Clarion Review

Philosophy

Essays and Aphorisms on the Higher Man
Emile Benoit
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Five Stars (out of Five)

History has shown examples of man trying to pull himself out of his ignorant bliss and stagnancy, from the philosopher kings and Renaissance man to Nietzsche's Superman. A scant number of individuals have dared to become something more by the unremitting quest for knowledge gained from the arts, religion, philosophy, etc., and the implementation of this knowledge across the broad spectrum of their lives and the lives of others. According to Emile Benoit, a student and teacher of philosophy, humanity can go beyond Kant, Hume, Nietzsche's Superman, and the selfishness of Sartre's existential humanism. In a sense, he or she can become a "higher man." Benoit writes, "The evolution of the species will be when man can incorporate and digest all of his religions and live wholly, honestly and peacefully with himself and others…when he accepts all the religions, arts, and sciences as expressions of human greatness; a time when even the truth will no longer be an eternal proposition but simply an expression of mankind's prominence at making the incomprehensible understood—if but only briefly."

Essays and Aphorisms on the Higher Man is not a thinking man's "Chicken Soup for the Soul." The author does not deck himself out in a guru's garish robes while sitting on a pinnacle of dung heap offering a "better way" to the unwashed masses. With the brevity of Confucius, the beauty, depth, wit and wisdom of the poet Rumi, and his own succinct, lyrical language, Benoit writes about the human condition.

Constructed of thirteen chapters with apposite titles like "The State of Man," "The State of Death," "The State of Art," etc., and a concluding final chapter titled "The State of the Higher Man," the book contains the author's adroit humor and parental compassion for his fellow man without affectation or preachiness. His writing is a mirror to show our flaws and celebrate our potential for the brilliance we can aspire on the endless quest for purpose and meaning. There is

a catch though, Benoit explains: "… meaning is nothing more than an invention of man. As the eagle is most glorious in his habitat of the sky, so too is man in his search for meaning." Later, he declares, "Nothing is meaningless unless a man deems it so," showing us that humanity is its own worse enemy and its most benevolent benefactor. Man is a wonderful, contradictory enigma that can choose to roll in the filth with the other beasts of the field, or, like Icarus, try to reach the sun.

As readers progress through Benoit's ideas, they will find that, like in life, everything is related. That sudden tiny glimpse into the realm of the "higher man" can be shocking. To have the minutest sense of clarity–like a burst of light in a dark room that reveals only for an instant the contents and interior of the room and then expunged of illumination again–is indeed frustrating. One must read Benoit's work slowly, explore and study the source of his ideas—history, religion, sciences and the arts—to light up the unlit rooms and use its hidden treasures and tools and maps to become a "higher man."

Lee Gooden