

Outstanding Issues in Zubirian Philosophy for the 21st Century

Editorial

At the beginning of the 20th century, German mathematician David Hilbert posed his famous ten problems to be solved during the course of century. Hilbert's problems were intended to serve as examples of the *kinds* of problems whose solutions would lead to the furthering of mathematical knowledge. Hence, some were really areas for investigation and therefore not strictly "problems." During the 20th century many were solved, and though mathematics developed new ways of thought that made Hilbert's problems less important, they were (and are) a stimulus for much creative mathematical work. Taking a page from Hilbert's book, we would like to propose ten outstanding problems or topics in Zubiri's philosophy that would bear research and examination during the 21st century:

1. *Evolution*: Zubiri wrote one article on this topic in 1948. Since then new schools of thought about evolution have arisen, and many problems with the orthodox Neo-Darwinian understanding of evolution (assumed by Zubiri) have been uncovered. Because of the important cultural as well as scientific implications of evolution, a reworking of Zubiri's ideas on this subject in the context of his overall philosophy of sentient intelligence is called for.
2. *Explanation of the field concept* (campo): Zubiri makes extensive use of the concept of field, especially in *Inteligencia sentiente*. But the concept is never clearly explained and remains somewhat obscure. A comprehensive explanation of it would greatly clarify key aspects of his philosophy, including the notion of openness.
3. *Development of a comprehensive aesthetics based on sentient intelligence*: Zubiri began to develop a theory of aesthetics, but only laid the basic foundations in *Sobre el sentimiento y la volición*. He developed the notion of reality by postulation in literature, and the formality of reality associated with literary works. A comprehensive Zubirian theory of aesthetics would be useful especially in today's artistic environment, overrun as it is by hucksters and the artistic equivalent of sophists.
4. *More empirical confirmations of Zubiri's philosophical postulations*: philosophy is not an empirical science, but all philosophy is based on human experience to some extent—something upon which Zubiri relies heavily in *Inteligencia sentiente*. For example, it may be possible to show the three levels of sentient intelligence (reality, logos, reason) by studying the way infants develop. Zubiri himself made a few efforts in this direction, such as his Appendix I on possible neurostructures responsible for formality in humans. But much more needs to be done.
5. *Comprehensive theory of science and integration of Zubiri's thought with science*: Zubiri discussed science and mathematics throughout his ca-

- reer, beginning with the articles reprinted in *Naturaleza, Historia, Dios*. He addressed a lengthy book, *Espacio, Materia, Tiempo*, to some issues which overlap those of science, especially physics. He discussed causality in many places and his explanation of causality as functionality is well-known, as his distinction between content and formality. But he did not devote a major work to the question of how science integrates with philosophy and how philosophical knowledge impacts science in its methodology, its ground, and its scope. Such a work would inevitably have to deal with questions such as the limitations of science.
6. *Comprehensive ethical theory*: This is another area where the raw materials are present, but in need of further development. Obviously a Zubirian ethical theory must integrate both Zubiri's philosophy of sentient intelligence with his notion of essence, and include his ideas of sentiment and will from *Sobre el sentimiento y la volición*. This work will of course flow into the political theory work (see below).
 7. *Integrated political theory*: Zubiri never addressed the question of political theory, either with respect to the best political form or the reality of political entities such as states. However, his philosophy does provide the basic framework for such an elaboration, which will need to be done in conjunction with the comprehensive ethical theory discussed above.
 8. *Systematic theology*: Zubiri wrote on many key theological issues, but his theological work was incomplete at the time of his death. A systematic theology based on Zubiri's ideas would be an important contribution. Naturally it would have to be integrated with ethical theory and sentient intelligence.
 9. *Essence and genetics, system theory*: Zubiri developed a new, profound theory of essence in *Sobre la esencia*, emphasizing that essence is that from which a thing's characteristics must flow, but also that essence is characterized by self-sufficiency or stability. He speculated at one point that perhaps DNA could be identified with human essence. But science itself has moved in a similar direction with the development of system theory, so perhaps it is time to revisit Zubiri's ideas in light of these recent scientific advances.
 10. *Comprehensive explanation of reality in Zubiri, including reality by postulation in all its forms*: This cuts across all of the other topics, and would therefore serve as an integration tool. Zubiri devoted a short volume to the subject, but it was written before the development of his mature thought. A comprehensive treatment of reality across science, philosophy, political theory, ethics, aesthetics, and theology would greatly clarify Zubiri's thought.

This is the list proposed by the Xavier Zubiri Foundation of North America. We invite all readers to submit to us their preferred list. Utilizing these submissions, in the next issue we will publish a consolidated list of the ten problems and research areas deemed most important by Zubiri scholars. Please send your list to editor@zubiri.org.

Thomas B. Fowler