

**Deciphering the Power of Money,  
Why is it so influential in our lives?**

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Economic and Religious Book.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In this literary work it is expected to decipher the complex issue of the power of money, seeking answers to these questions:

**Why is money so influential in our lives?**

**Can we live in a world without money?**

In order to understand the relevance of money, it is absolutely necessary to envision what a human being is and analyze the human nature. Although, the money is an instrument of exchange, saving and valuation, indispensable for the functioning of the modern world, the optimal development of economies and markets, and the realization of commercial activities, we have granted it a special status and too much importance, in part, because of our way of being and acting. So much so, that currently for many people the goal of their life is enrichment at all costs (pursuing happiness in a wrong way) and therefore, the money has been transformed into an idol or false god of a pseudoreligion.

The Chapter II. The Human Being is divided into these sections: a) II.1 The Human Needs (Which are?), b) II.2 The Human Rationality (How is the human behavior, rational and optimizing, according to the microeconomic perspective?), c) II.3 The Human Egoism (How is this human quality, taking into account mimicry?), d) II.4 The Meaning of Life (How have researchers addressed this issue?), e) II.5 The Pursuit of Happiness (What is happiness?, How do humans achieve it?), f) II.6 The Trap of Postmodernity (What is Postmodernity?, Why are there more unsatisfied needs than in other times?), g) II.7 The Essence of the Human Being (What is a human being?, What are the main characteristics of human beings?), and h) II.8 Conclusions about the Human Being.

In this chapter, it is emphasized that it is important to try to understand what a human being is. This matter is extremely complicated, considering: a) the innumerable human qualities, b) the unlimited human needs, c) the human rationality, d) the human egoism, e) the existential mystery of the meaning of life, and f) the continuous pursuit of happiness, among other aspects. Even more, to-date, there is no exact and precise definition of the human being.

While the Chapter III. The Money is separated into these parts: a) III.1 The Definition of Money (What is money?), b) III.2 A Brief History of Money (When did it originate?, How has it evolved?), c) III.3 The Relevance of Money (What are its benefits?), d) III.4 The Disadvantages of Money (What are its weakness?), e) III.5 The Money and The Happiness (How does money affect happiness?), f) III.6 A World without Money (Can we live in a society without money?), and g) III.7 Conclusions about Money.

Considering that the money is the best human invention, in this chapter the influence of money is addressed, defining what is money, explaining concisely its history, mentioning its advantages and disadvantages, and discussing the effect of the money on happiness. Also, the fictional tale of Robinson, who lives stressed and distressed, in a world without money, is told.

Finally, in the Chapter IV. Conclusions, it is expected to decipher the power of money in our lives and in this world, taking into account its remarkable influence, structuring the conclusions in five parts: a) the money and the human beings, b) the money and the happiness, c) the money and the Christianity, d) the money and the society, and e) the final conclusions. And in the Chapter V. Recommendations, certain guidelines are proposed on how to act to lead a full and satisfactory life, mitigating the powerful influence of money.

Recapitulating with the two initial questions:

**Why is money so influential in our lives?**

**Can we live in a world without money?**

In general terms, the power of money originates from our human nature and the great benefits that this medium brings. We, as human beings (even, in an irresponsible way) have given that hegemonic role to money. Although, maybe we can live in a society without money (without so many comforts), it would take us a lot of effort to survive, mainly due to the excessive competition with others, which would arise in a conflictive environment, prevailing the shortage of opportunities and resources. These statements are explained in more detail, in the course of this publication and in the final conclusions.



## **II. THE HUMAN BEING**

Before analyzing the subject of money, it is important to try to understand what a human being is, which isn't easy, taking into account, among other aspects: a) the innumerable human qualities, b) the unlimited human needs, c) the human rationality, d) the human egoism, e) the existential mystery of the meaning of life, and f) the continuous search for happiness.

Additionally, despite the high level of scientific and technological development, to-date, there are more unmet needs than at other times, mainly due to the fact that the postmodern thinking moves away from the satisfaction of the main human needs, concentrating on the secularism and materialism, in the detriment of the spiritual and religious thought.

Moreover, the complex essence of the human being (of which there is no exact or precise definition), makes us: a) exceptional, b) demanding and ambitious, c) non-conformist and dissatisfied, d) egoist and mimetic, e) spiritual and religious, f) curious, g) part of an existential mystery, and h) responsible for discovering the meaning of life.

In the following sections of this chapter, the ideas discussed previously are considered:

1. The human needs.
2. The human rationality.
3. The human egoism
4. The meaning of life.
5. The pursuit of happiness.
6. The trap of Postmodernity.
7. The essence of the human being.

## II.1 THE HUMAN NEEDS

The human beings are an inexhaustible source of desires and needs. According to the microeconomic Theory of Consumer Choice, based on the psychology and the foundations of human rationality, we live in a constant cycle of need-achievement-need. Therefore, when some needs are satisfied, others arise and there is no maximum limit or full state of well-being.

The economists argue that this is the basis of human rationality (continually striving for a better quality of life), which has allowed the progress and development of humanity. However, these attitudes are not entirely convenient, considering that the insatiable human needs are complex and difficult to understand.

The American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) classified the human needs into five levels:

- a) **physiological** (feeding, resting, sleeping, breathing, etc.),
- b) **safety** (employment, possessions, resources, etc.),
- c) **belongingness** (affection, friendship, belonging to groups, etc.),
- d) **esteem** (trust, success, respect, etc.),
- e) **self-actualization** (creativity, success, innovation, solution of problems, etc.).

The first two types of requirements are basic and essential. The human beings need to: feed, drink, rest, sleep, have good health, have a place to live, recreate and live in an adequate, pleasant, comfortable and safe environment, among others requirements.

However, the needs of belongingness (belonging and identifying with certain groups, family, companies, institutions, society, country, etc.), esteem (success, trust, respect, etc.), and self-actualization (development of the potential), are the most relevant.

In this sense, people need to preserve an identity (belongingness), to have their merits recognized (esteem) and to go further, leaving a distinctive mark in their tasks, activities and obligations (self-actualization).

Even more, consumption, possession of goods and enjoyment of recreational activities, have an ephemeral effect on the basic needs (physiological and safety), acting temporarily in the rational cycle of need-achievement-need and not over the fundamental ones (belongingness, esteem and self-actualization). While leading an exemplary and virtuous life constantly influences on the fundamental needs, adequately mitigating the referred cycle of human dissatisfaction (need-achievement-need).

**Summarizing**, the human beings are an inexhaustible source of needs and there are five types of requirements (physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem and self-actualization). On the one hand, consumption, possession of goods and recreation, act temporarily on the basic needs (physiological and safety), and on the other hand, having an exemplary and virtuous life, constantly influences over the others (belongingness, esteem and self-actualization), attenuating the complex cycle of need-achievement-need; which can be positive (challenges the monotony that characterizes animals, requires continuous concentration on the latest needs and seeks a meaning to life), and negative (being a source of dissatisfaction, frustration, unhappiness and even resentment).

## II.2 THE HUMAN RATIONALITY

According to microeconomics, based more on anthropological, cultural, philosophical, psychological and social aspects, than on the economic postulates, the human being is rational, because he:

- a) **makes decisions continually**: these choices consider: a.1) income, a.2) various factors (cost, effort, time, resources, risks, ethical issues, opportunities, expectations, etc.), and a.3) the consequences in the present and future,
- b) **selects the best options to maximize well-being<sup>1</sup>**: taking into account: b.1) the restriction of opportunities (these aren't frequent), and b.2) the shortage of products (resources, goods and services aren't infinite),
- c) **is characterized for this distinctive rational behavior**: however, under certain circumstances, non-rational or more emotional than rational behaviors can occur.

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<sup>1</sup> The individual decisions are generally accurate, but these are not always correct, nor produce optimal results in all cases.

In this regard, according to the microeconomic Theory of Consume Choice, at the subconscious level, each person has a utility or welfare function, which is satisfied by various factors (consumption of goods and services, free time, work, other activities, savings, investments, etc.) and is constantly maximized considering: income, other determinants (cost, effort, time, resources, risks, ethical issues, opportunities, expectations, etc.), and the consequences in the present and future.

As a result of this continuous process of maximization of well-being, according to its possibilities, the person chooses between different baskets of consumption. For example, when a worker receives his biweekly salary, he has several options: save, pay debts, buy some products, spend on recreational activities, etc.

Although the combinations between different consumption baskets are innumerable (the saving is a deferred consumption) and each decision generates an additional level of satisfaction in the function of utility or welfare, depending on its valuation.

For example, if the referred worker acquires shoes, the utility could be 100, while if he buys a vehicle, the utility could reach 100,000,000 (these are extreme cases).

Therefore, considering that the financial resources are limited, there are several factors (cost, effort, time, resources, risks, ethical issues, opportunities, expectations, etc.), and consequences in the present and future; the human being will maximize its well-being, choosing the consumer basket with the best possible combination (amount of savings, amount to pay debts, purchases of products, other expenses, etc.). In addition, this process of maximizing the well-being, subjected to the budgetary restriction and other determinants, occurs at the subconscious level, day by day.

This constitutes the foundation of the human rationality, taking reasonable decisions, considering complex circumstances and various limitations, especially the financial resources. Nonetheless, since the human well-being is insatiable and people need to satisfy their needs, once they do this, other desires will arise. This is the need-achievement-need cycle.

**Summarizing**, the rationality is the way of thinking and acting, responsible for human progress and development, based on making decisions to maximize welfare, subjected to various restrictions and limitations. However, as the human well-being is insatiable and an inexhaustible cycle of need-achievement-need prevails, the five human needs must be satisfied (mainly the last three: belongingness, esteem and self-actualization).



### II.3 THE HUMAN EGOISM

Although the human being seeks to satisfy its needs and longs for happiness, being prone to discover the meaning of his life, to act in that sense, a serious problem persists, derived from the human qualities, which tilts the balance towards the satisfaction of physiological and safety needs, in the detriment of the fundamental ones (belongingness, esteem and self-actualization).

According to the French historian and philosopher Rene Girard (1923-2015), the human beings are mimetic (imitators of the winners) and therefore, they want to possess what others have: from simple material objects to fame, power and prestige. This explains the causes of human violence and why victims are constantly being sought.

In general terms, this researcher argues that:

- a) if other individuals are successful, the aspirations of being like them and having their goods, are exacerbated,
- b) the mimetic desires come from the insatiable attempt to imitate social referents (models) and lead to strong rivalries,
- c) the inability of human beings to renounce to their mimetic desires, is a trigger of conflicts and wars,

- d) when the archaic communities entered into crisis, these became violent, eliminating the supposed causes of the disorder or weak victims (scape-goats),
- e) human sacrifices in primitive societies acted as a compensation mechanism to attenuate this cycle (desire-revenge-desire), appease violence and enforce the authority of governments,
- f) some societies changed human sacrifices for animal sacrifices (figurative substitutes of human life),
- g) from these sacrifices comes the notion of looking for the guilty and condemning them, which represents the destruction of the causes of the problems,
- h) throughout history, societies have hidden aggressive behavior and applied various forms of execution (for example: the inquisition),
- i) the Christianity is unprecedented and highly innovative. Without the existence of this social and religious movement, perhaps it would not have been possible to end human sacrifices, nor with the legitimacy of punishing innocent victims,

- j) the Christianity showed that proceeding through sacrifices is not beneficial, since sacrificing an innocent man is not going to end the mimetic desires, nor destroy these cycles (desire-revenge-desire). It also revealed that the community is capable of unjustly condemning an innocent,
- k) the Christian message led to the elimination of sacrificial practices,
- l) the judicial system has also improved: it seeks to identify and condemn the real culprits and not substitute victims,
- m) the sense of human justice is questionable (what deprives are desires of revenge and the false idea that punishing the scapegoats or the guilty, will solve the problems).

The statements of Rene Girard are convincing. In this postmodern, hyperconsumerist, hypercompetitive and technological era, there are more inequities and unsatisfied needs than in previous times, due to these aspects:

- a) the models or social referents are: actors, artists, bankers, directors, entrepreneurs, investors, managers, millionaires, musicians, politicians, singers, sportsmen, writers, etc.,

- b) the achievements of few successful people are exaggerated, while the efforts and merits of various professionals, from educators to policemen, whose participation is indispensable for the functioning of institutions and the development of the society, aren't recognized,
- c) countless people aspire to imitate celebrities or at least equalize their living standard,
- d) in a world that offers all kinds of products and stimulates hyperconsumption, the differences between the rich and the poor are being accentuated by: d.1) the loss of principles and values, d.2) the secularism, and d.3) the unlimited desire to own more and more goods. These facts are the cause of: illegal and illicit activities, armed conflicts, delinquency and high levels of violence.

**Summarizing**, the human beings are mimetic and wish to possess what others have: from goods to a social status. Unfortunately, in these times, the exaggerated emphasis on materialistic triumphs (models or social referents), the aspirations to live with all kinds of luxuries and comforts, in harmony with a postmodern thought (more consumer-secular and less idealistic-religious) and the abandonment of the satisfaction of the needs of belongingness, esteem and self-actualization, generate alarming levels of: violence, anxiety, frustration, resentment, depression, extreme exhaustion (burn-out) and chronic boredom (bore-out).

## II.4 THE MEANING OF LIFE

This is the most difficult question posed by philosophers, theologians and researchers of various disciplines, at different times: **What is the meaning of human life?**

It forces to reflect on the great existential mysteries and raise questions about the origin (Where do we come from?), purpose (What are we doing here?) and destiny of humanity (Where are we going?).

Certainly, there is no exact answer to the meaning of human life.

Throughout history, various Greek philosophers, religious, theologians, modern philosophers, psychologists, psychiatrists, academics and researchers have tried to discover the meaning of human life.

Currently, three points of view predominate:

1. The human life has a meaning.
2. The human life has no meaning.
3. The human life can have a meaning (intermediate).

## **1. The human life has a meaning:**

This position is supported by most Greek philosophers (including Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans and the Hedonists), modern philosophers, religious, theologians, psychologists, psychiatrists, academics and researchers. It is also endorsed by almost all religions.

It should be noted that Dr. Viktor Frankl (1905-1997), an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist of Jewish descent, founder of logotherapy (psychotherapy based on the search for the meaning of human existence), is the only researcher who has given satisfactory explanations about the meaning of life.

Masterfully, he exposed the following aspects about the meaning of human life:

**Firstly**, the human being is extraordinary, very different from all the animal species, which is corroborated by these facts:

- a) he poses the meaning of his existence. This concern is the most original characteristic of a human being, and at the same time, this is a great expression of maturity,
- b) he registers his history. Therefore, the human being is essentially historical (no individual can live outside this coordinate system),

- c) he tends to perceive a superior wisdom (which implanted the reason in the man and the instincts in the animals),
- d) he has an innate quality: responsibility. This is “terrible” (we must respond to the facts of each moment) and it is also wonderful (we know that our future and that of others, around us, even in an insignificant extent, depend on the decisions constantly taken),
- e) he develops in peculiar (irreplaceable) and singular (unique and unrepeatable) situations, which lead continually to accept or reject absolute duties,
- f) he has a superior creative notion: the faith,
- g) he values his actions and results,
- h) he is endowed with an exceptional ability to examine the hidden singularity in each event: the conscience. Moreover, he is also free to decide, whether or not to act in conformity with it (if he suffocates it, then he falls into Western conformism or Eastern totalitarianism).



**Secondly**, the Homo sapiens decides by values that: a) obey to the conscience, b) are universally abstract, c) transcend over the acts these point to, and d) provide certain orientations of the meaning of life.

**Thirdly**, the conflict between values and the absence of the meaning of life, generates confusion, and even propitiates neurotic behaviors and mental disorders, considering that:

- a) some people believe that they should try to enjoy the moment, seeking pleasures and breaks, thus giving up their responsibilities,
- b) in other cases, the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure-producing means and the inordinate urge to possess multiple products, also lead to: not ask for the essence of human life, and neglect duties and obligations,
- c) many individuals affirm that life has no meaning, claiming that their activities aren't relevant, and at the same time, they experience an existential vacuum, that manifests mainly in depression and boredom, however, the meaning of life is not totally related to the workplace.

The important thing is that the person must:

- c.1) occupy a position commensurate with his abilities, c.2) work efficiently, and c.3) know how to evaluate his work performance,
- d) it is a mistake to put pleasures and joys as goals for aspirations (the same are the consequence of the realization of the wishes). Certainly, if these constitute the meaning of life, then it is meaningless,
- e) those who fail to value: who they are, what they have achieved and what they do (including health, family, academic level, etc.), live in a state of dissatisfaction that moves them away from happiness. Gratitude is the way to value and recognize what we are and what we have built, giving spaces to joy, faith and hope,
- f) nobody should surrender to the challenges and failures, nor should invoke his insufficiency, nor despise his qualities,
- g) as the human being doesn't exhaust his reality in the satisfaction of instincts and needs, in the modern consumer society there is an unsatisfied requirement: **to find the meaning of life.**

#### **Fourthly, what is the meaning of the human life?**

- a) this is partially subjective because each one assigns a different connotation, but it can't be reduced only to particular judgments. Moreover, although its perception and realization depends on the conscience, and the knowledge, the meaning of life is not given by us, rather it is partly granted to us (by a Higher Consciousness),
- b) the peculiarity and uniqueness relate the mission of life to its meaning. Therefore, the mission of life always exists and is capable of being realized,
- c) with respect to the faithful fulfillment of the obligations, the human being must feel and live his responsibilities. The understanding of this reality gives more meaning to the life,
- d) the difficulties accentuate the duties of our existence, giving a greater meaning to life,
- e) one who doesn't acquire the consciousness of responsibility, accepts life as a simple contingency and doesn't value, nor appreciate it<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>2</sup> It is not the same to live in a full and satisfactory way (even suffering difficulties), in agreement with an existential purpose, that simply to exist.

- f) the mission of life can contemplate transcendental mandates, proper of the Homo religious. The interpretation of this statement confirms that the human being is spiritual.

It is also important to note that since the Ancient Age, the meaning of human life has been associated with the satisfaction of needs, well-being and happiness. Sensationally, Dr. Viktor Frankl managed to overcome these conceptions, guiding the sense of human life towards ethics and a transcendental spiritual-religious plane.

Even more, Dr. Viktor Frankl didn't give a definition of the meaning of human life, rather he indicated that each person must build it, taking into account that this abstract notion has two components (general, established by the Creator, and particular, delimited by each one).

From the approaches of Dr. Viktor Frankl, it can be concluded that: **the conception and justification of existence as a mission of missions (development process: learning, doing, fulfilling, failing, triumphing and above all valuing), in accordance with the principles, moral values and religious dogmas, constitutes the true meaning of the human life.**

## **2. The human life has no meaning:**

This approach is accepted by some philosophers, “light religious”<sup>3</sup>, supporters of some non-monotheistic religions, scientists, psychologists, psychiatrists, academics, researchers, and mainly by atheists and communists.

However, this perspective is based on an anti-religious thought, which considers the Homo sapiens as: a) a being that wasn’t created by God, b) a complex animal that lives only to guarantee the continuity of the species, and c) a being without divine character.

All these premises are rejected by Dr. Viktor Frankl, who stated that: a) there is a Creative Consciousness superior to the human, b) the Homo sapiens is exceptional, unlike any animal, and c) the human being is eminently spiritual and religious.

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<sup>3</sup> Those who accept a religion for various reasons (family, social and cultural), but don’t believe in their dogmas, give little importance to these, and/or don’t act according to its foundations, giving priority to materialistic goals.

### **3. The human life can have a meaning:**

This position is supported by some Greek philosophers (mainly the Stoics), modern philosophers (including the Humanists), psychologists, psychiatrists, academics and researchers.

Nonetheless, this approach is questionable taking into account that: a) it is contradictory to affirm that life can have a meaning, when in practice it does (even if it is granted), b) the meaning of life has two components, objective and subjective, therefore, it can't be determined 100% by each person (according to the premises of Dr. Viktor Frankl), and c) the aforementioned meaning of life is separated from the spiritual-religious dimension of the human being.

**Summarizing**, although there are three approaches (life has a meaning, life doesn't have a meaning and life can have a meaning), to-date, Dr. Viktor Frankl is the only researcher who has been able to give satisfactory explanations about the meaning of human life and has provided convincing arguments to reject the last two hypotheses. Therefore, the human life has a relevant and special meaning. The greatest challenge for any human being is to discover the meaning of his own existence, which will allow him to enjoy a satisfactory life, in accordance with the fulfillment of a mission of missions or a remarkable existential purpose.

## II.5 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

The term happiness is broad, abstract, complex, diffuse and subjective, being difficult to define and specify. Usually, mentioning happiness is a reference to:

- a) positive emotional states due to events, expectations and achievements of certain goals,
- b) feelings of joy, faith and optimism,
- c) absence of anxieties, worries, sufferings and fears,
- d) surplus of positive situations with respect to negative ones,
- e) self-realization, self-motivation and self-sufficiency,
- f) positions and attitudes to develop favorably,
- g) a level of “general satisfaction”,
- h) the reason that justifies human existence, in accordance with the purpose, mission and meaning of life.

The anthropologists argue that happiness is also an evolutionary mechanism that allows the survival of the human species, because if individuals don't try to fulfill their desires, they would have lost interest in all aspects of life, including reproduction.

Some studies conclude that happiness is determined by genes (1/3) and circumstances (2/3).

Most Greek philosophers defined happiness as the supreme good, resulting from the supposed “good fortune” and well-being. While Aristotle expressed that it is related to the actions and practice of the virtues (generosity, honesty, sobriety, etc.).

On the other hand, Plato related it with a contemplative state of the soul, an idea that was accepted by Christian theologians, who associated happiness with the search and union with God. This thesis was widely accepted by the Christian communities during the Middle Ages.

Subsequently, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, changed this paradigm: happiness through religious service and the hopes of an eternal life, is replaced by one that depends on pleasures and materialistic goals.

Since that time, the utilitarianism seeks to tune the happiness of each person with that of society, hoping that the rulers generate the greatest possible happiness for the communities.

Almost all the philosophers of the Modern Age denied that happiness was the supreme good. Some questioned the search of the referred ideal emotional state, and others like Voltaire and Rousseau, affirmed that happiness is not a whim of fate, nor is a divine gift, but something that we should all reach here and now (not in another life).



Kant warned that the concept of happiness is indeterminate, since everyone wants to get it, but no one can say what he really wants. Or in other words, it is not only difficult to define what happiness is, but also what makes individuals happy.

As a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, the World Wars, the emergence of Postmodernity and the rise of globalization, the predominance of secularist tendencies over religious foundations was accentuated.

Currently, the Western postmodern human being has become accustomed to procuring happiness through material possessions, various ephemeral pleasures and a social status, relegating religious beliefs to the background and minimizing his valuations of who he is and what he does, which has generated: some denial of the meaning of life, neglect of the fundamental needs, and high levels of dissatisfaction in society.

**Summarizing**, in the Middle Ages, serving God was the path for happiness. However, during the Modern Age, the idealist-religious thought was replaced by a materialist-secular one, aimed at seeking happiness for consumption, possession and recreation. Certainly, the substitution of a sense of spirituality and transcendence (oriented to satisfy the needs of belongingness, esteem and self-actualization), by an exaggerated possession of goods, and the incessant search of pleasures, aspiring to satisfy mainly the physiological and safety needs, constituted a serious philosophical-ideological error. Due to this decadent evolution of human thought, the Postmodernity emerged, becoming the modern world a source of: violence, anxiety, frustration, resentment, depression, extreme exhaustion (burn-out) and chronic boredom (bore-out).

## II.6 THE TRAP OF POSTMODERNITY

The current conditions are very different from those of previous centuries, especially because of the radical changes in the ideologies and the ways of thinking, performing or “living in the world” (more secular than religious).

When referring to Postmodernism, the term encompasses diverse artistic, cultural, literary, philosophical, political, social and religious currents (basically more “light religious” or diffuse as those of the New Age) of the last three decades of the XX century and the XXI century, which are opposed to the idealistic thinking of the Ancient, Middle and Modern Age, deepening secular, individualist and egocentric tendencies, which prevail over the moral, ethics and religious tenets.

Likewise, this movement constitutes the new rational way of thinking and acting of humanity, which emerged in the seventies. Its approach is very different from that posed by cultural, social and religious traditions, and the world view of other eras, based primordially on the incessant pursuit of enrichment, the predominance of hyperconsumption, the attachment to fashions and the desire to possess more and more goods, and enjoy all kinds of luxuries and comforts. Its background is to deny morality, ethics and religion, for the sake of a good material life.

It is true that people must satisfy their primary needs (physiological and safety). However, the postmodern thinking minimizes: principles, moral values, ethics, justice, the meaning of life and the religious ideals of spirituality and transcendence; relegating the needs of belongingness, esteem and self-actualization, to a second level.

Obviously, it isn't bad to aspire for better economic benefits and a good living standard. The problem is that when these aspirations are put over principles and moral values, denying the search for a meaning of life and the notions of spirituality and transcendence, the postmodern man becomes a narcissist<sup>4</sup>, who thinks that the world revolves around him, doesn't consider the rights of others, and doesn't understand that he must be a servant and a useful citizen.

In the Postmodernity, these phenomena are combined:

**Firstly, the deterioration and loss of principles and moral values prevail.** People justify their actions relativizing morality, at their convenience.

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<sup>4</sup> Term coined by the French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky. It refers to the exaggerated cult personality.

The narcissist, arrogant and malicious, is a great egocentric who thinks he owns the world, he doesn't care about the rights, nor the problems of others, and seeks his own advantage, by any medium, denying a life of service to others and to God.

**Secondly,** many individuals are narcissistic. They strive to satisfy their material desires and fulfill their personal-professional objectives, disrespecting the rights of others.

**Thirdly,** innumerable people hope to mitigate their dissatisfactions, frustrations and shortcomings, acquiring goods and enjoying various pleasures, ignoring their fundamental needs (belongingness, esteem and self-actualization), without seeking the meaning of life, or approaching to God.

**Fourthly,** there are individuals who insist on projecting that they are prosperous and materially successful, instead of trying to be honest citizens.

**Fifthly,** the transformation of strict moral values in relativists, secular and liberal, justifies a “light life”, religious hypocrisy and atheism. In other words, a comfortable lifestyle is addressed, without compromises or responsibilities, denying principles, values, religious dogmas, social norms and laws.

**Sixthly,** there is an abandonment of the search of destiny. In other times, the human being persecuted it through God. While in the Postmodernity, he doesn't seek it, rather aspires to enjoy a materialistic life, separated from religion.

**Seventhly, the models or referents changed.** The majestic Cathedrals and Churches, a symbol of spirituality and transcendence, which marked behaviors to follow during the Middle Ages and part of the Modern Age, were replaced by pagan sites, oriented to the consumption, enjoyment or management of money (banks, casinos, clubs, discotheques, racetracks, restaurants, shopping centers, shops, etc.). Other referents are the stars or the famous material winners.

**Eighthly, for many people the goal of life is enrichment** and not the service to society and God.

Due to this transculturization, confusion, disorder, lack of priorities, and loss of principles and moral values, a great postmodern dilemma persists:

On the one hand, countless individuals are frustrated by not possessing the goods, nor the living standard of some winners, and on the other hand, there are people who have immense material resources, but they don't know what to do with their lives. **Definitely, the postmodern thought forgets that being and doing are more important than having.**

The humankind must change paradigms to overcome the Postmodernity. Possibly, this can be achieved through the rejection of the relativistic morality, the recovery of religious doctrines and the promulgation of aggressive educational reforms, aimed at raising awareness of people's role in the family and society. A life of service to others and to God, with a definite purpose, like Mother Teresa of Calcutta, is an excellent example of a human being who rejects the Postmodernity.

**Summarizing**, to-date, many human beings have been reduced to being simple agents of consumption. Therefore, they have fallen into the great trap of Postmodernity, replacing the search and fulfillment of a purpose in life by the exaggerated satisfaction of primary needs, to the detriment of the fundamental ones (imbalance), and moving away from the religious ideals of spirituality and transcendence. This behavior is also typical of atheists and communists. The human being is exceptional and can't become a simple consumer agent. We were created in the image and likeness of God. Our skills and abilities are extraordinary. We have the potential and the need to lead an exemplary and virtuous life of service to others and to God, fulfilling a mission and giving a true meaning to life. However, as the postmodern thinking minimizes and denies this, undoubtedly this constitutes a source of: violence, anxiety, frustration, resentment, depression, extreme exhaustion (burn-out) and chronic boredom (bore-out).



## II.7 THE ESSENCE OF THE HUMAN BEING

Taking into account the human needs, the rational behavior of Homo sapiens, their egoism-mimicry and complex issues such as the meaning of life and the search for happiness, then: **What is a human being?**

At different times, philosophers have asked this question. Nonetheless, to-date, it hasn't been possible to construct an exact and precise definition, because any will be short, limited, restricted and incomplete. Even, if we try to elucidate this question (considering various characteristics, certain reasoning and behaviors), we will not achieve this goal, because this conception is holistic and synergetic: the whole surpasses the parts, and there will always be more and more qualities that will distinguish the extraordinary human being. Because of this, there are not enough words, nor expressions to explain what a human being is (less delimit it).

Moreover, the human beings stand out for widely surpassing the abilities of other living beings, being:

1. Exceptional.
2. Demanding and ambitious.
3. Non-conformist and dissatisfied.
4. Egoist and mimetic.
5. Spiritual and religious.
6. Curious.

7. Part of an existential mystery.
8. Responsible for discovering the meaning of life.

**Firstly, we are exceptional human beings.**

Our capacities, abilities and qualities are extraordinary (trust, creativity, curiosity, faith, innovation, intelligence, optimism, persistence, responsibility, courage, etc.).

We change our attitudes through learning. We become obsessed with transforming efforts into pleasurable, attractive, and useful results. We have free will or the ability to decide, subject to our conscience, principles and moral values.

We also are proactive (avoiding or altering certain facts and circumstances through unpublished actions, not demanded, nor solicited by others).

**Secondly, we are highly demanding and ambitious human beings,** with multiple aspirations and needs.

Day-to-day, we continue living, we try to fulfill our desires and we seek to reach happiness.

According to the philosophical and psychological thinking, and the microeconomic Theory of Consumer Choice, by nature, we are selfish and rational: we seek to maximize our well-being or obtain the greatest possible benefits, in the face of scarce resources, little opportunities and financial constraints.

These attitudes allow us to: enjoy a better living standard, reject the monotony that characterizes animals and focus on various objectives, which contribute to the development of the society and the survival of the human species.

**Thirdly, we are non-conformist and dissatisfied human beings.**

On the one hand, when we don't achieve our goals, we can fall into anxiety, frustration, resentment, depression, burn-out and/or bore-out. And on the other hand, when we triumph, we don't become as happy as we expected (we overestimate the joys of success and underestimate their associated problems), being our natural escape route, to pose other goals. Because of these disappointments, triumphs don't free us from the adverse human qualities (anxiety, frustration, resentment, depression, exhaustion or burn-out and boredom or bore-out).

In that sense, we live in a constant cycle of need-achievement-need (which is extremely dangerous, when we don't value what we are, what we have achieved, and what we do). Therefore, if we don't properly orient this behavior, it can end up generating a great existential vacuum, dissatisfaction, unhappiness and abandonment of the search for the meaning of life.

**Fourthly, we are egoist and mimetic human beings** (according to the French historian and philosopher Rene Girard).

We want to possess what others have (from simple material objects to fame, power and prestige), hoping to imitate the triumphant. In addition, most of our needs come from the wishes to be like other people, or are influenced by the same society.

In this postmodern world that provides all kinds of luxuries and comforts, the hyperconsumption is exacerbated, and the mimetic desires are aimed at achieving materialistic goals that are too ambitious (unlike other times).

Furthermore, although the postmodern, hedonistic and hyperconsumist lifestyle acts on the physiological and safety needs, it is ineffective to satisfy those of belongingness, esteem and self-actualization.

Again, we need to preserve an identity (belongingness), to have our merits being accepted (esteem) and to be allowed to go further, leaving a distinctive imprint on tasks, activities and obligations (self-actualization). All these needs are minimized, underestimated and/or negated by the postmodern thought, which creates existential vacuums, leading to the rejection of the meaning of human life.

Once again, as Dr. Viktor Frankl said, many people have the means to live, but they don't know why they live (they don't understand that being and doing are more important than having, nor try to find the meaning of their existence). There are innumerable citizens who are frustrated, because they don't have the goods of others, while some successful ones, have immense material resources, but they don't know what to do with their lives.

**Fifthly, we are spiritual and religious human beings.**

As countless people have lost the course of their lives and don't seek the meaning of their existence, they neglect their religious essence and don't lead an exemplary life of service to others and to God.

While the citizens faithful to their principles, moral values and religious beliefs, are prone to act ethically and contribute to society and God. Likewise, a virtuous and religious life entails:

- a) developing extraordinary capacities, abilities and qualities (including resilience),
- b) setting up an ideal balance between aspirations and needs (being realistic about goals, accepting failures and understanding that it is not always possible to achieve all the goals),

- c) valuing various aspects of the life (identity, family, health, friendships, freedoms, opportunities, education, knowledge, work, service to God, etc.),
- d) giving up unnecessary mimetic desires,
- e) mitigating the referred cycle of human dissatisfaction (need-achievement-need).

**Sixthly, we are curious human beings**, prone to wonder about the great existential mysteries and the meaning of our lives.

By becoming aware of the meaning of our existence and orienting it towards the faithful fulfillment of that purpose, we begin the journey to enjoy a true and satisfactory life (with its disappointments and hopes, sorrows and joys, failures and triumphs).

**Seventhly, we are an existential mystery**.

Hypothetically, a person who reflects on the meaning of life and accepts the beliefs of a monotheistic religion, would respond to the existential enigmas in this way:

- a) **Where do we come from (origin)?**: we were created by God, Omnipotent and Omniscient, in the image and likeness of the Creator. We are the result of a divine plan and we surpass any intelligent animal species. So much so, that there is no definition of the unique, exceptional and extraordinary human being,
- b) **What are we doing here (purpose)?**: we are born, we live and we die, because this life is temporary, then we will move on to another. The human life has an essence, a special meaning and a relevant value. There are transcendental reasons to live, in accordance with the will of the Lord,
- c) **Where are we going (destiny)?**: we die because we are sinners and remain trapped in a spiritual conflict between the good and the evil, in a fallen and corrupted world. This life has a meaning, we must leave a legacy and prepare for life after death, fulfilling the religious obligations.

**Eighthly, our greatest existential challenge is to discover the meaning of life.** This has been assigned by the Creator (objective part), leaving a portion, under our own criteria (subjective part). This forces us to:

- a) overcome the adverse qualities (anxiety, frustration, resentment, depression, exhaustion, boredom, etc.), in difficult situations,
- b) accept that consumption, possession and recreation act temporarily on physiological and safety needs, but have no effect on those of belongingness, esteem and self-actualization, neither contribute to the pursuit and fulfillment of a purpose in life,
- c) value and thank for: what we are, what we have done and what we do, including various aspects (identity, family, health, friendships, freedoms, opportunities, education, knowledge, work, service to God, etc.),
- d) reaffirm our identity as human beings, members of the society, able to use our skills and talents, to serve others and God,
- e) recognize the positive influence of: religions, principles, moral values and ethics,



- f) reflect on the great existent mysteries (Is there a God?, How was the Universe created?, What is the origin of life and humans?, What comes after death?, What is time?, What is our destiny?, Is there a battle between good and evil?, Why does human suffering persist?), taking into account that these exceed considerably human understanding. Therefore, we can only glimpse or conceive a tiny portion of the reality,
- g) inquire about the meaning of our existence,
- h) lead an exemplary and virtuous life of service to others and to God, fulfilling a mission of missions, in accordance with a true existential meaning.

**Summarizing**, there is no exact or precise definition of what a human being is (any will be short, limited, restricted and incomplete). Broadly speaking, the human beings, whose aspirations, desires and needs are insatiable, are distinguished by being: a) exceptional, b) demanding and ambitious, c) non-conformist and dissatisfied, d) egoist and mimetic (imitators), e) spiritual and religious, f) curious, g) part of an existential mystery, and h) responsible for discovering the meaning of life.

## II.8 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE HUMAN BEING

There is no concept of human being. In general terms, the human beings, whose aspirations, desires and needs are insatiable, stand out for being: a) exceptional, b) demanding and ambitious, c) non-conformist and dissatisfied, d) egoist and mimetic, e) spiritual and religious, f) curious, g) part of an existential mystery, and h) responsible for discovering the meaning of life. Therefore, the essence of the human being is more spiritual and religious than biological and rational.

Moreover, the human beings are an inexhaustible source of needs and there are five types of requirements (physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem and self-actualization). On the one hand, consumption, possession of goods and recreation, act temporarily on the basic needs (physiological and safety), and on the other hand, leading an exemplary and virtuous life, constantly influences over the others (belongingness, esteem and self-actualization), mitigating the complex cycle of need-achievement-need, which can be positive (it challenges the monotony that characterizes animals, forces to continually focus on the latest needs and to seek a meaning to life), as negative (source of dissatisfaction, frustration, unhappiness and even resentment).

Obviously, the exceptional human beings are rational (they continuously maximize their well-being) and mimetic (imitators of the winners), which fosters the interminable cycle of need-achievement-need, justifies why the human well-being is insatiable and the humans are so competitive.

Unfortunately, in this postmodern era, the greatest scientific and technological advance, and the abandonment of the fundamental requirements (belongingness, esteem and self-actualization), have led to more unmet needs than in other times. In this regard, this postmodern world is characterized by high levels of: violence, anxiety, frustration, resentment, depression, extreme exhaustion (burn-out) and chronic boredom (bore-out).

Even more, this time is different from the previous ones, since secularism and materialism have achieved the abandonment of the religions, and also established the enrichment as the primary objective of life, denying the meaning of human life (despite the fact that Dr. Viktor Frankl showed that life does have a relevant meaning, and the religious Homo sapiens can discover it, to act in accordance with a mission of missions).

Again, the substitution of the search and fulfillment of an existential purpose by the exaggerated satisfaction of primary needs, to the detriment of the fundamental ones (imbalance) constitutes the great trap of Postmodernity.

Therefore, currently, we live in a hedonist, hyperconsumerist, hypercompetitive and technological era, in which these aspects prevail: a) the deterioration of principles and moral values, b) the exaggerated emphasis on the physiological and safety needs, c) the ignorance of the belongingness, esteem and self-actualization needs, and d) the maximization of money as an idol or false god (which satisfies the primary needs, generating the false illusion that this will allow to achieve happiness and enjoy a full and satisfactory life, separated from suffering).

Most people, influenced by postmodern thought, have implicitly accepted this reality, giving power to money over their lives, and forgetting that the exceptional human being should take advantage of his qualities and abilities to fulfill an extraordinary purpose, serving society and God.

### III. THE MONEY

This instrument isn't good, nor bad, rather it is neutral. In that sense, what has given it a negative connotation of dirty and impure, is the excessive love for money, the ambition to obtain it, and its inappropriate use.

Moreover, without the existence of money, the functioning of this modern world, as we know it, would be practically impossible. In this regard, money is the best human invention, and is a medium of exchange, savings and valuation. Or in other terms, it has three essential functions: a) exchange, b) savings, and c) measure of value (price fixer and estimator of riches).

The history of money goes from the first attempts to market with not minted coins until the formation and evolution of the International Monetary System, based on the US dollar.

In addition, this instrument has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, this mechanism allows the optimal functioning of all markets and economic activities, taking into account that it is easy to store, use and transport, is valid, legal, legitimate, universal, convertible and efficient, has an intrinsic value, and allows to maintain and improve the life quality. And on the other hand, this medium isn't infallible (it loses value over time, presents risks of losses, can accentuate differences between the rich and the poor, fosters egoism and narcissism, and also creates false feelings of security).

In this regard, the excessive love for money, the insatiable desires to own it, and the inadequate ways of using it, are the causes of multiple problems in society.

Even more, although money contributes to the well-being, progress and development of humankind, it is insufficient to satisfy the insatiable Homo sapiens, being the relation between money and happiness, diffuse, imprecise, and difficult to determine. Therefore, money can't replace the satisfactions of fulfilling the needs of belongingness, esteem and self-actualization, nor substitute an exemplary and virtuous life (obviously, there are innumerable aspects that money can't buy).

Likewise, these reflections lead to ask:

### **Can we live in a world without money?**

The fictional story of Robinson, who lives in a society without money, gives us guidance on how uncomfortable and difficult life would be, without this instrument.

In the next sections of this chapter, the ideas discussed previously are identified, among others:

1. The definition of money.
2. A brief history of money.
3. The relevance of money.
4. The disadvantages of money.
5. The money and the happiness.
6. A world without money.

### III.1 THE DEFINITION OF MONEY

Then, **what is money?**

The money is an instrument of exchange, a medium of saving and is also the measure of the value of: a) goods and services, b) assets, c) wealth, and d) various economic-financial indicators (GDP, international reserves, etc.).

To-date, it can be used physically and electronically.

On the one hand, the primary definition of money includes: coins, banknotes or bills, amounts deposited in sight bank accounts (checkings and savings) and instant credit lines granted by financial institutions. All these resources can be used quickly (high liquidity).

And on the other hand, the Monetarists<sup>5</sup> insist on their broad definition of money, which also comprises those resources that can't be mobilized immediately (low liquidity). This includes deposits in other bank accounts (fixed term, trusts, etc.), bonds, drafts, checks, bills of exchange, obligations, credit notes, corporate stocks, and a big number of financial instruments and assets.

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<sup>5</sup> The Monetarism is an economic trend led by Milton Friedman, Karl Brunner and Allan Meltzer, which from the mid-seventies to the late eighties, was the predominant world economic doctrine.

It is extremely successful because it allowed the central banks of emerging and developed countries to reduce inflation.

In general terms, the Monetarists support the following aspects:

a) the main economic policy is the monetary (which can't be subordinated to the others and its effectiveness depends on the autonomy of the central bank),

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In practice, all these mediums are forms of money. Although some economists classify the money according to its availability (high liquidity), taking into account that the primary money is the “real money” and that any type of money that can’t be available quickly (low liquidity), constitutes the “quasi money” or “pseudo money” (in opposition with the monetarist approach that considers all these instruments as real money).

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- b) in the long-term, there are no stable links between inflation and unemployment,
  - c) the inappropriate monetary policies can be inflationary and cause unemployment,
  - d) in order to mitigate inflation and stabilize the economy, optimal monetary policies are required. Milton Friedman and some Monetarists prefer to implement certain rules (fixed policies that don’t vary in the long run, regardless of unexpected events; for example: the Federal Reserve sets very low interest rates, expecting to keep these at least for 5 years),
  - e) the inflation is originated primarily by a rapid expansion of money (considering the broad money: currencies, notes, bonds, corporate stocks, financial assets, etc.) higher than the GDP growth,
  - f) unlike inflation that requires measures by the monetary authorities, unemployment will return to its optimum level (the natural rate of unemployment hypothesis),
  - g) the Keynesian policies are unable to eliminate stagflation or contract very high inflation. In this case, it will be counterproductive to raise or decrease public spending and adjust interest rates,
  - h) the Theory of Economic Cycles (expansions and decreases) is questionable. There are recessions due to incidents not controlled by economic policies.
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**Summarizing**, the money is a medium that has three essential functions: a) exchange, b) savings, and c) measure of value (mainly price fixer). The modern technology has allowed its electronic use. In addition, according to its convertibility, there are two definitions of money: a) the primary or restricted one (coins, banknotes or bills, deposits in sight bank accounts and instant credit lines), and b) the broad or general (coins, bills, banknotes or bills, deposits in sight bank accounts and in other bank accounts, bonds, drafts, checks, bills of exchange, obligations, credit notes, corporate stocks, and a big number of financial instruments and assets). The money can also be classified as high liquidity or low liquidity (quasi money or pseudo money).

### III.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF MONEY

There is no consensus when money began to be used. Between centuries XXX and XXV B.C., in Sumer (Mesopotamia), ingots of precious metals were used as medium of payment.

In the Code of Hammurabi (written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), there are references to money. The Jewish patriarch Joseph (who lived between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.), was sold as a slave for twenty silver coins<sup>6</sup> (Genesis 37:28).

Since the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C., in China, tiny knives and swords of gold, silver and bronze were used as money.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the first minted coins were made and used in the Asian kingdom of Lydia<sup>7</sup>, and in Greece. China and India also produced their own minted coins<sup>8</sup>. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Phoenicians minted their coins and established payment deadlines (introducing the credit modality). Most historians believe that money originated during this time (between 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.).

Later, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., the Romans minted their coins. While in the Middle Ages, the European countries utilized their own currencies.

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<sup>6</sup> Possibly, these were not minted coins.

<sup>7</sup> Currently, this territory is part of Turkey.

<sup>8</sup> It isn't known, when the first minted coins of these countries were elaborated (7<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.).