

*Man is the principal cause of his crisis and the principal source of its resolution*

## BOOK REVIEW

# Man Alone but Central

**RAMON K. ILUSORIO.** *Human Involution.* Multinational Foundation, Inc. 287 pp.

**H**ow does one steeped in business, specifically merchant banking, view the human situation and the world? Can the concepts and principles, learned and applied in a mercantile endeavor, be extended on a larger whole to serve as the basis of a philosophical system?

Ramon K. Ilusorio was educated as an economist in the Philippines and abroad (Fordham University, University of Michigan, and New York University). He involved himself in the financial world, first by being part of financial institutions and then, subsequently, organizing Multinational Investment Bancorporation in 1972. Based on his work and from practical experiences, he synthesized the lessons learned and recorded them, at an admitted risk to himself, in a book, *Human Involution*.

Perhaps the title itself suggests the central theme of the book. Involution is a process, an inward process of change in man. As defined in the book's glossary of terms, it is a transformation of the human constitution, presumably from its negative to its positive qualities, and principally realized from within but assisted by the Support Systems. The author explains involution as handling a problem by turning inward; observing, interpreting data, and then constructing and offering solutions.

### Why Human Involution?

In the later pages of his book, the author posits that man alone should assume the principal responsibility of his development --that

is, man is the principal cause of his crisis and the principal source of its resolution. In other words, man occupies the central position of this philosophical universe.

### REMOVING BLINDERS

**M**r. Ilusorio resorts to the laws of physics as the basis of how to observe and explain realities. In lieu of what he termed as mechanistic determinism (derived largely from Newtonian and Galilean Physics and processes of Cartesian Logic), he postulates a new paradigm from the latter theory of quantum physics.

Thus, things are not very often what they seem to be, and perceptions based on appearances are frequently wrong. Change is permanent in all reality and hence, processes are more important than conclusions. Constant change always brings constant chance. Reality possesses an abundance of symmetries. Finally, everything is part of an integrated and complementary megasystem, so that any development in one being will have effects on all others.

The use of the quantum paradigm is crucial in the book's perception of reality and how man, thereby, accepts such reality and responds accordingly.

### THE VIEW OF THE PRESENT

**T**he book starts with the description of a crisis: a world in crisis plagued by both physical and social entropy. The physical world seems to be inexorably headed for total collapse due to a short-run prospect of a nuclear war; a medium-term danger of chemical pollution; and a long-term danger of ecological failure.

On the other hand, social entropy is the disintegration of human society itself. The author urges that this entropy should be arrested if only to delay, not accelerate, the disintegration of the physical system.

Furthermore, the author premised a general crisis of productivity in three basic institutions. These institutions are identified as the family, the community and the state. They are defined as basic for there, individuals are "grouped together to produce more economic, social and even psychic benefits for themselves than they could produce singly." None of these institutions, however, are turning out the results they had been established for.

The crisis does not end with institutions but continues with the individual. This time, however, man faces a crisis in his human constitution. These defects in man are that he

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is a short-term thinking creature with a narrow, fragmented view of life and a self-defeating attitude of sloth. Man, in addition, has a characteristic flaw of dishonesty, with an inordinate propensity for selfish judgment; and an overwhelming passion for competition.

The book pinpoints several support systems which ought to provide the guide for man's rational acts. Unfortunately, these support systems -- compartmentalized into education, religion and law -- are similarly in crisis. Instead of providing functional maintenance for the process of internal change in man, the support systems are in a crisis of impotence.

**REFORMATION, RETHINKING AND RESTRUCTURING**

**T**he gloom generated by the scenario presented is not left hanging by the author.

The book presents in its second part the elements of redesign. The author suggests reforming the support systems. Education should be a liberating process for the mind; it should not be used for brainwashing. The idea is for students to be taught with the basic skills and then be taught how to learn. As for religion, it should concern itself with man rather than with paradise. Religion should inspire and motivate man to transform his will into the ideal mode. Indeed, religion should emphasize utility -- that is, what is useful, rather than the standards of morality.

Law is likewise in need of reforms. It is more effective when it is not enforced. The book suggests that "if law establishes the framework within which man maintains a constructive relationship with his society", the resolution of disputes should be towards conciliation, reconciliation, compromise, concession, give and take, and splitting the difference. There is less emphasis on positive law but more on mediation.

The basic institutions should be restructured to produce synergy. The objective is for individuals to combine their productive efforts properly so that they can actually generate a value greater than the mere sum of what their separate capacity can produce. According to the redesign, "basic institutions should ideally operate under ideologies that are responsive, dynamic and communicable; within terms of reference that are commonly understood by all their members; with adequate treatment of all conflicts of interest: and by applying the processes of meritocracy to governance."

Man is the focus of all these efforts of redesign. But man also must rethink himself, his paradigm, his set of fundamental values and beliefs that allow him to view and interpret reality and the future. According to the author, "if our perceptions disappoint us, if our beliefs have disillusioned us, and if we have felt frustrated and depressed about reality, it is because our existing paradigms have failed us. If they have failed us, it is

preferably to rethink them before we attempt to change reality."

The process of changing our way of thinking in order to change ourselves is the starting point of human involution. Accordingly, "living life is more important than its purpose because how we live it determines what one achieves. How one gets there determines where one is going."

## FRAMEWORK AND FREEDOM

There are two other parts in the book. The third part of the book deals with the framework of governance in basic institutions. In this section, management of productivity through emphasis on the thruput process and on positive stress are discussed. The need for meritocracy in government is advanced to bring about institutional integration.

The final part discusses the basic precondition in the whole process of human involution. Man should have individual freedom for voluntarism. The author maintains that "societies where individual liberties are at a maximum, limited only by the extent of others' rights to the same liberties, are the most meaningful of all. Further, "in the manifestations of his liberties are contained man's most meaningful destinies."

## CONCLUSION

The book concludes with the statement that involution is the process of internal change that man must seek for himself and commit to now. Man must transcend his own nature and instincts to strive for the level of consciousness at which the individuality of his interests becomes subsumed to the collective, institutional interests not only of the family or of the community or the state, but of all mankind.

There are some interesting premises and postulates posited by the author in his book. They may hit the readers as controversial or novel. However, one thing is sure: Mr. Ilusorio does have definite ideas and a sure program of action on the human situation. He was able to construct a world view based on the notion that man, given the present crisis, can reverse the process of entropy through an inward transformation of himself. No doubt others may have arrived at such a conclusion. The difference lies in the content of such a transformation, since those other views may not have readily placed emphasis on a purely secular, rational change in man.



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