The troubled beginning of the third millennium has witnessed a spectacular series of hazards. Humanity seems to be experiencing a rather difficult period of its history. This can be attributed to a variety of factors, including a significantly violated balance of the global society–environmental system, the burden of accumulated social disparities, and, mostly, numerous drawbacks in the prevailing way of life, with the faults of the entire international civilization being rooted in human nature itself. Sometimes humanity seems to waver in the face of this “sea of troubles” and the problem acquires an eschatological dimension, as the very survival of humanity is challenged [1]. But even if the problem statement is not so dramatic, it is still clear that the situation is close to critical. Drastic measures must be taken without delay to save the planet and humanity before it is too late…

This unambiguous warning is by no means new. It has been openly and publicly expressed. I mean here the first book by Aurelio Peccei, the founder and the first president of the Club of Rome, which was published as early as 1969 with the title “The Chasm Ahead” creating a burst of anxiety [2, p. 12]. Needless to say, we have only come closer to the edge of this chasm… And at the same time we are cheerily marching on, seemingly unaware of the fact that our next step could be the last one. Society seems to be spiritually blind and deaf. We do not want to see the evidence and ignore all the warnings.

No particular person is meant by all of the above-said, we certainly address humanity as an integrated subject of world history. Laying the foundations of the theory of the noosphere [3], V.I. Vernadskii conferred on the world community the huge historical responsibility for the fates of the entire human race and even the planet as a whole, because Man is the genuine agent of the mind and this is his objective mission.

The most typical characteristics of our time, which determine many human calamities (or at least difficulties and hardships), primarily include two main factors—global problems and the adverse effect of globalization [4, 5]. The globalization process, as has been repeatedly noted, is controversial in itself: along with historically positive moments it also includes negative consequences, making the world community pay a high price for its progress. The bipolarity of globalization clearly reflects the light and dark of the real development of humanity at a time of increasingly manifested global trends in society.

In analysis of specific events in the international arena, attention is usually focused on their outline based on certain material factors (such as, for instance, warfare, man-made hazards, and acts of terrorism or humanitarian assistance in disaster areas). It is much more difficult to look deeper and see people’s motives, desires, incentives for the actions of social forces, i.e., phenomena of a spiritual nature behind the superficial outline of events. These two aspects of reality, however, are ever interacting and are of great importance in society. The sphere of man’s spiritual values and intentions at all times has been, figuratively speaking, a significant and active “co-author” of history. This article is an attempt to draw the readers’ attention to this very aspect of world development in the globalization era and also to its interrelations with the information sphere and the progress of informatics. It would be logical, however, to begin this analysis with some fundamental consideration of a general character.

1. MAN’S SPIRITUAL LIFE: HISTORY AND MODERNITY

Such notions as “psyche,” “spiritual life,” or “spiritual value” to the first approximation are common knowledge. Their everyday meaning is evident because it is etymologically connected with the spirit (and man’s soul). Actually, however, understanding those two phenomena is a complex problem of philosophy and ideology. All the world’s religions (as well as other beliefs) vary in interpreting these concepts, although we will skip discussion of this aspect here and try to bring the entirety of those ideas and concepts to a uni-
versal pan-human and pan-civilizational understanding. We will proceed from the fact that in the context of modern philosophy spirituality is “a category of human existence reflecting man’s ability to create culture and capacity for self-actualization.” Understanding the nature of human existence through the categories of “spirit” and “spirituality” means that, in addition to cognizing and reflecting the surrounding world, man can also create it. The creative abilities of man as a spiritual creature show that he is endowed, not only with reason, but also with a volitional attitude to reality. “The spirit as an interaction of reasoning, contemplative, and volitional processes is continuously objectified in artifacts that create the world of culture. Spirituality emerges as an integrated category expressing the theoretical and cognitive, artistic and creative, and moral and axiological activities of man” [6, p. 179].

Accordingly, the spirit is the “potential of creative activity, the conversion from the state of things to the state of ideas (and vice versa), which is continuously taking place within an activity. The spirit characterizes an individual’s self-actualization, his ability to recreate himself in the world of objects (and, in particular, culture) and deobjectivate this world through a creative personality” [6, p. 177]. For a more adequate interpretation of those theoretical statements it is important to take into account that the employed definition of culture is extremely wide—understood as the entirety of material and spiritual values created by humanity in the past, present and future [7, p. 2].

The most important ontological characteristics of the spirit are its ideality, nonmaterial nature (incorportivity and fundamental imperceptibility by sensory organs), gnostic (cognitive) plenitude, mandatory moral intentions, i.e., its orientation with respect to the opposition of good and evil.

Importantly, it is man’s spirit that makes him human and distinguishes him from all the other entities in the universe, singling him out in the universe. The spirit is the manifestation of man’s internal “Ego,” which is intrinsically connected with the personality and its self-consciousness. Spirit may be called the most important personal absolute; at least this is the way it is interpreted in the western culture of the recent centuries.

The above, as we believe, casts additional light and elucidates such notions as spiritual life, psyche, spiritual values, and spiritual culture. It should only be noted that in all these cases the subject may be both a specific individual (man, personality) or a collective or social entity of any nature (according to discriminatory criterion) or hierarchical level. This could be, for example, a class or estate, demographic group, nation, race, any ethnocultural or social community, and, finally, all of mankind at a particular stage of history.

What can be said about a man’s spiritual life in the past and at present?

First of all, let us turn to the first stage in time immemorial, the trace of which is lost in the chain of centu-