with whom I have shared and continue sharing multiple experiences. I have got a piece of learning from all of them.

I should name the Spiritist who have joined and join me in the decisions of my life. Importantly, though, they have been there.

Finally, my gratitude goes to Nature, God, or whatever name of that unknowable, cosmic energy, the incredible experience of life.

Cheer up, my friends, for this reading could be food for thought!

Dante López

SUMMARY

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1 TO BELIEVE OR NOT TO BELIEVE

Seemingly, modern thinking has discarded the idea of God. Nowadays, for most scientists and philosophers, God is no more a subject-matter. For them, the issue of God has been exiled to a religious problem, a subject to be tackled only through faith, regarded as unnecessary in the field of philosophical reflection and inaccessible to the area of knowledge.

As a matter of fact, after Kant, it is claimed that no science may be built on metaphysical questions. However, the big question about the existence of God is, possibly, the metaphysical question par excellence. It is likely to be the highest attempt at giving the Universe and human beings a raison d'être and meaning.



Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) Born in Konigsberg, Prussia, Kant was a philosopher and the author multiple works that overturned the Western philosophical thinking.

DID YOU KNOW?

Philosopher Kant gave an impact on the history of thinking by promoting the Copernican revolution, after affirming that neither experience nor reason can demonstrate certain things. One of them is God; some other things include reality, the Universe, the Infinite, and the soul, among other. https://super.abril.com.br/cultura/o-livro-queacabou-com-deus Alexandre de Santi¹.

In the 19th century, at the end of the darkest period of the infamous Holy Inquisition, where the heretics were sentenced to die in the bonfire, Nietzche, the great German philosopher, proclaimed the death of God.

Nietzche was not the only one who managed to strike a hard blow on the idea of God. Some other thinkers, including Feuerbach, Marx and Freud, annunciated the end of metaphysical delusions. God would be labelled by some scholars as alienating opium, human projection, and also the outcome of man's sense of weakness before Nature.

These thinkers aimed at contesting the dogmas imposed for centuries by the Church.

To be honest, the inability of Christian religious institutions to hold talks because of their authoritarian and imperative character, suffocated for long time the human natural trend toward free thinking.

The rational, scientific thinking collided with the truths of faith, resulting in a profound abyss between science and religion.

Numerous disputes over reason have arisen in the modern era.

Galileo Galilei, Giordano Bruno and Charles Darwin are some of the names that remind us of



Galileu Galilei (1564-1642)

Physicist, mathematician, astronomer and philosopher born in Florence, Italy.

DID YOU KNOW?

Galileo Galilei proved that the Earth and some other planets revolve around the sun. At that time, however, the Catholic Church endorsed the geocentric model of the solar system, e.g., the sun and the rest of planets revolved around the Earth, a central, fixed planet. For this reason, Galilei's theory was deemed as an affront to the Catholic Church. Brasil Escola. *https://brasilescola.uol.com. br/biografia/galileu-galilei.htm.*²

the deep fracture between, on the one hand, free thinking and new knowledge stemming from scientific research, and, on the other hand, religious dogmas.

Hans Küng, famous for being at odds with Pope's infallibility, president since 1995 of the Foundation for a Global Ethic and Emeritus Professor of Ecumenical Theology at the University of Tübingen, made reference to this question:

"Was Galileo's conflict with the Church a sad isolated event? No, it was a symptomatic precedent that corroded from the root the relationship between the young, growing science and the Church, particularly because in the times that followed, Rome's attitude did not change. Instead, it became even tougher with the progress of


Hans Küng (1928-2021)

Swiss	Catholic	priest
and theologian.		

natural sciences (and later on, mainly, upon Charles Darwin's biological research and his theory of the evolution of species). After the grave excommunication of Luther and the Protestants by Rome, Galileo's case arrived, producing a silent estrangement between scientists and the Catholic Church, and leaving a permanent conflict between natural sciences and the prevailing theology. For this reason, Italy and Spain, under the lash of Inquisition, remained until the 20th century with no scientific growth of note. Nevertheless, the Church's repression has failed to impose itself on scientific evidence.³ (p. 19-20)

The clash between these super powers, science and religion, grew fiercer amidst sectarian views, putting them on opposite sides. Most advocates of scientific, rational thinking, would be turning to atheism.

DID YOU KNOW?

Deism: Belief in the existence of God, rather than the Church's authority or religious practices. This doctrine relies on reason to warrant the existence of God, negating the influence of religion or the Church. **Theism**: A doctrine that affirms the individual existence of God and its providential action around the world. *Online dictionary*.⁴

Notably, at the beginning of the science-religion debate, many thinkers and scientists, including Rousseau, Voltaire and Newton, advocated a deistic conception.

For their part, the advocates of religion took shelter in faith and its dogmas, and waived free thinking.

Paradoxically, because of this religious stance, which extends up to date, an increasing number of people stopped believing in God.

The advocates of Deism label themselves as atheists, for they do not accept the Church's version of God.

Another, relevant contributor to incredulity were the attempts by religions to explain the existence of evil in the world.

In this regard, while Christianity submitted the thesis of the original sin, in the practice, by preaching and worship, enormous power was conferred to an allegedly supernatural entity, the devil, who, in a hypothetical challenge to God, tries to divert humans from the road to salvation

Such harangue reinforced atheism, for being inconsistent with the idea of God's unconditional love, also preached by the Christian Church.

Truly, the conception of a certain being forever dedicated to evil, which confronts God with a formidable challenger, would mean an inexplicable failure by the Creator. At the end of the day, the devil also is a creature of God.

Quite often, failure to comprehend suffering leads humans to speculate over the origin of evil.

It is impossible to deny that life is composed of dire situations and big existential challenges, many a time interspersed with happy occasions.

We must acknowledge that many events make us love life, such as the happiness of counting on a loving, caring family, the affection of friends, love returned by a partner, a child's birth, contact with animals, and appreciation for Nature.

In our daily routine, it is easy as well to witness suffering, sadness and mischief.

Many lives are uselessly lost in wars, accidents and violence in major cities. Some children are born with a congenital defect. Good, honest people suffer for various reasons.

Humans continuously fight against disease, aging and death.

In the practice, it seems that the loving God of religions is unable to free men, women, children and the elderly from the world evils.

In this connection, French philosopher Luc Ferry wonders about the possibility of conciliating the idea of God as a father:

"In light of the unsustainable repetition of massacres and disgraces lashing out humankind, which father would forsake his children in the hell of Auschwitz, Rwanda or Cambodia? A believer will say undoubtedly that it is the prize of freedom; that God created humans free; hence, evil must be attributed to them. But, what happens to the innocent people?

What about thousands of small children, martyred during such ignoble crimes against humanity? A philosopher will end up doubting about the sufficiency of religious answers."⁵ (p. 24)



Luc Ferry

French philosopher, politician, writer, and Minister of Youth, National Education and Research from 2002 through 2004.

The anthropomorphic God created by religion has the power to give and remove happiness or unhappiness. Such a belief in a discretionary, despotic power over creatures generated a state of fear of the divine wrath.

Worship tries to calm down such rage with repentance, pray and promises.

Concomitantly, the Jewish-Christian thinking instilled the idea of guilt in human minds, and humans were taken as doomed by definition, forced to submit to the religious mandates, awaiting the grace of God.

DID YOU KNOW?

Anthropomorphism: A way of thinking or concept that attributes God, gods or supernatural entities behaviors, feelings and thoughts characteristic of human beings. *Online dictionary*⁴

Salvation has been offered in exchange for repentance, but also money or material assets.

Luther's historical example is most helpful to understand the extent of trading in material goods for salvation, defined as simony.



Martin Luther (1483 - 1546)

Augustine monk and professor of German Theology, one of the leading characters of the Protestant Reform.

The humans' perception of their feeble existence, strengthened by the idea of having only one possibility of happiness and success in one single life, is put through the lens of a heteronomous relationship, that is, submission to an outer power able to provide assurances or instill fear.

DID YOU KNOW?

Simony: Buying or selling of sacred artifacts; spiritual gifts. *Online dictionary*⁴

Therefore, fear, guilt and hope to obtain the divine grace play a key role in humans' relationship with God.

In this context, religions spread the idea that "God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him."

We wonder if man rather imagined God in his own image and likeness.

On the side of sciences, even though Albert Einstein said that "God does not play dice with the universe," cosmology endorses the Big Bang as the origin of all, a random event that gave rise to everything.

O universo e a vida, para o conhecimento cientifico atual, são produtos do acaso e não possuem nenhuma finalidade maior, e estão destinados ao nada.

For most modern scientists, life and the universe are the result of chance, there are no main purposes, and both of them are destined to nothing.

After listing his reasons for not believing in God, French philosopher André Comte Sponville admonished:

"Does God exist? We do not know. We will never know, anyhow in this life. Hence, the question: to believe or not to believe in God. Readers know now that, for me, I do not believe. Firstly, because no argument has managed to prove the existence of God; secondly, because no experience bears witness to it."⁶ (p. 124)

Despite such assertions, some other modern thinkers continue pondering on the origin of everything, and they wonder about the mystery of beings. They cannot be content with just the immediate effects, phenomena, felt by our senses in Nature.

They pursue the deep causes of beings and life, the cause of causes.

Hans Küng is among these thinkers. Revolving around the scientific hypothesis of the Big Bang, he queries:

"If, at the beginning, there was only a primary fireball, tiny but of very high density and temperature, a question inevitably emerges: where did it come from? What did cause the giant or unimaginable primary blast? Where did the immense energy of the cosmic expansion come from? What did cause its great initial momentum?"³ (p. 89)

In the practice, the metaphysical reflection on the origin, raison d'être and purpose of beings, takes precedence over insight.

Even if there is no evidence to prove scientifically the existence of God, human curiosity and questioning do not cease. Agnosticism fails to meet humans' natural necessity to know.

DID YOU KNOW?

Agnosticism fails to meet humans' natural necessity to know. *Online dictionary*.⁴

During an interesting talk with scientist Leonard Mlodinow, Deepak Chopra, a Spiritualist physician and writer born in India and residing in the United States, affirms:

"Stephen Hawking and others claim that the quantum principles make possible the emergence of the universe from nothing. But, to distinguish that from the vacuum where the Genesis starts, physics got tangled in a knot. If such 'nothing' gave rise to the human quest for meaning, why is it not important? The universe manifest itself at random, but such randomness created the human brain, which does all kind of non-random thinks – such as Shakespeare's works and saying 'I love you'. So, how is it that no project resulted in the project?"⁷ (p. 47)

That chance which produces smart phenomena is a source of perplexity for thinkers.

On planet Earth, for instance, an evolutionary

process takes place from the simple to the complex in the organic and biological areas.

At the intangible level, basic intelligence can go to a very developed intelligence, evolving as well from psychological unconsciousness to consciousness.

The laws of Nature create harmony and shape life, attaining specific goals and meeting specific needs of different beings.

In this regard, Léon Denis, a French Spiritist thinker, claimed to believe in a power superior to human beings.

"The world, physical and moral, is ordained by laws, and these laws, formulated after a predetermined plan, denote a profound understanding of that which they govern. They do not proceed from a blind cause, for chance and chaos could not produce order and harmony; they do not emanate from man: so ephemeral a being, limited as to time and space, could hardly be credited with creating permanent and universal laws. Logically to explain them, one must ascend to the generating cause of all things."⁸ (p. 93)

Modern thinkers rightly say that there is no possibility of proving the existence of God, as purported by Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages. At the end of the day, how could the absolute be measured by the relative? Which rule could success in measuring the infinite?

However, we understand that the issue of God can and should be the subject-matter of rigorous cogitation, still relevant nowadays.

Spiritism advocates among its basic postulates the existence of God. Indeed, human limitations – epistemological, ideological and linguistic – must be acknowledged to tackle this topic.

From our Spiritist perspective, we appreciate scientific discoveries and understand that the idea of God should encompass all scientific achievements, moving farther from myth and blind belief.

Concerning the science-religion relationship, Allan Kardec, the founder of Spiritism, says:

"Out of respect for the texts regarded as sacred, should we impose silence on science? That would have been something as impossible as keeping the earth from turning. Religions – whichever ones they may be – have never gained anything by upholding patent errors. Science's mission is to discover the laws of nature, and since those laws are works of God, they cannot be contrary to religions founded on truth. To anathematize progress for being detrimental to religion is to anathematize the



Pseudonym of Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, a French educator, writer and founder of Spiritism.

very work of God. Furthermore, it would be not worthwhile because all the anathemas in the world will not prevent science from moving forward and the truth from coming to light."⁹ (p. 78)

Moreover, it is worth claryfing that atheism, or disbelief in deities, should also be respected. At the end of the day, nobody is better or worse for trusting or not in God. The time of anathemas and of chasing those who think otherwise must have come to an end.

The authors of this book have no intention of imposing their views on anybody, as they recognize the complex nature of this topic.

This work is not a theological treaty. The authors identify themselves as Spiritist, with no intention of preaching or exhausting such an important topic, which would be impossible, for that matter. Spiritism is a philosophy. Therefore, it is up to Spiritist to spur curiosity and reflection on a relevant matter for modern humans.

The authors offer these *reflections about the idea of God* from a Kardecist, progressive, lay and free-thinking perspective, i.e. an approach from Allan Kardec's work.

Consequently, far from any kind of dogmas, this is a true practice of free thinking, also in line with the scientific, philosophic and cultural progress of humankind.

For the authors of this work, a Brazilian and an Argentinean, the issue of God continues being a great enigma to be thought about and reflected on. It could be affirmed and even denied, but never ignored. As a matter of fact, it is a fundamental topic in an attempt at comprehending the being, the universe and life.

The following chapters display quite a few ideas of humankind about God throughout the history.

Special attention will be paid to the Spiritist idea of God, because Spiritism has a specific understanding of this issue.

Next, emphasis will be made on the Spiritist ontology, the Spiritist theory of being, which teaches

that reality is composed of three core components: God, spirit and matter.

Queries about divine love and divine justice, as well as the creationist and evolutionist theories, will be covered in this work to delimit the stance of the Spiritist philosophy in this discussion.

Given the importance of Jesus of Nazareth as the incarnation of God in the Western culture, a reflection will be provided to understand this historical person from the Spiritist view.

Next, the authors will elaborate on the need of a new idea of God, rather optimistic, far from the concepts of guilt and punishment, more in line with the information supplied by Nature and sciences, in addition to the contribution made by Spiritism.

Finally, the epistemological, linguistic and ideological troubles to tackle such a complex theme will be noted, for the issue of God has not finalized for humankind.

We invite our readers to ruminate on the fundamental question posed in this first chapter. It has been food for thought at all times, with the potential of revealing new horizons to comprehend life.

2 SOME IDEAS OF GOD IN HISTORY

Since the dawn of mankind, humans have imagined higher powers in the forces of Nature. The idea of a supreme being has been in place in all peoples at all times. Thus, we could infer that such feeling is not the result of education, but innate intuition. Hence, it is possible to understand the faith of the simpletons, who have felt deep inside their souls and without further philosophical questioning, the reality of a higher force that makes sense. Such a feeling, in quest of transcendence, has given birth to religions.

According to Allan Kardec, in: *The Spirits' Book: "If the sentiment of the existence of a Supreme Being were only the product of education, it would* not be universal. Like all scientific ideas, it would only exist in the minds of those who received such education.⁷⁷⁰ (Question 6)

With regard to the human's possibility of understanding the mystery of divinity, God's innermost nature, Kardec said:

"The inferior nature of their faculties makes it impossible for

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human beings to fathom God's innermost nature. While humanity is in its infancy, people often confuse God with God's creatures, imputing to God their own imperfections. However, they ponder the nature of things more deeply as their moral sense develops and thus they acquire a truer – though always incomplete – idea of God that conforms more to reason.⁷¹⁰ (Question 11)

José Herculano Pires, a Brazilian Spiritist scholar, refers to the multiple interpretations of the idea of God in the history of humankind, able to create a true worship scale.

"We could create a true worship scale in the primitive world. While its degrees could be simultaneous, rather than successive, the mere fact of their existence shows that worship, resulting from



José Herculano Pires (1914 - 1979)

A Brazilian journalist, philosopher, educator and translator. A Spiritist thinker, the author of numerous works on Spiritism.

an innate feeling in man, evolves in a real process. At the lowest degree, there is stone-worship. The next degree is plant worship, then, animal worship, and only at the highest degree, mythology itself, in its classical form of polytheism. Therefore, worship unfolds from the mineral kingdom to humankind, with all these stages and their components being interspersed. And the residues of the multiple stages are still present to date in the religious systems. Mankind carries this legacy in the course of time."¹¹ (p. 30)

Greek polytheism is among the major concepts of divinity with a tremendous influence on the Western world.

For the ancient Greeks, everything was divine. The reality was explained by the intervention of gods, both in natural phenomena and the social life.

DID YOU KNOW?

The tradition of sacred cows in India was born within *Hinduism*. The Vedas, a collection of religious texts dating back to 1500 b.C. commented on the cows' fertility, associating it with some deities. Another fundamental Hindu-Christian text, Manuscmriti, complied about the first century b.C., also underscores the significance of cows. *https://super.abril.com.br/mundo-estranho/porque-a-vaca-e-sagrada-na-india/*¹²

Rays were the work of the almighty Zeus; the sea waves were stirred by Poseidon's trident, and the sun was carried by Apollo's golden car. Also, war, peace and the destiny of cities were under the whimsical domain of the Olympic deities.

According to Brazilian philosopher Marilena Chauí, "Homer's Iliad, which relates the saga of the city of Troy and the mythical Trojan War, poet Homer tells the reason why Trojans won certain battles, whereas the Greeks came out as winners in some other battles. Gods were divided into two opposite sides. Once in a while, Zeus favored either Trojans or Greeks, making them prevail. Besides, the Trojan War was caused by the goddesses' rivalry. They appeared in the dreams of Paris, the Trojan prince, offering him their gifts, and he chose Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Jealous, the other goddesses induced him into kidnapping the Greek Helen, the beautiful wife of Menelaus. Such action triggered the war among humans."¹³ (p. 29)

Greek gods incarnated human features. Zeus represented justice; Athena, intelligence; Aphrodite, love, and so on. Thus, all gods were moved by human passions and emotions.

Polytheism was predominant as well in the ancient Egyptian culture, despite the attempts of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV to center worship on the sun-disk Aten.

Finally, the ancient Hebrews brought in a new concept of god – monotheism. They consolidated the belief of one god as the only deity, the protector of the people of Israel, with whom they had made a deal. It is the god of Abraham, Isaac, David and Moses; the god of the Old Testament, the Prophets, the Bible.

The Hebrew view of God permeated the Western culture, giving rise to the Jewish-Christian culture. In spite of such innovation of one god only, which requires a higher degree of mental abstraction compared with polytheism, God still had human features. This god intervenes in the name of his people, demands loyalty, and harshly punishes whoever fails to obey his orders.

DID YOU KNOW?

Polytheism is the belief in or worship of more than one god. **Monotheism** is the belief that one god is the only deity. *Online dictionary*⁴

Brazilian Spiritist thinker Jaci Régis says:

"The Jewish people, who descended from Abraham, according to the Bible, set up worship of the only and invisible god who promised the hegemony of Israel over all. Jehovah is the almighty god of war, the protector of the Jewish against their enemies; he halted the sun movement for Joshua's army to defeat the Philistines; made manna descend from heaviness in the wilderness to prevent Israelites from starving, and caused Jericho walls to come down for his people to prevail. And he dictated the Ten Commandments."¹⁴ (p. 22)

A couple of thousand years later, a Jewish as well brought in a new view of god.

As part of the monotheist tradition of the Hebrew people, Jesus of Nazareth taught the novel idea of God as a loving and merciful father. But this god is also the father of all, including Jewish and Romans, masters and slaves, a loving and good father.

Thus, the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth introduced a new way of understanding divinity.

Jesus' god is similar to that of the Jewish, but with a rather loving and sympathetic vision.

In the New Testament, based on the words attributed to Jesus, there is also an anthropomorphic understanding of God. Take, for instance, the term father.

Note, however, that despite such similarity, it was a true revolution as compared with the previous concepts among the Hebrew people.

Allan Kardec mulled over the different views of God in the Old and New Testaments:

"The most important part of Christ's revelation – in the sense that it is the primary source, the cornerstone of his entire doctrine – is the entirely new point of view by which he portrays the Divinity. It is no longer the terrible, jealous and vengeful God of Moses; the cruel and merciless God who drenches the earth with human blood, who ordains the massacre and extermination of peoples – including women, children and the elderly – and who chastises those who spare their victims. It is no longer the unjust God who punishes an entire people for the wrongs of their leader, or who takes revenge on the guilty by striking the innocent, or who castigates children for the wrongs of their father; rather, God is one who is kind, supremely

just and good, full of tenderness and mercy, who forgives the repentant sinner and renders to each one according to his or her deeds."⁹ (p. 26)

However, no matter the monotheistic tradition borrowed from Judaism and the revolutionary thinking of Jesus of Nazareth, Christianity embraced the dogma of the Holy Trinity, making Jesus part of God.

Jesus of Nazareth, according to Christianity, is God incarnated on the Earth and died for the salvation of humans contaminated by Adan's original sin. Such a biblical and theistic narrative has accompanied the West for more than two thousand years, and it is commonly accepted by the Christian Church today.

There are some other important views of the existence of God or gods, including those of the Arabs, Egyptians, Romans, Hindis, Druids, Africans, Chinese, and many other peoples in both the West and the East, in ancient times and nowadays, who venerated and venerate a superior power.

Due to lack of space in this book, this chapter cannot be elaborated on any further. Still, from this brief presentation, we can check that humankind has had several ideas of God throughout history.

DID YOU KNOW?

Based on the teachings of Candomble, all persons are the children of orishas. To find out their orishas, individuals need to use the knowledge offered by the Game of Buzios.

The Game of Valva consists basically of throwing sixteen valvas, also known as caravans, through a sieve. The saint's father is the only one entitled to throw the valvas and read correctly the position of each of them. Rainer Sousa

https://brasilescola.uol.com.br/religiao/os-orixas.htm¹⁵

3 GOD ACCORDING TO SPIRITISM

The issue of God is of the essence, to such an extent that Allen Kardec addressed it from the outset, in the first question of *The Spirits' Book*. "What is God?" Kardec queried.¹⁰

Such a question produced a sensible, outspoken answer, in line with all the ideas developed throughout the Spiritist works.

*The spirits responded: "God is the supreme intelligence, the first cause of all things."*¹⁰

Therefore, Spiritism points to the existence of an original, necessary cause, which generates the being and the contingent reality.

At the same time, Spiritism argues that such first cause is endowed with a supreme intelligence, that is,

the cosmos has an intelligent original meaning and it is not the product of chance.

Next, Kardec dared to ask the spirits:

"What about the idea that attributes the first formation of all things to an accidental combination of matter, i.e. to chance?"

Incidentally, the thesis of the random combination of atoms has existed since ancient times, particularly thanks to Democritus.

And the spirits' answer is "No."

"Another absurdity! How could anyone with any common sense believe that chance is an intelligent agent? Moreover, what is chance? Nothing."¹⁰ (Question 8)

In this connection, Kardec commented on the following:

"The harmony that governs the forces of the universe reveals certain set combinations and designs, and thus an intelligent power. To attribute the first formation of things to chance would be nonsense because chance is blind and cannot produce intelligent results. An intelligent chance would no longer be chance."¹⁰

For Spiritism, God does not appear in person; does not influence over our affairs as if we were puppets or chess pieces. Human beings have reasoned as such, thus begging for divine protection. For instance, wars have been waged with the parties in conflict asking God for help. In this connection, Kardec asked the spirits:

"Is God concerned personally with each individual? Isn't God too great and aren't we too small for each individual in particular to have any importance in the divine sight?"

And the spirits responded,

"God is concerned with all created beings, no matter how small they may be. Nothing is too small for God's goodness."¹⁰ (Question 963)

Not satisfied enough with the answer, Kardec insisted on further clarification:

Must God be concerned with each of our actions in order to reward or punish us? Aren't most of such actions insignificant to God?

And the spirits specified,

"God has established the divine laws that regulate all your actions. If you violate them, the fault is yours. Obviously, when people commit an excess, God does not pronounce sentence on them by saying, for example, 'You are a glutton and I am going to punish you.' But God has set a limit: maladies, and sometimes death, are the consequences of excess. Thus the punishment – it results from breaking a law. Everything happens this way."¹⁰ (Question 964)

Spiritism teaches that God manifests himself before human beings through the natural law:

"Natural law is the law of God. It is the only law that is truly necessary for human beings to be happy. It shows them what they should or should not do, and they only suffer misfortune when they depart from it."¹⁰ (Ouestion 614)

Natural law is imprinted in individual conscience. If we pay due attention to our inner world, we will be able to discern what is good and what is evil. Such an innate ability is present in every individual, depending on their degree of moral development.

According to Spiritism, all of us eventually learn to strike a balance with natural law. Through successive reincarnations, the spirit moves ahead through a gradual intellectual and moral learning process of trial and error. Rather than sins, mistakes form part of the natural learning process.

To Jaci Régis' mind:

"Divine or natural law does not judge or punish. In other words, natural law is not a moral law, in the general sense of that term. Natural law controls the universal life by setting a positive guideline that survives and prevails over the apparent chaos and

limits of free will. And natural law is imprinted in the spirit through the evolutionary process."¹⁶ (p. 35-36)



Jaci Régis (1932-2010)

A Brazilian Spiritist thinker, writer, economist, journalist and psychologist.

Spirits will record deep inside their conscience, in the exercise of their freedom, the best behaviour in their lives, the best way of living, so as to avoid suffering the consequences of their bad deeds and reap the fruits of their conduct under law.

Consequently, spirits will eventually learn to live in harmony with both their inner world and their social lives, developing a respectful and peaceful treatment with their peers. Thus, natural law will be learned in depth in successive lives, i.e., reincarnation.

Allan Kardec explains:

"The justice of multiple human incarnations springs from this principle because in each new existence humans' intelligence becomes more developed and they better comprehend what is good and what is evil. If everything had to be accomplished in a single existence, what would be the fate of the many millions who die every day in the brutishness of the primitive state or in the darkness of ignorance simply because they were born into a situation that did not enable them to become enlightened?⁷¹⁰ (Question 619)

From this perspective, the idea of a punishing or rewarding God does not coincide with the Spiritist conception of God. You reap what you sow. Individuals and societies build upon their own destiny, for better or worse, and they are fully liable for it. Not alien to the individual development, family and social needs also play a key role in each process.

Further, Spiritism postulates that whoever meets the necessary requirements of balance may choose, before incarnation, in the extra-physical plan, the objective conditions for their existence on this planet, namely, their family, social, economic and geographical environment, among others, for their specific learning.

In the third and last part of The Spirits' Book, Kardec elaborated on the moral laws that govern, in a natural, orderly manner, the existential process of humans as developing spirits.

This chapter provides the Spiritist idea of evolution and the relationship of these laws with the individual and collective progress of humankind. This analysis cannot discard the aid offered by the spirits to the incarnated as they go along their existential path. Spiritism teaches us that spirits have a great influence on the incarnated, much more than we can imagine, without trespassing on free will.

For this to occur, we need to be in mental and moral harmony with them. The quality of such attunement will rely on the positive or negative individual character. To sum up, the kind of influence received by us will depend on our emotions and feelings.

This subject matter is good for a reflection on prayer or thoughts addressed to God or spirits. Spiritism values heartfelt prayer, no matter rituals and modes. It is not prayer intended to change the course of natural law or halt the sequence of causes and effects, but to regain strength when facing existential challenges.

About prayer, Kardec asked the spirits:

"Can the prayers we offer for ourselves modify the nature of our trials and change their course?

And they responded:

"... Prayer attracts good spirits who give you strength to courageously endure your trials; thus, they seem less difficult to you. As we have already stated, prayer is never useless when offered rightly, because it provides strength, which in itself is a good result. Heaven helps those who help themselves – you know this. Besides, God could not change the workings of nature to suit the taste of each and every individual, since what may be a great evil from your narrow point of view and for your ephemeral life is often a great good within the general order of the universe."¹⁰ (p. 234)

DID YOU KNOW?

While acknowledging that "the inferior nature of their faculties makes it impossible for human beings to fathom God's innermost nature," Allan Kardec made a philosophical exercise to imagine God's indispensable attributes. As commented by Kardec, "God is eternal. If God had had a beginning, then either God would have had to have sprung from nothing or would have had to have been created by a being that existed previously. (...) God is immutable. If God were subject to change, then the laws that govern the universe would have no stability. God is immaterial. This means that God's nature differs from everything we call matter (...). God is one. If there were several gods, then there would be no unity of design or power in the organization of the universe. God is all-powerful because God is one. (...) God is supremely just and good. The providential wisdom in the divine laws is revealed in the smallest things as well as in the largest..." + (Question 13)¹⁰

4 GOD, SPIRIT AND MATTER

It must be said that, despite the importance of the subject, the object of study of Spiritism is not God, but the spirits and their relationship with the corporeal world.

Allan Kardec defined it this way in his book, *What is Spiritism?*

"Spiritism is at the same time, a science of observation and a philosophical doctrine. As a practical science, it consists of relationships that that can be established with the spirits; as philosophy, it includes all the moral consequences resulting from such relationships. It can be defined



as follows: 'Spiritism is a science that deals with Nature, origin and destiny of spirits, as well as their relationship with the corporeal world.'^{"17} (p. 10)

Hence, Allan Kardec did not define Spiritism as a religion, as opposed to the common knowledge elsewhere in the world. Instead, Kardec labelled Spiritism as "*a science of observation and a philosophical doctrine*."¹⁷

The primary goal of this science of observation is to study mediumship – a natural event that should be subject to rigorous observation. From that, Spiritism finds the survival of spirits after death and the ensuing possibility of communication with the terrestrial world by means of persons with special faculties, called mediums.

For a successful communication with spirits, some conditions need to be satisfied, namely: harmonious environment, serious intentions and a group with theoretical knowledge about the wide variety of potential occurrences in the meetings. Of course, a person with proper mediumship faculties should be present, as well as spirits willing to communicate.

As *philosophical doctrine*, Spiritism, from the empirical observation of the soul's survival after death, offers a rational world view of life, destiny, ethics and the purposes of the being.

For Spiritism, there are two fundamental, structural components in the universe –spirit and matter. And, on top of all that exists, God.

In Kardec's words:

"One obvious fact dominates all theories: we see matter, which is not intelligent, and we see an intelligent principle that is independent of matter; nonetheless, the origin of and connection between these two are unknown to us. Whether they have a common origin and necessary points of contact between them, and whether intelligence has its own independent existence or is only a property or effect, as some claim, or even whether it is an emanation of the Divinity – this is all unknown to us. Matter and intelligence are distinct, as far as we are concerned; thus, we regard them as being two principles comprising the universe. Above these, however, we see an intelligence dominating and governing all others, and it differs from them due to its essential attributes: it is this supreme intelligence that we call God."¹⁰ (Ouestion 28)

Life emerges from the union of spirit and matter. Matter is a tool for the spiritual evolution and development in the course of multiple reincarnations. For Spiritism, matter is neither an enemy nor a tomb for the soul. Nor should matter be denied or restrained in favor of the spirit's release. For this reason, the incarnated must be aware of the importance of their material body to fulfill their evolutionary destiny, and therefore, take care of and maintain it in the best possible conditions.

Under the Spiritist conception, spirits are created simple and ignorant by God, in an unknown cosmic past and, by joining with matter, progress up to the status of pure spirits, with no more need to incarnate in a material body.

During this journey, spirits get to take care of their individual progress, but they also play a role in collective progress.

Therefore, the purpose of incarnation is to learn by experience. All the necessary stages must be completed for a great spiritual development.

Many incarnation experiences are necessary to reach a degree of individual, collective and cosmic conscience, allowing spirits to be responsible for their own development and supportive with the development of social groups on this planet and all the worlds spread over the infinite.

José Herculano Pires summarizes in a beautiful philosophical prose on the grandiosity of divine creation the formation of beings with God as the supreme origin.

DID YOU KNOW?

Kardec asked in The Spirits' Book, "What is spirit." And the spirits responded: "*The intelligence principle of the universe*."

Additionally, question 79 specifies that "Spirits are individualizations of the intelligent principle."¹⁰

"God is the supreme intelligence, the cosmic conscience from which everything is derived and which controls everything. Only he is supernatural, overlapping all Nature. He is the sole unit of the Pythagorean conception that touches the ineffable. Such is his transcendent aspect. But Pythagoras speaks about a thrill of the unit that unleashed the decade, generating the universe.

Thus, we have the immanent aspect of God, mirrored in his creation and linked to it, becoming concomitantly its soul and law. In this way, the supernatural turns into natural. The cosmic conscience impregnates the cosmos and imprints it the infinite scheme of its designs. Leibniz developed the theory of monades to explain philosophically the creation process. Monads would be infinitesimal particles of the divine thought, which, like seeds, carry the secret plan of what will be created. The dynamic of invisible monades form the natural kingdoms – mineral, plant, human, spiritual.⁽¹⁸ (p. 16-17)
Allan Kardec surmised on the purpose of reincarnation:

"The action of corporeal beings is necessary for the evolution of the universe, but out of divine wisdom God has willed that in this same action they might have a means of progressing and drawing near to God. Thus, through an admirable law of divine providence, everything is connected and everything in nature is in solidarity."¹⁰ (Question 132)

In the early 21st century, with quantum mechanics turning 100 years, a new generation of scientists has drawn attention to new concepts of reality, prompting us to revise our understanding of the world.

In the opinion of Brazilian physicist and Spiritist Moacir Costa,

"Changes of paradigm in physics lead to novelties. Matter loses its substantiality and the components of the universe become energy and intention."¹⁹ (p. 13. The Spirit's Era)

The new physics has unraveled the composition of matter and destroyed an old paradigm. Physicists affirm today that matter is essentially energy. Add to this a no less relevant component – the involvement of conscience (intention) in the process of evolution.

DID YOU KNOW?

Quantum mechanics is the field of physics that explains the behavior of multiple events occurring at molecular, atomic and nuclear levels.

See full article by Rafael Heller Brock in https://brasilescola.uol.com.br/o-que-e/fisica/oque-e-fisica-quantica.htm²⁰

This ground-breaking vision could transform human thinking with a new approach to God as "the supreme intelligence and first cause of all things."

Bruce Lipton, Ph. D., well-known authority worldwide, Professor of Cell Biology at the University of Wisconsin, and the author of *The Biology of Belief*, affirms:

"I realized that quantum mechanics is very important for biology... Physics, after all, is the basis of all sciences, even though we biologists rely on the oldfashioned Newtonian idea of how the world works. We stick to Newton's physical world and ignore Einstein's invisible, quantum world, in which matter is actually



composed of energy and in which there are no absolutes. From the atomic point of view, matter

does not even exist exactly; it just has a tendency to exist. All my certainties about biology and physics had been shattered!"²¹ (p. 31)

And he moves forward.

"The quantum perspective reveals that the Universe is an integration of interdependent energy fields that are embedded in a complicated web of interactions."²¹ (p. 31)

This new perspective that deserves to be explored in depth has been warranted by numerous world-class scientists. It is an excellent opportunity to understand how the will influences on matter and. consequently, how important is to develop the moral conscience.

Up to the present, we did know the way intuitively; now, sciences attest to it. We have in our hands the key to opening a door of new alternatives for a deeper knowledge of beings, generally speaking, and, particularly, the human being.

Thus, we get to understand, for instance, that, same as bad habits make our physical body sick, new and good intentions leading to a change of habits can remedy any problems and restore health.

The old resource of meditation could be a useful tool to soothe a mind saturated with negative emotions, leading it to a new generation of healthy habits and thoughts.

Therefore, we have the power to become an architect of our own physical and mental good health. According to Spiritist physicist Moacir Costa, in this *world of intentions*, the will, which is a faculty of the spirit, acts on matter, which is essentially energy.

Furthermore, quantum mechanics points to the significance of the observer's awareness in the production of atomic events. For this reason, Moacir Costa postulates that the universe might be the product of a higher conscience.

"In quantum mechanics, the observer is someone apart from the phenomenon intended to be described. It is a component alien to the phenomenon and, since phenomena are, in this old consideration, independent and absolute, it is possible, from their observation, to set up accurate, final laws. From relativity, it is established that there is not a phenomenon per se. In other words: every phenomenon depends on the observer and its conditions determine the related findings. Quantum mechanics demonstrated the changing behavior of the particles under observation. And, crucially, we do know that an electron sometimes appears like a wave, and sometimes looks like a particle. What is the cause of such diverse behavior? Awesome,



Moacir Costa de Araújo Lima

Brazilian physicist, university professor and international speaker. He is the author of multiple books on the issue of sciences and spirituality.

the observer's awareness. Then, we move from a separate, independent observer to a necessary observer to characterize the phenomenon, and, from that, to an observer who creates the phenomenon – the co-creating observer. John Wheeler has proposed to replace the term "observer" with "participant." We wonder if this high sensitiveness of the physical world to the action of the fields of conscience is just another firm indication of the universe as the product of a higher conscience."¹⁹ (p. 24-25)

Granting that all in the universe is basically energy, it is easier to understand the possibility of contacting spirits who are in a plane of less dense matter, which is hard to perceive by our gross senses.

When our psychic, spiritual energy vibrates at a proper level, it is possible to contact by mere affinity the spirits who reside in the extra-physical world. Next, conditions permitting, we could gain access, ultimately with their help, to spirits of a higher level, stepping up to the highest possible spheres of intellectual and moral knowledge.

Moreover, a communication flow could be described in the inverse sense of this trajectory.

From the supreme intelligence, in accordance with universal laws, spirits of different levels could interact one another to help accomplish the most suitable plans for evolution.

Amit Goswami, Ph.D., Professor of Quantum Mechanics with the University of Oregon, affirms in his book God is not dead, the following:

"One of the keys to developing a science with real solutions to human problems is to realize that what we experience as matter is only one important



Amit Goswami

Ph.D., Professor of Quantum Mechanics with the University of Oregon.

domain among many domains of quantum possibilities of consciousness: the domain we experience through our senses."22 (p. 43)

The works by Rupert Sheldrake (1981), Roger Penrose (1989) and Amit Goswami (1999 y 2001) have established that sentiments, thoughts and intuition, respectively, cannot be reduced to the material movement and belong to independent domains of consciousness.

Such studies lead to hypotheses that go beyond the materialistic, atheist paradigm, the visible, concrete universe captured by the senses.

They make us think over the possibility of the existence of a hidden, higher intention, will or consciousness which coordinates cosmic processes and generates the being, from the invisible to the visible.

DID YOU KNOW?

English physicist James Jean premises that "The universe looks more and more like a great thought rather than a great machine."²³ (p. 21)

5 LOVE, JUSTICE AND NATURAL EVOLUTION

The first subject matter to be elaborated in this chapter has to do with God's love for his creatures. Traditional religions, particularly Christianity, have disseminated the idea expressed in the Gospel of Apostle John, which affirms that God is love, despite the apparent contradictions with such statement that can be found all over the world.

The Spiritist theory does not take issue with this idea, yet proposes the existence of a natural law that governs the whole universe, whereby human beings are individually responsible for their own and subject to the consequences of their actions, to the extent of their comprehension of what is good and what is evil in terms of ethical conduct.

DID YOU KNOW?

When Pope Benedict XVI visited the former concentration camp in Auschwitz, Poland, he exclaimed: "In a place like this, words fail; in the end, there can only be a dread silence – a silence which is itself a heartfelt cry to God: Why, Lord, did you remain silent? How could you tolerate all this? Where was God in those days? Why was he silent? How could he permit this endless slaughter, this triumph of evil?" Source: O Globo, 29 May 2006, O Mundo, Graça Magalhaes Ruether.²⁴

For some, such Spiritist conception could sound rather cold and distant, because, apparently, God detaches himself from humans, leaving them in the lurch.

Nevertheless, in the Spiritist view, God's love –an expression used by us as a mere metaphor– can be found in the very structure of the being.

In observing the reality, material and spiritual realms interact with a view to reaching an ultimate goal: gradual evolution, for immortal spirits to arrive at their wholeness and happiness.

Such happiness will be conquered in the course of time, as part of a complex process of evolutionary fight, through successive reincarnations. Human beings, along their journey, might be relatively happy while upgrading their intellectual and moral attributes.

In other words, the universe is structured in such a way that the evolutionary process of each of us will unavoidably result in victory.

It is just a question of time for us to reach higher evolutionary stages.

From the status of spirits created simple and ignorant, necessarily subject to the ups and downs of the material life, one fine day we will achieve the status of pure, happy spirits, full in terms of intellectual and moral development.

Jaci Régis suggests that God's love is precisely the offering of opportunities for spirits, in the course of time, to find their happiness and wholeness. The Brazilian Spiritist thinker proposes a new way of thinking about God's action on the destiny of human beings.

"Believers wonder, ¿Where is the almighty God who fails to eliminate the evil, punish offenders and save or heal, releasing us from death? Deception comes from the so-called God's love... A new way of thinking of God makes us to realize that the dynamics of life, wherever manifested, stands out in the creation of environments, opportunity, selection and overcoming. We could query why things are this way. However, they are this way. All the statements made by churches refer to God's love for individuals; his mercy and extreme care of people. As a matter of fact, the universe revolves around love, in the sense of providing the means and ways of granting the human spirits access to their inner balance and in their relationship with others, that is, to be happy..."¹⁶ (p. 36-37)



A new way of thinking – God, man and world -Brazilian edition

God's love is mirrored in the momentum for permanent progress. In this regard, there is no need to speak about eternal punishment. Even the creatures with serious moral and intellectual handicaps have inside the germ of perfection, happiness and integrity. There will be always a new chance of going back to progress in the evolutionary path.

This principle is valid for all, even for those spirits who represent on this planet true archetypes of evil, regarded as the paradigm of mischievous persons, who have caused, while incarnated, great havoc for humankind. Out of immense love, God neither punishes nor condemns. He is keenly aware, in his wisdom, of the existential processes of creatures who, widely diverse as they are, could be placed in different levels of intellectual and moral development.

The timeframe of such process can hardly be determined; certainly, though, it will take many lives.

The idea of moral consciousness, as a faculty of intelligent individuals, is the key to understand the evolution of human beings.

Animals have instinct, which is useful for them to live their lives. Because of their instinct, they know about breastfeeding when they are small and mating in adult life.

In his book, *The ignored presence* of God, Dr. Viktor Frankl, said:

"Animal instinct, for instance, tends to something general and universal – They act only generally, which means it is necessarily schematic. In fact, animals, depending on their individual instinct, react to the signals of their environment within a rigid scheme, fixed once and forever for all individuals."²⁵ (p. 35)



The ignored presence of God Viktor Frankl.

Humans are the only beings in the animal kingdom who, besides the instinct, are aware of their individuality; the only ones able to recognize themselves as different from others, willing and determined to make their own decisions.

There is among humans a notion of individual consciousness, making them different and allowing them to choose their own way, even against their instinct.

Different as they are from other beings in the animal kingdom, humans can start an individual process of evolution in an absolute unique way, for they do not need to obey and being guided like herd. They are able to make their own decisions and choose their own way.

Therefore, consciousness evolves with the experiences gathered in innumerable corporeal lives, acquiring more and more ability to make proper decisions.

At any time in this evolution, humans manage to tune into what Frankl terms as the eternal law or moral law, similar to the *natural law* of Spiritism.

Interestingly, how can humans get access to such knowledge still hidden in their innermost consciousness and the result of multiple reincarnations? Through intuition it is possible to get access to this source of evolutionary resources. Intuition helps individuals, in the process of self-knowledge, tap into higher stages of comprehension, which favors them in the direction of overcoming their existential challenges with deeper wisdom.

God's love is always present, waiting for individuals to take the way towards a better version of themselves, supported on the evolution of their consciousness.

The second important reflection in this chapter refers to the divine justice. In this regard, we must not forget the existence of multiple, various factors which influence people's lives.

Besides spiritual factors stemming from individual development, all human beings are under genetic, social, environmental and economic influences.

Some Spiritist try to interpret the divine justice verbatim and mechanically, by making an inflexible analogy with the law of retaliation, expressed in the ancient formula of *an eye for an eye*, a tooth for a tooth. They apply this principle in the context of successive lives.

In this way, they attempt to give all human troubles a spiritual origin, based on past reincarnations.

Argentinean Spiritist thinker Manuel Porteiro

addressed the interpretation made by some Spiritist of socioeconomic matters, especially concerning the status of individuals as rich or poor.

In Porteiro's opinion, such interpretation is misleading – "a false concept of the Spiritist law of causality."

"Advocates of this false concept of the Spiritist law of causality affirm, based upon mere hypotheses, that the individual socioeconomic situation is predetermined by similar situations, but the other way around. That is, advantageous socioeconomic conditions, properly or improperly acquired in this life, are the compensation of inferior realities in previous lives, and that the inferior socioeconomic conditions in the present life are the result of some other advantageous conditions, poorly used in previous lives. Hence, this world is, for some, a place of redemption, and for some others, a place of trial. And God subjects them to it, entrusting them with wealth and advantageous position for them to make good use of them with their peers. Similarly, for this reason, socioeconomic inequality, a society founded on crimes and exploitation, of exploited classes, of despots and big fish, of miserable and starving people is, within this concept, a requisite condition for the spiritual progress. Accordingly, every effort to remove such system is contrary to divine laws, particularly, the law of causality."²⁶ (p. 151)



Manuel S. Porteiro (1881-1936)

Argentinean Spiritist thinker, expresident of the Argentinean Spiritist Confederation (CEA), the founder of Spiritist psychology.

Porteiro warned that, if this reasoning were to be borne in mind, the world must be accepted as such, because all that exists would be God's will. Consequently, we should not try to change either the world or the social reality. We agree with Porteiro in the sense that such linear reasoning is erroneous, turning the doctrine of successive lives into a conformist ideology which invites the acceptance of global evils with resignation.

The same questionable reasoning is used in an attempt at justifying, in a deterministic manner, all current problems as a necessary consequence of the deeds in previous lives.

A birth defect, for instance, is explained by some Spiritist as ultimately originated in previous lives. However, it is not possible to ignore that problems like

DID YOU KNOW?

Allan Kardec asked the spirits, "Is the inequality of social conditions a law of nature?" And they replied, "No, it is the work of humankind, not of God."10 (Question 806)

this were likely caused under current circumstances, such as poor health care in a hospital, medical neglect, parental lack of responsibility, accidents, traumas due to malformation of the fetus, and so on.

Naturally, from the Spiritist view, some ordeals are likely the aftermath of previous lives. Nonetheless, not all the problems in present life may be attributed to hypothetical causes from previous lives. This would be oversimplification of the complex reality, preventing us from surpassing our average chances of knowledge in each case.

At the bottom of these fatalist arguments lays the old idea of a punishing or rewarding God, now taken to the reincarnation dynamics.

The Spiritist conception, however, teaches us that education is the goal of natural law for the spirits to grow and develop.

There are multiple ways and means for this purpose, apart from those of the scared and limited human imagination.

According to Venezuelan Spiritist thinker Jon Aizpúrua:

"Some have been accustomed to present the spiritual law of causality in terms of "payment of debts or terrible expiation," within a simplistic criterion inherited from traditional religious cultures. They believe automatically that, when someone suffers it is because he/she inflicted suffering on someone else on the same proportion, thus circumscribing the rhythm of reincarnation to a vicious cycle, ignoring the multiple factors that condition the incarnated beings, in their biological and social dimensions. What could be, then, the purpose of such suffering?

How could someone be benefitted from additional suffering? We need to say loud and clear that we do not reincarnate because of our sins, but just



Jon Aizpúrua

Venezuelan Spiritist thinker, writer, economist, clinical psychologist, university professor and international speaker. Former president of the International Spiritist Association (CEPA). because we live, and we do not reincarnate to repeat the past, but to overcome it!"²³ (p. 231)

Finally, the third fundamental question in this chapter poses a reflection on the thesis of creationism and evolution of species.

The Spiritist idea of God is not contrary to the theory of the biological evolution of species advocated by Darwin.

Brazilian Spiritist thinker Dora Incontri gives a clear opinion for this matter.

"Evolution of species is a fact. We have fossil records of prehistorian animals, humans, actually more physically primitive than modern humans. Just visit a good museum of natural history to learn that the story of Adam and Eve is a symbolic tale, with multiple and rich meanings, except for a literal meaning."²⁷ (p. 75)



Dora Incontri

Brazilian Spiritist thinker, journalist, teacher and writer.

The idea of humans coming from Adam; that Eva was created from one of Adam's ribs, and that God formed the world in six days, as if by magic, runs counter to the scientific knowledge.

The Bible's mythological conception does not work anymore for the modern men and women in the 21st century, who appreciate scientific findings.

Like Galileo, Darwin shifted the view that humans had about themselves.

We wonder, these scientific findings necessarily exclude the idea of God, as a necessary cause of the contingent reality?

Again, Dora Incontri, muses over this topic.

"The fact that scientific research points to data on the biological evolution of species and puts forward hypotheses about humans evolving from lower forms does not necessarily exclude the idea of God. Sure enough, it could end up with a narrow conception of God as a magic little deity, walking about the gardens of Eden, who decided to create Adam out of dust and Eva from one of Adam's ribs."²⁷ (p. 76).

Finally, justice must be done to a great scientist of the 19th century, who, like Darwin, arrived at same conclusions on evolution.

DID YOU KNOW?

Charles Robert Darwin was an important naturalist, born on 12 February 1809, in Shrewsbury, England. From a very young age, this researcher showed his love for science, working on his collections and running experiments together with his brother in a chemistry laboratory.

Darwin came to be recognized for his work, *On the Origin of Species*, a contribution to understanding the evolution and presently regarded as one of the most influential scholarly books in history. Vanessa Sardinha dos Santos.

https://brasilescola.uol.com.br/biologia/charlesdarwin.htm²⁸ (full article)

His name was Alfred Russel Wallace, as important as Darwin, yet forgotten by most researchers, perhaps because he made a nonmaterialistic choice. This made Dora Incontri suspect a pact of silence on Wallace's key role in the history of science.

"The English scientist, the author of multiple works, from books on socialism, agriculture, philosophy, spirituality, to natural history and biology (...) travelled, like Darwin, all over the world, conducting research into plants and wildlife in the continents, and he arrived at the theory of evolution concurrently with Darwin. Wallace forwarded, however, the findings of his research to his colleague, who was in England, while he was still travelling. Charles Darwin was taken by surprise when seeing years of lost work because someone else had stricken same result as he. Facing the ethical conundrum caused by multiple letters written by Darwin, his fellows opted to deliver both of the works, Wallace's and Darwin's. to the Academy at the same time. Why, then, all of us are familiar with Darwin and almost nobody has learned about Wallace? Because Darwin opted for atheism, whereas Wallace did not release God from a world in the process of evolution. Later, he devoted himself to the study of the so-called psychic phenomena and became a spiritualist. Then, the prejudice in relation to his name went deeper."27 (p. 76-77).

Dora Incontri's suggests that Wallace was displaced owing to his spiritualist beliefs and convictions. If true, this thesis could be just another example of the reluctance to link science with religious matters, in a clear Kantian reference.

5 JESUS: AN ADMIRABLE MASTER

No reference to the issue of God in the Jewish-Christian culture is possible without reflecting on the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth, of great relevance also for the Spiritist.

The first remark to be taken into account in this context is that, for Christianity, Jesus is God incarnated on planet Earth.

Apostle John made it clear:

"From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. (...) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."⁵ (p. 64) Therefore, Jesus is divinized in Christianity, becoming God himself, going down in history for the salvation of human beings.

By comparing the Christian ideas on divinity with those of stoic philosophers, Luc Ferry says:

"For Christians, the divine has changed its meaning. It is no more an impersonal structure. To the contrary, it is an individual, Jesus, the God-man. An enormous change in the meaning which has led Europeans on a road completely different from the way taken by the Greeks. In his Gospel, John urges us to believe that the incarnated word, the divine as such, does not more designate the rational, harmonious structure of cosmos, the universal order as such, but a simple human being."⁵ (pp. 64-65)

More than two thousand years of divinization of Jesus as Christ have elapsed in the Western history, and this still occurs in Christian churches.

Therefore, as of today, within the Jewish-Christian culture, believers regard, understand and feel Jesus like a God, instead of a notable human, a spirit of the highest intellectual and moral rank, who came to this world to teach ethical and spiritual values.

In his well-known prayer, Jesus identifies himself as our brother, when saying "Our Father."

DID YOU KNOW?

For the orthodox Catholic Church, the heir of primitive Christianity, Jesus is one of the three distinct persons who share the essence of God – God, the father and creator, the son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Cláudio Fernandes *https://brasilescola.uol.com.br/historiag/arianismo-heresia-ario.htm*²⁹ (full article)

For Spiritism, since its foundation by Allan Kardec, Jesus is the true archetype of proper behavior and spirituality, not God incarnated on Earth.

After more than one century of studies on the historical Jesus and the contribution of Spiritism to the understanding of this subject matter, it is possible to comprehend in essential terms that Jesus' message was anti-clerical, advocating to release humans from religions. Concurrently, Jesus urged humans to individual development.

Jesus of Nazareth talked about the predominance of spirits over matter and taught that there was no need to build stone temples. All of us have our own temple inside, and we are individually responsible for our own destiny. Years passed by and Jesus became a legend, a myth. Thousands of stories have been told about his life. However, the substance of his message is profound and crystal clear – Only through love we can find the meaning of life.

The beautiful and true remarks by Amalia Domingo y Soler, a Spanish Spiritist who superbly portrayed Jesus' thinking, show the Spiritist view in this connection:

"God must be worshiped by loving and doing the good. For him, there is no need of temples or priests. The best altar is the heart of the virtuous being. The best worship is touchless morals. God does not require men to profess a certain religion, but to be humble and, above all, love others as much as they love themselves."²³ (p. 20)

As usual in human history, paradoxical and contradictory, magnificent, luxurious temples have been erected in Jesus' name. Many people claimed to be his proxies on Earth and the biggest and most powerful religious structure developed.

On the pretext of the evangelization of peoples, Jesus' name was imposed violently, in fire and sword, and holy wars were staged, very far away from his teachings. Brazilian Spiritist thinker Milton Medran explains why Spiritism has chosen Jesus as the guide and model for humankind.

"Because of the way it was introduced into the historical process in the Christian world and since its message was addressed to the West, it is natural that Spiritism took as the benchmark of behavior the message of Jesus of Nazareth, further designated by spirits as "model and guide of humankind." This demonstrates how important Jesus is for Spiritism. His clear message, centered on love and service to others, is the core of the Spiritist morality, derived exactly from those values to substantiate, philosophically, than men, far from such values and, therefore, far from the natural law, will create suffering on their own."³⁰ (p. 105)



Milton Rubens Medran Moreira

Brazilian Spiritist thinker, writer, attorney at law, journalist, international speaker, former president of the International Spiritist Association (CEPA). Jesus was a man, an extremely advanced incarnated spirit, a true master of life, an admirable master.

As any human being, Jesus was and continues being, for he still exists somewhere in the universe, subject to natural laws.

For Spiritism, the spirit incarnated in Jesus was created simple and ignorant, subsequently making progress in successive reincarnations. He evolved through a way of successes and failures to a certain development moment, two thousand years ago. Then, he came to planet Earth to teach love and immortality of the soul with his doctrine and living example.

Jesus was not interested in power or money. Nor was he interested in creating another religion. Jesus was a true revolutionary of ideas, thinking, sentiments, and spirituality. He was far away from Pharisaism of his time and nowadays.

Brazilian Spiritist thinker Nícia Cunha offers an interesting insight into Jesus' and Kardec's proposals, frequently misunderstood.

"Neither Jesus nor Kardec created any religion. They disseminated ideas, recommended moral integrity and inner connection with the Creator. Religions were invented by their mistaken followers on behalf of both of them (Jesus and Kardec) and in the name of God. No proxy. (...) Men make a mistake every time they speak and give orders in the name of God. The science of evolution, much beholden by the Spiritist, has demonstrated that God just wants men to live, learn, improve and follow the normal path of experiences, slowly but surely, for centuries, up to higher stages of knowledge and spiritual elevation. No Salvationism is to release you from this trajectory, for you were born safe and destined to relative perfection and happiness."³⁰ (p. 108)

For his part, José Herculano Pires opines that a gap spanned between Jesus and Christianity. Jesus became a myth, lost his human features. A god was made of him.

Christianity, in its diverse historical milestones, frequently contradicted its clear message of love.

"There is an abyss between Jesus Christ and Christianity, as big as the abyss between Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mariah, born in Nazareth, Galilea, and Jesus Christ, born into the Virgin's constellation, in the city of King David, in Bethlehem, province of Judaea, according to the Hebrew myth of the Messiah. For this



Overview of Christianity by José Herculano Pires. Brazilian edition.

reason, the Christian civilization, born into blood and nurtured with blood, has not the spirit of Jesus, but the mythological body of Jesus Christ, dead and bloodless. For this reason, the High father set in Paris the difference between the Christianity of Jesus and the Christianity of priests."³¹ (p. 5)

For these and other considerations, we deem it necessary finding a new view of Jesus of Nazareth, a truly incarnated higher spirit, like many others, misunderstood. Muhammad, Confucius, Lao Tse or Siddhartha Gautama faced a similar destiny.

In the 19th century, in the middle of positive science, a less mystical, rather scientific, man disentangled the mechanism of communication with spirits. That man was Allan Kardec.

The message of those intelligent beings was akin to Jesus' lessons, because they talked about the spirit's transcendence beyond the physical context and the need to develop moral consciousness for a new appraisal of universal love.

Same as Jesus, the spirits said that human beings are the owners of their destiny; that the quest of meaning is a personal matter, and that nobody needs to be saved, for nobody has been condemned. Such similarity and the influence of Christianity in his historical context moved Kardec, a scientist of his own, to make a comparison and draw conclusions.

Kardec was startled to prove that Jesus' lessons could be deciphered otherwise under the spirits' doctrine, and he wrote *The Gospel according to Spiritism.* In this book, Kardec offered an interesting and, in our opinion, outperforming view of the Gospel.

Given the importance afforded by Kardec to the figure of Jesus and his interpretation of the Gospel, some disputes have arisen among the Spiritist.

Seemingly, some have mixed up such interpretation of the Gospel with the core book of Spiritism, which is The Spirits' Book.

Furthermore, some people even think that Jesus was a non-binary fluidic person in this plan, sort of spiritual manifestation, an existential simulation. Some others think that Spiritism could be combined with Christianity or other religions.

Those of us, identified with the genuinely Kardecist Spiritism, do not concur with, yet respect, this approach. We are certain that all the means of searching the truth are convergent. For the authors of this work, the fundamental book of the Spiritist philosophy is The Spirits' Book. Meanwhile, *The Gospel according to Spiritism* is a supplementary work, an integral part of the collection of the books authored by Allan Kardec.

We admire Jesus as a man, what he represents as the archetype of human beings, and we look forward to freeing ourselves from the burden of individualism and imposition.

We expect to be eventually like him, a man of steadfast ideas and lovely actions, supportive of his peers, determined to devote his life to his ideals, capable of understanding his and others' limitations.

We would like to have a universal way of thinking, like him, which does not assess, or adjudicates or condemns. We are certain that all of us form part of the same project and each of us are in a particular moment of our own evolution.

7 FOR A RENEWED CONCEPTION OF GOD

The idea of God has been much abused by religions through the ages. Excruciating pain has been inflicted in the name of God.

Certainly, Spiritism does not want these conflicts to be reedited. The world is overly tired of crusades, inquisitions and holy wars.

Spiritist respect freedom of conscience and belief. Again, atheism deserves respect. Rather than trusting or not in God, it is the deeds what shape moral dignity. Indeed, we cannot ignore that many atheists have much more spirituality than most religious persons, understood, in essential terms, as respect and appreciation for the entire life.

DID YOU KNOW?

For some atheists, the non-existence of divinities is not limited to the mere spectre of doubting their presence. As well as not believing in God, many atheists argue that it is possible - by means of rationally constituted arguments - to prove the idea that gods and their spiritual reality do not support the creation of the world in which we live. Rainer Sousa.

https://brasilescola.uol.com.br/religiao/ateismo.htm³²

Nevertheless, without wishing to exhaust the issue or impose any belief, Spiritism advocates the existence of God. There is, for Spiritism, an unseen supreme intelligence that governs with wisdom the constituent elements of the universe – from the spirit to matter, from the subtlest to the rudest thing. From the Spiritist view, the universe is not a product of chance.

To the mind of Léon Denis,

"Materialism explains the formation of the world through the blind dance and the fortuitous approximation of atoms. But, has it ever been seen that throwing the alphabet letters at random can produce a poem? And what a poem is that of universal life! Has it ever been seen, somehow, that an amalgam of materials is able to produce, on its own, a building of stunning proportions, or



Léon Denis (1846-1927)

French Spiritist thinker; the author of multiple works; regarded as the "apostle of Spiritism."

a machinery with numerous, complicated wheels? Matter cannot do anything on its own. Unconscious and blind, atoms could not bring to an end. The world harmony can be explained only through the intervention of a will. It is due to the action of forces over matter, due to the existence of wise and profound laws, that such will is manifested in the order of the universe."⁸ (p. 98)

Spiritism takes distance from the anthropomorphic idea of God, typical of religions, as a severe judge who condemns or absolves humans after death.

In fact, the general idea of God is that of a mighty lord, a despot, before whom humans are just sinners awaiting a humiliating salvation.

Spiritism submits the thesis of God being manifested in the universe through the mechanisms of natural law, which rule both over the physical world, of Nature, and the moral world, of the immortal spirits.

In the moral aspect, insofar as human beings achieve ethical awareness and free will in their evolutionary process, they take on responsibility for their relative happiness or unhappiness. Then, they are accountable for their own destiny, exercising their autonomy to pave their own evolutionary path.

When the lights of consciousness, freedom and responsibility shine on the human spirit, it is no more possible attributing to God, or the devil, or the spirits, or the angels or anybody else their own conditions of balance or imbalance, happiness or unhappiness.

According to Jon Aizpúrua:

"The notion of personal liability derived from all our actions is among the most transcendent lessons of the Spiritist doctrine. For this reason, the beings from outer space remember it continuously in their enlightening messages. Humans, according to what they do, either forge their freedom or tighten the chains of their moral and social slavery. Every event is linked to previous



The fundamentals of Spiritism - Jon Aizpúrua.
causes and subsequent effects, turning the present into the fruit of the past and the germ of the future. Ontologically, we are at the stage in which we were created, according to the thoughts and behaviors cultivated in our numerous previous lives and, in the future, we will be in the stage according to the evolutionary degree we can accomplish."²³ (p. 229)

The natural law created by God offers us every day, every month, every year, every century, every life on planet Earth or in other worlds, the opportunity to grow, develop, repair existential roads and achieve happiness.

Higher stages are accomplished with our conscious and patient endeavors. Therefore, Spiritism encourages us to change our idea of God.

God is no more a terrible, serious, severe and discretionary being who condemns some and saves others in this valley of tears, but affords all of us the everlasting opportunity to be happy.

Thus, for Spiritism, there is a profound sense, a hidden, impersonal, wise, necessary, eternal, causal, teleological raison d'être which carries a process, which even admits chance and error while building and developing the being; it is the manifestation of spirit and matter towards perfection. It is a positive guide that signals the eternal movement of matter and the realization of the immortal spirit, developing, in the course of time and space, across successive reincarnations, innate potentials in terms of love, knowledge, virtue and happiness.

8 AN INCOMPLETE ENDEAVOUR

Finally, it is necessary to reaffirm the complexity of dealing with the subject of God, both from the point of view of language and in relation to the possibilities of human knowledge.

Moreover, the ideological conditioning of the approach to the subject is unavoidable.

From the point of view of language, it is clear that to speak of God is to speak of what human beings think about this subject.

Human beings can only talk about God with human comparisons and references.

Interestingly, even in Allan Kardec's work, which displays advances for a new conception of God, there

are several passages with wording that attributes human features to divinity.

That is to say, even in the books of Spiritist philosophy we find quotations with anthropomorphic language.

Furthermore, human beings interpret nature, being and reality, from their organic condition, through their cerebral equipment, physical senses and rationality, surely conditioned by the notions of time and space.

It is evident, therefore, the human limitation to unveil reality as a whole, mainly in its first causes and ultimate ends.

Finally, in some passages of Allan Kardec's works, the idea of God is very close to the concepts of guilt and punishment of Judeo-Christianity.

It cannot be forgotten that France in the middle of the 19th century, where Spiritism emerged, was a country with a strong Catholic tradition, which certainly had an ideological influence on the Spiritist philosophy.

Nevertheless, the answer to the first question in *The Spirits' Book* opens up the widest possible perspectives for thinking about the subject of God in a deeper way from a philosophical point of view, even opening up perspectives for science.

Unquestionably, this subject is imposed on human reason.

Perhaps we are facing the great philosophical question of all time – Does God exist?

Will we ever be able to answer this question?

Will we ever turn this question into knowledge? In fact, this remains an unfinished business for mankind.

For now, we can say that, for Spiritist, there is a fundamental cause for the existence of the universe that generates physical and metaphysical regions.

A superhuman intelligence, with creative capacity and unimaginable characteristics, precedes, grounds the whole and gives meaning to life.

Spiritist call God this "supreme intelligence, the first cause of all things."

INDICATIONS OF READINGS OF INTEREST

- Deus na natureza, Camille Flammarion
- Deus um delírio, Richard Dawkins
- Dez provas da existência de Deus, seleção de Plinio Junqueira Smith
- O homem em busca de um sentido, Viktor Frankl
- Del reloj a la flor de loto, Ana María Llamazares
- A revolução da consciência, E. Laszlo, S. Grof, P. Russell

INDICATIONS OF SITES OF INTEREST

https://cepainternacional.org/site/pt/ https://kardecpedia.com/ http://www.cpdocespirita.com.br/portal/ https://www.cepabrasil.org.br/portal/

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