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PS'Антропологи 

*The world tried to capture me but it failed.
(Epitaph on the grave of G.S Skovoroda, 1722 – 1794)*

PS'ANTHROPOLOGY

Joint project of SREDA non-profit research foundation and BOGOSLOV.RU web-portal

The Main Question

How to preserve humanness?

Global changes over recent decades have had a significant effect on human nature. The way in which we receive and perceive information, in addition to our concept of space, time and one another, has changed. We have learnt to reprogram DNA and have solved many mysteries of the physical world. However, we have probably not come closer to a real understanding of ourselves. We propose that the preservation of humanness is a fundamental issue of current relevance to humanity. What will the future bring for mankind as a biological species? How tempting are the prospects that transhumanism and other movements of human nature transformation open up? What can enable us to remain human despite current and forthcoming changes? Our aim is to reflect on all such questions not as techno-optimists or techno-pessimists, but as anthropological practitioners.

Our Approach

We propose the following questions to respond to our key issue: we do not claim that they are universal or necessarily true

- «Being HUMAN» - **WHAT** does it mean? Religious and non-religious perspectives will be recognized and considered with equal respect.
- «Being HUMAN» – **WHAT FOR?** The concept of humanity will be examined with respect to time: dynamism, holism and the open (or closed?) life-cycle. A teleological approach based on “efficiency” and the meaningfulness of human life is determined by trying to reach a goal rather than a sequence of causes and effects of the past.
- «Being HUMAN» – **HOW?** How can one’s existence be understood considering the goals of human life? The spirituality (entelechy) of micro practices will be considered.

Methodology

Our intention is to collate expertise and practical experiences to consider how human performance may be continued in time and volatile civilizational conditions; to enable human beings to find themselves through new consciousness (or through one which may have been lost but is dormant; waiting to be found) and to see and realize more clearly the source of power for withstanding the challenges of today's world. In order to achieve all this, we intend to attract the attention of various audiences and find interlocutors to participate in discussion about human experience. We believe that, at present, such debate is impossible without addressing the experience and goodwill of representatives from different beliefs, religions, worldviews and ideologies.

How can we make this happen? Over the next few months we will be holding meetings, "brain storms" and interviews with a wide range of people. These will include scholars, practitioners, clergy members and experts in current methods of communication, in addition to our friends in order to assess relevance, feasibility and realizability of this project. At the same time, we will start to implement pilot projects in several cooperative directions.

Stages

STAGE 1: THEORY and networking

- Definition of terms. What do the words "human" and "humanism" mean? Enumeration of the anthropological concepts (images, symbols and approaches). On-line and off-line awareness-raising of the issue.
- Creation of an "active community" where results of the research and feedback are considered.

STAGE 2: PRACTICE and discussion

- A product for a broad audience
 - Realization of one's humanness; guidance and support, recognition and encouragement of "a human" inside oneself.
 - Spirituality in day-to-day practices: what are the sources of power enabling us to remain human in a changing environment?
 - Post-Secular health: physical, mental and spiritual.

Principles

1. **Openness.** Benevolent and explicit recognition of the terms human and humanness. Is it possible to hear “a buddy” in the word “anybody”?
2. **Pro-active attitude.** Religious wars are characterized by a lack of mercy that terrifies witnesses. Due to the liberal holdover of the Enlightenment, today we have unique opportunities to study postsecular (unsecular, out-of-secular) approaches and senses. How long will this remain possible? How long will “the civilization” tolerate “religious barbarism”? It is unlikely that we have much time.
3. **Hospitality** (philoxenia, *φιλοξενίας* in Greek). An equal respect for all wanderers, newcomers and foreigners. Every interpretation of humanity is a jewel in the common anthropological treasury. Our outlook comprises self-honesty when accepting and understanding one another.
4. **Kindness.** A teleologist is a kind person. What do we mean by this? Our project will aim to prove this among other issues.
5. **Peacebuilding.** Ideological wars are started by benefits and fed by ignorance. Governments and peacemakers are redundant - troops want to fight. Our peacemaking project is risky.
6. **Incompleteness.** We create space for research rather than seeking answers. Presenting in this space means giving it power.
7. **Bravery.** To be brave on the way to awareness of oneself means to be brave teleologically while exceeding our own limits. In the New Age, it was not popular to consider the purpose of life. A teleological approach should therefore be recovered. We are sure that the “image of a human” has sense, so a dialogue about human beings should start with a discussion of the goal and purpose of human life.
8. **Sense of humour.** We consider the project mainly as an experiment and would like our interlocutors to do the same. We will try to discuss the issues without too much gravity in order to avoid potentially blocking ideas and also to encourage creative and adventurous suggestions. Humour is a mediator to common understanding which is essential for cooperation in the present anthropological journey.

Team



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Appendix: Special project “Gallery of HUMAN IMAGES”

The key direction of the first stage of the study is the implementation of the special project “Images of a human”; the goal of which is to enumerate existing ideas. In this regard, we intend to hold cycles of interviews with experts; collect “images of a human” from all volunteers on the internet. We are going to collect opinions about the nature of human beings, current problems and threats to humanity and ways out of the situation from interlocutors with different worldviews, confessions, traditions and beliefs. In the first instance, the interviews will be in Russian; in future we would like to invite foreign experts.

- The resulting “gallery of images of a human” will be the subject for analysis and discussion. We will try to attract the attention of various audiences via both on-line and off-line tools such as social networks, presentations and the release of an almanac collection. We would prefer the format of a dialogue and discussion resulting in new anthropological consciousness, rather than that of lectures.
- The major objective is to move beyond the descriptive action and search for answers in practice. We are going to focus on the particular experience of humaneness problems solving. We intend to discuss problems that have currently become acute as well as older issues.
- The project’s web-page will include “images of a humans” by a number of authors. The aim of this is to help all volunteers who are ready to answer the given questions, therefore to share their views of a human. “Images of a human” will be collected in an open cumulative database.

Outcomes:

- An almanac collection of “Images of a human” obtained during the interviews;
- An open on-line “gallery of images of a human” and groups of followers on social networks.