

Thesis

The objective of the following is to broaden the ideas developed in the Declaration of Principles of the Humanist Party.

Before thinking about their origin or destiny human beings find themselves in a particular vital situation – a situation they did not choose.

Thus, human beings are born within a natural and social world plagued with physical and mental aggressions that they register as pain and suffering. As a result, they move trying to overcome pain and suffering.

As opposed to other species, humans can extend the possibilities their bodies have through the production and use of instruments or "prostheses" (etymologically: pro, in front of, and thesis to place)

In their efforts to avoid pain human beings produce objects and signs that become part of society and are transmitted historically.

Production organises society, and with continual feedback, society organises production. This is not, of course, the same as the social and natural world of insects where experience is transmitted genetically. This is a social world that modifies the natural, animal state of human beings.

This is the world in which human beings are born: A world in which their bodies are part of nature and a world that is not natural but social and historical – in other words, a world of production (of objects, of signs) which is fundamentally human, a human world in which all production is charged with significance, with intention, with 'what for'. Ultimately, this intention is to overcome pain and suffering.

Since human beings are characterised by having an expanded temporal horizon, they can defer responses, choose among situations and plan their futures. It is this freedom that allows them to deny themselves, deny aspects of the body, deny their body completely (such as in suicide), or deny others.

This freedom has allowed a few to illegitimately appropriate the social whole. In other words, to deny the freedom and intentionality of others, reducing them to prostheses, to instruments of their own intentions. Here lies the essence of discrimination: its methodology being physical, economic, racial and religious violence.

Those who have reduced the humanity of others have, through this action, necessarily provoked new pain and suffering, reinitiating the old struggle against nature in the heart of society, but this time against other human beings who have been turned into natural objects.

This struggle is not among mechanical forces. It is not a natural reflex. It is a struggle among human intentions. This is precisely what allows us to speak of oppressors and oppressed, of the just and the unjust, of heroes and cowards. Only this allows personal subjectivity to be rescued. Only this allows the practice, a meaningful practice, of social solidarity and commitment to the liberation of the discriminated, be they a majority or a minority.

At this point a definition of human beings becomes necessary. It is not enough to say "human beings are social animals," because other animals are also social. It is incomplete to define human beings as manufacturers of objects, possessors of language, etc. For Humanism, "Humans are historical beings whose mode of social action transforms their own nature."

If we accept this definition, we must also accept that human beings can transform their physical constitution. This is already happening. Human beings began this transformation with external prostheses which today are being placed inside the body. Human beings are changing their organs, intervening in their brain chemistry, fertilising in vitro, and also beginning to manipulate their genes.

By realising that all human beings find themselves in a situation, that this situation takes place in the natural world (the most immediate fact being the body) and in the social world; by realising that the conditions of oppression that a few have created by appropriating the social whole: an ethic of freedom can be inferred, that is, a willed commitment to struggle against the conditions that produce pain and suffering, not only in myself, but in others as well. The oppression of any human being is also my oppression. Their suffering is also mine, and my struggle is against suffering and that which produces suffering.

But the oppressor is not just satisfied with enchaining the body. The oppressor needs to go even further: to possess all liberty and all meaning and, consequently, possess the subjectivity. This is why ideas, thoughts and feelings must be "objectified" by the System. "Dangerous" or "suspicious" ideas must be isolated, locked up and destroyed as if they were contagious germs.

As things stand, human beings should claim the right to their subjectivity and to ask themselves about the meaning of their lives and to publicly practice and preach their ideas and religiousness or lack thereof. Any pretext that blocks the practice, research, preaching and development of subjectivity – that blocks or postpones it! – is the unequivocal sign of oppression that the enemies of humanity wield.

The following Theses, constitute the broadest foundations for the systematic body of ideas which we will call the "Humanist Doctrine".

The Theses do not stem from an "idea" or "belief" about reality. They stem from an analysis of human life as existence, in other words, concrete particularity.

This point of departure, which gives the initial direction to our theses, does not prevent us – just as in the cases of those sciences that do not stem from axioms – from arriving at an extensive system of understanding.

From a logical point of view, we affirm the method of existential analysis as opposed to any previous system of logic that, through inference, aims to arrive from the general to the particular; since, if there is no data about the particular, it is impossible to make universal propositions about it.

In this respect we restate the interpretation of categorical propositions, according to which, particular propositions have an existential character while universal propositions are only their negation.

Thesis 1. Human existence takes place in the world. It begins, develops and concludes in the world. Therefore, we can not assume a direction, a reason, or a purpose prior to existence without contradicting the aforementioned.

Thesis 1.1. Human existence begins at birth with the opening-up of intentionality towards the world as the first step of liberation from natural conditionings. From this point of view, we can not rigorously speak of "human existence" prior to birth.

Thesis 2. By "world", we understand all that is different from one's own body. However, we consider our bodies as part of the world. Body and world are given, factual, natural.

Thesis 2.1. Nature does not have its own intentions. Neither the body nor the world possess separate consciousness. Attributing an end to nature can be used as a device for understanding, but it is not derived legitimately from this proposal.

Thesis 2.2. Nevertheless, the world into which one is born is also a social world that is made up of human intentions.

Thesis 2.3. Only the sociability of the world has intentions. Nature is susceptible of being intentionalised, "humanised." In fact, society is both an agent and a receiver of humanisation, of meaning.

Thesis 2.4. Human existence is open to the world and acts on it intentionally. Existence can even deny the world radically through suicide and destruction. Existence can nihilise the world (and therefore nihilise the body, nature, and/or society), or it can humanise the world.

Thesis 2.5. Human existence, therefore, is freedom to choose between affirming and denying the world. Human intentionality allows humans to affirm or deny conditions, therefore allowing it not to be a mere "reflection" of those conditions.

Thesis 3. Society is historicity. Thus, the human being is personal and social history, and not human "nature". Nature affects only the human body, but not human intentionality. Intentionality defines that which is human.

Thesis 3.1. It is from the condition of liberty that human beings choose to accept or reject the social conditions in which they are born, develop, and die. No one can exist without confronting the social conditions in which he or she lives, and no one can avoid choosing among them. Not choosing among conditions is also a choice. The results of the choice neither confirm nor invalidate this fact.

Thesis 3.2. The notion of historicity arises from the confrontation with social conditions and is understood as preceding and continuing beyond one's existence. Thus, social activity is a continuous appraisal of history and is a commitment toward the future beyond one's personal death.

Thesis 3.3. Human existence develops amidst contradictions imposed by historical conditions at both personal and social levels.

Thesis 3.4. Contradiction has its personal correlation in the register of suffering. Because of this, when faced by contradictory social conditions, individual humans identify their suffering with the suffering of groups of humans that are subject to those same conditions.

Thesis 4. Social contradiction is the result of violence. The appropriation of the social whole by a part of the whole is violence, and this violence is the root of contradiction and suffering. Violence is expressed as taking away the intentionality (and, most certainly, the liberty) of others, or, in other words, it is an action of submerging the human being, or large groups of human beings, into the world of nature.

Thesis 4.1. The different forms of violence (physical, economic, racial and religious) are the expression of the denial of the human in others.

Thesis 5. In the field of interpersonal relations, the objectification of other human beings, that is, the denial (or appropriation) of all or some of the aspects of their intentionality, produces suffering. In all cases there are oppressors and oppressed, discriminators and discriminated.

Thesis 6. Personal and social suffering must be overcome by modifying the means of illegal and violent appropriation which have installed contradictions in the world. This struggle to overcome suffering gives continuity to the historical process and gives meaning to human beings because it affirms the intentionality denied to them by others.

Thesis 6.1. The results and development of the struggle for the humanisation of the world (natural and social) accumulate as progress. The different societies do not find themselves within the same framework or moment of process of development, they are rather in different paths of development. This means that the conditions for liberation are constantly available and are not within a distant future when the supposed "objective conditions" will take place.

Thesis 7. Finally, death seems to impose its nature on human intentionality, and its factualness – today unavoidable – appears to destroy all future and all liberty. The rebellion against this definitive fact and against sickness, inequality, and injustice is what gives coherence to human life. There is no logical need, within this framework, to force human beings to accept the triumph of the absurdity of the natural over intentionality and liberty.