Integral Humanism

Gheorghe M. Stefan[1]

Pure thought didn't supersede creative engagement with phenomena as a way of understanding the world twenty years ago, hasn't in the meantime, and won't anytime soon.

Frank Wilczek

... I hope never!

Abstract Integral humanism refers to an ideal human being challenged by an imaginable, perhaps utopian, global world. It is about an integral human being, equally spiritual, imaginative and rational, confronted with the three global networks – the functionally-hierarchical one of states, the concurrent one of corporations and the cooperative one of the civil society – he created in order to survive well balanced within the wholeness of existence. Integral humanism looks like a dream, but, unfortunately seems to be the only solution for the too skilled, tricky and apparent spiritual being who dominates a limited natural environment in a recklessly authoritarian manner, while he is unable to dominate at least his inner and so (maybe too) ``close" natural instincts. Already proposed solutions, stressing by turn on rational or spiritual constructs at the level of the human mind or of the world we live in, proved to be worthless because of their simplicity. We must try a more complex one, maybe will be simpler to apply it.

About the three global nets

We live anchored in three types of networks like weird spiders which, instead of being located at the heart of one net, are positioned at the intersection of three "nets" in a node belonging, hard to explain how, to three different, but very dependent cobwebs. Three nets, with bigger or smaller mesh size, are discarded over every place in this world: the net of states, the corporate net, and the net of the civil society organizations.

The rules used to live together are the rules of the state. The resources of the effective freedom we have are adjusted by the harsh games played by corporations. The level at which individual integration in the community is possible depends on the ability of the civil society to act through its academic, cultural, religious, non-governmental, non-profit, voluntary, club, ... organizations. Any normal individual tends (1) to be citizen of a state to ensure its *safety*, (2) to pursue a gainful

[1] E-mail: gstefan@arh.pub Web page: http://arh.pub.ro/gstefan

activity that strives to produce something useful to others, to ensure its *survival*, and (3) to belong to a club, cultural, sporting or religious association in order to shape its own *identity*.

The democratic state, the free market and the civil society are the three scenes where the show of the world many of us live in is played. Willy-nilly, each of us interacts "simultaneously" with the three scenes, both, as a player and as a spectator.

The balance of the human world depends on a subtle dialectic involving, instead of the classical opposition of two contraries, three performers[2]: the **civil society** that can support the aspiration towards *unity* of the world, the **corporations**, responsible for the *unique* events of our world, and the **state**, providing *uniform* treatment of all citizens. Thus, unity, uniqueness and uniformity can contribute to the balance or to the imbalance of our already troubled world.

What else is the history of mankind than the interaction of three fundamentally different trends that can act more or less convergent or divergent:
- the tendency to regulate, authoritarian, chaotic or democratic, the coexistence of individuals by laws as well as possible caught in forms with very clear meanings in order to shape a simplified world to the level of the systemically organized statal structures
- the tendency to create, to produce and promote freely artifacts, obeying to the legislation and accepting the mechanisms of the market (more or less free)
- the community integration trend in which the individual's identity is shaped within continuously expanded limits.

The helpless *human being* struggled to generate its own *world* for protecting himself against the uncomfortable rest of *existence*. Thus result the three, **only partially organized**, nets used now to ``cover'' any place of our world: the net of *states*, the net of *corporations* and the net of *civil society organizations*. The *rules* to live together are given by the state. The creative *freedom* is exercised inside of the various kinds of corporations. The degree of the spiritual *integration* depends on the ways a big variety of civil society components are organized.

We hope, this process evolves toward the ideal situation when the three global networks become:
- a functionally-hierarchical organized network of states: reflecting the **uniformity** imposed by *rational* rules (see Figure 1 for an example of 4-level hierarchy)
- a concurrent network of corporations: allowing the **uniqueness** of the *imaginary* to act through its three components -- will, intuition, and fantasy -- in order to produce the novelties of our world
- a cooperative network of civil society organizations: witnessing about the deep *spiritual unity* of humanness.

We expect that the integrity of the global world can be achieved only by the self-organizing process involving these three very differently structured nets: a hierarchically organized one, a concurrent one, and a cooperative one. We hope the *order*, the *competition*, and the *cooperation* are able together to well-temper a world no matter how struggling it might be. But, we are not at ease with the current stage of organization of the three mentioned nets because:

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[2] See more on the triadic approach in [Stefan].

- the functionally-hierarchical organized network of states does not yet exists
- the concurrent network of corporations dominates alone our world, at the global level, with an exclusively self-centered organization (generating a lot of undeserved criticisms against the general process of globalization)
- the network of civil society organizations contains a lot of uncooperative entities which sometimes are involved in irrational debates, even fights.
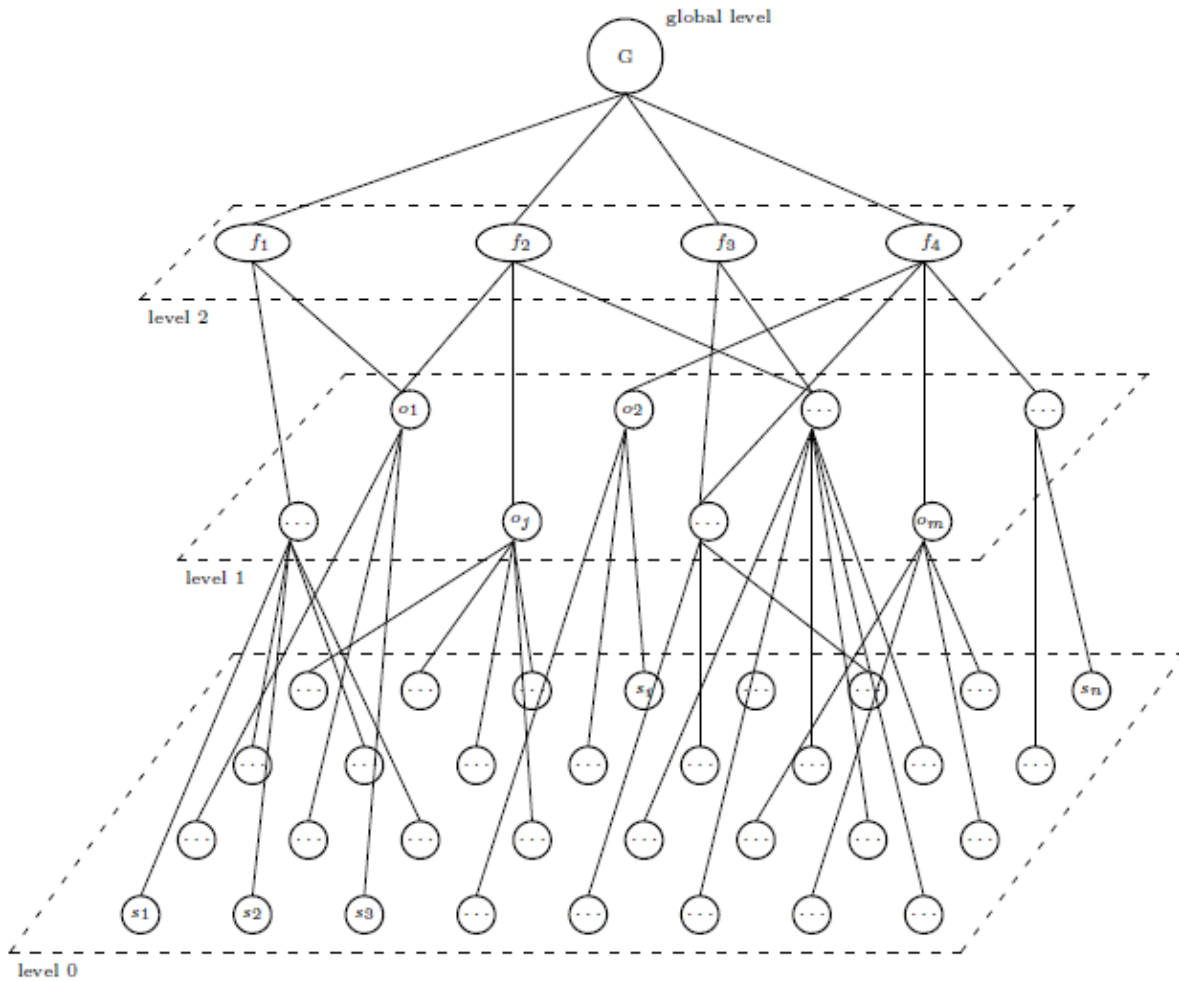

Fig.1 **An example of functional hierarchy of states.** The level 0 contains **all** the states, form s_1 to s_n, while the higher levels are defined according to different functional criteria (m organizations o_j on the first level and 4 organizations f_k on the second level in hierarchy). Each state is **equally** integrated related to each level.

Thus, the global space is now dominated exclusively by the concurrent network of corporations. Corporations are free to do whatever they want, almost undisturbed by state regulations or ethic restrictions. The states and the civil society do not know yet how to act coherently at the global level, while, at the same level, the corporations are very skilled in following their own goals in promoting *insane consumerism*, *destructive mass production* and *unfair speculations*.

The only solution to remove the evil behaviors generated by the unrestricted corporate net domination is to *balance the relation between the three nets*. Indeed, the states net must be able to provide reasonable regulations, while the civil society net must generate the appropriate ethic environment, able to promote a well balanced approach for using the goods provided by the corporate net. This means that both of them must collaborate to reach the advanced stage of organization providing them with the means to balance the behavior of the corporation net. For the states net is a functionally--hierarchical organization, while *for the civil society net it is about an advanced cooperative organization*. The expected collaboration is unfortunately delayed and distorted because of the bad totalitarian relation experienced between state and civil society during the 20th century.

We believe that the global and intercultural humanism will be developed mainly based on the cooperative work of the civil society net, because the human condition is directly promoted in this net, and only indirectly by the other two nets. But, in the same time, the cooperative organization of the civil society net will be possible only based on a mature and well balanced humanistic approach. It is about a sort of *synchronistic* development which supposes the intercultural humanism manifests itself as an **integral humanism**, able to commit all the three main aspects of our human mind: its *structural-formal rationality*, *chaotic imagination* and *phenomenal spirituality*. Thus, the integral humanism will provide the *contents*, the *instruments* and the *environment* for the unrestricted cooperation requested inside the civil society net.

Without a wholesome cooperative network the functionally-hierarchic network is not possible and, consequently, the competitive one of corporations, which is already dangerously active, will continue to provide the bad consequences of an unilateral globalization.

Humanism vs. ``humanisms''

In our Western culture, too much dominated by divergent ideologies, each competing against the others, the term humanism has *several*, more or less different meanings. Introducing the term of **integral humanism**[3] is an attempt to put together almost all of them in a coherent and convergent way, a way which corresponds to the deep unity of the three-part human condition defined by the *rational*, *imaginative* and *spiritual* behavior of our mind. The rationality of ``pure thought'', the ``creative'' activity of imagination and the spiritual involvement with ``phenomena'' are all equally meaningful manifest forms of our mind, and **no one** must be allowed to ``supersede'' the other two[4].

The actual Western ``humanisms'' **point masterly to** the human being, while the proposed integral humanism must **radiate permissively from** the human being (see Figure 2). Indeed, the term *humanism* is associated by turn to different:
- organizations (*British Humanist Association*, *American Humanist Association*, ...)

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[3] The term was also used in the 1960s to designate a sort of political philosophy developed in India as an alternative to both communism and capitalism. Jacques Maritain used also the term arguing against the limitative secular forms of humanism which ignore the spiritual dimension.

[4] See the motto of this essay extracted from [Wilczek], p. 10.

- ideologies (Religious humanism, Secular humanism, Marxist humanism, Existential humanism, Evolutionary humanism, ...)
- historical epochs (Renaissance humanism, Post-modern humanism, ...)
- activities (World Humanist Day, ...)
- cultural areas (German humanism, French humanism, ...)

All these entities *point*, from different ideologies, activities or organizations, to the pour human being, which thus becomes a ``helpless'' target (see Figure 2a). They ``see'' the human being, sometimes oppressing it with divergent viewpoints. Instead, the integral humanism is a human attitude emerging from an ``happy'' integral human being (Figure 2b). In this radiating model, the human being is not haunted by various ``humanisms'', because now the very integral humanistic attitude is the driving force behind a lot of ideologies, organizations or activities.

Fig. 2 ``**Humanisms'' vs. integral humanism. a**. The human being under the pressure of various ``humanisms'' practiced in different humanist activities, by different humanist organizations based on different humanist ideologies. **b**. The human being radiating its integral humanism toward various activities, organizations or ideologies.

The problem we have with the different sources of humanism is that the ``X humanism'' has some contextual and subjective preconditions which can be very different from the preconditions of the ``Y humanism''. Too many times the weight of the human criteria behind a certain humanism are so small that the resulting humanism becomes dangerous for the targeted community. Any humanistic approach must be based almost exclusively on criteria imposed by the human nature, but unfortunately even the big diversity of ``humanisms'' we have, shows us that too many extra-humanistic criteria are involved in the process of shaping the humanistic space.

How can be conceived a secular humanism and a religious humanism for the same human being!? There is no a secular or a religious human being. Both, the secular attitude and the religious one are equally human, and they and many other kinds of attitude belong to a normally developed human being. The secular attitude can be a pure rationalistic one, or belonging to a person living in a bohemian group. Even a religious attitude can be of a pure spiritual believer, of a hypocrite bigot or of a religious organization representative acting like a more or less disciplined clerk. Any human being can be integrally defined only as a weighted composition of all the previous, and many other characteristics.

What happens in one's mind which is taught about the differences between, let us say, the Marxist humanism and the existentialist humanism? Does not matter what is presented as a valid one, the only way to survive such a disruptive experience is to consider both as pseudo-humanistic ideologies designed for, at least partially, undisclosed purposes. In this context, can we ask the question about what is the good or what is the wrong approach? Yes, we can, but the answer is: both are wrong. Both, because any partial, polarized, on purpose truncated approach regarding humanism is for sure wrong. Having a particular ``view point'' is a deceiving start. Any simplifying assumptions are dangerous. We must let confronted us with the whole complexity of the problem of humanism in order to avoid vicious reductionist approaches.

The integral humanism can't be preconditioned by particular circumstances. A genuine start in defining, implementing and promoting integral humanism must be natural and simple, considering the human being as a whole, indestructibly anchored in the wholeness of the existence through its own world. It is simpler to take into consideration all the complexity of the human nature, than to make reductionist simplifications leading to very complex implications. A more complex start is sometimes the natural condition of a simpler development.

It is a Western cultural routine to consider ``humanistic disciplines'' as a separate corpus. In this context mathematics, engineering, sciences are not humanistic activities. More, it is considered that a lot of formal-structural approaches are not related with the humanistic domain, and the people involved in such kind of activities are doing something unrelated with what humanism means. A humanistic education is considered dealing only with arts, philosophy, psychology, history ..., while it totally ignores physics, mathematics, biology, chemistry, or engineering. The result: a lot of strange decisions regarding the human development strategies. For this reason we are confronted with a lot of ``educated'' people completely uninstructed regarding a lot of aspects on which they blindly decide more or less politically. The complexity of our human world can not be managed without a lot of ``non-humanistic'' knowledge coming, why not for example, from quantum mechanics[5]. When in the definition of a cultured person the knowledge about science, technology, mathematics are considered unimportant, we are not allowed to be surprised when ``cultivated'' people are unable to understand nothing about an *information based philosophy*, for example. Some ``cultivated'' people reject by default intellectual constructs containing, besides ``humanistic'' concepts, concepts borrowed and integrated from positive sciences[6]. Thus, we must accept that a big part of the rational activities performed by our mind are almost completely ignored in defining and implementing the too many ``humanisms'' we are facing mainly in our Western world.

While the rational behavior is partially ignored, the spiritual attitude has not a better treatment in the jungle of Western ``humanisms''. The relation with the sacred is distorted in a lot of ``humanisms'' in which the spiritually transcendent attitude is confused with the low, pop

[5] By the way, what is in the public school curricula the weight of the huge scientific discoveries done in the 20th century? Unfortunately, more than 80\% of the scientific knowledge comes from the dusty knowledge acquired till the beginning of 20th century

[6] Meantime, it seems that the scientists are more zealous to succeed in getting involved in the humanistic conceptual spaces [Brockman].

cultural involvement in our world (we pretend the arrow points up, but instead it points down). The spiritual connection with the depth of existence is converted, in our Abrahamic world, in a lot of customary cultural practices. Miming spirituality by culture the humanistic repertoire is diminished and more, it is confused. The consequences are sometimes devastating. For example, we kill each other because of some cultural differences, apparently fighting in the name of the same spiritual entity. We claim a spiritual goal, but we refer in fact only to mundane low local interests disguised in cultural differences.

Converting the heterogeneous space of ``humanisms'' in a harmonious and unitary integral humanism must start from taking into consideration an integral human being, with its three well-tempered mental behaviors. Thus, integral humanism promotes a human being equally

> **spiritual**, by its ability to discern the good from bad related to the wholeness of existence
> **imaginative**, by its predisposition to use its own *fantasy*, *intuition*, and *intentionality* in the limits of the human world and of the accepted values
> **rational,** through its ability to prove the truth in the simplified realm of forms and to validate structures in the world he created.

The three-dimension space of *Good -- Values -- Truth* is the space of the integral humanism where the human being is requested to *discern -- evaluate -- decide* related to his existence viewed by turn as a *phenomenon*, or as a *spontaneous process*, or as a structural-formal *order*.

The integral humanism we intend to develop can not avoid the fact that we are ``designed'' to be in the same time *homo sapiens*, *homo ludens* and *homo faber*. How looks the learning process leading to an integral human being? A short answer is: stressing with equal strength the three components of learning: *education*, *training*, *instruction*. In the contemporary learning systems we pay high attention to instruction, we don't ignore training, but we forgot almost completely about education.

Maybe the starting point of the process leading to the integral humanism we are dreaming is the reshaping of the learning system. The three components of learning must be reconsidered according to the IT tools provided by the emergent information society. The instruction component of learning could be, at least partially transferred toward the more efficient and patient automatic tolls. The training component must run under the supervision of good ``coaches''. It must be the central component of the learning system. ``To teach'' must become ``to train'' when the IT based instructors take over the job of informing us. Education, the most neglected component of learning in the last few centuries, must be the ubiquitous ``side effect'' of any learning process. Whatever a teacher teaches he must transfer continuously a subliminal educational message interleaved within the main matter. It is a hard task, but it seems to be the only way to reinforce the educational aspects of learning[7].

It is very easy to instruct a citizen that she/he is a free person. It is not too hard to train her/his skills in using the freedom. But it is almost impossible to educate him about his duties in a free society.

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[7] We postpone a detailed discussion about the involvement of different churches in the educational process.

The enlightened 18th century neglected to tell people about the human duties while putting a lot of emphasis on the human rights[8]. The same enlightened period substituted the pure qualitative approach in knowledge with an almost exclusive quantitative one. And, if these are not enough, the same enlightened century deprived the churches of the political power, but forgot to give them another precise job. These three big omissions[9] have bad delayed effects in our globalizing society. The same learning system is asked to provide the means to solve this inheritance coming from the last three centuries of unrestricted, more or less real, progress.

In order to be able to promote a cooperative intercultural humanism we must fix the problem we have with the bad-tempered ``humanisms'' of our partially globalized world. Only when in each culture the ``local'' humanism at least tends to be integral, there are in place the conditions for the cooperative global net of the civil society.

Concluding on integral humanism

Humanism means integral humanism because it must support the human existence in all its components starting from what a human being is, not from the dispersive political, ideological or cultural criteria.

Integral humanism refers to an integral human being as a potentially three-part being -- a spiritual, an imaginative, and a rational being -- which must be actualized in the individuation process guided by education, training, and instruction.

Integral human being occurs only in a three-net balanced world consisting of components belonging to the state, to corporations and to the civil society. The current process of globalizing is deeply unbalanced because of the preeminence of the very well organized global corporation net, unaccompanied by similar degree of organization at the level of states and of the civil society.

The three-net balanced world is based on the global cooperative civil-society net because only the civil society can be the motivated mediator between the unlimited freedom promoted by corporations and the rational responsibility regulated by the state.

The set-up of cooperative civil-society net is based on the integral humanism because the heterogeneous components of the civil society are almost all involved in shaping the human condition.

... and so on in an Ouroboric nightmare ... (see Figure 3).

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[8] Thomas Paine tells the story in *The Rights of Man* [Paine]:
> "While the *Declaration of Rights* was before the *National Assembly* some of its members remarked that if a declaration of rights were published it should be accompanied by a Declaration of Duties. The observation discovered a mind that reflected, and it only erred by not reflecting far enough. A Declaration of Rights is, by reciprocity, a Declaration of Duties also. Whatever is my right as a man is also the right of another; and it becomes my duty to guarantee as well as to possess."

[9] Mozart's *Don Jovanni* (first performance in 1787, in the middle between the two important revolutions of the century) can be seen as a complex metaphor of the three proved dangerous omissions of the Age of Enlightenment. In this *dramma giocoso* **liberty without responsibility** (see *Viva la liberta!* in ``*Venite pur avanti*''), **quantity without quality** (see ``*Madamina*'', and ``*Fin ch'han dal vino*'') **profane without sacred** (see ``*O statua gentilissima*'') represent the guiding ideas of the libretto written by Lorenzo da Ponte.
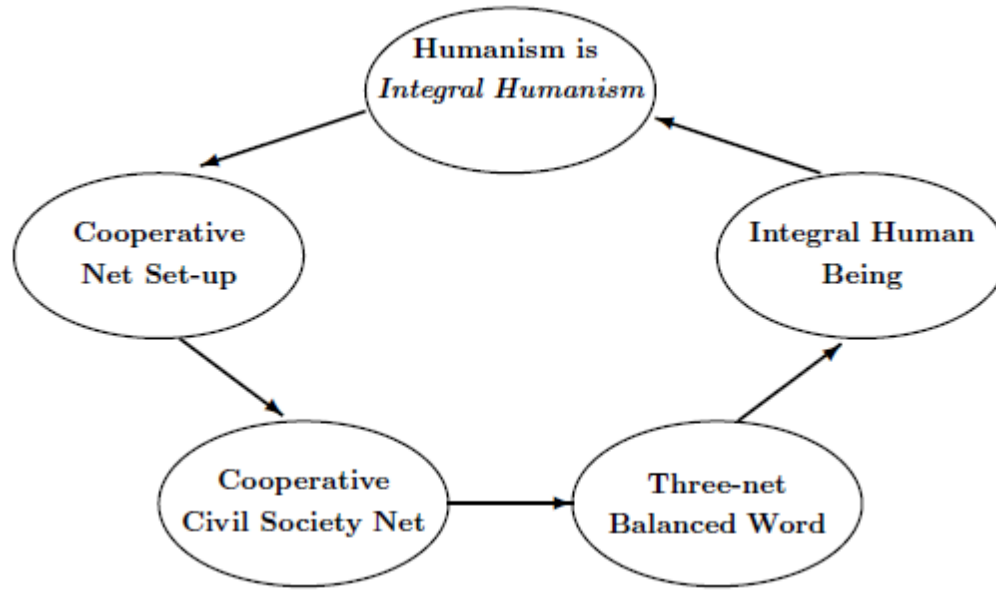
Fig. 3 **The circularly conditioned process ``leading'' toward the** *integral humanism*.
The achievement of integral humanism is conditioned by an unfortunate circular process
whose triggering point is to be found.

The process is a many-loop, self-organizing and synchronistic one. The big problem we have is:
who triggers the start of this complex process? **If** the rationality of ``pure thought'', the
``creative'' involvement of imagination and the spiritually approached ``phenomena'' are equally
meaningful manifest forms of our mind, and if no one will be allowed to ``supersede'' the other
two, **then** there is a hope, perhaps utopian, for triggering the previous *integral humanistic loop*.

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