Prologue

Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière's literature is of *vivencia*, an approach I have sought to reflect in this book. *Vivencia* is often translated into English as 'lived or life experience.' However, this may not reflect its actual meaning in Spanish. Its earlier definition conveys everything that a person oneself has lived (perceived, contemplated, thought, wished to do or left undone). Spanish philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) proposed as the nearest equivalent the German *erlebnis*, which possesses a strong active sense distinguishing it from the passivity implicit in conventional empirical accounts of experiences. *Erlebnis* does not simply denote having had an experience but conveys a sense of having already become entangled in the demands of this—worldly existence. Vivencia retains a certain degree of immediacy, but an immediacy which does not disappear in the flux of life. Rather, it retains its relevance in the achievement of a thorough understanding and sense of life. It cannot be diluted in semantic significance. People can have the experience, but not the vivencia, or have both and not heed the lessons learned.

Due to the subject's scope and complexity, I crave the indulgence of critical readers who might feel that the following text contains excessive generalizations. Over time, the topic of the ages of the world, and specifically R. de la Ferrière's insights into it, have been distorted, ignored, and dogmatically manipulated.

Sociological, psychological, religious, geopolitical, and environmental changes are unfolding before our eyes at unexpected speed. Transition and transformation have become buzzwords as society faces complex problems that are shrouded in uncertainty. *From Belief to Knowledge* provides a fresh perspective for understanding this transition, based on the thinking of Dr. Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière and his protégé and interpreter, D. Ferriz,

which enables us to understand current shifts with greater objectivity, subtlety, and wisdom.

This book intends to fill a major gap in the literature on R. de la Ferrière's thinking and to prompt further research.

In the academic world, and even among those who claim to be his followers, Raynaud de la Ferrière's thinking has been ignored or misrepresented. In this process, conscious or unconscious doctrines and ideologies, religious beliefs, and aspirations to power and authority have all played a part.

R. de la Ferrière's most important texts were written in French and translated into Spanish by David Ferriz Olivares under his direct supervision. He named Ferriz as the only coordinator and curator of his literature. The translations into English and interpretations of Raynaud de la Ferrière and D. Ferriz's texts are my own. I quote most of them not only to highlight their importance in a specific context, but to point out opportunities for future research. Whatever errors and shortcomings have crept into this project are entirely my own.

I aspire to showcase some of the range, depth, and complexity of Serge R. de la Ferrière's thought, which overall produced a literature of synthesis. In his textual analysis of sacred and other texts, he uses his own translations and interpretation of the classical languages (e.g., Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Sanskrit). His resort to etymology and deep meanings is highly noticeable throughout his work. His stylistic interventions in original sources were applied to terms with potent cross-linguistic currency. This nuanced approach serves to highlight his singular contributions to understanding and the innovative elements in his thinking.

Furthermore, the meanings of many words in the original have shifted. My hope is that readers will seek to understand beyond the mere words, and come to value the ideas outlined by R. de la Ferrière and Ferriz and other visionaries regarding questions surrounding changes in the ages of our world.

Beyond exegesis, this book focuses on the social implications as well the values associated with what Raynaud de la Ferrière visioned as our new Age of Knowledge. These values are urgently needed if a new humanity is to emerge, a humanity guided by reason and knowledge in the quest for human transcendence.

Description of contents

From Belief to Knowledge covers the ideological, doctrinal, and methodological aspects of Raynaud de la Ferrière's thinking and is divided into nine chapters.

The first is an introduction concerning human beginnings and evolution. One of Raynaud de la Ferrière's most important studies refers to the equinoctial precession and its sociological and geochronological implications. That is, the history of humanity is divided into phases classified as World, Age, Era, etc., and Great Ages of about 2,000 years that in terms of astronomical cycles are called precessional ages. These great cycles are marked by profound sociological, psychological and religious changes. He argues that our civilization is in the process of adopting thoroughly new social and religious forms. Metaphorically, it is being wrapped in a dress of unknown cut and colour.

He discusses science (from the Latin *scientia*, meaning knowledge) in the unlimited sense that includes both "accepted" and "rejected" knowledge, as well as religion (from Latin *religāre*, to bind together). This approach leads to discussions of sacred traditions and initiation principles.

In Chapter 2, the equatorial electrojet (EEJ) provides a massive and tacit endorsement of his conclusions. Equinoxes are not fixed: Every year the Sun cuts the ecliptic a tiny bit sooner than it did preceding year. This inexorable celestial motion then manifests itself in symbolic facts and concrete results.

A few examples of his avant-garde research from more than 70 years ago are discussed in Chapter 3. He approached both science and philosophy, but always sought to balance objectivity and subjectivity.

Chapter 4 focuses on transition. The salient characteristics of the Age of Knowledge (Aquarius) and the preceding Age of Belief (Pisces) are depicted in comparative tables and significant phases are identified. These encapsulate the distinctive features of each Age and also help us to identify the key characteristics of the transitional period and the potential ideologies of transitions. Precessional transitions can be inherently chaotic. Overall, the values of both Ages can overlap and new ideologies can emerge. The New Ageism that emerged and developed into a mutable and diverse set of practices is consistent with the broader patterns of religious and sociocultural change.

Perhaps one of the most revolutionary aspect of R. de la Ferrière thought is portrayed in Chapter 5. He posits an *epistemology of life* as necessary to analyze the different manifestations of what he called the Supreme Cause, or God. "Life" he says, "in its deepest sense is a dominion of precious investigations that should be appreciated for their true value: Those things we call sacred are exactly those that contain the most life." He projects a new concept of Divinity, in which the Supreme Cause contains the Non-Manifested and the Manifestation. His concept of Divinity is also enunciated as LIFE-FORM-THOUGHT, which is "the point of convergence or the end of all investigation." Hence, he provides a new subjective realization of universal existence based on scientific thought.

Each Age gives rise to a New Teaching, a new way of thinking. Several established cannons collapse and give way to new ones. Chapter 6 includes some comparative analysis of the fundamental teachings associated with specific precessional Ages. Retrospectively, his comments on the Emerald Tablet of the Age of Gemini are discussed, in which he equates the mystery of it with that of the Great Sphinx in Egypt. His proposal for a new hermeneutics expands current perspectives. Additionally, the historical sense of eternity, immutability and transformation evident before a new precessional age is tackled by turning to a very few key on the philosophy of history.

Chapter 7 depicts what he calls 'Yoghism' that he develops based on ancient traditional yoga. It is not a new philosophical school or brand of yoga, but rather a synthesis of all types of yoga. He posits a relationship between Yoghism and *jñāna*-yoga. Jñāna means Knowledge in Sanskrit and it is related to the Greek gnosis. Jñāna features *bhumis* (consciousness states), *dathus* (elements) and *nagasidhis* (faculties). The Upanishads (ancient Vedic sacred texts) proclaimed the superiority of jñāna Yoga. Ferriz sees this as aligned with our currently unfolding Age, in which people seek to reencounter foundational principles.

Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière's life itself manifested a synthesis, and his biography is dialectically discussed in Chapter 8. He accomplished his mission in three very different but linked stages. The experiences associated with each stage are methodically discussed with a focus on identifying certain fundamental aspects that reveal the characteristics of the new precessional age.

R. de la Ferrière is known in particular for founding the Universal Great Brotherhood (UGB) in Venezuela in 1948. Back to Europe, during his retirenment period (1953-1962), he produced most of his literature and readjusted UGB that it was interpreted as sectarianism. He even said that if, anonymously he would set foot in UGB, he would not be interested in becoming a member. On his own terms, "It is the limit that a founder would not recognize his own foundation." He devoted the last years of his life more to his first foundation, the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés Scientifiques (FISS), which he founded in 1947 in France.

Serge R. de la Ferrière died in 1962, after having established the principals in writing for his foundations. Chapter 9 portrays what happened after his death, as his disciples tried to continue his work even as underlying ideological tensions among them persisted. Ferriz brought his considerable intellectual and spiritual talents to re-establish UGB as envisioned by R. de la Ferrière, but his efforts were dogmatically contested by two other disciples. In October of 1990, Ferriz lead what was termed an 'Exodus of Knowledge' from UGB to safeguard R. de la Ferrière's thought.

Note on capitalization

Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière occasionally used neologisms to better convey meaning, as well as other editorial devices such as capitalization; whole words and even small phrases in uppercase; bold and italics for emphasis; and ellipses to denote silence in various forms to convey gaps in knowledge as well as the limits of language when trying to describe the nature of existence.

To honor the creative ways he used language in his writing, throughout the text certain words and phrases are capitalized in some circumstances but not in others. Initiation is written with an initial capital—Initiation—when referring to high Initiates; in all other uses it describes generic initiation and so is written with a small "i". Similarly, we find other words capitalized that include, but are not limited to, Religion [religion], Sacred [sacred], Science [science], Yoga [yoga].