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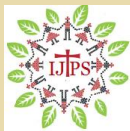


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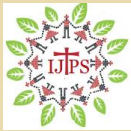
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Preface

The 11-th issue of International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science (November 2022) presents scientific and theoretical articles on various aspects, all of them centred on the area of Philosophy, Theology, and Science.

In the first article: FREE-FALLING DESCENT INTO EPIPHANY OR APOCALYPSE STEPHEN KING – A FAIRY TALE, Prof. Dr. Jacques COULARDEAU explains the actual direction in more than 70 books of Stephen King. He systematically mixes the various genres of horror, fantasy, suspense, mystery, science fiction, etc. His reach is a lot wider than plain horror.

The next article is called: A CRITIQUE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SUBJECT: TOWARDS RELATIONAL INDIVIDUALISM. The bifurcation between holism and individualism is essential to understand the contemporary debate in political theory. In this article Ph.D. Eskendir Sintayehu KASSAYE argued that both traditional and modern societies have elements of holism and individualism.

The next study, by Kevin STEVENSON, presents THE EMBODIED FLUENCY MODEL: UNCANNINESS BETWEEN THE MERE-EXPOSURE EFFECT AND ANGST. Human beings can be said to naturally seek familiarity in their environment for survival purposes, and this can explain why the mere-exposure effect, where being merely exposed to external factors in our environment, can increase preference for these factors.

SHOULD WE BELIEVE IN MORAL REALISM? ON THE BURDEN OF JUSTIFICATION OF MORAL REALISM IN MORAL DISAGREEMENTS is the article presented by Shuoning ZHANG. Moral realism and moral relativism are two influential dogmas in moral philosophy. This paper examines relativism's possible position and the burden of justification of a particular form of realism in the problem of moral disagreement. This paper concludes that neither position is morally acceptable, and this paper further offers a hint to a middle way: moral pragmatism.

AN INTERPRETATION OF ADAM'S FALL IN THE LIGHT OF FAR EASTERN PSYCHOLOGY is the scientific research presented by Prof. Ph.D. Bharat JHUNJHUNWALA. One must not pursue a concordism or discordism of theology and science but their dialogue toward creating a mutual understanding. In the research author make an effort in this direction by reinterpreting certain Hebrew words in the narrative of Adam; and by bringing insights from far eastern psychology into play.

Luminița Mihaela DRĂGHICESCU and Ioana STĂNCESCU propose for our readers the educational research entitled: TEACHERS' REPRESENTATIONS AND BELIEFS ON EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING. Children's participation to education is an important concern for the entire educational system, for policy makers, but also for organizations, institutions, employers, etc. interested in what is happening in education, without necessarily being part of this system.

The scientific content presented in the current issue of International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science is very actual and diverse. In this line, disciplinary and interdisciplinary works related to philosophy, especially philosophy of religion, metaphysics, and philosophical ethics. IJTPS provides the opportunity to examine the altogether truth-claims found in theology, philosophy and sciences.

Prof. Ph.D. Marian BUGIULESCU,
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FREE-FALLING DESCENT INTO EPIPHANY OR APOCALYPSE STEPHEN KING – A FAIRY TALE

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ABSTRACT

Stephen King has published more than 70 books, many of them adapted to the cinema and television, some original series with no published scenario, except Storm of the Century in 1999. His reach is a lot wider than plain horror. He systematically mixes the various genres of horror, fantasy, suspense, mystery, science fiction, etc. I will only consider his latest stand-alone novel with no co-author, and not part of a series like Gwendy's Final Task, also published in 2022, co-authored with Richard Chizmar.

I will show the style uses some patterns to build the architecture of the story, in this case, ternary structures at all levels of story and style. This ternary pattern is borrowed from the Bible and many fairy tales collected by the Grimm Brothers. The ending brings up a problem: it locks up the two deep and deeper levels with a concrete slab, thus breaking the ternary topography. Is it meaningful about Stephen King's fiction, or is it only suspending the situation in order to produce a sequel by reopening the passage under the concrete slab, or when Gogmagog manages to escape the deeper level and to invade the human world?

That's Stephen King's mystery. His fiction is so popular and has been so much exploited on the various screens that we wonder if this multifarious fiction will survive the author, even with his two sons to promote and prolong the fame of his fiction when it becomes necessary.

Keywords: *horror; fantasy; black magic; Bible; Revelation; Gogmagog;*

INTRODUCTION

This latest novel published by Stephen King in 2022 could be seen as one more story of a world underneath our own world like in *The Dark Tower*, but this world below, under ours, does not suffer because we are doing unethical things in our world, which would cause some mishap and some distortion if not destruction in the lower world. Not at all.

I am going to follow several lines of interest, angles of approach, or attack, of the story. I am trying to find out if this story has a particular formula that makes it mesmerizing or simply interesting to people because that formula is in phase with an extremely deep pattern in our own psyche or cultural vista.

This study is not exhaustive. It just wants to show the fictional light that makes us behave like night butterflies or moths attracted by a light, to the point of getting destroyed when this light is a flame. Monarch butterflies are essential in this book. Butterflies are the emblem of the lower world known as Empis.

I was all the more intrigued by this novel because of the Biblical reference at the very start of this story. Stephen King is not known for his religious affiliation or religious references in his fiction. This book is an exception. But to set this Biblical reference we are



going to explore in detail, I would like to quote Stephen King on the subject of religion, and the way he expresses his views in the periodical Rolling Stone.

Switching gears, your new book *Revival* talks a lot about religion. Specifically, one of the two main characters is a reverend that turns on God when his family dies but also delivers a sermon about why religion is a complete fraud. How much of that sermon mirrors your own beliefs?

My view is that organized religion is a very dangerous tool that's been misused by a lot of people. I grew up in a Methodist church, and we went to services every Sunday and to Bible school in the summer. We didn't have a choice. We just did it. So, all that stuff about childhood religion in *Revival* is basically autobiographical. But as a kid, I had doubts. When I went to Methodist youth fellowship, we were taught that the Catholics were all going to go to hell because they worship idols. So right there, I'm saying to myself, "Catholics are going to go to hell, but my aunt Molly married a Catholic and she converted, and she's got 11 kids and they're all pretty nice and one of them's my good friend – they're all going to go to hell?" I'm thinking to myself, "This is bullshit." And if that's bullshit, how much of the rest of it is bullshit?

Did you relay any of your doubts to your mother?

Jesus, no! I loved her. I never would have done that. Once I got through high school, that was it for me. When you see somebody like Jimmy Swaggart and he's supposed to be this great minister touched by God, and he's paying whores because he wants to look up their dresses, it's just all hypocrisy.

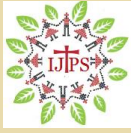
All that said, you've made it clear over the years that you still believe in God.

Yeah. I choose to believe in God because it makes things better. You have a meditation point, a source of strength. I don't ask myself, "Well, does God exist or does God not exist?" I choose to believe that God exists, and therefore I can say, "God, I can't do this by myself. Help me not to take a drink today. Help me not to take a drug today." And that works fine for me.

Do you believe in the afterlife?

I don't know. I'm totally agnostic on that one. Let's put it this way, I would like to believe that there is some sort of an afterlife. I do believe that when we're in the process of dying, that all these emergency circuits in the brain take over. I base what I'm saying not on any empirical evidence. I think it's very possible that when you're dying, these circuits open up, which would explain these whole white-light phenomena – when people clinically die and they see their relatives and stuff and say, "Hello, it's great to see you." (ANDY GREENE, "Stephen King: The Rolling Stone Interview, The horror master looks back on his four-decade career," October 31, 2014, <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/stephen-king-the-rolling-stone-interview-191529/2/>.)

This is an excerpt from his interview, in no way edited, the way it was published in 2014. The only comment I will make is that he knows his Bible, at least some of it and that in general, he is very critical. Think of Carrie's mother who is a Christian fundamentalist and think of the consequences of such an ideology. *Carrie* was the first novel published by Stephen King, but you find such fundamentalist or perverse priests and preachers in many books, including pedophiles like the evangelist psychopath Robert Gardner in *The Talisman*, a book with a surface human world, and a deeper replica of it in which all humans in the surface world have a "twinner" in the deeper world. This book was written by Stephen King in collaboration with Peter Straub and published in 1984, with a sequel, *Black House*, published in 2001. Now we can get into this here Fairy Tale.



1. THE BIBLICAL REFERENCE

In fact, the evil that is happening in the lower world in this book is caused by one member of the royal family, in fact, one son of this royal family who was severely handicapped by “nature” since he was born with two deformed feet and a hump on his back. It might have been interesting to know why nature made this man, Elden, that physically unfit, or misfit, but this last son of the royal family is rejected by all the other children and members of the family, except the youngest daughter Leah who protects him and plays with him, but to no real avail. What has to happen happens. In their game in the castle and capital of this lower world, known as Empis, they discover a deeper level that should be off-limits, but what can be kept off-limits for children? It is very difficult to reach, but there, a Dark Well goes even deeper and the evilest character lives down there, Gogmagog (mentioned on page 109), directly borrowed from the Biblical *Book of Revelation*, chapter 20:7-10 (the reference is mentioned but with no verse and chapter specifications page 110).

“The Judgment of Satan

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—**Gog** and **Magog** [*Ezekiel*, 38:2, “Gog and the country of Magog”]—and to gather them for battle. In number, they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (*Revelation*, 20:7-10)

In fact, the standard reference to Gog makes him connected to a territory Magog, whose king he might also be. In *1 Chronicles* 5, he is identified as the second son of Joel:

⁴ The descendants of Joel:

Shemaiah his son, **Gog his son** [my emphasis],

Shimei his son, ⁵ Micah his son,

Reaiah his son, Baal his son,

⁶ and Beerah his son, whom Tiglath-Pileserking of Assyria took into exile. Beerah was a leader of the Reubenites. (*1 Chronicles* 5:4-6)

But in *Ezekiel* 38-39, Gog is provided with a role that is quite typical of the Old Testament and how God punishes his people, Israel, when they do not do what he wants them to do. Ezekiel is a prophet recognized by the three Abrahamic religions. In the Biblical book *Ezekiel*, he is identified as the Son of man. I will not quote the two chapters, but I will give a few verses, emphasis on Gog and Magog, mine.

38 ¹ The word of the Lord came to me: ² “Son of man, set your face against **Gog**, of the land of **Magog**, the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal; prophesy against him ³ and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, **Gog**, chief prince of Meshek and Tubal. ⁴ I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. ⁵ Persia, Cush, and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, ⁶ also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you. [...] ¹⁴ “Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to **Gog**: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: In that day, when my people Israel are living in safety, will you not take notice of it? ¹⁵ You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. ¹⁶ You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers



the land. In days to come, **Gog**, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I am proved holy through you before their eyes. [...] ¹⁸This is what will happen on that day: When **Gog** attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign Lord. ¹⁹In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. [...] ²²I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones, and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. ²³[...]

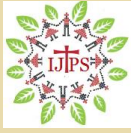
³⁹[...] ⁶I will send fire on **Magog** and on those who live in safety in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the Lord. [...] ¹¹“On that day I will give **Gog** a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east of the Sea. It will block the way of travelers because **Gog** and all his hordes will be buried there. So, it will be called the Valley of Hamon **Gog**. [...] ¹⁷“Son of man, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: ‘Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood. ¹⁸You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls—all of them fattened animals from Bashan. [...] ²⁵“Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will now restore the fortunes of Jacob and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name. [...] (*Ezekiel*, 38-39, excerpts)

We could compare this with the role Gog and Magog play in the *Book of Revelation*. It is very similar: Gog and Magog, hence Gogmagog, is or are the tool(s) used by God to force all those who do not submit to God’s rule to reveal themselves in order to be destroyed. Gogmagog is slightly different in Stephen King’s book. In fact, he is not specified in any way, except that he is living at the bottom of this Dark Well, a sort of inverted Dark Tower, going down ever deeper as opposed to the tower that stood tall, at the end of the trail or pilgrimage or picaresque journey, on the horizon. But this Biblical context is obviously present, directly referred to, and the “banquet” after God’s victory on Gog and Magog is openly cannibalistic. It is not a sheer human sacrifice. It is a vast and multiple, quasi-collective, human sacrifice with only one intention: to eat their flesh and drink their blood. It is not in any way metaphorical, and Stephen King in this novel describes horror in no way as a metaphor: when a character is cut up in pieces, that character is really cut up in pieces, even though he is only a fictional character. It might be a metaphor in our minds, but in the story, it is not a metaphor because it is part of the storyline without which there is no story.

When this is said, when this reference is cleared, Stephen King sets the objective of containing Gogmagog, not destroy him, to his main character, no Gunslinger Roland here, but Charlie Reade, and this seventeen-year-old Junior Highschool student demonstrates in the book that he learns fast how to sling a gun and how to use many weapons very effectively.

2. THE FAIRY TALE REFERENCE, GRIMM AND JUNG

The reference to various fairy tales is constant all along in the book. The explicit reference to *Jack and the Beanstalk* (page 107) is repetitive. Charlie though is not going up the beanstalk but down the beanstalk that is a spiral staircase in the back garden shed of Mr. Harold Adrian Bowditch going down into another world called Empis where there is a lot of magic, gold of course, and a very dangerous situation that is imposing a curse on most people in this deeper world, what they call grayness, or the gray. Only very few remain whole and are not infected by this disease, but then they are hunted, captured, and put in



some dungeon to be trained for a final gladiatorlike fight with lethal weapons, two by two, in an arena, and the objective is to the death of one per pair, the loser of course. This can only happen when there are thirty-two prisoners. When Charlie is captured, he becomes the thirty-first prisoner. This shows you the radical twisting this *Jack and the Beanstalk* story goes through.

But this reference is centered on the famous mantra: “Fee, fi, fo, fum, I smell the blood of en Englishman” (page 108). And this mantra is at once attributed or related to *King Lear*, Act 3, Scene 4, the concluding remark from Edgar:

“Child Roland to the dark tower came,
His word was still Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man.”
(*King Lear*, Act 3, Scene 4, 172-175).

Note how this reference brings in the Gunslinger Roland and his long journey to the Dark Tower. This is a reference to a series of books by Stephen King, but Stephen King never hesitates to refer to his own books and characters. But this reference leads us to the Brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm who collected popular tales, some fairy tales, others pure horror, in German-speaking countries in the 19th century. Stephen King often alludes to the very horrible and at times gross and nauseating original versions of these tales that we seem to only know in their polished, simplified, and pacified versions rewritten or edited by other authors after the Grimm Brothers. Cinderella’s vengeance that makes her stepmother dance to death wearing red-hot metal shoes on her feet is one of these nice endings. From the Grimm Brothers themselves:

“At first, she did not want to go to the wedding, but she found no peace. She had to go and see the young queen. When she arrived, she recognized Snow-White, and terrorized, she could only stand there without moving. Then they put a pair of iron shoes into burning coals. They were brought forth with tongs and placed before her. She was forced to step into the red-hot shoes and dance until she fell down dead.” (*Grimms Household Tales* 1857) [Tuesday, August 27, 2013, “A Real Life Glimpse Into Snow White's Revenge,” <http://fairytalenewsblog.blogspot.com/2013/08/a-real-life-glimpse-into-snow-whites.html>, posted by Gypsy Thornton on 27.8.13]

But the most important reference in this book is to the fairy tale *Rumpelstiltskin*. It is even embedded into the story by referring to the Little Rumpel River (page 2) which has a bridge that was dangerous a long time ago and on which Charlie’s mother was killed by a truck when he was still a young child. It is said the driver of the truck was not considered in any way accountable for this death because he did not make a mistake and was going very slowly. Pure circumstantial death. Yet this death determined Charlie’s life in many ways. More later. But the repetitive reference to Rumpelstiltskin finds real roots in this fatal event, at least for Charlie.

The reference to this particular story is extremely interesting because of its rich history.

Rumpelstiltskin, etymology, from German *Rumpelstilzchen*, possibly from German *rumpeln* meaning "make noise" and *Stelze* meaning "stilt", combined with the diminutive suffix -chen. It has been suggested that it was inspired by a children's game *Rumpele stilt oder der Poppart* mentioned in Johann Fischart's 1577 book *Geschichtklitterung*. (<https://www.behindthename.com/name/rumpelstiltskin>)

Historical note from Dr. Oliver Tearle: “It was famously included in the 1812 volume *Children’s and Household Tales* by the Brothers Grimm (a book that’s better known



as Grimms' Fairy Tales), but many of the tales written down by the German siblings were of a considerable vintage by then.

“The surprising thing is that the story of Rumpelstiltskin – albeit under a different name – is thought to be some 4,000 years old. To put that in perspective, that’s over a thousand years before Homer, and roughly contemporaneous with the earliest surviving versions of the tales that comprise the Epic of Gilgamesh, widely regarded as the oldest epic. Rumpelstiltskin, in summary, is one of the earliest known narratives in Western literature.”

<https://interestingliterature.com/2017/01/a-summary-and-analysis-of-the-rumpelstiltskin-fairy-tale/> From the blog *Interesting Literature* set up in 2012 by Dr. Oliver Tearle <https://interestingliterature.com/tag/oliver-tearle/>, Lecturer in English at Loughborough University, UK, and freelance writer. Dr. Oliver Tearle, short presentation, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=930901280312860>

But the reference to the story brings up a pattern that is often typical of fairy tales. Stephen King uses his seventeen-year-old character to bring up some references that a Highschool junior would probably not know, and certainly not have read extensively. The reference is purely circumstantial again. Charlie notices a scholarly-looking book next to Mr. Bowditch's bed and he provides us with the title and subtitle: “*The Origin of Fantasy and Its Place in the World Matrix* – what a mouthful. And *Jungian Perspectives* to boot.” (page 177) When you google this title and subtitle, you get the quotation from this very book by Stephen King and many other references, including two books by Jung, but never with this title. I would consider it is a trick to give some density, “a mouthful” of density, to Charlie’s exploration of Mr. Bowditch’s existence or personality. But, indeed, we can easily say that for Jung, fairy tales, traditional stories, myths, and mythologies were the production of collective human imagination and as such reflected very directly the unconscious of humanity that some call the collective unconscious.

That was the main difference with Freud who considered that the unconscious was produced within one personality, one person. But note Wilhelm Reich is not mentioned, thus keeping out of the discussion the sexual dimension of this “collective unconscious,” or personal Id (“the primitive and instinctual part of the mind that contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories.” <https://www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html#:~:text=According%20to%20Freud's%20psychoanalytic%20theory,id%20and%20the%20super%20Dego.>) We could discuss the term “mind” in this definition of Freud’s Id, but it is clear that Charlie despite all the dangerous and strenuous situations in which he finds himself with boys and girls alike is never, or hardly ever (and with no satisfaction) sexually motivated, or even stirred.

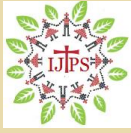
But *Rumpelstiltskin* brings in a pattern, I have said. Let us look at that pattern which is essentially spatial, maybe territorial, but definitely three-dimensional, and that is the main characteristic of this pattern.

1- First night, spinning straw into gold. **First** intervention of the manikin. **First** present: a necklace.

2- Second night, spinning straw into gold. **Second** intervention of the manikin. **Second** present: a ring.

3- Third night, spinning straw into gold. **Third** intervention of the manikin? **Third** present: the promise to get the first child when born.

At first, after the birth of the child, the Queen refuses to give it. Rumpelstiltskin gives her three days to find his name and if she does, he will forget about her promise.



1- **First** attempt to collect the **third** present: she gives the names of the three magi, wise men or kings,

1- **Kaspar,**

2- **Melchior,**

3- **Balzer.**

“That is not my name.”

2- **Second** attempt to collect the **third** present: she gives three rare names,

1- **Rippenbiest (Rib beast),**

2- **Hammelswade (Mutton calf),**

3- **Schnürbein (Lace bone).**

“That is not my name.”

3- **Third** attempt to collect the **third** present: she gives three names,

1- **Kunz,**

2- **Heinz,**

3- **Rumpelstiltskin.**

"The devil told you that! The devil told you that!" cried the manikin, and in his anger, he stamped with **his right foot** so hard that it went into the ground above his knee; then he seized **his left foot with both his hands** in such a fury that he **split in two**, and there was an end of him."

The ternarism is kept all along with great care, and when he is finally defeated by his own name, he steps out of the ternarism and becomes **so binary, so dual**, that he destroys himself with his own **two hands** ripping himself **into two** by pulling **his two legs** apart.

The worlds Stephen King is proposing, or mapping in this story have a three-tiered architecture.

ON TOP, the human world.

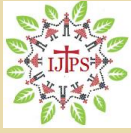
One spiral staircase (185 steps of varying heights, page 183) in one stairwell to go down to the next level.

SECOND LEVEL, Empis under the curse of Gogmagog or/and Flight Killer.

All sorts of stairs to go up and down from one level of this Empis world to another since the Empis of Flight Killer is mostly underground since the security forces, the Night Soldiers, are very weak in the daytime, but in the end, to go down to the deeper level, that of the Dark Well, Charlie and his friends will have to go up to the top of one spire of the castle or cathedral, and then down the second spire, and then enter into descending stairs and corridors, to finally reach the third level.

THIRD LEVEL, the Dark Well with the mouth of it in this deepest level of the second world, leading to Gogmagog in the dark world underneath (“another world down there. A dark one I never want to see,” page 537). We assume it refers to the prison in which Satan has been kept by the decision of God himself in the *Book of Revelation*.

No one can go down into this world, but one, Gogmagog, can come up out of it if someone is doing what's necessary for the hatch to be lifted for Gogmagog to come out. The hatch is already being lifted by a “natural” event: the two moons of this world are kissing, proving that when a binary element comes into play it is purely destructive. And the two moons implode and/or explode when they collide on this very special day.



3. TERNARY STRUCTURE: LOVECRAFT AND CTHULHU

But this ternary pattern brings up another literary reference, this time to H.P. Lovecraft and *The Call of Cthulhu*. (pages 291, 292, and 535, among others). The reference is fundamental. “Lovecraft’s favorite words [...] *eldritch* [weird and sinister or ghostly, my comment], [...] *ordure* [something regarded as vile or abhorrent, my comment], [...] *mephitic* [(especially of a gas or vapor) foul-smelling; noxious, my comment].” (page 293) Of course, three words are mentioned. “Elden [think of “Eldritch”] was this world’s Cthulhu, as surely as Dora was the old woman who lived in a shoe and Leah was the goose girl.” (page 535) You can see the ternary sentence with three characters and three references to fairy tales or H.P. Lovecraft, but we have to specify this Lovecraft’s reference slightly more.

We find the same basic architecture in this short story or novella by H.P. Lovecraft. The novella is a three-tier collection of documents on a fantastic entity known as Cthulhu.

The first phase is brought by a clay bas-relief. Henry Anthony Wilcox brought up, on March 1, 1925, to a group of archaeologists, a bas-relief he had executed in a trance within or just on the verge of getting out of a dream that sounds more like a nightmare. This clay tablet reproduces a monstrous figure with some glyphs on the edge.

The second phase is a report by police inspector Raymond Legrasse from New Orleans about a police operation to control some voodoo celebration in New Orleans, or rather in the swamps close by. The celebration is described as an orgy of violence, rhythmic drum playing, dancing, and sexuality. Less than a hundred people. Forty-seven were arrested. The police got some tale about Great Old Ones that existed before anything else and who have to be worshiped. They centered their rituals on an idol.

“The statuette, idol, fetish, or whatever it was, had been captured some months before in the wooded swamps south of New Orleans during a raid on a supposed voodoo meeting; and so singular and hideous were the rites connected with it, that the police could not but realize that they had stumbled on a dark cult totally unknown to them, and infinitely more diabolic than even the blackest of the African voodoo circles. [...] between seven and eight inches in height, and of exquisitely artistic workmanship. It represented a monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopuslike head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind.” (The Call of Cthulhu, ISBN 9798671208115, pages 14-15)

The whole episode ended badly with two men hanged in the name of justice and all the others of the forty-seven arrested people institutionalized for life as raving mad, hence dangerous. No regeneration, no reformation, nothing but let’s put them away till death can liberate us from them, or from the fear they inspire in us.

“Only two of the prisoners were found sane enough to be hanged, and the rest were committed to various institutions. All denied a part in the ritual murders and averred that the killing had been done by Black-winged Ones which had come to them from their immemorial meeting-place in the haunted wood. What the police did extract came mainly from an immensely aged mestizo named Castro, who claimed to have sailed to strange ports and talked with undying leaders of the cult in the mountains of China.” (The Call of Cthulhu, ISBN 9798671208115, page 23)

This idol is quite similar to the figure on Wilcox’s clay bas-relief. What’s more this cult brings up some “language,” in fact a formula: “Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.” Translated as “In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.” It is this formula that led the police inspector to William Channing Webb, a professor of



anthropology at Princeton University. He mentions a tour of Greenland where he witnessed some similar cultish rituals among some local Eskimos.

The idea that emerges here due to all the events that happened at a certain date, or within a certain period of time, is that this Cthulhu came out of where “he” was, and he then was calling during that period of time.

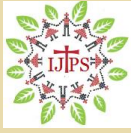
The third section of the novella is dedicated to what happened to the Norwegian naval officer Gustav Johansen and his crew in the Pacific in the same period in 1925. It is the testimony of the emergence of the city of R’lyeh from the ocean for a short period. This city is explored by Gustav Johansen and his crew and only two manage to go back to their ship, one completely berserk, and Gustav Johansen still capable to sail the ship. They were, the ranting mad man and the traumatized Johansen, rescued by some naval agency in New Zealand. They had been confronted by a monstrous being that is quite similar to Cthulhu, the idol of the other cases. But the period of time during which this call was heard and felt comes to a close and nothing remains, even in the memory of Henry Anthony Wilcox, except the clay bas-relief and the small idol from New Orleans.

It’s quite clear that this ternary structure and the description of Cthulhu is in direct phase with Stephen King’s ternarism in his book, and the “octopuslike head whose face was a mass of feelers, scaly, the rubbery-looking body, and the prodigious claws on hind and fore feet,” are in many ways similar to what Elden became when he got possessed by Gogmagog the first time, and we could think of the sketchy description of Gogmagog when he tries to get out of the Dark Well.

To conclude on this dimension of the novel and the various references we find to fairy tales or other existing works of imagination, we should mention Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798, page 253), with one stanza from the Sixth Part quoted in full; *The Wizard of Oz* quoted several times (*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a children's novel by L. Frank Baum illustrated by W. W. Denslow, first published in the United States in May 1900 by the George M. Hill Company. It became a successful 1902 Broadway musical as well as the classic 1939 live-action film); *Red Riding Hood* (Brothers Grimm, 1812), quoted once; the nursery rime *There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe*, first published in *Infant Institutes* in 1797; the red giant cricket known as the Snab alludes to a certain Jiminy Cricket in *Pinocchio*, a Walt Disney film in 1940; and numerous mentions of films, musical pieces, novels, and other books, not to mention the great number of allusions to other works by Stephen King himself. This list is far from complete.

4. TERNARY TRAUMATIC SUBSTITUTION

The whole book starts with the basic trauma in a family of three people, the mother, the father, and the son. The story starts with tremendous trauma for both the son, seven years old at the time, and the father. The mother is killed by a truck on a bridge over the Little Rumpel River, whose surface was not secure. In fact, it seems to be understandable that the city council should be accountable for this death, but we are in a rural area, and accountability is not always taken into account. The father just sinks into alcoholism and the son will have to take care of his father for several years, showing how deficient social services to protect minors in such situations are in the USA. In this obviously traumatic situation, the son is looking for a substitute father and he turns to God, though he does not seem to be a great believer. His prayer is, in fact, a promise:



“If you do that for me [my father would quit drinking], whoever you are, I’ll do something for you [...] Promise and hope to die if I don’t keep it. You just show me what you want, and I’ll do it. I swear.” (page 11)

This is a typical promise from a young teenage boy scout, but such promises from kids are tighter and more binding than any other promise from any adult. For the child, it is like a mental road from which he cannot step off, a sort of mental personal existential straight jacket that represents his very freedom seen as, not a submission to any one or anything, but as the true nature of his own personality, being. The child IS his promise.

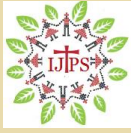
Then, we have a first substitute, God, who rebuilds the ternary structure: the alcoholic father, the caretaking son, and the miraculous God. And of course, a miracle happens but not with wind, storm, lightning, etc. but in the simple form of an ex-colleague (the father was fired because of his alcoholism) of the father who intervenes in the name of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous). This is a typical modern American miracle, based on the voluntary work of some people in many associations, or some people in many churches, who go out of their own way to help other people in their daily predicaments, most of the time, and in this case of alcoholism, practically always, because they used to experience these predicaments, and here be Alcoholics. These volunteers, before being volunteers, found some help concerning their predicament from the members of the circle they become attached to, and one of their missions and ethical promises is to look for other alcoholics and bring them, male or female, to the AA group in which they can regenerate themselves. And then Charlie Reade is the pivotal individual of two ternary structures

The father → Charlie → God (who becomes AA, or for whom AA is the miraculous tool)

The father → Lindsey Franklin (God’s tool) **→ Charlie**

This is going to determine a whole ternary trip for Charlie who will bring together a whole set of triple entities that all target the compensation of the trauma by providing Charlie with various ternary substitutions. And it is this ternarism that makes the story glue together and hold some truthfulness and veracity. That’s always the power of Stephen King. The style, meaning the architecture of the story and the language, provides his storytelling with the proper tune and tone that leads the reader to believe (or suspend their disbelief for a while) and enjoy the story, even if it is horror, fantastic, science fiction, or totally unbelievable in normal conditions. And we must keep in mind Charlie suffered two traumas: the loss of his mother and the alcoholism of his father. And yet instead of developing a case of Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, he rebuilds his sanity, brick by brick, moving from one ternary structure to the next, and even the first shift with AA is seen by him as his doing since he asked God to do it for him, hence in his place. All the others will be the results of his decisions.

At the top of the street (1 Sycamore), there is an old Victorian house that is inhabited by an older man with an aggressive dog – behind a fence though. The man is a recluse and very few people have seen him. The man hardly goes out, and he gets his commodities, from food to whatever is needed in a house, delivered by various shops or services. And yet, Charlie in his search for some kind of payback service to hold his promise, after picking trash from the close-by highway for a while, one day goes by this house known as the Psycho House, and hears the dog, not barking, but kind of moaning, whining, and behind this animal cry, a small human voice calling for help. The strange thing here is that Charlie does not even hesitate. He tries to open the gate but can’t. So, he goes over it, goes to the back yard and porch, and finds Mr. Bowditch on the ground. He has



obviously fallen from a ladder and his leg shows an open broken bone. The dog (she is female) is “taking care” of her master, and Charlie assumes he is the third element of this situation, and he has to save the man and call 911, which he does: his new regenerating ternary situation is, in fact, double:

Mr. Bowditch → the dog Radar → Charlie

Charlie → the promise → 911

And this double situation will produce another one

The father → Charlie → the dog Radar

And the miracle itself is a ternary situation that connects Charlie to three different entities, one being himself:

Charlie → 1- His promise, God (→ his father)

2- Lindsey Franklin and AA (→ his father)

3- Mr. Howard Adrian Bowditch (→ the dog Radar)

And we could even see the first of these ternary patterns (Mr. Bowditch → the dog Radar → Charlie) emerge from the last one as the direct production of this last one (Charlie → Mr. Bowditch → the dog Radar) by the inversion from Mr. Bowditch and Radar calling or whining for help to Charlie taking over the situation and calling 911. If the intervention of Lindsey Franklin and AA enabled Charlie to become or be again a top student and a top-jock in football, and baseball, but not in basketball, the intervention of Mr. Bowditch and Radar is going to change all that because Charlie expects the baseball coach to have empathy for him, the way he has empathy for both Mr. Bowditch and Radar. But a coach is a professional bully who does not experience and certainly does not express any empathy to his athletes, even if we are only in highschool, who are for a standard coach, too often, nothing but fodder for the Friday night games. That’s the picture given by Stephen King of this coach for whom the games are nothing but the gladiatorial games we will mention later in the depth of the capital of Empis, games this time to the death, the gamers really being fodder for the audience.

Thus, while he may entrust his father to Lindsey Franklin, he can take care of Mr. Howard Adrian Bowditch’s business while he is in the hospital and then at home for his physical therapy and healing, and the dog Radar who is a female. This triad then recreates the triad he experienced up to the age of seven, before the death of his mother. Mr. Bowditch proposes (a proposal that cannot be refused) direct employment to Charlie – and indirectly to the father – salaried US\$500 a week, plus benefits that include board and lodging but clearly and specifically exclude anything perverse, and this being verified by the father, the arrangement is approved by the three sides: **Mr. Bowditch → Charlie → Mr. Reade.**

You can see the dynamic of this situation that does not only concern living entities, but also the topology of Charlie’s territory with his own home with his father, then Mr. Bowditch’s house where he is going to spend a lot of time since he will be employed by Mr. Bowditch during his long physical therapy and healing process, and finally, the back garden shed that is padlocked up, in which there are strange noises, and at which Radar barks when these strange noises happen. And this shed which is off limits is, in fact, the center of the back garden lawn that Charlie trims and takes care of. This ternary territory can be seen as centered on Mr. Howard Adrian Bowditch’s property: the house (3 stories) → the back porch and the surrounding land from the front fence to the back garden, the specific territory of Radar → the back garden shed. This last element is the element he cannot visit because



Mr. Bowditch has declared it off-limits. And imagine the perfect ending of this territorial triad since the last episode, just before he has the ground surface of this back garden shed covered up with concrete, will bring Charlie's father down the 185 steps guided by Charlie but without Radar, for a demonstrative visit from very far, in fact never leaving the mouth of the cave at the bottom of the stairs, of this lower world he, Charlie, has told his father about. A complete shift of the ternary structure of the family home with Charlie and his father to the back garden shed's universe with Charlie and his father visiting, the first and last time for the father.

We have to understand that Empis has to be protected against the human world, though the danger and the curse that nearly destroyed Empis did not and do not come from the human world, but rather from an even deeper world. Then we can wonder if this concrete sheet over the spiral stairway is not targeting the protection of the human world against this deeper evil in the Dark Well that could invade Empis and eventually come up to the human world like the giant cockroach Mr. Bowditch had to shoot, causing his own death soon after. Nevertheless, this concrete sheet deconstructs the ternary architecture of the three worlds, and like Rumpelstiltskin when he becomes binary, we can wonder if we are not ripping ourselves into two dead halves by breaking the ternary architecture. We can wonder too whether we are not sterilizing our own imagination since we are burying the world of Fairy Tales under a sheet of concrete. Safety first? That is protectionism. Protectionism is bad for the economy, but it is suicidal for culture, the mind, dreams, imagination, and human spirituality. This protective ending has to be seriously considered, questioned, and discussed.

And if we discuss it seriously, then we have to consider the fact that, in literature, everything is symbolical and has a meaning that goes beyond the plain facts and the plain words used by the author. This protectionism, mind you in Stephen King's own words, to protect Empis from human intervention, if not colonialism, hence deculturation and other profit-oriented deconstruction, is cutting Empis from the human world but the people there are humans or at least humanoids who can speak English among other languages, who wear shoes and normal clothing.

This concrete slab is locking them up in what becomes a ghetto out of which they can't get, and into which no one can get, and with no possible communication with the outside world. At the same time, it locks away any kind of fantastic, magical, or supernatural reference and use in his fiction. Is Stephen King symbolically rejecting all that with this ending, and all that made Stephen King's books what they are? Is this ending a U-turn in Stephen King's inspiration and style that had been at work with some more recent books like *Elevation* (2019) where the weightlessness of the main character is pure symbolical magic for death seen as a big trip up into the infinity of the cosmos? We have to understand the magic of Empis has no presence or even real impact on the human world. The U-turn is already completed. The gold Mr. Bowditch probably stole and brought back from Empis is hardly significant, even if it is very useful to pay bills and make Mr. Bowditch independent and well-off. The only real impact is the rejuvenating of Mr. Bowditch and the dog Radar.

Keep these questions in mind, because now we are going to descend into the blackest and darkest magic of the book, of the kingdom of Empis, of the Dark Well abyss. We can now get into the discovery of the meaning of this lower world and its even lower Gogmagog extension.



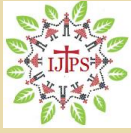
5. A TRIP TO THE DARK WELL

Some cataclysm happened some years ago. We will learn about where and whom it came from later. But first of all, Charlie has to discover the country where he is now, under below, with Radar, and his only objective is to take Radar to the magic sundial on which, if it turns anticlockwise, the living entity on it can go back in age. That's the plan for Radar who has reached the end of her normal life. The first lady they meet (Charlie had already come once and visited that lady) is Dora, the Shoe lady or the lady living in a shoe. That's how Charlie discovered the gray curse that makes people turn gray and little by little lose their various senses. Dora is losing the ability to speak, but she has not reached muteness yet. She repairs shoes that she sends then to her brother who distributes them to the people on the main road who have abandoned their old shoes at Dora's place and have been given a coupon for a new pair from Dora's brother down the road. Radar recognizes her and is very happy, though she is severely handicapped by her age. Dora is going to set Charlie and Radar on the road to the capital city of Empis, Lilimar.

They meet three people who are three survivors of the old kingdom, banned by the new leader. First, the goose girl, who is taking care of a flock of geese. She does not have a mouth anymore, just a hole through which she can straw drink her food. She can communicate via a horse, Falada, because she is a ventriloquist. We will discover later on she is the only surviving heir to the crown and throne and she was banned by the new leader who is her own younger brother turned malicious and monstrous by Gogmagog. Charlie and Radar meet then two other survivors of the old kingdom. Charlie meets the second survivor, Stephen Woodleigh, aka Woody, who is blind. He used to be the Regent of the kingdom. But of the seven children, only two are still alive: one daughter, Leah, who has managed to escape and has become a goose girl to survive, and one of the two sons, Elden, who was severely deformed at birth, two legs out of shape and one hump on the back.

He only had a relationship with Leah who does not want to believe Elden has become the monster that rules Empis. The third person from the royal family that has escaped the new king is Claudia, the aunt of Leah, the goose girl and heiress of the throne. This triad of three escapees connected to the royal family will be complete when we know that they explain to Charlie and Radar the great danger at night outside the city: as soon as the two moons appear in the sky enormous gangs of wolves start howling and rampaging the countryside for anything or anybody they could eat. Then the three survivors explain to Charlie the great danger inside the city, at night again: the Night Soldiers who are, in fact, living dead more than alive and are surrounded by a blue halo that makes them extremely powerful. Their power will be understood by Charlie to be electricity and the blue halo around them. That knowledge will enable Charlie, and a few people with him, to escape from the underground dungeons by destroying the Night Soldiers by throwing water at them. They fry in their own electricity, their own juice if we can say so.

But beyond these explanations, the ternary power these three survivors entrust Charlie and Radar materializes in the tricycle Claudia uses to go around. This tricycle, which has three wheels like all tricycles, is essential for Charlie to save time on the trip, and for Radar to travel like a princess in the luggage carrier made comfortable with thick and soft material. The last ternary element Charlie must know is the three bells that ring, the first one at dawn, the second one in the middle of the day, and the third one at night, when dusk is arriving, and night is falling. The first bell will tell Charlie when the wolves are gone, and thus when he can go to the gate and enter the city. The last one is crucial because it tells him when the Night Soldiers are coming out and can chase him and Radar. The first bell rings at



the same time as an enormous number of Monarch butterflies leave the area around the capital to migrate somewhere else for the day, and the third bell coincides with their returning to the area around the capital city, Lilimar, for the night. These butterflies are the emblem of the old monarchy and sculptures of them were everywhere in the city, but the new king or the new ruler destroyed most of them. The second bell is only to tell Charlie the middle of the day, and since his trip has to be one way to the sundial and then back to the gate and out, the second bell is crucial for him to know when he has to go back since, in his normal life in the human world, he gets his time from his smartphone that does not work here in Empis, and he does not have a mechanical rewinding wristwatch. You can note we assume with Stephen King the day and the night are similar in Empis to those in the real surface world.

On this trip, he follows the red painted signs AB that Adrian Bowditch had painted along the way from the gate to the sundial and back of course during his various visits, particularly the long one when he rejuvenated, on the sundial, his old body born in the 19th century into his own “son” by age, not by birth. He must also have used these inscriptions to navigate to the treasury’s gold reserve when he recuperated a pailful – if only one – of those gold nuggets or pellets that he kept afterward in his safe in his bedroom. Charlie and Radar will spend the night in a trolley depot where the old trolley used to be kept during the night. Charlie will encounter, on his way to the depot with the tricycle, another dangerous character, Peterkin, a dwarf, that Charlie discovers in the process of torturing a giant red cricket, known as the Snab. Charlie remembers how he treated the murderer, Christopher Polky, of the jeweler who bought Mr. Bowditch’s gold to cover the hospital bills, and then how that same Christopher Polky turned burglar in Mr. Bowditch’s house, failed to open the safe with the gold inside, but managed to abduct him when he came back from his first visit to Empis. It ended very badly for Christopher Polky because Charlie opened the safe, and brought the bucket of golden pellets out but, by accident on purpose, spilled them all out on the floor. Christopher just skidded and rolled on them, and he fell and lost his weapon. Then Charlie punished him by breaking both his wrists and releasing him “in nature” where he lived or squatted anyway. He will be killed later on, in some area where homeless people gather. But this time, Charlie does not kill Peterkin, though he liberates the Snab. Peterkin will get his vengeance by erasing the AB signs so that Charlie gets lost in the city on his way back and is captured by the Night Soldiers, whereas the rejuvenated Radar runs out through the gate, and she will go to Claudia’s.

Nature is providing, as I have said, another surprise. An enormous cloud of Monarch butterflies rises every morning at dawn and comes back every evening at dusk. These Monarch butterflies will be crucial at the end because they will attack the Night Soldiers who will fry in their own electric juice though quite a great number of the butterflies will also fry in this electric juice.

The only thing Charlie knows about the new ruler of the kingdom is that he is called Flight Killer. From the very start, he is told or at least indicated that this Flight Killer is probably Elden, the handicapped youngest son of the royal family.

Charlie is a whole individual, meaning that he is immune to the gray, and as such he is made a prisoner by the Night Soldiers when he is captured, and he is taken to the underground dungeons where he meets with thirty other prisoners, some women, most men. He will have to live in this community for some time and he discovers from the very start the objective of this “enslaved community.” They have to train to become gladiatorlike fighters to provide some circus games to Flight Killer and his two direct associates. First of all, the

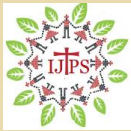


head of the guard or police, the leader of the Night Soldiers. This military, extremely vicious, and repressive individual is called Lord High, aka Kellin. He is a Night Soldier himself, and thus, like all Night Soldiers, he is wrapped up in a bluish envelope of electricity. He is only at his best in the dark and during the night, meaning, the real night outside. He can only get out of the underground prison at night. That is the reason why the gladiatorial games take place at night. In the daytime Kellin and the Night Soldiers are weak and their electrical envelope is very feeble. They are presented as being living dead, hence dead really but being able to live in their Night Soldier identity by some magical or devilish force that comes from the monster behind all that, or rather under all that, the one who is known as Gogmagog with whom Flight Killer got an agreement for him to become the king, and we understand that the proviso was that he will go down to the Dark Well and open it up when the two moons kiss, targeting the freeing of this devilish creature to reign unopposed on the earth, I mean at least in the world known as Empis.

The third character in this triumvirate is Petra, a woman, officially the consort of Flight Killer. She looks rather youngish, but she is the great-aunt of Leah, hence of Elden, hence of Flight Killer. Flight Killer has no legs anymore nor arms. He has a great number of tentacles. The model here is typically Cthulhu, the monster imagined by H.P. Lovecraft, though Lovecraft's version has no head, and the head has been replaced by a fair number of tentacles or feelers. Flight Killer is hiding his real physical recomposition with a vast cape entirely wrapping his body. Petra is his consort but that does not mean they have any sexual intercourse that would be highly incestuous, though the relationship, even if it is not in any way sexual, is perverse and can be described as incestuous.

Every two or three days, the prisoners are supposed to train in the circus, stadium, arena, or whatever you may call it, but it is only training, so no death is allowed, but some brutality is required. When they finally turn thirty-two with the arrival of one more prisoner, Cla, an enormous character in size, but very limited in brain. He has a severe case of tunnel vision which prevents him from seeing what is happening on the sides of this tunnel vision. He has to turn his head to see what is on the left or what is on the right. This is a great disadvantage for a fighter. When the Fair One, that's the name of the competition to the death when the prisoners are thirty-two, comes, this new one, Cla, is set to fight with Charlie. At this time Charlie has grown blond and his eyes have grown blue. He is identified as the Prince, Prince Charlie, the promised Prince who is going to liberate the prisoners and the country. Everyone knows about it. All the prisoners, the gray people serving them in their daily life, and of course the triumvirate of this hellish maelstrom of a society. In the first round of this Fair One, sixteen pairs of prisoners will have to fight to the death and at the end of the day, there will only be sixteen prisoners left, though two are maimed so badly that they will not "fight" in the second round, but only be brought there to be executed by the second prisoners with whom they are paired. The pair Cla and Charlie seems to be a plain execution for Charlie, the Prince, even if he refuses this title. Unluckily tunnel vision is no good and sure enough by systematically moving to Cla's sides, he evades his vision and can rather easily defeat him and do what he is supposed to do, hence he kills him.

The second round will never take place because Charlie, with the help of Pursey, their appointed gray servant, and the communication with the outside world carried in and out by the Snab, the red giant cricket that uses the various holes in the walls to reach the common jail. It is only on the very night before the second round that Charlie understands the blue aura around the Night Soldiers and Kellin is electricity, probably static electricity



that burns all those who want to touch it, or them the Night Soldiers, and thus it protects them against any physical attack.

This world is inspired by the various films on the subject of gladiators, and *Spartacus Blood and Sand* is the 2010-2013 series we would put forward first of all. It is repulsive in its very target in such a story, and that is the objective: to show how gross and sick such games can be when managed and produced by degenerate perverts, and the triumvirate of this degenerate world is a triplet of perverts. But we have some education and thus that reminds us of the fact that these fights were common in many human civilizations, and first of all in the Roman Empire, the very ancestor empire of the West. In those distant days, the elite of the country or countries had the full right to kill someone from a lower social status, or to have him or her executed for some “fancy” crime, or even to have him or her tortured and executed slowly for no crime at all, just for the fun of the show thus produced for such voyeurs. Here we think of Emperors like Nero or Caligula. And we have to think of Emperor Tiberius who has one man executed in the circus by choking him to death slowly with stones piled on his chest, and what’s more in front of his children and his wife, and at the same time, he keeps Agrippina the Elder, the accomplice of this man, alive but under the menace that she could be executed any time any day as the traitress she is since she plotted the assassination of the emperor, Tiberius himself. The reasoning of such a suspended sentence attached in its performance to the whimsical decision of the emperor is the longer he lets her live, the more she suffers. There is always a small Nero, Caligula, Tiberius, or many others buried deep in the mind of a member of the elite of any autocratic, not to mention dictatorial, state. Here we have to think of Pasolini’s 1975 film *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (*Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*) which depicts how the elites under Mussolini were able to bring together in a castle twenty or so boys, and as many girls in their mid-teens to submit them to all sorts of tortures and gross behavior ending after several days of that game with their death, executed in the most extravagant ways.

“Benito Mussolini’s fascist Italy, 1944. In the northern Italian Republic of Salò, a Nazi-controlled puppet state, the town’s four most wealthy, powerful, and decadent members – The Duke, The Bishop, The Magistrate, and The President – herd the finest specimens of young men and women into a palatial villa. Having established a set of authoritarian rules for their captives, the perverted dignitaries then plunge them into a hideous, three-part abyss of systematic degradation and torture inspired by Dante Alighieri’s *Inferno* – the first part of the *Divine Comedy*. And as the sadists indulge in their most despicable vices and depraved erotic fantasies, only death can save the doomed prisoners.” (Nick Riganas, an IMDb contributor, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0073650/plotsummary?ref_=tttr_ql_str_2)

But I may think that today in such films or books the viewers or the readers keep a distance between their reading or watching experience and their real behavior. Yet it is a certain level of reflection and detachment that has to be seen and analyzed. In a way, Stephen King speaks against such monstrous acts, even if they occur in war time. But at the same time, the readers or viewers of such works of fiction may feed, nurture, and nourish a demon deep in them that may instill pleasure in their psyche. Pleasure at the level of an individual is a corporal phenomenon based on simple hormones and chemicals produced by the body when confronted with something that is for them pleasurable.

“The Neurochemicals of Happiness, Seven brain molecules that make you feel great.”

1. Endocannabinoids: “The Bliss Molecule” [...]
2. Dopamine: “The Reward Molecule” [...]
3. Oxytocin: “The Bonding Molecule” [...]



4. Endorphin: “The Pain-Killing Molecule” [...]

5. GABA: “The Anti-Anxiety Molecule” [...]

6. Serotonin: “The Confidence Molecule” [...]

7. Adrenaline: “The Energy Molecule” [...]

(Posted November 29, 2012, by Christopher Bergland, a retired ultra-endurance athlete turned science writer, public health advocate, and promoter of cerebellum ("little brain") optimization, **Psychology Today Blog: *The Athlete's Way***, in *Psychology Today*, the world's largest mental health and behavioral science destination online. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-athletes-way/201211/the-neurochemicals-happiness>

And there is no unique trigger for each one of these chemicals, what's more for them all. In fact, the triggers are, in our case here, from outside since we are discussing circus games providing the audience with a direct, slow, and extremely violent killing of one person by another, and this show is repetitive. In our case, the first round provides sixteen duels of this type in one night. Furthermore, there are no two viewers or two readers who have the same triggers to their pleasure chemicals, and some may very well find pleasure in the suffering expressed or described by a film or the author of a book. There should – or might – be a boundary between the pleasure found in the representation of something, and the pleasure found in the direct participation as a witness or as an actor in the real action. Some may consider the ethical dimension of the expression of such deviant behaviors as described in this book and even consider they should be X-rated, the same way as for films. That goes against the grain of the freedom of expression, and yet in bookstores, various practices enable people to know at once where books for kids or teenagers can be found, whereas adult literature will be in another section of the store, often under special surveillance or so high that you need a ladder to reach it. Is it advisable to consider that books of fiction that describe or include violent or sexual scenes should be kept away from the eyes and hands of people under a certain age? It seems to be a vain attempt because any person, no matter their age, who wants to get to a certain book will always find a way or another person who will provide them with the book. The list of such works of fiction or art that were, in one way or another, censored is long, and yet these censored works always got to the targeted audience under the table, under the blanket, or simply on the black market.

The song “Le Déserteur” by Boris Vian was banned in France in 1954, interpreted and recorded by Mouloudji. I remember getting an underground version of the record long after its first interpretation and its being banned because the song was understood as a song against the war in Indochina (not much since it was finished in 1954), but against the war in Algeria since this one started in 1954. I seem to remember the record I am talking of was pressed in Switzerland. We all know censorship is vain, but censorship in school libraries in the USA is a very common phenomenon initiated most of the time by parents in the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) of the concerned schools, though in this country this censorship concerns mainly racism, slavery, sexuality, especially LGBTX-oriented sexuality, but violence does not seem to bother these parents a lot. Some parents protested in a Highschool Junior class in France in 1999 because to amplify the antisemite discourse of the film *American History X* that the class had chosen to watch, I provided them with an excerpt of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* on racism and various photographic, artistic, or testimonial documents on the Holocaust. The argument was, for these parents, that it gave their children nightmares.

To conclude this point, the book is particularly effective in showing that all extreme authoritarian regimes are based and founded upon mental and psychological perversions, and



in this book those who fight can escape, even if most of these fighters will not survive the events, the worst death being that of Charlie's closest fellow-prisoner, Iota, aka Eye, in this dungeon: he dies of a superficial wound on his leg but performed with a poisonous blade, and just at the most one hour away from the final victory against Flight Killer. To die like that when they were so close to the final victory is cruel and poignant: to have suffered so much and so long to die in a few minutes from a superficial cut on the leg is the most absurd and unhappy ending for Iota. How many readers would feel some empathy for Iota in his death, and Charlie in his suffering then, suffering that he had to crush away to be able to finish his mission which was to liberate Empis from Gogmagog?

6. BACK OUT AND BACK IN TO CLEAN THE MESS

After escaping from the dungeons through an evacuation passage for the elite revealed to them by the gray man Pursey who considers Charlie as the promised Prince – Pursey will be killed by the Night Soldiers after the escape – they end up in the trolley terminal, very close to the gate. Yet they have to deal with three obstacles. Charlie has to run to the other side of the avenue and recuperate the two guns he had left there at the end of his first visit, just before being captured. These weapons will enable him to kill the daughter of the giant Hana, Red Molly that is coming on a sort of big vehicle moved by her pedaling a very powerful system that does not need any energy other than the muscular work of her legs. Peterkin – who reappears here to be the traitor he has always been – is trying to tell her that Charlie is there – as if she did not know – but he is run over by Red Molly in her vehicle. Then Charlie can shoot her, but it takes a few bullets to manage to kill that giant girl. Then a cloud of Monarch butterflies, the emblem of the royal family, arrive on the scene since we are close to dusk and these monarch butterflies just fly en masse onto the Night Soldiers, getting fried for sure, but the Night Soldiers are fried by their own electrical juice. The giant Hana, Molly's mother, comes for vengeance, but all the surviving escapees manage to get out of the gate, Charlie last, and the gate is closed by the regular command "Close in the name of Leah of the Gallien."

The survivors and the three people we have already met, Leah, Claudia, and Woody have a conference to determine how they are going to block the evil liberation of the monster down in the Dark Well on the following day when the two moons kiss the following night. The attack will be led by Leah herself who still pretends the Flight Killer is not her brother, her brother being dead, pure and simple. We know of course this is symbolical. He is dead because he no longer is Elden. He has become a monster. But she wants to be the one who confronts Flight Killer and does justice to her brother Elden by killing the monster he has become. So, on the morning following their escape, they start back into the city, this time through a little side door that was completely concealed under the ivy. They are five human beings: Leah, Charlie, Iota, Jaya, Eris, and two animals: Radar and the Snab on top of her. That makes seven. They all have to confront Hana and kill her to be able to reach the entrance of the palace and cathedral. There they have to go on three vertical ascent-descent. First, one ascent up to the top of one spire on a platform worked by some wheel that has to be turned. Seven individuals on this platform with no security around it are bound to make the readers feel some vertigo. At the top of this first spire, they have to use a rather rinky-dink footbridge to the second spire next to the first and go down a long, very narrow spiral staircase down to the ground and into the palace. They then have to cross some rooms. That's where Iota is going to be wounded with a poisonous dagger by Lord High, aka Kellin, who is then killed by Charlie, and Iota dies just a couple of rooms farther. Then they have to



go down a second time, hence, to climb down, this third time, into the underground world leading to the Dark Well. They have to choose first one corridor out of three and then one corridor out of twelve. Charlie notices some ripped fragments of green silk, the dress Petra was wearing the last time they saw her. At this moment they have been reduced in number: Iota is dead, and the two girls, Jaya and Eris are too afraid to go on, so, they stop in one of the rooms. Apparently, the Snab stays behind too, so they are three: Leah, Charlie, and Radar (the rejuvenated version of the dog they discovered at Claudia's after their escape).

Then they go onto the third vertical transit, the second descent that leads them to the room of the Dark Well. The confrontation is three to three: Leah-Charlie-Radar versus Flight-Killer/Elden-Petra-Gogmagog. The last one, a demon from the deepest darkest underground world imaginable will manage to get a little bit of his nose out when the hatch rises from the opening of the Dark Well when the two moons collide. But, without me giving the details, Petra is killed, Flight Killer is killed by Leah herself and the hatch is brought back down on the nose precisely of Gogmagog. The funny thing is the way Charlie manages to bring the hatch down and force Gogmagog to retreat. It is one more reference to the fairy tale Rumpelstiltskin and he just gets inspired by the ending of the tale. Rumpelstiltskin is defeated by the newly promoted Queen (by getting married to the King) who tries to save her first-born from a bad promise she had done to the manikin. He had given her three days to either find his name or to hand up her child. Three evenings with each time three names, and it is the ninth name that is the true name and the defeat of the manikin when she gives his name, Rumpelstiltskin. This inspiration is used by Charlie. Here is the mantra, progressively developed by Charlie, which defeats the monster.

'I KNOW YOUR NAME!' [...]

'I KNOW YOUR NAME, GOGMAGOG, AND I COMMAND YOU / TO RETURN TO YOUR LAIR!' [...]

'GOGMAGOG, GOGMAGOG, YOUR NAME IS / GOGMAGOG!' [...]

'RETURN TO YOUR LAIR, GOGMAGOG! YOU MAY COME AGAIN, GOGMAGOG, IN TEN YEARS OR A THOUSAND, GOGMAGOG, BUT NOT THIS DAY, GOGMAGOG!' [...] ***'IF YOU TAKE ME IN, GOGMAGOG, I'LL BURST YOUR GUTS WITH YOUR NAME BEFORE I DIE!' [...]*** (page 539-540)

The whole incantation, command, and curse are based on the hammering of this command with three-syllable words or phrases that are repetitive, and they are all the more powerful because they alternate or contrast with the four-syllable or five-syllable phrases. The three-syllable words or phrases are the nails of the execution of Gogmagog. Note, three-syllable words are the very basis of Hebrew which is a Semitic language based on triconsonantal roots that mostly produce trisyllabic words. Note it is not exactly the same here since "GOGMAGOG" itself has only three vowels, but it has five consonants, a pentad in a way with 4 "G's" and one "M." But it has to be noted that the ternary pattern we find everywhere in this novel does not find its origin in but can be attached to the long human tradition that can be found in Homo Sapiens' culture as far as we can go in archaeologically certified elements, and the triconsonantal roots and mostly trisyllabic words of Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament, are fundamental. These three-syllable words or phrases are the nails (the three nails of Jesus' Crucifixion) that are supposed to seal the hatch for a long time. Note the "one-thousand-years" phrase is directly extracted from the *Book of Revelation* (20:7), and it is the time that elapsed between the first battle and the second battle with Satan, or the Beast, the time during which Satan had been imprisoned. And that is exactly what Charlie promises Satan he will do. That is maybe slightly too much. But we are in a



fairy tale after all. The colors I used (red for three-syllable words or phrases, blue for four-syllable phrases, and green for five-syllable phrases) show this hammering. The lay-out can be changed to even amplify the hammering.

Note the only line that is different and set in purple: it is a six-syllable phrase. I would keep this direct reference to the number of Solomon or David, to the wisdom of Solomon, and to the truth of God poured into the cup of man, especially because it can easily be considered as two three-syllable groups both starting with the first word "TO," an infinitive particle first, and a simple nominal preposition second:

TO RETURN

-//-

TO YOUR LAIR!

It could be a subtle piece of advice from Charlie to Gogmagog, a piece of advice he will not really take. And the hammering will then be resumed. Of course, we could also consider this phrase to be cut into two three-syllable groups that would be part of the hammering.

'I KNOW YOUR NAME!' [...]
'I KNOW YOUR NAME,
GOGMAGOG,
AND I COMMAND YOU
TO RETURN
-//-
TO YOUR LAIR! [...]

'**GOGMAGOG,**
GOGMAGOG,
YOUR NAME IS
GOGMAGOG!' [...]
'**RETURN TO YOUR LAIR,**
GOGMAGOG!
YOU MAY COME AGAIN,
GOGMAGOG,
IN TEN YEARS

OR A THOUSAND,
GOGMAGOG,
BUT NOT THIS DAY,
GOGMAGOG!' [...]
'**IF YOU TAKE ME IN,**
GOGMAGOG,
I'LL BURST YOUR GUTS
WITH YOUR NAME
BEFORE I DIE!' [...]

And I will consider that the twelve red three-syllable words or phrases are not haphazardous in their number. The six blue four-syllable phrases are not haphazardous either. And the five green five-syllable phrases are definitely not an accident. Three is the number of the nails of Jesus' Crucifixion, and twelve is the number of his apostles. Six is Solomon's number and his wisdom, while four is the symbolic number of the crucifixion, hence Gogmagog has been crucified twice (three and four) by Jesus' twelve apostles and Solomon's wisdom (six). And to top it off the five five-syllable phrases are a double reference to the devil (five). That's what can be called a prophetic style used here by Stephen



King to speak to the totally unconscious numerical experiential, even existential knowledge of such symbols, a knowledge that most people have though they are unconscious about it. They may use such numerical symbols, feel or experience an emotion or a force carried by these numbers, and yet not know why they feel like that.

Once I asked Pascal Dusapin why he used so many three-syllable phrases and three-note musical items in his *Faustus, The Last Night*. He answered me that “pan-pan-pan” is the rhythm of conviction, action, anger, etc. You could of course think of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony and its rhythmic evocation of fate as a four-note musical phrase, three short and one long, “pan-pan-pan-paaan.” And it works. Four notes but five in length.



Five has always been attached to evil, to Satan, and all Satanic rites with the five-branch star. And yet this five-branch star is magic because it can be drawn in one single continuous stroke, and this magic has been recuperated by many non-satanic traditions so that the Satanic traditions are at times using the five-branch star upside down. We could, like Stephen King, refer the readers here to Carl Gustav Jung and his collective unconscious. But we could also refer the reader to Jürgen Habermas, Theodor W. Adorno, and Wilhelm Reich who are, along with Kenneth Burke, approaching life, daily language, and creative language, not to mention all arts, in a symbolical perspective, and then numbers are essential. Note here the tradition of numerical symbolism in the Jewish Kabbalah.

But I would like to insist on another influence that pervades Stephen King’s work. The musical background is always present in his novels, and this novel is no exception. But to amplify what I have just said on the power of the incantation against Gogmagog, I would like to quote what Bono, the singer of U2, writes in his latest book, *Surrender, 40 songs, one story*, (Hutchinson – Heinemann, London, 2022) on how a song, here an incantation, must have “a hook” (page 163) for the audience, and the hook is for him coming from the drum, from the drummer who gives the rhythm that carries the song to the listening audience and can have a mesmerizing effect because it is permanent, constant, continuous. Rhythm is obviously sequences of two, three, four, and five beats, and the architecture of these rhythmic units has a direct effect on the audience because of the deep and somatic more than psychological force of rhythm. But Bono insists on the fact that the strongest impact of a song comes when the drummer and the singer are working together when the rhythm and the melody are one and supporting each other, and as soon as you introduce the melody, the singer, you introduce language and words, and thus we come back to Charlie’s incantation. The rhythmic architecture reinforces the words used to hammer in the necessity for Gogmagog to go back into his lair, his deep underground realm of night and darkness under the menace that, if he did not, he would simply be destroyed from the inside of his own material body, if it is a body, by Charlie himself and his continuing incantation.

The last and important element here is not so typical of Stephen King who has not dealt so much with voodoo, the way his colleague Anne Rice used to. But he knows perfectly well some very important traditions in black, native American, and other minority cultures in America which have kept contact with the magic of nature, the magic of life and death, and which consider that the name of a person has to be kept secret, unpronounced because uttering the name of a person in plain life is equivalent to endangering their life or survival. The private name of a person can only be used within a ritual to contact that person



after they have passed to the other side of life and that uttering has to be performed by a ritualistically certified person, hence a shaman, sorcerer, or witch doctor. It is quite different with the unutterable name of God in the Old Testament, the ban on the public use of the name Yahweh because it reveals God, it endangers him – and it definitely is a “him” – in his own essence. Here in this novel, we are dealing with a being that is not human at all, and yet that is stated as having a material “body” and the use of his name does not endanger his essence, but his real material existence. The devil is more material than spiritual. He – and in his case again he definitely is a male – can be destroyed in his material flesh and bones. God, on the other hand, is spiritual, and pronouncing his name may endanger his spiritual essence which is based on the fact God is pure spirit, and the distance between him and the people can be endangered by using his name, by making him familiar, which he is not supposed to be. God is supposed to be unreachable in a way. You can speak to his spirit, but you cannot touch God, or embrace and hug him, because then he would not be God anymore, and using his name is part of this destabilizing familiarity or bold informality.

And that episode ends up with the reinstating of Leah as the Queen of Empis, and the slow regressing of the older curse, hence the liberation of the people from grayness. Charlie after celebrating the victory, mourns the dead, particularly Iota, aka Eye (not at all a gratuitous nickname) whom Charlie had learned to love like a brother or maybe even more than a brother, maybe a mate in fate, a seer, a prophet, – after all, he, Charlie, was the Prince. And he is starting to feel homesick – and he can be since now his main loving and emotional bond that could retain him in this Empis world, namely Iota, is no longer there. The relationship between Charlie and Iota is mysterious and such relationships between two characters are common in Stephen King’s books, and they become strategic or crucial when embedded in some endangering and existentially lethal adventures. The death of Iota enables the final fight to be three versus three, but it also enables the book to find an easy way to go back to Charlie’s world, our own world. This pattern of some mate-ness existing between two characters is in perfect line with a common reference to “Jesus and the disciple he loved.” The phrase “the disciple he loved” is used five times in John’s Gospel. You can check *John*, 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, and 21:20. The debate about the identity of this disciple is open between those who believe John was that disciple, and at the time of crucifixion he was around 12, and those who read this phrase as meaning Mary Magdalene; between those who see non-carnal love here, and those who consider all love is carnal, and hence the disciple has to be a woman, which might be an interpretative gender bias.

So, he packs up his possessions, presents, souvenirs, and of course Radar, and off they go back home. No surprise in the back-garden shed whose door had been padlocked by his high school friend, as required before leaving a totally untrue note and explanation (he supposedly went to Chicago to see a quack doctor who was supposed to make miracles with aging dogs). He emerges back in his real world on a Saturday in February 2014. He had just seen one of the numerous flyers glued or stapled to poles and trees requiring people’s attention.

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS BOY? [...] CHARLES MCGEE READE, AGE 17. [...] Charles (Charlie’) Reade disappeared in October of 2013. He is 6’4” and weighs 235 pounds. He was last seen . . . (page 568)

Welcome home Prince Charlie. You sure have a story to tell your father, and he will have to be convinced it is the truth if you want him never to tell anyone. And sure enough, the whole book has been told by Charlie, quite a few years later, but it is OK since it is a fictional fairy tale.



CONCLUSION

We could consider many other details and episodes that I have overlooked in this story. It is high time we ask the simple question: “Will Stephen King’s books still be read in one century the way they have been voraciously devoured by generation upon generation of many million readers for forty-eight years?”

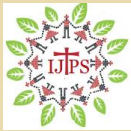
My answer is: “Oh yes, definitely, like Shakespeare and Dickens, to quote only two English authors that have reached long-lasting fame and recognition.” The real question is why? What makes reading Stephen King a must-read, at times an addictive must-read? Since 1974, starting around 1976, I have read all the books, novels, and collections of stories, in any format and form, plus collaborative works with other authors, illustrators, and his own sons, that have come out. I may have missed a couple of stories that were published in some confidential magazine and have not been reprinted. I even have all installments of a story that was published as an eBook exclusively on Amazon, *The Plant* (1982-1985, 2000), that he never finished, or I do not know if he has, and at least I must not be wrong since Wikipedia tells me it is unfinished.

There are many reasons why this polymorphous work will outlast the author. Let me give a few. The first one is simple enough: every novel, in one way or another, is always rooted in the reality of the time of the action (particularly when it is the past, for example, *11.22.63*, (2011) and in the time when the book is written, either because the present of the storytelling is included in the story, or because some problematics are clearly from the present of the writing time, or “universal in time,” and not from the past of the main historical period concerned.

The second reason comes directly from the one I have just given. The problems evoked in the books are fundamental and will be problems for a long time, and they may even become historical elements taught in schools in the future, like the clandestine survival of Nazi criminals in the USA in the book *Apt Pupil* (1982).

We have to think of children and young people who are immensely present in the books in so many ways. First of all, the bad *Children of the Corn*: check my own exploration of these Children of the Corn on Medium.com: “Children of the Corn and Maize God,” <https://jacquescouardeau.medium.com/children-of-the-corn-and-maize-god-69ca482c03ef>, and “Children of the Corn — 40th Anniversary — 1978–2018,” <https://jacquescouardeau.medium.com/children-of-the-corn-40th-anniversary-1978-2018-bb1a4bce02f3>. Then glorious children or teens like Charlie Reade, but also so many frustrated children in their families with at least authoritative parents (think of *Carrie*), bullied children in schools or society in general, including some children encountering pedophiles from whom they manage to escape, but how many have not escaped their claws? And what about the extreme exploitation of differently abled children to turn them into killing agents sent out to execute some politicians or elite that are considered bad by the masters of *The Institute* (2019)?

Then the presence of handicapped people is constant. Think of *The Dark Tower* (1982-2004) where a black girl is reduced to traveling along with Roland in a wheelchair. This empathy for handicapped people is also vastly expressed for dogs and other animals. Radar is the animal hero in this book, but another animal, a billy-bumbler, a sort of dog, goes along with the group of “pilgrims” drawn together by Roland Deschain, Eddie Dean, Susannah Dean, Jake Chambers, hence four people plus Oy, the billy-bumbler, hence reaching five, a pentad, a very bad omen as for the fulfilling of the mission. And the empathy I am speaking of is so rare in our society where dogs and animals are reduced to pets... that



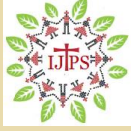
can be abandoned when their masters go on vacation. We must definitely think of *Cujo*, (1981), a dog that is made rabid by bats, and how it becomes a terror to several people till he is put to sleep... forever.

Then, of course, you have the various genres that go beyond the real world and the various genres are mixed in many novels, like in this one, and these genres work directly on our deeper emotions and the books concerned become very fast mesmerizing, if not addictive. Let me give some of these genres. Science fiction when the action is projected into the future (*The Gwendy Trilogy*, 2022). You have a lot of fantasy when the action is in another world, another universe, under our own, or parallel to our own, but living in some heroic medieval culture (*the Dark Tower*, of course, but also *A Fairy Tale*, or *The Talisman*, 1984 & 2001). Then, you have much horror in many books (and that horror is quite present in this here *A Fairy Tale*). But beyond horror or along horror, we often have magic, which is too often, black magic (present in *A Fairy Tale*, as a curse or the sundial). The use of Extrasensory Perception (ESP) is also very common: the ability to move objects with one's mind (*Carrie*, 1974, for example), the ability to start a fire with one's mind (*The Firestarter*, 1980, for example), the possibility to communicate with other people directly via your mind's waves (*The Dead Zone*, 1979, or *The Gwendy Trilogy*, 2017-2022). Along that line, think of Abigail Freemantle in *The Stand*, (1979), a black lady from the corn belt who plays the guitar and sings psalms, who can communicate with God, and who is the seer in the book, the one who guides the good ones in Boulder, Colorado, against the bad ones in Las Vegas.

That's where we can consider the use of "monsters" coming from the deepest layers of human culture: vampires, werewolves, living dead, extra-terrestrials, and at times some Stephen King invented like Gogmagog. His world is supernatural, and I use "supernatural" here with the meaning that should refer you to the TV series *Supernatural* (2005-2020) by Eric Kripke (now producing the TV series *Revolution*). In fact, I would say that the series *Supernatural* is some prime-time soft fantastic, and frightening series inspired (is there a copy-cat in the studio?) by Stephen King, but in a more commercial approach: what can be sold to television channels in the whole world for the prime time general public, not even PG, a type of television fiction, implying the presence of real Satan, of an angel, and a few other mythical characters who are so polite and polished that we could serve them tea in an upper-middle-class tea party celebrating the beauty of the world from rich-biased eyes.

There is one more element I would like to give here. The possibility for houses, hotels, places in general, factories, and slaughterhouses to be haunted in one way or another. Think of *The Shining*, (1977). But a car can be haunted too, Think of *Christine*, (1983). The house on the hill in *Jerusalem's Lot*, (1978) is another example serving as the base of vampires, especially Victorian houses. I was expecting Mr. Bowditch's house to be haunted, but the cliché was changed here in a different direction: it is the gate from our world to another world, not the gate of another world into our own world. Along that line, in a later period, Stephen King tried to approach suspense and mysteries, meaning crime, detectives, police, and investigations. We could also insist on the use of technology to achieve mysterious effects. Think of the *Mr. Mercedes Trilogy*, (2014-2016) which uses simple game tablets to capture the mind of some people and make them become criminals.

The last element I want to mention is political. In this book here there is a strong denunciation of the perverse dimension of any dictatorial regime. But in several books, the simple democratic system is both questioned and advocated. In *The Stand*, (1978, abridged; 1990, uncut), an epidemic erases humanity (a theme that has been used and overused since



2000 by TV series), and the survivors are going to divide themselves along two lines: the followers of the Dark One, the devil of course, in Las Vegas, Nevada, who will try to conquer the world with nuclear weapons, and the followers of those who believe in democracy in Boulder, Colorado, led by a black woman and a few other people, inspired by Christian principles and dedicated to rebuilding the USA. But in Stephen King, we never have that clear-cut good and evil, black-and-white approach. There are always other, third or fourth, solutions, options, and thus side-conflicts that can become crucial in choosing the low road or the high road, the easy one, and evil is easy, or the difficult one, and to choose the NON-EVIL road is a lot more difficult because then there are many roundabouts and junctions and choices to make.

It is quite obvious in *11.22.63*, which takes place at the time of the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, there is a fair amount of criticism of the American society that produced such a tragedy that was to be repeated twice before 1968 with Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, plus a few more. The question behind it all is: “Is democracy responsible for such a political catastrophe?” Stephen King never clearly chooses. Read the third volume of *The Gwendy Trilogy* that takes place in 2026 and you will find some direct references to Trump and the divided situation in the USA. But he does not seem to suggest a choice against democracy, even if it enables charlatans to take over the system, or some regulations to prevent it that would mean some limitations of the sacrosanct freedom of expression. But the question is definitely open and absolutely urgent in relevance.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

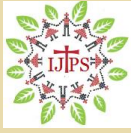
All references are specified in the text.

I will not provide a full list of all books, novels, novellas, and short stories, ever published by Stephen King because that is available on the Internet in about two clicks. I would suggest

***All 70+ Stephen King Books in Order | Ultimate Guide*, by [Anna Marie CARROLL](#), December 5, 2021, books in order, horror, <https://www.tlbranson.com/stephen-king-books-in-order/>.**

Anna Marie Carroll remains evanescent so far. The only Anna Marie Carroll I can find is a Digital Content Strategist | Experienced Editor and Writer, connected by education to Carleton University, and living in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/annamariocarroll/>. I have no idea if she is the one I am looking for. She is also a Maritimer | Prolific reader | Travel enthusiast on <https://twitter.com/CarrollAnnaM>.

T.L. Branson (<https://www.tlbranson.com/>) is a participant in the Amazon Associates Program. All links to Amazon provide him with a small commission on qualifying purchases. T.L. Branson is the author of the all-new [Soul Stones series](#) (<https://www.tlbranson.com/books/>). Branson started writing when he was eighteen and has contributed articles to several blogs and websites over the years. Soul Render is his debut novel in a planned quartet. He finds his inspiration from the kings (and queens) of storytelling, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, George Lucas, and J.K. Rowling. Born in Pennsylvania, he currently lives in San Diego, California with his wife and two children.



A CRITIQUE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SUBJECT: TOWARDS RELATIONAL INDIVIDUALISM

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ABSTRACT

The bifurcation between holism and individualism is essential to understand the contemporary debate in political theory. In this article I argued that both traditional and modern societies have elements of holism and individualism. I also argued that individualism is not radically opposed to holism because it is impossible to imagine a human society without authority, tradition, and taboos. Moreover, the pre-theoretical norms and values of holist societies have rational foundation within a certain context. Thus, it is possible to imagine an individualist society which is grounded in a holist social ontology. I argued that collectivist and tribal societies are not totally opposed to individual liberty since one of the morally relevant advantages of rationality is to foster cordial relations with others. I argued that Habermas's intersubjective communicative scheme is appropriate to account for the pre-theoretical norms and values of holist societies.

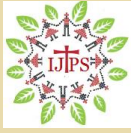
Keywords: *individualism; communicative action; rationality; pre-theoretical norms;*

INTRODUCTION

Most Western philosophers did not say much about non-Western cultures and traditions in their writings. Thus, Western philosophers draw on their own philosophical tradition and culture. One of the works that I deal with in this article is Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*. In this work Popper addresses the works of Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, and Karl Marks with a deep sense of skepticism and distrust.

Popper claims that these thinkers are antithetical to the values of the open society such as freedom, equality, and democracy. He argues that Western societies are the best approximations of an open society although they have a long way to go in terms of fully realizing these values (Popper, 2002, p. xxxv). From this assessment it seems that non-Western societies are closed societies. Popper traces the origins of the open society back to ancient Greek (Popper, 2002, p.167). Metz laments that Popper attributes the values of open society solely to the Western world without any comparative assessment of non-Western cultures (Metz, 2021, p.9).

The idea being that traditional societies are heavily dependent on collectivist and communal organizations giving moral priority to the tribe or clan than the individual human being. Indigenous African societies are characterized as communal or collectivist (Ake 1987; Sogolo 1993; Adeyinka and Ndwapi 2002, cited in Metz, 2021, p.10; Gyekye 1997, p.36). My purpose in this paper is to argue that collectivist and communal societies are not totally opposed to individual freedom and liberty using Habermas's communicative model of rationality.



1. POPPER'S IDEA OF AN OPEN SOCIETY

Popper argues that Western civilization is characterized by the transition from collectivist social organization to individualist social organization which is based on critical individual thought (Popper, 2002, p. xxxv). He claims that the future depends on the decisions and will of individuals as opposed to any historical necessity (Popper, 2002, p. xxxv). He is against all those traditions of thought which seek to prophetically determine the course of history by way of “long term historical prophesies” (Popper, 2002, p. xxxv). Popper argues that the dissolution of collectivist or tribalist societies begins with the recognition that the truth of taboos is contingent on the tribes that uphold them implying that they are the artifacts of the human mind (Popper, 2002, p. 58). He calls this position critical conventionalism (Popper, 2002, p. 58).

Popper argues that critical conventionalism is not the affirmation of moral arbitrariness rather it is a call for individual moral responsibility because, he argues that norms and moral decisions are distinctively human without any natural causation (Popper, 2002, p. 59). Popper criticizes the Platonist plea for permanence epitomized by the Theory of Forms as a reactionary tendency that calls upon collectivist or holist justifications for a social and political order (Popper, 2002, p. 83). Popper argues that Plato's question as to who should rule is a misleading question in the history of political philosophy because it leads to holist and authoritarian solutions. That is, it lays a fertile ground for elitist social and political organizations which undermine democratic institutions in which even incompetent rulers would cause less damage (Popper, 2002, pp.114-115).

Popper also recommends piecemeal social engineering as opposed to a utopian and authoritarian approach to social engineering because no statesman can claim to have the blueprint for social transformation aside from addressing the most urgent and expedient problems of society (Popper, 2002, p.148). Popper argues that a closed society is analogous to an organic understanding of society in which priority is given to “semi-biological ties—kinship, living together, sharing common efforts, common dangers, common joys and common distress.” (Popper, 2002, p.165). Thus, abstract social relationships such as division of labour and commerce are more important in open societies (Popper, 2002, p.165). It seems that an open society is based on abstract or spiritual bond as opposed to concrete biological and semi-biological bond (Popper, 2002, p.167). These abstract forms of social relationships were enhanced by the development of science and technology which facilitated sea communication and commerce (Popper, 2002, p.168).

Popper explains that collectivism emphasizes the priority of some whole or group such as the state, nation, or class as opposed to the individual. Thus, collectivist or holist societies magnify the normative importance of a group, tribe, or clan above and beyond an individual. In contrast, an open society emphasizes the priority of an individual over a group, tribe, or clan. He says that individualism is not synonymous with egoism rather it is the belief that the moral worth of an individual is intrinsic to him/herself instead of being contingent on group membership. Thus, individualism is based on the Kantian imperative to treat individuals as ends in themselves, and not only as a means. This belief leads to assuming individual responsibility for one's decisions and actions. Thus, the capacity for rational and free choice of an individual is the normative ground of an open society.

The idea of an open society is based on not only tolerating an individual for what s/he thinks and believes but also respecting an individual's thought and freedom. In contrast, if the rules of social cooperation or simply social rules are imposed from above by a state, nation, or group proclaiming them as culture, tradition, or taboo of society then individual



freedom of choice is violated. Thus, according to Popper, this kind of society is characteristically a closed society. However, it should be noted that all societies have some elements of holism. So, the Popperian distinction between open and closed societies as two different social systems is highly problematic. Because open and closed norms exist side by side in all societies.

2. METZ'S AFRO-COMMUNITARIAN ETHICS

Metz says that he agrees with Popper that individuals are morally important than groups. However, Metz contends that his version of the Afro-communitarian ethics is a viable alternative to Popper's Kantian moral individualism (Metz, 2021, p.16). According to Metz, Popper attributes individual dignity to the intrinsic qualities of an individual such as her/his capacity for rationality. Metz states that although it is true that Popper's ideal of the individual engenders a certain social manner or character, it lacks relational premises (Metz, 2021, p.16). That is, Metz is against the attempt to justify the moral worth of an action in terms of qualities intrinsic to a person rather he prefers to ground morality on relational qualities. He says, "the claim is not that relationships matter, and individuals do not, but instead that individuals matter because they are capable of certain relationships" (Metz, 2021, p.17). Metz points out that the word Ubuntu implies humanness in some indigenous languages of southern Africa. According to Metz, Ubuntu is distinctive to the moral thought of sub-Saharan Africans. The idea of humanness by way of being in communion or relationship with our fellow human beings is the core of Ubuntu. Metz points out that this ethic excludes those who are unable to exhibit relationship or fellowship with others from the human category (Metz, 2021, p.17). He points out that the difference between Popper and indigenous African morality is that Popper's moral theory is based on an individual's capacity for rationality whereas indigenous African moral thought is based on an individual's capacity for relationality. Metz points out that the idea of relationality or forming communion with others has counterintuitive implications for human rights in the sense that a stranger or a foreigner who is not part a certain existing relationship is excluded from moral consideration. To avoid this implication Metz introduces the idea that individuals have dignity by virtue of their capacity for communion or social harmony. I would like to call this position relational individualism. The idea of relational individualism is based on the belief that communion or relationality is not a fundamental value but rather our capacity for it as individuals (Metz, 2021, p.18). So, the dignity of an individual is contingent on the ability to relate or commune with others. I contend that the capacity to relate or commune with others is one of the virtues entailed by individual rationality. But the contention that individual dignity is based on the mere ability to relate or commune with others is unacceptable. Metz argues that the Popperian account of individual dignity condones psychopathic behaviour which means a person who is hardly capable of other regard is equally worthy of moral dignity (Metz, 2021, p.19). I argue that this is the reason why Popperian moral individualism needs to be complemented by the African relational ethic of Ubuntu. Metz points out that for Popper it is strictly an individual's capacity for agency that matters morally whereas for the African relational ethics it is an individual's capacity to relate with others cordially which makes him/her worthy of moral dignity (Metz, 2021, p.19). So, the normative implication of African relational moral theory is that an act is right so long as it produces communal solidarity or harmony; otherwise, an act is morally unacceptable. I propose that individualism can be justified by relational norms and values. Metz's relational moral theory can be an alternative justification for individualism. Thus, I



contend that individual agency and rationality is not opposed to the capacity to commune or relate with others.

Metz argues that from African relational perspective moral behaviours such as truth telling, promise keeping and respect for humanity are justified on grounds of social harmony and solidarity as opposed to individual rationality and free choice. He says, "... wrong acts by the present ethic are those failing to treat people as special in virtue of their capacity for harmonious relationships" (Metz, 2021, p.20: Metz, 2022, p.108). Thus, African relational ethics requires avoiding discordant behaviour for treating an individual with respect and dignity. This implies that indifference and isolation are morally reprehensible since they lead to "discordant actions involving subordination consistent with an 'us versus them' attitude as well as harm consistent with a selfish motivation" (Metz, 2021, p.20). Next, I will try to develop the compatibility of individual agency and rationality with relational values using Habermas's theory of intersubjectivity and communicative rationality.

3. RELATIONAL MORALITY AND COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY

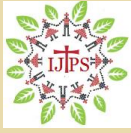
In this part, I will introduce Habermas's notion of communicative rationality to complement Popper's formal understanding of rationality in the process of moral cognition and deliberation to argue that morality is the outcome of intersubjective deliberation and communicative action. I contend Habermas's account of intersubjectivity, and communicative rationality provides a solid foundation for a relational understanding of morality. That is, Popper's idea of individual rationality and agency presupposes purposive rational action which does not "take into account all forms of symbolic interaction" (Habermas,1981, p.5). So, Popper's moral individualism is indifferent to "structures of a lifeworld that underlie the other subsystems" (Habermas,1981,p.5). Habermas says that the concept of communicative rationality implies "the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus bringing force of argumentative speech," in which subjective views are rationally integrated with the objective world and the intersubjective lifeworld (Habermas,1981, p.10). Thus, Popper's idea of individual rationality and freedom can be complemented by a relational morality in the intersubjective lifeworld through communicative rationality. Habermas points out that anthropologists and sociologists cannot succumb to the rationalization of moral life because of their increasing awareness of other cultures and ways of life which do not fit into the Western model of individual rationality. So, according to Habermas, this makes the instrumental reason of modernity limited and relative to the Western world. Instead, he introduces a phenomenological approach to a lifeworld which enables us to understand the communicative conditions of its possibility. That is, a certain lifeworld is possible because of intersubjectively shared linguistic devices which differentiate true propositions from false ones. The significance of this approach to ethics is that it enables us to understand the rational basis of a form of life from its own vantage point of view. This method helps us to discover the fundamental sociological and anthropological reasons for behaving and acting one way rather than another in a non-Western lifeworld or social system. Thus, I aspire to demonstrate that a relational moral individualism is possible through the critique of Kantian moral individualism. In other words, there are fundamental anthropological reasons for creating both self-regarding and other-regarding intersubjective lifeworld. I accept Popper's Kantianism in that an act is morally right if and only if it treats the individual not only as a means but also always as an end. However, Metz's relational approach to moral individualism is appealing as an alternative to Kantian individualism to account for the relational element of morality. Thus, I



contend that Habermas's communicative model of rationality accommodates other social systems through intersubjective argumentation in which the validity of moral propositions is determined by an intersubjective linguistic procedure called communicative action.

I contend that Habermas's communicative ethics seeks to redeem the Kantian deontological ethics through a discursive ethical procedure (Habermas, 1990, p. 14). Habermas introduces a moral procedure that is deeply rooted in Kantian principle of universalizability with an intersubjective discursive procedure to validate shared norms (Habermas, 1996, p. 107). He intends to transcend a particular cultural perspective to formulate an intercultural foundation for the Kantian principle of universalizability or moral impartiality (Habermas, 1990, pp. 195–203). So, Habermas wants to replace the monological aspect of Kantian ethical theory with a pluralist discursive moral theory without undermining the Kantian principle of universalizability. That is, Habermas seeks to transcend the monological aspect of Kantian ideal of universalizability in search of a pluralist universal discursive principle. Thus, the contention that Popper's Kantian moral individualism can be complemented with the relational imperatives of African ethics can be understood within this framework. My critique of Popper's moral individualism is based on the monological foundations of his moral and political theory by relegating other lifeworld to the category of closed systems. I contend that Habermas's project of redeeming modernity through the critique of modern reason is a viable solution to the problem of the monological aspect the Eurocentric model of rationality.

I contend that the idea of individual autonomy is worth entertaining, but it shouldn't be the sole ground of moral reasoning and argumentation. So, in line with Habermas, I argue that the intersubjective aspect of morality should be considered to recognize the relational aspect of public practice (Habermas, 1990, pp. 109–10). I think, Habermas is trying to strike a balance between the Kantian imperative for transcendental moral reasoning and the Hegelian quest for the concrete duties of the transcendental moral agent (Hegel, 1975, p.76). Hegel argues that Kantian transcendentalism and formalism results in meaningless tautological maxims without a concrete content. In other words, the Kantian moral agent is devoid of concrete qualities except for analytic and procedural ones (Hegel, 1975, p.76). He goes on to inquire that how can an individual who is endowed with her/his own contingent features elevate her/himself into a universal and absolute law giver (Hegel, 1975, pp.77-78). However, Habermas maintains that the formalistic and deontological rules of Kantian moral theory in his theory of communicative rationality by giving priority to the right over the good (Habermas, 1993, p. 2). He maintains that deontological rules are concerned with the procedural questions of justice as opposed to substantive rules of moral action (Habermas, 1990, p. 207). Thus, Habermas criticises the Hegelian notion that procedural claims are just semantic and logical propositions without any substantive content because every procedural moral claim implies a certain substantive moral norm required by real life (Habermas, 1990, p. 204). Consequently, Habermas endorses the Hegelian insight that the enunciation of a universal moral statement implies a particular conception of the good life (Habermas, 1990, p.205). In other words, Habermas's ideal of communicative rationality is the synthesis of Kantian formalism in terms of a deontological theory of justice and Hegelian notion of concrete moral norms in terms of a conception of the good life. However, Habermas draws distinction between Hegel's specific forms of the good life and Kant's abstract forms the good life. That is, he draws distinction between Hegelian specific forms of the good life and the Kantian deontological norms of the good life to introduce the notion of "structural aspects of the common good life" (Habermas, 1990, p. 203). Habermas's notion of "the



common good life” is neither Kantian nor Hegelian rather it stands for the pre-theoretical norms of social life and cooperation in their day to today lifeworld. I argue that this notion applies to indigenous moral values as in Africa which are the pre-theoretical norms of social harmony and solidarity like Ubuntu. I think, Habermas’s communicative rationality emphasizes on the validation of these pre-theoretical structures of social harmony and solidarity. Habermas recognizes the existence of different conceptions of the good life in modern industrial societies. He contends that citizens of a democratic society can come to a common standpoint on contested norms through the practice of moral deliberation with a view to formulate the principles of their common conception of the good (Habermas, 1998, p.41). Habermas endorses the Hegelian claim that Kantian moral proceduralism draws a sharp boundary between facts and norms or the “is” and “ought” in the sense that he does not properly address how moral norms can be put into practice (Habermas, 1990, p.196). Unlike Kant, Habermas justifies the universality of moral norms on a discursive as opposed to transcendental grounds (Habermas, 1990, p.207). He also recognizes the context, and the target population determines the validity and universality of a norm. Habermas also highlights the idea that norms are challenged and revised through day-to-day social practice and their validity is contingent on human relationships (Habermas, 1990, p. 61). In other words, if individuals or citizens of a democratic society are willing to conduct their affairs using certain norms then those norms are legitimate or else, they are illegitimate. This point leads the idea that norms need to be expressed in terms of concrete duties of social and political life in the form institutionalization (Habermas, 1990, p. 207). The underlying procedure for the institutionalization of norms is communicative action through collective social and political efforts (Habermas, 1990, p. 208). The novelty of Habermas’s moral theory is that he introduces the relational idea of “common good life” as a common background knowledge of society in contrast to the Kantian individualist notion of “good will” (Habermas, 1996, pp.106–7).

4. A CRITIQUE OF MONOLOGICAL RATIONALITY

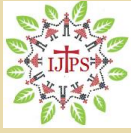
Habermas’s communicative ethics is indebted to the Enlightenment project of liberating human beings from the deceptions of reified dogmatic power (Habermas 1988 [1971], p.15). The Enlightenment ideal of emancipation and freedom is based on the deconstruction of implicitly accepted belief systems by exposing their dogmatic and erroneous claims to knowledge whose continued existence undermines human emancipation and freedom. For this to happen, critical theorists like Habermas emphasize the need to wage the struggle for human emancipation on two fronts to wit: theoretical and practical. So, Habermas’s communicative ethics recognizes the Enlightenment trust in reason in the sense of recognizing the imperative to intersubjectively validate claims to knowledge (Habermas 1988 [1971], p. 15). The essence of communicative rationality is the intersubjective or I would argue relational scheme of moral problematization. It thereby helps us to dissolve the monologic and solipsistic subject of modernity through intersubjective dialogical quest for valid claims to knowledge (Habermas 1988 [1971], p.15). Therefore, Habermas is indebted to the Enlightenment’s theoretical quest for justified valid claims to knowledge that serve as pillars of social agreement. This theoretical pursuit lays the ground for practical action in the form of changing established social conditions (Habermas 1988 [1971], p.15).

The Cartesian subject of monological reason is no longer acceptable given the imperatives of Habermas’s dialogical communicative ethics (Habermas 2001 [1984], p.118). The monological subject of modernity has no independent sources of speech and action. In



other words, although formal ability for speech and action is inborn the content of speech and action is provided by the cultural resources of a society into which the individual is born. Thus, despite its monological pretensions the Cartesian subject is the product of a dialogical intersubjective lifeworld. That is, linguistic cognition is possible through a communicative engagement with society. Thereby I contend that society is not the product of the monological Cartesian modern subject rather the Cartesian subject is the product of a maturing society in which mature human beings come to self-conscious communication (Habermas 1988 [1963], p. 281). I claim dialogue is essential for a relational understanding of morality because it recognizes the social character of communicative rationality. This implies that social norms and conventions are valid if and only if they are rationally defensible. Thus, monological claims to knowledge are hardly defensible from a relational dialogical perspective. In other words, the modern monological subject is inadequate unless its claim to knowledge is subjected to the dialogical rationality of social normativity. I agree with Habermas's communicative rationality because he situates the hermeneutic universe of discursive rationality in a lifeworld inhabited by ordinary people (Habermas 1987 [1981a], p. 134). So, it can be argued that communicative ethics is not an abstract linguistic exercise in philosophical imagination, but a philosophical enterprise concerned with the everyday intersubjective lived experiences of ordinary people. The practical quest for social transformation cannot be divorced from the social nature of communicative rationality. The idea of communicative rationality is inconceivable without mutual understanding through communicative action. Therefore, communicative rationality as a philosophical approach is inconsistent with the idea of withdrawing into solitary subject of modernity rather it seeks to recover the primordial relational subject (Habermas 1988 [1971], p. 28). This commitment of communicative ethics is confirmed by the enlightening of power of discursive encounters. That is why I contend that the monological subject of modernity is withdrawn from all forms of relational ethical discursive encounters to ensure the purity of monological rationality. Thus, an authentic ethical discourse is dialogically constructed out of relational discursive encounters. In other words, the normative force of a moral principle comes from dialogical discursive encounters in the relational lifeworld. Moreover, one of the major advantages of dialogical rationality in a communicative moral paradigm is to engender a sense of mutual responsibility in the form of reciprocity. In communicative ethics our goal-oriented action is mediated by our intersubjective communicative rationality. Finally, it is interesting to note that Habermas recognizes the relational imperative inherent in a dialogical relationship as a recognition of oneself in the other human beings (Habermas 1988 [1968], p.148).

Habermas states that human speech and action draw on intuition and reflection. Thus, discourse ethics identifies with both world intuitive and world-reflective subjects of communicative rationality. It is important to note that communicative ethics recognizes the overlaps between intuitive and pre-theoretical claims to knowledge and discursive and reflective claims to knowledge. The latter is theoretical and discursive knowledge while the former is communicative and pre-theoretical knowledge of ordinary people which enables us to interact on pretheoretically endorsed non-problematised folk beliefs and values (Habermas 1987 [1981b], p. 286). Habermas's communicative ethics recognizes the communicative competence embedded in pre-theoretical folk beliefs and values aside from the reflective competence of the monological subject of modernity. Although I used the phrases communicative ethics and discourse ethics interchangeably, there is a slight difference between the two. That is, communicative ethics suggests competence of ordinary people for communication whereas discourse ethics seeks to emphasize the reflective competence of

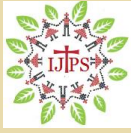


the modern subject. In the former case, the accent is on the pragmatic significance of communication for mutual understanding while in the latter, the accent is put on our capacity for a reflective engagement in the rational defence of a discursive action. Thus, from this analysis we can say that communicative ethics is cognizant of the rational defensibility of pre-theoretical folk values and beliefs on grounds of their potential for mutual comprehension. On the other hand, discursive ethics is the outgrowth of the maturity of Western civilization which mistakenly identifies rationality solely with the contemplative powers of the monological subject of modernity. Since Habermas's communicative rationality recognizes the communicative and discursive foundations of normative propositions, communicative rationality is the most appealing epistemological justification of the African relational ethics of Ubuntu. However, I contend that the recognition of background rationality does not imply uncritically endorsing it rather the background lifeworld has to be a live option for responsible and free individual philosophical reflection. In this regard, African philosophy is a two-pronged intellectual exercise in the sense that it draws on the background lifeworld of indigenous African communities and the foreground thought of a critical and independent philosopher. I claim it is the unilateral endorsement one of these two positions that leads to a monological discourse and stereotypes. Thus, the pre-theoretical and hidden premises of the background wisdom of society are exposed to the demands of open, independent, and critical scrutiny of the modern subject. The crux of the matter for Habermas is the fusion of the communicative and discursive horizon with a view to forge a mature and coherent understanding of modernity. Hence, the proper understanding of modernity entails the recognition of both forms of discourse as the building blocks our life world. As the habitual activities of an individual need to be disturbed to bring about self-consciousness in the same way the habitual patterns of social life need to be disturbed by critical reflection and inquiry (Habermas 1992 [1988], pp.173-174). Thus, communicative rationality seeks to strike a balance between the pragmatic significance of the background lifeworld and the critical role of an independent and responsible thought in the form discursive argumentation.

I think, Habermas's communicative model of rationality is very useful for framing the debate between ethnophilosophers and professional philosophers in African philosophy as it clearly outlines the fault lines of the African philosophical debate on tradition and modernity. I claim tradition stands for the background communicative significance of folk values and beliefs for mutual understanding whereas the quest for modernity stands for the need to discursively engage the background knowledge of society to come up with a rationally defensible claims to knowledge. I contend that taking sides is not the way forward rather it is appropriate to understand the mutual reinforcing nature of both background and foreground knowledge. Thus, I contend that the African relational ethics of Ubuntu is a live option for a discursive engagement in African cultures, traditions, and languages.

CONCLUSION

The above analysis has demonstrated that communicative ethics seeks to transform society through intersubjective validations of claims to knowledge as opposed to a commitment to the monological reason of the modern Cartesian subject. The aversion to risks of partiality is no longer valid in the intersubjective paradigm of communicative rationality rather it is the recognition of partiality that justifies the need for communicative rationality. I would argue that communicative rationality justifies a global intercultural dialogical communicative ethics in which partial claims to knowledge are wedded to create a



global intercultural communicative rationality. In this regard, African relational pre-theoretical folk values such as Ubuntu can facilitate the intersubjective quest for a global communicative rationality. Basically, the idea is that intersubjective communication is useful for legitimizing social and political systems through opening the discursive forum for indigenous, subaltern, and pre-theoretical lived experiences of traditional societies. Thus, the Popperian distinction between open and closed societies implicitly shuns other social systems by stereotypical labels such as closed versus open societies.

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THE EMBODIED FLUENCY MODEL: UNCANNINESS BETWEEN THE MERE-EXPOSURE EFFECT AND ANGST

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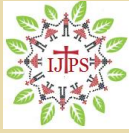
ABSTRACT

Human beings can be said to naturally seek familiarity in their environment for survival purposes, and this can explain why the mere-exposure effect, where being merely exposed to external factors in our environment, can increase preference for these factors. Familiarity in this sense can thus be framed as important for affect and preference formation and considered built upon both the subjective process of fluency and the objects of experience being processed. The feeling of uncanniness is often considered the opposite of familiarity, yet within its semantic vicinity. By considering the term ‘uncanny’ as having a double meaning linked to both familiarity and unfamiliarity, however, this paper will show how this ambiguity allows for a semantic relatedness of this concept to process fluency rather than familiarity. This connection will in turn be shown to have ramifications for affect through the proposal of a fourth model of process fluency: The Embodied Fluency Model. Through consideration of Mori’s shinkawan, Freud’s notion of the uncanny, and Heidegger’s connection between uncanniness and Angst, an exploration into conceiving how fluency and uncanniness share attributes that allow for a different view on affect is propounded.

Keywords: Angst; embodiment; familiarity; fluency; mere-exposure effect; uncanny;

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the psychological processes of familiarization and process fluency, and if we are to see how the latter is more suited for synonymity with uncanniness than the former, it is important to explore the background of the mere-exposure effect (henceforth: MEE). This effect can be said to be a concept lying at the heart of preference formation and affect for human experience. As a consequence of this exploration, this paper will first outline the components involved in the MEE to understand how fluency and familiarity relate to analytic and holistic experiences of affect, respectively. Secondly, it will consider the semantic relationship between uncanniness and fluency through consideration of familiarity’s limitations as a concept to synonymize with the experience of uncanniness. Thirdly, it will investigate the subjectivity involved in experience to elucidate the MEE as allowing for a semantic correspondence between fluency and uncanniness, with the proposal of an additional model of fluency termed the Embodied Fluency Model. Finally, it will inform of the relationship between uncanniness and fluency as one that leads to an interconnection with the embodiment of experience, shown in the form of Heidegger’s conception of Angst.



Throughout the history of psychological literature, the mere exposure of a stimulus that is repeated has been considered sufficient for the increase of preference for such a stimulus; an effect that is found in an array of contexts for a plethora of stimuli and displayed through the use of different procedures among both mature or prenatal animals and humans (Zajonc 2001, 224). Gewei and van Raaij (1997) define the MEE as: “the formation of a positive affective reaction (PAR) to repeated or single exposure to a stimulus, even in the absence of awareness [...] it indicates that communication effects go beyond ‘explicit memory’, measured with the traditional measures of (aided) recall and recognition (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 629).” Reber, Schwarz and Winkielman (2004) further the definition by stating that: “Mere exposure effects have been obtained with a variety of stimuli (faces, ideographs, words, and melodies) and a variety of measures (judgments of preference, behavioral choices, and physiological responses), indicating the robustness of the phenomenon (Reber, Schwarz and Winkielman 2004, 370).”

The MEE manifests itself in both naturalistic and laboratory settings allowing it to be considered a reliable phenomenon involving stimuli exposures that are unreinforced and increase affect toward auditory, taste and visual stimuli; however, it is important to note that meaningful, social, and non-representational stimuli can produce the effects of affective exposure despite the fact that such stimuli do not need to be explicitly recognized to produce the exposure effect (Bornstein, 1990, 791). The MEE thus involves a precognitive mechanism that not only considers it as symbiotic with the amygdala and thus affective emotion, but also enables caution for encounters with new novel stimuli that is potentially harmful; a caution that decreases after increased exposure and thus increased trust through expectation to counter the fear of the unknown (Reber, et al., 2004, 371). To understand how the MEE functions, we can consider that when we are face-to-face with another human being for example, a formation of a bond between ourselves and the other is initiated which is composed of both top-down (prior experience dependent) and bottom-up (sense dependent) processing, as rapid determinations within 100 milliseconds occur to make judgments on trustworthiness via face, attire, decór and arrangement (Wampold 2015, 270). It is in between these processes, we will see, that the concept of uncanniness becomes relevant.

When we consider its meaning in relation to the MEE, we can consider that an experience is described as uncanny when expectations are challenged by exposure to certain stimuli found within that experience. If we were to realize for example that the face we had encountered of another person is actually that of an artificial human rather than a real human being’s, we would consider that the processes involved in the MEE can be deceptive and the process fluency on which they depend can be questioned. The MEE is thus important for understanding the processes of determining what is reliable in human experience, but it is also indefinite because the changes in emotion or affect that are paired with repeated exposure to stimuli are not only dependent on subjective factors like familiarity’s subjective impressions, but linearly on an objective history of exposure (Zajonc 2001, 224).

One of the aims of this paper is to suspend such subjective/objective dichotomies in relation to experience, by exploring the history of the MEE in relation to familiarity, fluency and uncanniness. We can see that the MEE is relevant contemporarily in everyday life such as marketing and academia, but its importance can be traced to the psychological exploration of preference increase from unreinforced stimulus repetition, particularly found in the seminal work on the topic by Titchener (1915) and Zajonc’s (1968) renewed exposure of this work (Carr et al. 2007, 788). The MEE as a concept has thus evolved and has led to psychological ideas, such as recognition being considered based on distinct memory systems



(Willems, Dedonder, & Van der Linden 2009, 191). Memory that is involved with recognition in this respect is taken as a dual process, including both recollection (a process that is conscious and controlled) and familiarity (an automatic unconscious process) (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 633). What can be taken from this notion of a dual process is that no conscious effects occur in conjunction with increased familiarity, and so preference for and liking of experience and its relevant stimuli is to be said to increase unconsciously. From this it can be gathered that the MEE can be framed as functioning in the domain of familiarity or in relation to it, and this functioning is based on an unconscious process (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 644). It must also be the case, however, that the MEE is dependent on the process fluency of experience (the ease of processing experience) which does not necessarily require memory function, since familiarity is built upon such fluency (Whittlesea & Price 2001, 234). It is this more uncertain relationship, between the MEE and fluency, that the concept of uncanniness is able to provide relevance and insight into the role of the MEE and affect formation within the human experience of reality.

1. ANALYTIC & HOLISTIC EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE MEE

To understand how preferences function within human experience, we now see the importance of distinguishing between memory systems, especially between recollection and familiarity as a dichotomy within the faculty of recognition. Since recognition involves analytical processing, it can be considered to involve recollections that can be interpreted as ‘pure conscious processes’ (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 633). Familiarizations on the other hand can thus be interpreted as unconscious processes indirectly encountered, but still lying in the domain of analytical experience. Zajonc informs that such unconscious familiarity can be perceived as positive when: “the affect generated by repetition of exposures is diffuse, and non-specific, then any stimulus, if it follows a benign repetition experience, would become infused with positive affect (Zajonc 2001, 226).” Affective processes in this light thus require less resources and are more automatic than requiring conscious efforts (Fang, Singh, & Ahluwalia 2007, 102). We have seen above that familiarity is based on fluency, but it can be defined apart from it, as fluency is based on non-analytic processing while familiarity can be associated with both fluency and recognition (Whittlesea & Price 2001, 236). Non-analytic processing involves experiencing a feeling of fluency that is global (Willems et al., 2009, 189). Such globality allows for an experience of the quality of the performance of processing itself; hence it is required for liking and preference judgments (Whittlesea & Price 2001, 236). Analytical processing, on the other hand, provides for the recognition of parts and figures in tandem with familiarity processing. Recognition judgments and access to information in analytic terms is linked to processing critical features, in turn categorizing analytic processing for recognition as a possible hindrance to the global fluency experience of processing items as wholes; a hindrance that provokes a lack of a ‘familiarity feeling’ for preference formation and affect (Whittlesea & Price 2001, 236). Adopting a non-analytic approach to processing experience involves perceiving stimuli in a manner that forms an ‘impression’ of processing fluency, as stimuli will have encoded within themselves global properties, alluding to the notion that process fluency can range in degrees (Whittlesea & Price 2001, 237). There are thus stages of processing experience which can contribute together to the experience of the easiness of perception (Reber et al., 2008, 374). It is this nature of process fluency that considers itself in degrees and with ranges of processes that we will see below provides such it with a character that can be considered having solid synonymy with uncanniness.



There are three models for the MEE that are relevant for contemporary psychology. Gewei and van Raaij inform them to be classified as: the model of opponent process, the model of the two-factor learning-satiation, and the model of arousal (Gewie & van Raaij 1997, 632). After decades of meta-analysis on empirical research, the second two-factor model, is best supported in recent times (Gewie & van Raaij 1997, 632). This model is conceptualized as involving an MEE via two independent factors operating simultaneously: stimulus habituation (increase affect from increased familiarity) and satiation (boredom from overexposure). Affective responding involves liking, attractiveness ratings, and capacity for pleasing (Bornstein, Kale & Cornell 1990, 791). It has been known for researchers to hypothesize that some form of learning is underlying the MEE, with meta-analysis even further leading to the suggestion that implicit and explicit learning is able to mediate the MEE within experience; hence one of the benefits for its investigation (Bornstein et al., 1990, 799). Humans, when perceiving, interpret positive affects provoked by processing fluency as a response to targets which result in positive evaluations (Reber et al., 2008, 366). This paper aims to consider the importance of viewing fluency as free from positive and negative interpretations, in addition to any subjective and objective divisions. Alike the uncanniness that describes the experience of something that is ‘uncanny’, process fluency will be framed to be a neutral experience that overcomes dichotomies to conceptualize experience and more specifically, affect. Further understanding of the MEE will allow for a deeper insight into fluency and such neutrality, but also how uncanniness can be considered conceptually found between the realms of familiarity and fluency. This paper will vouch for the notion that uncanniness will lean more towards a semantic connection with fluency than familiarity, however. The MEE’s earliest explanation from Titchener provided for the tautological proposition that we prefer familiar objects due to the enjoyment we receive recognizing them (Zajonc 2001, 224). This was contested by Wilson’s 1979 notion that increased preference for an object is not dependent on individual subjective impressions or the familiarity of objects, but rather genuine objective taste (Zajonc 2001). Despite this objection from Wilson, it is scientifically proven that with exposure to stimuli, when taking place through mere exposure conditions, two possible inputs accompany judgment: the experience of fluency and the experience of affect; two important and perhaps imperative processes for the MEE, no matter which model it is based on (Fang, Singh, & Ahluwalia 2007, 102).

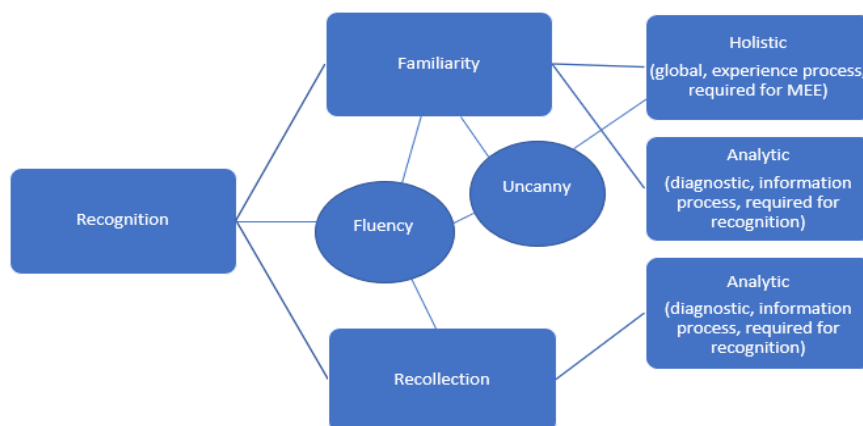
Research shows that there is a ‘warm glow’ when stimuli is familiar, due to a link between familiarity and positivity found at the core of the MEE (Carr et al, 2007, 789). Such levels of familiarity consider that positivity breeds familiarity and not contempt (as some research suggests) (Willems, et al., 2009, 185). We see under this interpretation that ‘warm’ is considered positive and denoting safety, but also that familiarity in this sense can be summed up as that which measures how well a stimulus links with all that is found in memory (Carr et al. 2007, 789). This shows the subjective and objective relationship inherent in the processes of familiarity, but also the positive and negative potentialities for familiarity. Such dichotomous potentialities are aimed to be phenomenologically overcome in the project, with a conception of fluency that transcends such dichotomies and shows an intimate relation with transitory uncanniness. Considering the relation between environment and the human mind, subjective contextual factors need to be considered able to change a setting’s ‘warm glow’; factors like mood, motivation and goals (Carr et al. 2007, 811). These contextual factors inform of the relevance of subjectivity within experience, as the repetition of exposure can be considered to involve a sense of implicit familiarity, leading the MEE to

link with subjective senses (Carr et al. 2007, 788). Due to familiarity involving implicit and explicit familiarity, we can see that familiarity can be considered both an analytic conscious and holistic unconscious process, rather than only an unconscious process as considered above with Gewei & van Raaij 1997 in their contrast between recollection and familiarity as the processes that recognition consists of. We will now see how this gap in the research literature on familiarity allows holistic experience to overcome dichotomies between subjectivity and objectivity, despite the fact that familiarity as an experience in terms of preference formation, might involve a dichotomy between both analytical and holistic experience. It is such holism that we will see respects the importance of embodiment for affect formation and how this reveals an intimacy between fluency and uncanniness as primordial psychological processes.

2. HOLISTIC OVERCOMING OF THE SUBJECT AND OBJECT DIVIDE

Recollection is known psychologically to prevent the MEE because it involves recollecting what can be termed stimuli recognitions, and this involves an analytical process lacking the holistic or globality required for the affect found within the MEE (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 633). Analytical (informational) views of the environment relate to memory because recognition as a re-collector (of experiences) is a meta-cognitive process involving second order thoughts on psychological processing, framing recognition in this recollecting sense (in contrast to a version of recognition that is compatible with familiarity) as a conscious counter-control which scrutinizes, analyzes, and has the potential to counteract or restrict affect (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 633). The explicit memory involved in the conscious counter-control of recognition's recollecting capabilities considers that such an involvement of second order conscious recollection hinders the MEE (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 634). Recognition that is compatible with familiarity rather than recollection, however, is able to extract experiences from recollection in order to suspend them within process fluency, having the potential to allow familiarity to act analytically by provoking recognition. It is argued that the uncanniness of an experience departs from any relatedness to familiarity in this sense, as uncanniness does not have the potential for analytical views on experience as familiarity does. This allows uncanniness to sit closer to the camp of holistic views of experience where process fluency also resides. Figure 1 below serves as a conceptual map of the literature on the MEE thus far, allowing for a view on where fluency and uncanniness can be found within the conceptual world of affect. Uncanniness will be shown below to further distance itself from familiarity.

Figure 1:





Considering familiarity as being unconscious, conscious, holistic, and analytic, coupled with the fact that affect formation can be considered to occur only in processes that are unconscious, we can understand familiarity as not being the most suited category to align with process fluency nor with uncanniness. We will now see the role of conscious and unconscious processes for affect formation to strengthen uncanniness' position as aligning with fluency, in order to substitute familiarity's dominance as a descriptor for the uncanny, but also to allow process fluency to develop a more unique conception compatible with embodiment.

Overexposure to objects in experience can help to maintain the consideration of familiarity and recollection as two distinct processes, but we can state that low levels of familiarity can lead to preference and liking affect via the MEE. Novel and new experiences are also attractive therefore, so long as they are not aversive and function in tandem with habituation as a feeling of lessened rather than greater threats from the environment (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 634). The MEE demonstrates that exposure to a stimulus that is cognitively limited (not within awareness) has an influence on affective reactions without one having the capacity to know consciously that such exposure occurred (thus subliminally) (Whittlesea & Price 2001, 235). Incidental repeated exposure thus results in an increase of perceptual fluency (ease of stimuli perception and processing) without recognition increase, as increased fluency in this sense is paired with positive evaluations of the objects of experience (Fang, Singh, & Ahluwalia 2007, 100). The experience of the fluency itself, however, is the experience that this paper argues to be akin to the experience of uncanniness, as both involve neutral evaluations of experience that are not memory dependent and are thus not information-based analysis.

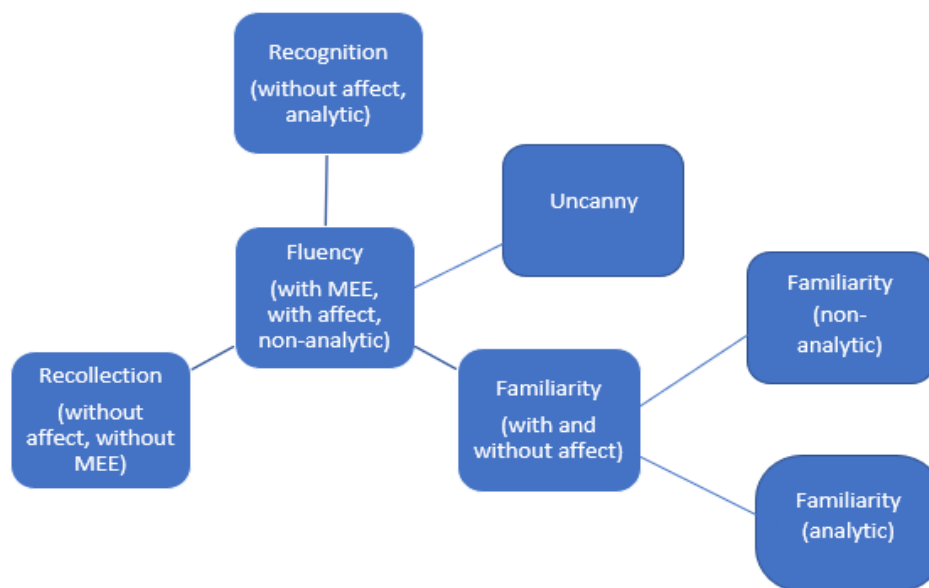
The MEE and average blending, as classic determinants of preference, consider that the process of increasing preference (affect) involves an enhancement of familiarity, and so when change eventually becomes familiar itself, the objects of change and the process of change will eventually be preferred (Carr et al 2007, 787). Familiarity being defined in this case as the measure of how effectively a stimulus matches everything else existing in memory, thus in accordance with a potential global match; an analytic process (Carr et al 2007, 788). Affect can thus be derived from an experience via two possible scenarios, the first being this analytical matching via familiarity based on mere exposure to an environment. This matching proceeds without any conscious recognition or memory of the procedure, which leads to subliminal affect formation as a result of the process of attempting to match experience with a memory although matching a memory does not necessarily occur (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 630). It is important to highlight that this analytical matching procedure by familiarity can be said to require memory, for if no memory is matched in the end, then how are we to know that the procedure actually took place. This reinforces the notion that familiarity depends on memory, which is important for stressing in order to maintain its contrast with fluency, which does not base itself on memories.

Second, affect can derive from the MEE's processing fluency, which is a non-analytical process and refers to easy processing of experience that, in opposition to the first notion that affect can result without any conscious recognition or memory, does require pre-exposure, conscious recognition, and memory over time (Willems et al., 2009, 185). Affect from mere exposure to stimuli can thus derive subliminally from an experience of the analytical processing of memory matching or holistically from the easiness of consciously recognizing familiar objects of experience; a process that cannot be distinguished from the objects themselves.

The MEE can thus be considered linked with familiarity and fluency, however, the subliminal functioning of the MEE in terms of familiarization, counters the notion that heuristic and holistic attributes of experience found in the process of fluency are solely responsible for affect and in turn preference. It is within this ‘gray area’ between fluency and familiarity that the concept of uncanniness is helpful for understanding preference formation within the confines of experience. We have seen that the ambiguity and contingent nature of uncanniness is appropriately linked to the nature of fluency in experience, but we also find the synonymy between uncanniness and familiarity can arise due to the latter’s affinity with both analytical and holistic experiences, which makes it contingent in nature.

We will now move on to different views on uncanniness to grasp its role within the MEE and affect formation. Figure 2 below informs how uncanniness can be understood to distance itself conceptually from familiarity, as uncanniness is not necessarily understood as a conscious or unconscious state as familiarity is. Uncanniness will be shown to collate more with fluency in order to assist in its understanding as more of a process than an fixed state. Figure 1 above informed of how uncanniness and familiarity often share conceptually linkages, and this is understandable, however the literature, through informing of familiarity’s ambiguities as a concept within the MEE and affect formation, provoked ideas on how fluency appears to be more appropriate for describing the experience of uncanniness.

Figure 2:



3. UNCANNINESS IN RELATION TO PERCEPTUAL DISCRIMINATION

The ambiguity of the term uncanniness can be found in its relation to the concept: *shinwakan*. Mori, the conceptualizer of the ‘Uncanny Valley Hypothesis’ (henceforth: UVH), considered *shinwakan* as the term that indicates the experience that characterizes this hypothesis: affective experience in terms of this neologism aims to describe the negative and positive characteristics of affective experience activated by objects in reality that are considered humanlike (Cheetham, Suter, & Jancke 2014, 6). In relation to the interconnections between *shinwakan*, familiarity and uncanniness, Cheetham et al state that *shinwakan* and familiarity are the closest in synonymy than other options, stating: “There

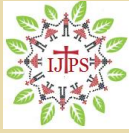


have been various renderings of *shinwakan*'s meaning in uncanny-related research, including comfort level, familiarity, eeriness, pleasantness, likability, empathy and affinity [...] Familiarity (as a) rendering of *shinwakan* has been used frequently in research, it is most often used to denote the affective dimension of the UVH (Cheetham et al., 2014, 6)."

The synonymity between uncanniness and familiarity, provoked through examination of *shinwakan*, is a synonymity that this paper considers should be challenged. Upon etymological examination of uncanniness, or the term 'uncanny', we notice its negative prefix, '-un', and yet 'familiarity' and its antonym 'unfamiliarity' can both be said to tend to denote 'the uncanny' without consideration of the prefix-free term 'canny'. This latter term in the English language can signify astuteness and prudence (Madeira & Leal 2019, 275). Here we have an example that allows us to see how 'the uncanny' can aim to signify both familiarity and unfamiliarity, much like how the word 'sanction' can denote both the verbs 'to prohibit' and 'to condone'. Such semantic ambiguity found with the term 'uncanny' considers that two words are required to signify the same thing, yet possibly to different degrees. It is this ambiguity and dependence on degrees which has led this paper to consider why fluency instead of familiarity is a suitable term to connote uncanniness.

Process fluency can be said to be scientifically measured or subjectively explained by degrees. Uncanniness also appears to function in this manner and this is perhaps one reason as to why the term 'canny', without the negative prefix '-un', is rarely put to use in the English language verbally or textually. To carry on with the notion of applying synonymity between fluency and uncanniness, it is important to consider how affect functions in human experience in terms of degrees. Such functioning requires consideration of how information is or is not processed in experience. When affect from experience is interpreted as diagnostic, as it is with judgments of preference, it is probable it will be used as a decision-making input through definitive judgements, leading affect in this case to be treated as information and crucial for the interpretation of other inputs like fluency experience; however, when affect is not processed diagnostically, it is unlikely that it will be used as an informative decision-making input and is thus valued in itself indefinitely (Fang, Singh, & Ahluwalia 2007, 102). Affect therefore, when treated as information derived from analytical diagnostic means, is thus used instrumentally for input interpretation which is not measured by degrees, whereas affect, when interpreted as intrinsic as an end in itself via fluency, can be measured in degrees.

We can see how diagnosis can prohibit the positive affect of an experience that is uncanny, in the example of a prosthetic hand. In Mori, he informs that: "One might say that the prosthetic hand has achieved a degree of resemblance to the human form, perhaps on par with false teeth. However, when we realize the hand, which at first sight looked real, is in fact artificial, we experience an eerie sensation. For example, we could be startled during a handshake by its limp boneless grip together with its texture and coldness. When this happens, we lose our sense of affinity, and the hand becomes uncanny (Mori, 1970, 33–35)." The realization of the hand's falseness involves diagnostic affect as the hand becomes informational in terms of determining if it is real or not through perceptual discrimination, which requires a 'Yes/No response', rather than via degrees. The hand is not taken as a hand in itself, but rather is analyzed through a recollecting recognition with past experiences of hands. As a result of recollection rather than non-analytical familiarity, process fluency is interrupted, which in turn activates the uncanniness of the experience. It is this activation that allows us to see the relation between the uncanny and fluency, as without fluency and its potential disruptions, the uncanny feeling of the prosthetic hand for example, would not



arise, as only analytical ‘Yes/No responses’ in terms of whether or not the hand is real would be required.

It is perhaps the intimate semantic linkage between the uncanny and familiarity (which can be analytic or holistic) that brings forth possible errors within the UVH, as there still remains the unresolved curiosity as to why and how increased perceptual discrimination which is dependent on analysis and derives from disruptions of fluency, can lead to an increased positive affect (Cheetham et al., 2014, 12). Considering the uncanny as more synonymous with fluency than familiarity can in turn allow for new views on the experience of uncanniness and its relations with the MEE and affect. We have seen above that affect derived from experience that is not analytically diagnostic results in the generation of other metacognitions to interpret fluency experience which are not informational nor analytical, but holistic (Fang et al., 2007, 102). Fluency, as a heuristic tool to judge prior occurrences of experience of stimuli, is experience’s source of familiarity, which means that it is more psychologically primordial than familiarity, but also that increasing one’s liking of something experienced in the present occurs without necessarily provoking familiarity strictly based on analytical recognition; hence we are led to the notion that non-analytic global experience is linked to pleasantness (Whittlesea & Price 2001, 234). Considering the neutrality of fluency, however, such heuristics do not consequentially lead to ‘liking’ or pleasantness as a strictly positive affect, rather, we will see below how fluency can serve as an uncanny primordial feeling in the form of Angst that respects the neutrality of fluency but also uncanniness as a stand-alone category within the process of affect-formation.

The connection between preferences and the experience of the uncanny can be said to be linked in a heuristic manner in which the experience of uncanniness is one that relates to process rather than a temporarily fixed notion of experiencing something as familiar or unfamiliar. The ambiguity of both the experience of fluency and the uncanny highlights their heuristic natures and can be found in moments when perceptual discrimination, where analysis of objects in experience, increases. Considering such moments as ‘fluency difficulties’, Cheetham, Suter, & Jancke (2014) inform of the example that: “Ratings of familiarity show that faces associated with greatest category ambiguity do not show an uncanny-like effect [...] greater PD (perceptual discrimination) difficulty is associated with more positively rather than negatively valenced experience. This challenges the key idea behind the UVH. This effect is strongest for ambiguous faces, suggesting that this effect is more consistent with the metaphor ‘happy valley’ and, correspondingly, the fluency amplification effect (Cheetham et al., 2014, 13).” This obviously interprets the uncanniness of the UVH as having a negative connotation, as uncanniness appears to relate to negative valence, much like how fluency often takes on a positive connotation in terms of easiness of experience. Linking fluency to uncanniness, however, allows such semantic dichotomies to be overcome, as it involves linking them both to holistic experience that we can consider neutral and beyond ‘yes/no’ discriminations that are found within diagnostic analyses such as in recollection and familiarity’s memory-matching.

4. A FOURTH MODEL OF PROCESS FLUENCY

In countering the UVH, Cheetham, Suter, & Jancke (2014) consider that the fluency involved in the analysis of objects of experience such as a prosthetic hand, would involve encountering perceptual discriminatory difficulties that amplify beyond that particular experience and continue to have an effect on subsequent experiences (Cheetham, et al., 2014). This does not cohere with the original UVH of Mori, which would consider such



discrimination as leading to distaste; hence the notion of the ‘happy valley’ rather than the ‘uncanny valley’, as there is a warmth or positive affect from the discrimination process itself that possibly extends to other subsequent experiences (Cheetham, et al., 2014). Such meta-experiences of processes (i.e. fluency and uncanniness) can be considered separate experiences from the objects or events experienced themselves. We will now see how mere-exposure to objects of experience influences affect and preference formation and what role fluency has in this process as a process itself that can now be linked to the experience of the uncanny. A fourth model of fluency will be proposed as a result of this potent link between fluency and the uncanny in order to respect them as individual yet compatible processes.

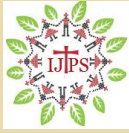
The MEE has been seen from above to be based on fluency and familiarity, and we have been elucidating the synonymity between fluency and the uncanny for not only semantic reasons, but for reasons that can inform scientific direction and how we consider the function of aesthetics when it comes to holistic experiences found in the processes of fluency and uncanniness. To further this direction, we will see how the MEE’s functioning can lead to a model of fluency that embraces uncanniness through the notion of embodiment in Angst.

Fluency can be defined as the ease of information processing, in turn explaining the MEE as either A) a cognition based perceptual misattribution (henceforth: PF/M) or B) an affect-based model of hedonic fluency (henceforth: HFM). Such conceptions are only possible when the MEE is likened to repeated exposure resulting in an enhancement of liking for neutral stimuli. We have seen that the process of fluency itself can influence liking or in other words, the human affective state (Fang et al., 2007, 97). The MEE in terms of the latter, via hedonic fluency, considers negative evaluations of unfamiliar or novel stimuli as relating to cognitive difficulties that extract information required for efficient processing. Such difficulties promote the notion that alludes to the UVH assumption on perceptual discrimination, that through diagnostics we arrive at uncanniness and a sense of disgusted familiarity (Cheetham, et al., 2014, 12).

The notion that processing information from experience via discriminatory diagnostics leads to preferences, aligns with another fluency model mentioned above, that of C) the Fluency Amplification Model. This model considers, apart from the other two models above (A) and B)), that fluency as a process increases affective reactions that stimuli evoke already, so that when humans experience increased fluency and thus less perceptual discrimination, they experience negative stimuli as more negative whilst increased perceptual discrimination difficulties lead to lesser negative ratings; hence we have C) as a model that counters the UVH’s assumption that discrimination of perception leads to distaste (Cheetham, et al., 2014, 12).

It can be considered that C) involves two steps for process fluency, as the process of fluency leads to a neutral activation of affect linkage. The first step involves a target in experience that leads to affective preference, while secondly the fluency process itself, whether or not the target is positive or negative, is experienced as amplifying affective reactions derived from such affective targets (Albrecht & Carbon, 2014). In the first two models A) and B), fluency can be described in terms of Winkielman (2006) who states: “positive reactions occur because fluency indicates error-free processing and successful recognition of a stimulus (Winkielman 2006, 800)”.

In the third ampliative model C), we have the indication that error processing leads to positive reactions, as fluency processes are activated as a result of such discrimination. Having linked the semantics between fluency and the uncanny, we wish to propose a fourth



model that considers how affect functions in a manner that brings fluency into an embodied experience of uncanniness which can be characterized through Heidegger's notion of Angst, rather than a merely cognitive experience based on error or error-free processing fluency.

We have seen from above that fluency is precognitive, but also how in the ampliative fluency model (C), fluency can be based on neutrality rather than positive or negative affect. It is such precognition and neutrality that we will see allows for process fluency and the uncanny to expose their commonalities as psychological concepts within the notion of affect and Angst. Precognition can also be considered to be what allows for a consecutive step from C), to a model that respects the embodied aspect of experience, and which we call the Embodied Fluency Model.

Processing fluency is often assessed psychologically prior to stimulus identification that is cognitively certain (Reber et al., 2004, 371). The body, however, is often not associated in this process, but since fluency can be framed as a non-analytical process, purely cognitive explanations of the effects of fluency on judgements (evaluations) therefore are not the only manner for providing explanations on judgment. The experience of fluency itself and not just stimuli, generates affect which influences subsequent cognitions and interpretations of the experience of fluency, yet also that which is experienced (Fang et al., 2007, 102). The MEE can thus be considered an effect on increased liking of something experienced involving positive affective (preference) reactions (henceforth: PAR) of stimuli, yet simultaneously, the MEE can be the phenomenon observed (not the experience or stimuli itself), despite the fact the PAR is the factor underlying the cause of the MEE (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 643). It is this transitory nature of processing fluency which is central to why it is more suitable for the 'the uncanny' to be linked to fluency over familiarity, as uncanniness and fluency can be considered in transit with the body over time whereas familiarity does not respect the context and contingent nature of experience, due to its discriminatory nature that considers objects of experience as familiar or not familiar.

Uncanniness connotes an experience of an object, situation, or event that is not necessarily certain, yet ambiguously familiar and unfamiliar. The feeling of the uncanny thus considers the second-order experience of experience itself, that of the experience of processing fluency; an experience that suspends familiarity, but also depends on bodily experience. We see how mere exposure itself can be degraded to the extent that a person may not even have conscious awareness of the exposure and yet activate affect for what is experienced. Such subliminal affect is how the exposure can be unconscious and yet still take effect whilst lacking cognitive or rational mediation, only requiring a bodily presence to be sufficient (Gewei & van Raaij 1997, 643).

It might be the case then that the better a human being is oriented to their environment the less it is that changes to the impressions of anything uncanny within that environment is likely; however, Freud considered this notion of uncanniness as incomplete (Freud 1919, 221). Part in parcel for this incompleteness lies in the terminology of uncanniness and its relation to fluency, not only as Freud saw uncanniness as defined as both an emotion and an object of aesthetics leading to aesthetic emotions, but also how it is used in language (Howe 2010, 42). This is why an Embodied Fluency Model, which does not omit the bodily experience involved in the experience of the uncanny, is warranted to reconsider the role of uncanny fluency in affect.



5. ANGST AS A FORM OF EMBODIED FLUENCY

Freud pondered on the notion of categorizing the uncanny under the subject of aesthetics and thus under positive beautiful experiences. Due to Freud's uncanny not being clearly defined up until his 1919 work on the subject, it rather becomes synonymous with that which provokes fear, even in a grotesque sense, rather than in relation to any beauty (Freud 1919, 219). He however did not consider the uncanny to be the opposite of beauty, and thus did not relate it to that which is ugly nor disgusting, in turn countering the negative connotation of uncanniness above. Merely because the uncanny's semantic place does not necessarily belong under the umbrella of aesthetics, does not mean the uncanny is not worthy of analysis for Freud, as he states: "The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar (Freud 1919, 220)." Freud aimed to show therefore how that which is familiar can become frightening and uncanny, as that which is uncanny is frightening due to being unknown and yet familiar at the same time; however, Freud did not insist that all novel experiences are frightening simply because they are not yet known to us; and so uncanniness does not equate with the unfamiliar in every case.¹ Freud's essay '*Das Unheimlich*' thus aimed to link the uncanny to anxiety and have the latter characterized as a form of uncanniness in order to maintain the former's neutrality (Madeira & Leal 2019, 277). Much like Heidegger's notion of Angst, Freud considered anxiety to arise from confrontations with ontological questions and existential insecurities, in turn serving to provoke questions on the purpose of life; however, Freud also recognized anxiety's links to the shifting nature of familiarity, which can serve as an allusion to process fluency's and uncanniness' bases on degrees rather than fixed states (Madeira & Leal 2019, 277). We see then in Freud's conceptualization of the uncanny, room for its synonymity beyond familiarity or unfamiliarity, allowing fluency to be considered a strong candidate to fill this empty semantic void. Not only have we seen above that fluency allows familiarity to be built upon it, but that fluency relates to a more primordial experience and existence. Such primordiality can help in understanding the notion as to why Freud considered the uncanny to relate to what is old and longed for, which echoes the concepts of nostalgia, melancholy and saudade; a relation that the binary opposition between familiarity or unfamiliarity does not elucidate. Fluency on the other hand allows for a contingency of experience to arise, relating to that old and long feeling of the uncanny we see in Freud; a feeling that is heuristically embodied in its nature rather than analytical or diagnostic. In fluency, analytical determinations within experience are left unknown and instead felt, and so experiences can be both familiar and unfamiliar, or aesthetically speaking, ugly and beautiful synchronously at the same time.

The uncanny thus allows for a contingency of experience that is holistic in its 'sensing'. Heidegger also connects such uncanny feeling to the anxiety of Angst², stating: "In Angst one has an uncanny feeling. Here the peculiar indefiniteness of that which Dasein finds itself involved in with Angst initially finds expression: the nothing and nowhere. But uncanniness means at the same time not-being-at-home [...] Angst, on the other hand, fetches Dasein back out of its entangled absorption in the 'world'. Everyday familiarity collapses. Da-sein is individuated, but as being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1927, 176)."

¹ *Unheimlich* is the antonym of *heimlich* (homely) and *heimisch* (native), and so these latter two concepts can be semantically taken as also the antonyms of 'familiar' for Freud, Freud 1919, 220

² Anxiety and Angst may not be entirely synonymous, especially in Heidegger's sense, however their related aspects are sufficient to consider Freud's anxiety and Heidegger's Angst as semantically close enough for the purposes of this paper



Fluency here links with the uncanny and Angst, in its bringing us back to a more primordial existence, as fluency is concerned more about our orientation to the world as a body and mind, not just via our cognitive appraisals. When we question our own experience of process fluency itself, an uncanniness arises as a result of such overcoming of the dichotomy between the subjectivity and objectivity of experience. The experience of fluency can be described by Heidegger therefore as having existential implications as: “Dasein stands primordially together with itself in uncanniness. Uncanniness brings this being face to face with its undisguised nullity, which belongs to the possibility of its ownmost potentiality of being (Heidegger, 1927, 264).” This in turn relates to the notion of Angst as serving the body and mind to work together for understanding how fluency, uncanniness, and affect function in tandem, in turn allowing for an Embodied Fluency Model to maintain relevance for the experience of affect formation. Heidegger can be interpreted to take uncanniness as an entity on its own, just as fluency can be interpreted to be distinct from experience and the experiencer. Both fluency and the uncanny share this meta-cognitive function as an end in itself whereas recollection, which also bases itself on second-order experience, does not. Such a description of these concepts can lead to the notion that such second-order experiences of experience (the experience of the processes of experience) are more primordial than their first-order experiences (that which is experienced). Heidegger informs that through Angst we can consider human potential to be based on motivations that lead uncanniness and fluency to remind us of our lack of homeliness, or as we saw in Freud above, lack of belonging. How we cope with this is an embodied experience that asks where we are and how our fluency of experience relates to this notion of place. Such existential questioning considers the uncanniness of experience and is important for authentic existence, as Heidegger states that: “Uncanniness reveals itself authentically in the fundamental attunement of Angst, and, as the most elemental disclosedness of thrown Dasein, it confronts being-in-the-world with the nothingness of the world about which it is anxious in the Angst about its ownmost potentiality of being [...] It is Dasein in its uncanniness, primordially thrown being-in-the world, as not at home, the naked ‘that’ in the nothingness of the world [...] Uncanniness is the fundamental kind of being-in-the-world, although it is covered over in everydayness (Heidegger 1927, 255-258).” The thrownness of Dasein and the Angst that is linked to this transitory existence, leads us to consider the process fluency of experience as uncanniness. Heidegger’s conception of uncanniness as a primordial being in the world, allows us to relate it to fluency’s primordially prior to familiarity. The Angst we experience when encountering the uncanny, such as in the example of an interaction with a prosthetic limb above, involves an engagement with reality and experience that is not necessarily analytical for familiarity’s sake of recognition, but questions the processing fluency of experience and existence. When that fluency as uncanniness is interrupted, it is then that discriminatory diagnostics come into play and analysis of experience in the form of familiarizations via recognitions take hold. Rather than conceive of fluency as modelled on the three models A) – C) mentioned above, in which objects of experience or the experience of fluency itself as discriminatory or non-discriminatory, dictate affect, the Embodied Fluency Model proposes that the uncanny relationship we have with ourselves and the world is in a hermeneutical circle between one’s body, one’s subjective experience, and one’s objects of experience; cohering with Fuchs circularity of embodied mindedness (Fuchs 2020). This Embodied Fluency model thus allows us to consider the uncanny as not an analytical recognition, but a holistic feeling that questions one’s entire existence in its contingency rather than positive or negative interpretations of experience.



CONCLUSION

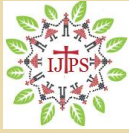
When we consider the notion that beauty is found in the objective and thus objectivity is responsible for preference derivation (Reber, 2008, 368), we would be omitting subjectivity. This might seem unfair, however, when figures, individual objects, and parts found within an environment on their own are deemed ‘good’ or ‘likable’ simply because there is less information to extract from them to maintain them as stimuli within perception, we can see that humans are responsible for their environment and how beautiful it is interpreted for them. There might be naturally inclined preferences for symmetry as a form of beauty since the times of Aristotle (Reber, et al., 2008, 368) where stimuli with less information are more pleasing by involving easier processing from increased fluency (Reber, et al., 2008, 369); however, creating an environment with these characteristics depends on human manipulation of the environment. Without the experience of the uncanniness of fluency, human preferences would be stagnant and our environment would not be rendered satisfactory to maintain our need for beauty, expectations, and preferences.

It is our human experience of Angst that allows us to witness our own vulnerability as an uncanny experience, and Angst has been shown to be connected to the lack of fluency within our experience. Fluency, and its accompanying experience therefore, have the capacity to expose us to primal experiences that are prior to discriminatory or diagnostic experience. When such analytical diagnostic discrimination is disrupted, it no doubt brings forth a form of Angst that is uncanny, but this disruption is not a destruction of fluency, rather we can now claim it to be a ‘call to being human’.



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SHOULD WE BELIEVE IN MORAL REALISM? ON THE BURDEN OF JUSTIFICATION OF MORAL REALISM IN MORAL DISAGREEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Moral realism and moral relativism are two influential dogmas in moral philosophy. This paper examines relativism's possible position and the burden of justification of a particular form of realism in the problem of moral disagreement. This paper concludes that neither position is morally acceptable, and this paper further offers a hint to a middle way: moral pragmatism.

Keywords: *moral realism; moral relativism; moral disagreement;*

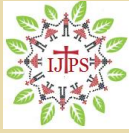
INTRODUCTION

“Thou shalt not lie;” you can lie in certain scenarios. Abortion is permissible; abortion is not permissible. You can sacrifice the life of one to save the world; you cannot sacrifice one’s life in any scenario. Moral disagreements prevail in our life. From the debates in principle to disputes around social events, people don’t lack disagreements. Many philosophers strive to find out ways to rationally resolve these disagreements, while others contend that ultimate agreements are not realizable.

Moral Realism believes that mind-independence moral truths exist, and hence people can resolve disagreements after discovering the eternal, absolute moral truths. On the other hand, Moral Relativism argues that there’s no such objective, universal, absolute moral truth or principle, as morality itself is the product of different cultures under particular cultural or social context. For this very reason, relativists consider the ideal of finding universal moral facts to transcend moral disagreements, formed by radical cultural differences, like a destined failure.

Two theories demonstrate a radical difference in handling the problem of moral disagreements. On one hand, moral relativists emphasize the priority of moral plurality, and different value systems may rationally have incompatible moral beliefs. On the other hand, realists argue that people can ultimately form moral agreements through understanding the mind-independent moral facts.

This paper firstly states a challenge to Moral Relativism’s position in moral disagreement. Then, this paper reconstructs David O Brink’s refutations to Moral Relativism and argues that these objections cannot be answered by relativists. In the third part, this paper examines Moral Realism’s proposal, especially two exceptions of moral disagreements, and argues that it demands a high burden of justification, which is unlikely to be achieved. Finally, the paper concludes that a viable theory must settle a middle way between the absoluteness of moral realism and complete relativity of moral relativism to address moral disagreements.



1. MORAL RELATIVISM AND MORAL DISAGREEMENTS

In “The Argument From Relativity,” Mackie expresses the following idea: unlike scientific disagreements resulting from speculative inference based on inadequate evidence, moral disagreements reflect people’s adherence to “different ways of life (127).”

Relativists, as Mackie exemplifies, believe that social, cultural, geopolitical contexts and different ways of life generate diverse moral beliefs and moral values. For instance, as Confucianism is rooted in the traditional relationship of family and clan structure in China, Western Individualism is caused by its particular historical contexts, and Greek’s virtue of courage is attributed to the very nature of Marine civilization...

Although physicists currently disagree on scientific disputes such as quantum mechanics or string theory, people can still rationally believe that physicists will ultimately reach mutual agreements on these problems. This belief is intuitive because people associate science and scientific method with “objectivity,” and scientific knowledge should provide explanations that correspond with an external, objective world and natural facts. Moral knowledge appears to be very different, however. As Mackie persuasively contends, the transformations of moral obligation in human history demonstrate the constructive nature of morality. Indeed, if there are universal moral facts, why different nations, civilizations, and cultures’ beliefs are so different? Moreover, why did the moral beliefs within the same country change throughout the course of history?

I reconstruct relativists’ opinions in the problem of moral disagreements as follows:

(1) If there are abundant, radical cultural differences and moral disagreements, morality is the product of different ways of life.

(2) There are abundant, radical cultural differences and moral disagreements.

(C1) Morality is the product of different ways of life.

(3) If morality is the product of different ways of life, then we should reject moral facts and hence moral realism.

(C1) \cup (3)

(C2) We should reject moral facts and hence moral realism.

Williams expresses a similar idea as he distinguishes moral knowledge and scientific knowledge into two categories: moral knowledge is about action, not about the world itself. Therefore, moral realists cannot provide a sufficient foundation to justify the objectivity of moral knowledge (131). Rawls is even more radical—for Rawls, the very idea of moral relativity indicates that at least some radical disagreements of moral principles are not rationally resolvable, leading to the inability for philosophers to reach ultimate agreements (223-224). For instance, a Utilitarian will never agree with Kantian’s categorical imperative of “thou shalt not lie,” while a Kantian will never agree with the method of utilitarian calculation since it treats the value of people as quantifiable.

What does relativists’ approach mean at the normative level? In other words, if we accept relativism, how should we deal with moral disagreements in reality?

The most typical idea is the doctrine of tolerance: since different moral paradigms between different cultures are incommensurable, a moral agent in one culture does not have a justified reason to criticize the moral practice or moral values held by a distant culture. Similarly, no culture has the supreme position that can demand other cultures to accept its value system. Put this conception into an idiom: you go your way, and I go my way. The doctrine of tolerance becomes the cornerstone of liberalism, which is also called “passive freedom.” In “The Pursuit of The Ideal,” Berlin argues that relativism, or pluralism in his phrase, drives people to transcend the Platonic ideal that demands an absolute, universal



truth. After abandoning this illusion, people are able to imagine a pluralistic ideal: every culture identifies the commonality with other cultures while respecting the difference (195).

Rawls further proposes two fundamental principles of action for relativists. Firstly, a reasonable agent must admit that moral systems produced by different cultures have boundaries, so one should not impose his or her own moral beliefs on others' moral contexts; secondly, a reasonable agent is not justified to use political power to suppress others' rational moral beliefs (226).

2. WHY RELATIVISTS' APPROACH IS PROBLEMATIC

To save moral truths from the attack of relativism, O. Brink firstly distinguishes two different kinds of moral disagreements: apparent moral disagreements and genuine moral disagreements (159). The former is the different exemplifications of the same moral belief under specific contexts. For example, developed countries and developing countries have diverse social welfare systems, but they may represent the same moral belief behind them. From the perspective of a developed country, certain practices in developing countries may be immoral because the means to realize the same end are seemingly different. Genuine moral disagreements, however, are more fundamental. They are the clashes of incompatible moral principles: Kantianism v Utilitarianism; Virtue Ethics v Deontic Ethics; Hedonism v Stoicism...¹

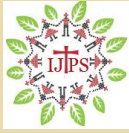
For apparent disagreements, realists deny (1): If there are abundant, radical cultural differences and moral disagreements, morality is the product of different ways of life. The first premise is too arbitrary since it fails to distinguish apparent disagreements from genuine ones. In fact, if people collectively realize that some moral disagreements, which are seemingly created by cultural differences, actually represent the same moral principle, people are likely to form moral agreements in practice. Moreover, apparent disagreements may depend on non-moral facts. For instance, moral agents possibly hold diverse information, self-interest, bias, and epistemic status about the same event. As a result, the disagreements on non-moral facts prevent people from reaching moral facts and hence moral agreements.

For realists, the existence of current apparent disagreements does not imply the impossibility of moral truth for the apparent disagreements is on the epistemic level. Instead, people should realize that various means in moral practice are multiple faces of the same moral principle.

After realizing the commonality of shared moral principles, reasonable moral agents can further meditate on how other cultures, societies, and political environments realize the moral principles in their unique practical contexts. Through this reflective practice of moral imagination based on the shared moral value, people will ultimately transcend practical divergence and reach mutual agreements. For instance, after gathering sufficient information and engaging in moral discourse, people in China are able to understand the legitimacy of the social welfare system in the Nordic Council and how the moral principle of "equality" is realized. Therefore, for apparent disagreements, (1) is problematic.

¹ One may challenge this distinction by arguing it's impossible to distinguish in fact between apparent and genuine moral disagreements in practice since any so-called genuine moral disagreements could be discovered in the future not to be a dilemma at all (e.g., slavery). However, the distinction is a metaphysical one rather than an epistemic one.

Therefore, whether people in practice can distinguish between apparent and genuine disagreements does not challenge the classification.



As apparent moral disagreements fail to attack moral realism, relativists may suggest genuine moral disagreements are resolvable if and only if there are common agreements on moral principles that are prior to epistemic facts. However, since there are no such agreements on moral principles, genuine moral disagreements are not resolvable. I believe that we can summarize this argument in the following form:

(4) If people do not share agreements on moral principles as these principles are internally justified, then genuine disagreements are not rationally resolvable.

(5) People do not share agreements on moral principles as these principles are internally justified.

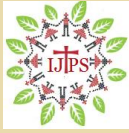
(C3) Genuine Disagreements are not rationally resolvable.

There are at least three objections to this argument. To begin with, realists can challenge (5). Relativists' justification of (5) rests on the principle of internal justification: a moral value "Ψ" is and only is justified within the paradigm "Ψ." According to this view, a moral agent is not justified to critique the Chinese Confucian ideal from the standing point of Western tradition since the Confucian ideal is internally justified within its own system of beliefs.

So far relativists only justify *within a paradigm*, not a *justification of a paradigm*, which is necessary to preserve the moral significance of moral beliefs. People do not demand agreements of preference since they are insignificant. Apple and banana, which is better? Dog and cat, which is cuter? Each position is only internally justified by its believer, but each belief hence becomes insignificant. Consequently, if relativists want to prevent morality from reducing to propositions of trivial preference, they must provide justification of the paradigm itself, which requires a shared horizon.

To illustrate the relationship between significance and common horizon, let's suppose Wilson says, "the meaning of people's life is to waggle their toes 42 times per day." Without extra explanation by Wilson, others have reason to regard this assertion as epistemically ridiculous or unreasonable; however, in this scenario, moral relativists counterintuitively suggest that people should not make judgments regarding Wilson's assertion. If Wilson does explain to support the assertion to make it morally significant and reasonable, he has created a common horizon for moral discourse, exposing the assertion to public critique, discourse, and debates. This analogy points out that the moral significance is grounded in a shared horizon that enables people to discourse, critique, and debate. It is the intersubjective agreements of a higher-order system with broad publicity that justify the moral beliefs of a narrower system. Therefore, the principle of internal justification is implausible as it reduces moral values to trivial, private preference.

Secondly, relativism rests on a problematic assumption: for incompatible moral beliefs, a moral agent ought to suspend his or her judgment, as implied by the principle of tolerance. One should neither accept others' moral values nor impose own values on other cultures. To begin with, from an epistemic perspective, if we regard people from an alien culture as our epistemic peers, it is rational for us to weaken previous beliefs when there're moral conflicts (Rowland, 87). It is precise because of the demand of the principle of tolerance, people should respect alien cultures' moral values and treat their believers as epistemically capable peers. However, unlike relativists' demand to suspend the judgment, it is more epistemically plausible for people to adjust their beliefs or at least to reduce their level of confidence. For example, when 99 out of 100 epistemically capable peers provide



opposite answers to Henry, Henry has reasonable motivation to change or at least reconsider his answer to the question².

Moreover, relativists' suspension of judgment implies the impossibility for people to genuinely criticize or support other moral paradigms as no paradigm has epistemic priority. Consequently, the Nazi's massacre in Auschwitz is morally free from blame because it was internally justified, the only demand of justification for relativism, in Germany's domestic contexts. In other words, moral relativism implies an absurd conclusion: we cannot criticize the Nazi's atrocity as it was justified within the paradigm.

Thirdly, Brink suggests (4) is a one-way view: only moral principles justify the moral judgments in practice, and this relationship is not reversible (Brink, 162). However, people's moral judgments formed in practice constantly adjust people's moral consensuses. As these consensuses expand in practice, people ultimately will reach agreements in principle, which refer to moral truths.

3. REALISM'S BURDEN OF JUSTIFICATION

So far, realists refute the argument of moral relativity from the levels of apparent moral disagreements and genuine moral disagreements and point out two repugnant consequences of moral relativism. Does it mean realism is saved? Not necessarily.

So far realists only indicate the implausibility of treating morality as merely relative, mutually incommensurable social, historical, and cultural products. However, realists haven't justified genuine disagreements are rationally resolvable and hence people can reach moral truths. Now I'll examine the burden of justification of realism to fully justify its position.

Brink argues two exceptions should be excluded from the responsibility of justification: (a) Some interlocutors in moral discourse may have systematically mistake moral system that it's impossible to convince them of true moral claims; (b) moral ties are possible and some objective values themselves may be incommensurable (Brink, 166).³

Therefore, moral realism's responsibility of justification in the problem of genuine moral disagreements is:

(R1): Genuine moral disagreements are resolvable, with systematical defects and moral ties of objective moral values excluded from the discussion.

Anti-realists are welcomed to accept the first part of this idea: moral realism should justify the resolvability of genuine moral disagreements; however, they may rationally reject the second section and insist that realists must discuss how moral agreements are possible in two exceptions.

Consider the first exception: some interlocutors may have systematically mistaken beliefs that it's impossible to convince them of true moral claims. Suppose A tries to converse with B, a holder of a particular epistemic and moral paradigm. A's a conceptual scheme, the epistemic pattern to perceive the world, is radically different from B's, so A's epistemic and moral beliefs and B's beliefs have nothing in common. In this case, "apple"

² The principle of tolerance of relativism is even self-defeating. The relativists cannot assert any moral principle as anything but relative. Then, if one culture disapproves of tolerance, as it clearly does, tolerance is unjustified.

³ The motivation to devise two exceptions is understandable. Although moral realism only demands the existence of moral truths, its establishment requires epistemic accessibility. If these mind-independent moral truths are inaccessible to moral agents, moral realism fails to satisfy the accessibility requirement and hence becomes an empty theory.



might be an edible fruit from A's point of view, while the term "apple" is a nonsensical expression φ , or even epistemically inconceivable, within B's alien conceptual scheme. If this is the case, A indeed has no way to understand B's language since the understanding of the language demands the shared beliefs about the world, but A also has no reason to treat B as a person who has the proper usage of language. Therefore, the objection to the first exception is:

(i) If there are systematically mistaken or incommensurable moral paradigms and epistemic conceptual schemes, then moral paradigms and conceptual schemes are mutually untranslatable.

(ii) Moral paradigms and conceptual schemes are mutually inter-translatable.

(iii) There are no systematically mistaken or incommensurable moral paradigms and epistemic conceptual schemes.

(iv) There are no systematically mistaken or incommensurable moral paradigms and epistemic conceptual schemes \equiv there are no first exceptions.

(v) There are no first exceptions.

The most important premise of this argument is (ii). The very fact that we can translate English to Chinese and from Chinese to English rests on a prerequisite: we share the same conceptual scheme to perceive the way. It does not require Chinese and American to share every belief. What inter-translation requires is moderate—general convergence of the conceptual schemes. On the contrary, if a linguist tries to translate a bat's language, he or she is destined to fail as they have fundamentally different conceptual frameworks. Bats may have subtle expressions to certain stimuli beyond human knowledge, so the human linguist has no way to genuinely understand bats' expressions. A human linguist might regard these subtle expressions as natural behavior, but certainly, they cannot be regarded as a rule-governed public language (Elgin, 93).

Therefore, if F is a systematically mistaken interlocutor, people have no reason to treat F as a person since the conceptual scheme is radically different. The commonality between an ordinary person and an F is nothing more than that between a person and a bat (Nagel, 437-442). An "agent" with a systematically mistaken system is impossible. What is possible to happen in reality is an agent's conceptual system is not epistemically responsible (e.g., a person lacks rationality or with epistemic handicap). However, these insufficient circumstances should be discussed by moral realists since they are so common. Therefore, realists should exclude the first exception. Now, the responsibility of justification becomes:

(R2): Genuine moral disagreements are rationally resolvable unless there are moral ties of objective, incompatible moral values.

We should eliminate the second exception as well. To begin with, it harms the strength of moral realism. It does not follow that moral realism is necessarily incompatible with the idea of moral plurality. Realists do not need to suppose moral truths to be monotonic and determined as suggested by the Platonic Heaven. Moral realism, however, should provide an achievable methodology to resolve genuine disagreements, otherwise, its theory does not have explanatory power compared with relativism. In fact, as Mackie suggested, when moral realism is forced to admit the moral ties in moral disagreements, anti-realists' interpretation of morality as the social construct of unique cultural contexts has stronger explanatory power.

Secondly, the incommensurability of objective moral values is a strong epistemic demand, perhaps too strong. Incommensurability, according to Kuhn, is a concept about



different paradigms. Kuhn believes that physicists in the quantum era are unable to genuinely understand or evaluate Newton mechanics because the paradigm has shifted. Therefore, (1) incommensurability is not a term that applies to specific moral beliefs, but different paradigms; (2) incommensurability demands not only a lack of convergence between different paradigms but also an impossibility to genuinely comprehend other paradigms (Elgin, 78-79).

In other words, realists need to justify those different cultures that possess diverse paradigms cannot mutually understand each other. This argument is too strong. The inter-translatability of languages provides empirical evidence that there are no incommensurable conceptual schemes (Davidson, 185-190). Although Western individualism does not agree with many practices of Eastern collectivism, a reasonable moral agent at least can understand what collectivism requires through moral imagination. The behavior of disagreement itself shows this truth: without such understanding of the opponent's belief, the action of disagreement reduces to an arbitrary, irrational behavior.

Thirdly, there are multiple ways to respond. Realists may argue that seemingly unresolvable moral ties are the consequence of vague questions. People can further specify "What is X" in order to reach moral convergence (Nussbaum, 173). Rather than asking "what is justice" in theory, people ought to ask what the practice of justice is and how to realize the ideal under particular social, cultural, and political contexts.

Due to the aforementioned reasons, moral realists need not and should not exclude the moral ties from their justification. However, as the second objection implies, moral ties do not have unique characteristics (incommensurability) that differ from moral disagreements, so we can combine the discussions of moral ties with those of moral disagreements. Consequently, the responsibility of justification for realism in the problem of moral disagreements is:

(R3) Genuine moral disagreements are rationally resolvable.⁴

The burden of justification is heavy to bear. Realism not only needs to justify the resolvability of genuine moral disagreements but also needs to provide a practical methodology to realize the process to reach the moral truth.

Indeed, perhaps the most optimistic realists will doubt whether their ideal is achievable. Or maybe the realist picture is but a naive fantasy. It is hardly believable that such responsibility of justification is more than a theoretical possibility and can be fulfilled.

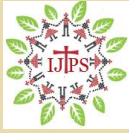
CONCLUSION

In the second section, I reconstruct a typical position of moral relativism on the problem of moral disagreements.

Then, In the third section, I point out three flaws of moral relativism. First of all, the justification within a paradigm is insufficient to secure the moral significance, so moral beliefs are not solely justified within their frameworks. Secondly, moral relativism does not

⁴ A moderate realist can use "may be resolvable" instead of "are resolvable" because there is no way to really know that any given moral dilemma is resolvable unless it is resolved. Consequently, it would be impossible for realists to prove that a given moral disagreement *is* resolvable. Just as in mathematics some truths cannot be proven, so the same is true in morality. As Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem suggests, any complex theory is incomplete containing truths that cannot be verified (Kim, 20).

However, as the accessibility requirement implies, the very idea of moral truths lies in the possible moral convergence. Therefore, "may be resolvable" is insufficient for moral realism to truly establish the accessibility of moral truths as it implies the convergence may not happen, metaphysically and epistemically speaking.



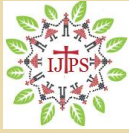
fit our intuition of epistemic peers and causes a repugnant conclusion that we are forced to accept certain inhumane moral systems as (internally) justified. Finally, moral relativism rests on a narrow one-way view that disregards the reverse relationship between moral judgments and moral principles.

Although moral relativism should be rejected, moral realism's stance is not justified so far. After revising realists' responsibility of judgment, I point out that realists need to justify the resolvability of genuine moral disagreements and provide a feasible methodology to reach moral convergence and hence moral truths. The justification is highly demanding.

In the challenge of moral disagreements, people on one hand are reluctant to accept moral relativism's repugnant consequence and its flaw of internal justification; on the other hand, people cannot genuinely trust that realism's strong responsibility of justification goes beyond the theoretical possibility. From the conflict between virtue ethics and deontic ethics to that between Kantianism and Utilitarianism, the history of philosophy seems to illustrate the failure of moral realism to find the objective moral truth. Now, the dichotomy between moral realism and moral relativism seems to repeat the fruitless quest as both theories are too extreme to prevent morality from the challenge of moral disagreements.

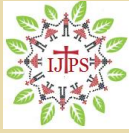
There are merits of the two extremes, though. From the problems of moral relativism, we learn that a tenable moral theory does not appeal to internal justification to establish moral values. Instead, moral values must be justified through the moral discourse of a common horizon that is accessible to all moral agents. From the failure of moral realism, we learn that a plausible moral theory is not grounded in the absolute demand of moral objectivity as it requires strong responsibility of justification that is hardly realizable.

"A middle way" is now opened to future inquires—it is neither absolute nor relative. Only if philosophers abandon the false dichotomy and devise a new moral theory, the progress to address the challenge of moral disagreements is as possible.



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AN INTERPRETATION OF ADAM'S FALL IN THE LIGHT OF FAR EASTERN PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

One must not pursue a concordism or discordism of theology and science but their dialogue towards creating a mutual understanding. We make an effort in this direction by reinterpreting certain Hebrew words in the narrative of Adam; and by bringing insights from far eastern psychology into play. The conventional understanding is that the creation of Adam from "dust" was the beginning of "spiritual mortality." However, Adam transgressed and did not follow spiritual morality. We rely on the far eastern narrative of creation and propose that "dust" may refer to the implanting of negative qualities by God to break the primitive bliss and take the first steps to "draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). The conventional understanding is that God prohibited Adam and Eve from eating of the Tree of Knowledge. We note that God had placed the Tree in the middle of the Garden. We suggest that God did this so that Adam would see and partake of it. Also, Adam had not eaten of the Tree till the alleged prohibition was pronounced. There was no occasion to prohibit him from doing what he was not doing anyways. We propose that God wanted them to eat of the Tree. Their error was in making delay in eating of it and then of trying to devour the Tree. The conventional understanding is that the speaking serpent is correlated with near eastern depiction of serpents as adversaries. The role of the serpent, however, was also positive since it led Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree and to the opening of their eyes. We propose that the serpent was the far eastern symbolism of the unconscious impulses emanating from one's own spinal cord. We find that these interpretations make the Biblical narrative sync with science and also give it a positive ambience. These interpretations are consistent with the majesty of Jesus Christ in helping establish a conscious connection between man and God. The process by which these far eastern narratives may have entered the Bible require further investigations.

Keywords: Bible; Genesis; Original Sin; Adam; Eve; Serpent; Tree of Knowledge; Tree of Life; spinal cord; humankind;

INTRODUCTION

Ion Marian Croitoru, Faculty of Orthodox Theology and Education Sciences, Valahia University of Târgoviște, Romania says "one must pursue not a concordism or discordism of theology and science but their dialogue from a theological and, implicitly, eschatological perspective."¹ We make such a dialogue by examining whether alternative meanings of the Biblical text of the narrative of Adam may concord with the natural sciences.

We agree with the Biblical scholars (1) that Adam was a historical person;² (2) that God created Adam without sin;³ (3) that death in Gen. 2:17 refers to spiritual death;⁴ (4) that



the transmission of sin from Adam to his descendants was spiritual rather than biological;⁵ and (5) that Jesus helped humankind to re-establish a conscious connection with God.⁶

We provide alternative interpretations in respect of certain other points by accepting the alternative meanings of select Hebrew words and by bringing insights from far eastern psychology.

The “Fall”

Primitive Bliss

Adrian D. Covan Lecturer, Faculty of Letters, History and Theology, West University of Timișoara, Romania says that there was “no way back to the *bosom* of lost Paradise” once Adam and Eve transgressed and ate of the Tree of Knowledge.⁷ Implied is the depiction of Eden as a place of bliss. There is a sense of deprivation and nostalgia. We suggest this representation is only partially true.

Before the making of Adam from dust, Gen. 1:27 says, “So God created man in His own image...” Marin Bugiulescu, Professor, Director of Saint John Chrysostom Orthodox Theological Seminary, Târgoviște, Romania quotes theologian Christos Yannaras to the effect that man is created in the image of God because he “responds positively or negatively to the call of God, leads his life to life, which is a relationship, or to death that is separation from God...”⁸ In other words, man became conscious of his existence. Adam may have enjoyed bliss and a spontaneous connection with God earlier but was not responding positively or negatively to the call of God. He was living in primitive bliss. The development of consciousness opened the possibility of establishing a conscious connection with God. Absence of such a connection was tantamount to spiritual death.⁹

Then Gen. 1:28 says: “male and female He created them. Then... God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...’” We understand the term “multiply” in an anthropological context. Studies indicate that about 12,000 years ago some groups of humans abandoned the hunter-gatherer practices to establish permanent settlements that could provide for much larger populations.¹⁰ The multiplication of humankind as commanded by God would be possible only upon the start of cultivation. However, Gen. 2:5 says that “there was no man to cultivate the ground.” It is clear, therefore, that God had commanded Adam to initiate cultivation in Gen. 1:28 but he did not follow that command as indicated in Gen. 2:5. Rather, Adam remained in the state of primitive bliss of possibly a hunter-gatherer state.

Question arises whether the “not cultivating” was a “sin.” We feel a distinction is to be made between “not following” and “acting contra” a command. While the latter may be called a “sin,” we think the former not so since there is no opposition to the command. 17th century French theologian La Peyrère made such a distinction. He identified the sin of the pre-Adamites as “natural sin.”¹¹ Hence, no “sin” was committed by Adam till this point of the narrative.

Implanting Negative Qualities

Then, the Bible says:

NKJV: And the Lord God formed man of the *dust* of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of *life*; and man became a *living* being (Gen. 2:7).

Throughout this article we will write in italics the words that we wish to consider in detail. The word used for dust is “aphar.” It means “dust” 65 times, “dirt” 14 times, “ashes” and “dusty” 2 times each; and “debris,” “dirt-covered,” “grave” and “scabs” 1 time each. On the other hand, it means “soil,” “ground,” “earth,” “plaster,” “clay” and “siege ramps” total



22 times.¹² The former 87 uses give a negative connotation while the latter 22 uses give a neutral connotation. The overall sense, therefore, is of a negative connotation.

The word used for “life” and “living” is “chay.” It means, “living, alive, flowing, fresh (of water), lively, active (of man).”¹³ These meanings give a sense of positiveness and growth.

In this verse, therefore, we have two seemingly contradictory indicators. The “dust” suggests negative qualities while the words “life” and “living” suggest positive qualities. This is consistent with the suggestion that “dust” signifies spiritual mortality;¹⁴ and that the “breath of life” depicts redeeming Adam from spiritual death.”¹⁵

David O. Brown of Queen's University, Belfast says that “it is possible to hold that God wills that there is a creation and that this creation is good, without also holding that God constrains that a particular creation is good in a specific way.”¹⁶ In other words, the larger scheme of creation is good which would imply that the specifics, if negative, would still sync with the larger good of the creation. We examine whether the specific negativity of creation from “dust” could be reconciled with the larger positivity of “breathing of life.”

Anthropological studies provide a possible pathway of reconciliation of these seemingly contradictory indicators. Studies indicate that the development of agriculture was possible only if man could establish his control over the land that he cultivated. Otherwise, one would spend the energy to cultivate the crop while the crop would be harvested by another. This establishment of right over land entailed the “violence” of keeping others out of fields cultivated by oneself. Thus, anthropologists say:

(In the evolution of man) of paramount significance, is social “domestication” with new means of molding community identity and interaction, whose very essence changed; these range from bonding through kinship, exchange networks, craft specialization, feasting, and so on, to rivalry, political boundaries, and intra- and intercommunity *confrontational violence*.¹⁷

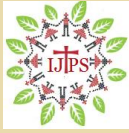
The advent of farming around 12 millennia ago was a cultural as well as technological revolution... This Holocene revolution was not sparked by a superior technology. It occurred because possession of the wealth of farmers—crops, dwellings, and animals—could be unambiguously demarcated and defended. *This facilitated the spread of new property rights* that were advantageous to the groups adopting them.¹⁸

These observations suggest that violence to guard the wealth created by the farmers—crops, dwellings, and animals—was a necessary step required for the beginning of cultivation and the multiplication of humankind. We suggest that the “creation from dust” was the specific negativity of violence that was necessary for the beginning of cultivation; while the consequent multiplication of humankind was the larger positivity of “breathing of life.”

We would like to share that we were led to this idea while reading the Hindu narrative of creation. Brahma is the creator in the Hindu narrative:

...when *the progeny did not multiply* by any means, Brahma, enveloped entirely by Darkness, became dejected. He then created intelligence which leads to a definite decision. He then saw only the Darkness element moving within himself as the controlling factor. Subduing Passion and Purity, it was functioning. *Tormented by that sorrow*, the Lord of the universe felt grieved. He eschewed Darkness and Passion enveloped it. The Darkness that thus dispelled, gave birth to a twin. *Violence and sorrow were born* of Unrighteousness. When the twins were born of the foot, *the lord felt pleased*.¹⁹

We may see the following parallels with the Bible here:



The progeny did not multiply ~ humankind did not multiply;
Brahma created intelligence ~ God made man in his image;
Brahma continued to be tormented by sorrow ~ there was no man to cultivate the ground; violence and sorrow were born of unrighteousness ~ God made Adam from dust.

The planting of the negative qualities such as that of violence also meant that the primitive bliss and the spontaneous connection with God was severed. Thus, Adrian D. Covan says, “sin and death are two sides of the same coin.”²⁰

Humankind was previously connected with God in an animal-like state of primitive bliss. However, God wanted to humankind to be drawn *consciously* to Him: “I... will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). The first step to such conscious drawing would be the initiation of independent thinking including severing of the primitive unconscious connection with God. Thus, scholars say, “Paul calls this state that of ‘the ungodly’ in Romans 4:5 and 5:6, designating it as a condition of separation from God.”²¹

Earlier, Irenaeus held that “Adam sinned and lost his initial endowment of friendship with God, and that all people die as a result of Adam's sin...” The initial endowment of friendship was the primitive connection that was severed due to the using of independent thinking by Adam. Irenaeus sees this “sin” as an almost necessary step for the education of mankind.²² Norman R. Gulley of Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists says “If humans are born separated from God, then the center of their lives is not God but self.”²³ We would like to also see this as a first step necessary for the conscious drawing to God. Paul Ladouceur, Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Divinity, Trinity College, University of Toronto says: “sin, the estrangement from God, is virtually cotemporaneous with free will, the acquisition of the “knowledge of good and evil,” and is dependent on it.”²⁴ We agree that estrangement from God is cotemporaneous with free will but we do not see this necessarily as sin. The independent thinking would lead to sin if and when a person would use the capacity of independent thinking to act contra God’s command. The result of this discussion is that the creation from “dust” refers to the implanting of negative qualities of violence and the beginning of independent thinking. This was a positive step in the larger scheme of God.

The question arises how did the negative qualities spread to humankind? It is oftentimes seen that an idea spreads like wildfire. An example that comes to mind is of the slogan “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” that spread during the French Revolution. Likewise, all humans may have broken out of the primitive stupor and started independent thinking after God planted the negative qualities in the person of Adam.

The capacity to think independently may be, in part, biologically inherited. Modern genetic studies say that “only 10% of a person’s ability to show empathy is due to genetic characteristics. The remaining 90% is not encoded by genes but depends on environment and lifestyle...”²⁵ Thus, the 10% of our emotional endowment, that is, the capacity of independent thinking is built into our genes and may be indicated in the view that humankind is born in sin.

Views of Adam’s “Sin”

We now consider certain views of “Adam’s sin” in this framework. The Roman Catholic and Protestant view that a sinful state for humankind resulted from Adam’s sin could refer to the spread of independent thinking from Adam.²⁶

The capacity to think independently existed before Adam. Its *use* started at the time of Adam, spread to humankind horizontally at Adam’s time and spread vertically to the descendants of those peoples. Thus, to repeat, Marin Bugiulescu quotes theologian Christos Yannaras to the effect that man is free to respond positively or negatively to the call of



God.²⁷ On the other hand, Adrian D. Covan focusses on the possibility of sinning that is inherent in independent thinking and says that the “sin” of eating of the prohibited Tree led to the digging out of “the foundation of the indomitable fortifications of good.”²⁸ Both Yannaras and Covan are correct in their own ways. Yannaras focuses on the capacity of independent thinking without attributing its positive or negative use. Covan may be understood to say that it would be unlikely that one could continue to act as per the commands of God entirely, therefore, a sinful state would result.²⁹

Jeremy Kimble, Associate Professor of Theology at Cedarville University gives four affirmations that Christian theology concerning original sin. We give our understanding of these below:

It is universal, affecting all humans. The capacity to think independently is inherited by- and affects all humankind.

It is something that has affected our nature. The human nature has changed due to the capacity of thinking independently.

It is inherited. The descendants biologically inherit the capacity to think independently—even if it constitutes only 10% of the inheritance.

It is Adamic, in that he plays a special role. The first person to think independently may have been Adam hence his special role.³⁰

A distinction can be made between “primal sin” and “inherited sin.” Primal sin would refer to the first use of the capacity of independent thinking sin contra God’s command by Adam. It would become “inherited sin” only if and when the inherited capacity would be used contra God’s command. Thus, Jesse Couenhaven of Villanova University says, “one can believe in primal sin... without being committed to a doctrine of inherited sin...”³¹

We need to maintain a delicate balance between the two aspects of independent thinking. On the positive side we have material progress as well as the first step towards being drawn to God. On the negative side we have the possibility of acting contra God. Thus, Bob Becking, Senior Research Professor of Bible, Identity and Religion at Utrecht University looks at the positive side and rightly says that “fall is absent in Genesis.”³² On the other hand, Augustine looked at the negative side and said that sin is inherited. In the light of above we may render Gen. 2:7 to say:

Alternate Translation: And the Lord God *planted in* man *negative qualities*, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of *independent thinking*; and man became *capable of being drawn to God*.

1. GOD ENCOURAGED EATING OF THE TREE

The conventional interpretation of Adam’s sin is that God prohibited Adam from eating of the Tree, he ate nevertheless and met with spiritual death.³³ Question arises how could eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the consequent opening of eyes be considered to be spiritual death? Also, why would God prohibit Adam from eating of the Tree, when he was not eating of it in any case? We suggest an alternative reading of this verse that God wanted Adam and Eve *to eat* of the Tree. Let us recall that God had placed the Tree in the middle of the Garden. We suggest this was done so that Adam would see and eat of it. Adam’s error was that he did *not* eat of it. We would like to reconsider the conventional translation of Gen. 2:17 and examine if it is amenable to such an interpretation:

NKJV: *but* of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not *eat, for* in the day that you *eat* of it you shall surely *die*” (Gen. 2:17).



We discuss the four words given in italics in detail.

But. The Hebrew text does not contain the phrase “but.” The text begins with the word “ets” that stands for trees or wood. The conjunction “but” has been interpolated into the text. We would like to interpolate “if” instead as, for example, done in Numbers 35:18.

Eat. The Hebrew word is “akal.”³⁴ It is used in the sense of eating-without-devouring as well as eating-with-devouring. In two verses it is used in the two senses in the same verse. The places where the word “akal” has been used are marked in italics in the quotes below:

NKJV: “And *ate* up all the vegetation in their land, And *devoured* the fruit of their ground” (Ps. 105:35).

NKJV: “There the fire will *devour* you, The sword will cut you off; It will *eat* you up like a locust” (Nah. 3:15).

We suggest that the word “akal” in Gen. 2:17 may have been used in the sense of eating-without-devouring in the first instance and in the sense of eating-with-devouring in the second instance.

For. The Hebrew word for “for” is “kiy.” It indicates causal relations of all kinds. We would like to translate it as “although, or” as, for example, done in Genesis 48:14.

Die. The Hebrew word “muwth,” is primarily used for physical death but also used as “despaired 1, fails to reach 1, perished 1, perish 1, finished off 1, finish off 1.”³⁵ In the present context we may consider it to mean “fails to evolve.”

The verse can thus be rendered as:

Alternative Translation: if of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, or in the day that you devour of it, you shall surely fail to evolve.”

Translated this way, God said to Adam that he would fail to evolve if he did not eat of the Tree or if he ate of and devoured it. Both the cases would lead to failure to evolve though differently. Adam would be deprived of the opening of the eyes and continue to live in the primitive stupor if he did not eat of the Tree. Future generations would be deprived of the opening of the eyes and they would fail to evolve if Adam devoured the Tree.

The same scenario unfolds again in Gen. 3. The serpent cast doubt on the nature of the command of God: He said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” The woman replied:

NKJV: *but* of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, *lest* you die.’

Once again, the difficulty lies in the conjunctions. The verse starts with the conjunction “and.” It is conventionally translated as “but.” It can alternatively be translated as “if.” The word “lest” is again a conjunction. It is translated as “or” in Gen. 19:15, 19:17 and Ex. 19:24.³⁶ Thus, the verse can be rendered as:

Alternate Translation: If of the fruit of the tree which [is] in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, or you die.’

Whether this “not eating” or “devouring” would constitute a “sin” would depend on one’s perspective. Strong’s Concordance defines the word “hamartia” used for sin, among others, as:

- 1) to wander from the law of God, violate God's law, sin;
- 2) that which is done wrong, sin, an offence, a violation of the divine law in thought or in act;
- 3) collectively, the complex or aggregate of sins committed either by a single person or by many.³⁷

“Eating” of the Tree despite prohibition in the conventional perspective; as well as “not eating” of the Tree in the alternative perspective could both be considered to be a sin. An important difference is that the “eating,” in the conventional perspective, would be a direct and conscious action contra the command of God; while the “not eating,” in the alternative perspective, would be procrastination rather than a conscious action and would stand at a lower level of sin, if at all.

2. THE SERPENT

Next, the serpent said, if you eat of the tree, “Surely you will not die” (Gen. 3:4). The talking serpent is explained by Biblical scholars by drawing parallel with the near eastern literature where serpents played a prominent role as adversaries of both humans and gods.³⁸ Adrian D. Covan follows this approach in saying that “The venom of lies was injected the moment the old serpent told Eve that they would not die.”³⁹ We know though that serpents do not speak. Further, serpent has both a negative and positive symbolism in the near eastern traditions. Between 4000 and 3000 BCE it represented devastation and fever.⁴⁰ This negative symbolism faded away in the second millennium and gave rise to a positive symbolism of vegetation, moisture, long life, wealth.⁴¹ The negative symbolism is understandable in view of the poisonous nature of the creature. However, no credible explanation is available as to how the serpent could represent long life and wealth. We suggest that an alternative explanation is available in far eastern traditions.

The Serpent in the Light of Far Eastern Psychology

The symbol of Caduceus of two snakes is used by many medical organizations. However, a historian comments that the “use of the symbol is very ironical as how can destructive creatures used to represent a healing purpose. The answer lies in the snakes’ characters of skin shedding representing immortal life, sudden change in activity emphasizing transit from sickness to cure, early use in the bible, and most important of all it was used by Asclepius who is the god of healing.”⁴³ We find these answers lacking because skin shedding and sudden change of activity pale into insignificance in front of its destructive nature.

We bring in far eastern psychology to gain insight into the matter. Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the doyen of Yoga of the last century, explains:

Most commonly, Kundalini is illustrated as a sleeping serpent coiled three and a half times. Of course there is no serpent residing in... any... chakra, but the serpent has always been a symbol for efficient consciousness... This serpent power symbolizes the unconscious in man... In the traditional descriptions of Kundalini awakening, it is said that Kundalini resides [in the basal chakra at the lower end of the spine] in the form of a coiled snake and when the snake awakens it uncoils and shoots up through the psychic passage in the centre of the spinal cord, opening the other chakras as it goes.⁴⁴

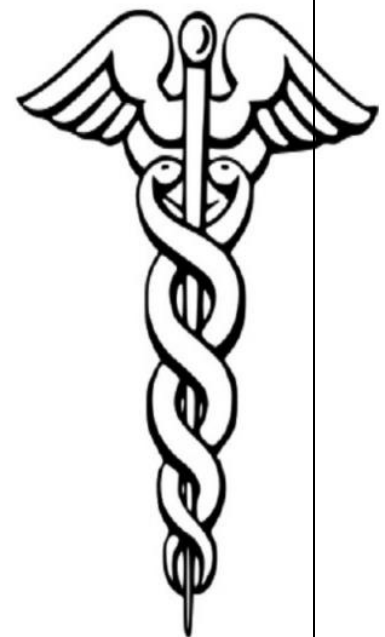


Figure 1: The Caduceus.⁴²

There are seven chakras or psychic centres in the spinal cord in the Hindu understanding. These are connected with each other and act as switches for certain parts of the brain. The interconnection of the psychic centres in the spinal cord is represented as a serpent. The spinal column is flanked by two nerves that join at the lower end.⁴⁵ The Hindu tradition holds that the flow of psychic energy through these three pathways—the spinal cord and the two nerves—strengthens the person psychically and begets positive results. This anatomy may explain the positive depiction of the serpent in the ancient near eastern traditions mentioned above.

We find confirmation of the existence of the three pathways from modern anatomy. Isaac Asimov says “the chief ganglia [swelling on a nerve fibre] involved in the autonomic nervous system form two lines running down either side of the spinal column... These two lines of ganglia outside the column resemble a pair of long beaded cords, the beads consisting of a succession of 22 or 23 swellings produced by massed nervous cell bodies. At the lower end, the two cords join and finish in a single central stretch.”⁴⁶ The number 22 or 23 need not distract us. More study is required to synchronize the seven turns with these 22 or 23 swellings. The main point is that the two serpents coiled around a central pillar may depict the two ganglia and the spinal column. The flow of energy through these may beget the positive results mentioned above.

Another association of the serpent in the near eastern and thus the Biblical tradition with the Hindu system is obtained through the planets. The Hindu tradition associates each of the seven centres in the spinal cord with a planet, specifically with Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn.⁴⁷ Joseph Campbell, author of *Occidental Mythology*, has produced an image from the ruins of a temple of a Roman Port dated to 190 C.E. in which a serpent is shown winding upward in six turns up the human body and resting its head above the brow on the 7th turn (Figure 2). The seven turns, he explains, were identified with the seven celestial spheres—Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn.⁴⁸

In summary, we find two lines of support for the serpent in the Bible being a symbol of the spinal cord. One, the connection of the serpent with the flow of energy through the spinal cord may underlie its positive depiction. Two, the association of planets with psychic centres in the spinal cord connects the far eastern with the Roman and presumably with the near eastern traditions.

The speaking serpent may thus represent the unconscious psyche reposed in the spinal cord. The unconscious impulse may be described as a speaking serpent in the Bible. We now resume our discussion of the Biblical narrative in this background.

Not eating of the Tree

Then, in Gen. 3:11, God asked:

NKJV: Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

The word for “not” in this verse is “lebilti.”⁴⁹ Its primary use is in the sense of negation as mentioned above. However, it is also amenable to alternative interpretations. We

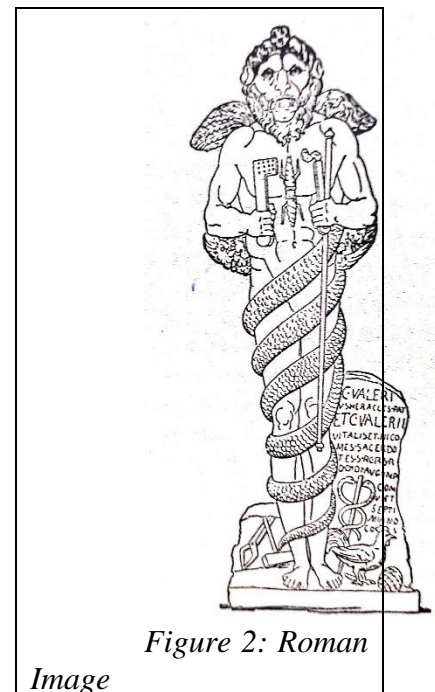
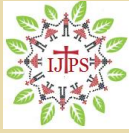


Figure 2: Roman

Image



give below three such usages with the order of the words changed for easy reading. We give the word “lebilti” in italics.

In Gen. 21:26 the word “lebilti” is used as “until” followed by “today.” Using the word “lebilti” in this way we get:

Alternative Translation 1: Have you not eaten until [today] from the tree of which I commanded you that you should eat?”

In Gen. 43:5 it is used to stress an exceptional person: “not you shall see my face *unless* your brother [is] with you.” Using the word “lebilti” in this way we get:

Alternative Translation 2: [You will die] unless you have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should eat?”

In Numbers 11:6 it is used to indicate the thing that is to be eaten: “there is nothing *except* the manna.” Using the word “lebilti” in this way we get:

Alternative Translation 3: Have you eaten except from the tree of which I commanded you that you should eat?”

These three alternative translations are consistent with God reprimanding Adam and Eve for not eating from the Tree of Knowledge.

Psychic Guidance

The woman explained:

NKJV: “The serpent *deceived* me, and I ate” (Gen. 3:13).

The Hebrew word for “deceived” is “nasha.” However, this is problematic. In Jeremiah 4:10, for example, this interpretation leads to accusing God of deceit: “Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.” The Pulpit Commentary notes that “much difficulty has been felt in interpreting this verse, partly because it seems directly to charge Jehovah with ‘deceit.’”⁵⁰ This difficulty may be removed if we were to translated “nasha” as “to guide.”

The word “nasha,” used here for “deceived,” can also be translated as “guided.”⁵¹ It is used 14 times in the O.T. Of these, 12 times it can be substituted with the term “guided” without changing the meaning of the verse.⁵² If this substitution is accepted, the verse would read:

Alternative Translation: The serpent guided me, and I ate.

Serpent: The spinal Cord

Then God cursed the serpent, Eve and Adam in succession. Scholars have noted that these curses are followed by progress. Matt Champlin writes in Themelios journal of The Gospel Coalition that the blessings given by God in Genesis are only partly offset by the curses, that is, the blessings stand tall over the curses.⁵³ Jacob Gerber, Senior Pastor of Harvest Community Church in Omaha, Nebraska says that God does not abolish the goodness of His blessings entirely. The curses only make a break in the larger continuity.⁵⁴ We follow this approach in understanding the curses.

We have already shown that the “serpent” could stand for the unconscious. We now discuss the curse on the serpent in view of the same. God said to the serpent:

NKJV: Because you have done this, You are *cursed* more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your *belly* you shall go, And you shall *eat dust* All the days of your life (Gen. 3:14).

We now consider the five words given in italics.

Curse.



The word “curse” has a negative connotation but one that could be of a short-term negative consequence leading to a long-term fortuitous result.⁵⁵ We give three examples to this end. First, the Lord had cursed the land at the time of Adam. Yet, Gen. 5:29 says that Noah would bring comfort from “labor and from the painful toil of our hands because of the ground that the Lord has cursed.” Second, God had cursed Canaan. Yet Gen. 9:25 tells us that Canaan was the land where the Lord led Abraham to reside. Third, Prophet Jeremiah wished that the day he was born would be cursed (Jer. 20:14-15). Yet he became a Prophet. Thus, the word “curse” can be used for pain followed by an fortuitous circumstance.

Belly. The Hebrew word for “belly” is “gachown.” Its origin is “giyach” which is used in the sense of “bursting forth” as in Job 38:8, “raging” as of a river as in Job 40:23, and “jumping out” from a place of hiding as in Jdg 20:33—just as consciousness bursts forth in the spine.

Crawl.

Go. The Hebrew word for “go” is “halak”—just as consciousness “goes” in the spine.

Eat.

Eat. The word for eat—“akal”—could signify the eating of the vibrations at chakras as the consciousness moves up.

Dust. The Hebrew word for dust, as mentioned previously, could be the quality of darkness.

Thus, we can alternatively render this verse as follows. To the unconscious reposed in the spinal cord, God said:

Alternative Translation: Because you have done this, You are cursed... On your spine you shall go continually up and down, And [lead to the fortuitous result of] burning up darkness All the days of your life (Gen. 3:14).

Swami Sivananda explains the movement of consciousness in the spine as follows:

As you inhale, feel that the Consciousness lying dormant at the base of the spinal cord is awakened and is going up from psychic center to psychic center ... Feel that by the Grace of the Lord, the darkness of ignorance enveloping your soul has been dispelled... Slowly exhale now. And, as you exhale feel that the Consciousness is gradually descending from the top of the spinal cord, and from psychic center to psychic center to the base of the spinal cord.⁵⁶

Rendered in this manner, this verse indicates that once activated due to eating of the Tree of Knowledge, the consciousness was “cursed” to move perpetually up and down the spinal cord.

Curse upon the Woman and the Man

After cursing the serpent, God cursed the woman:

NKJV: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children (Gen. 3:16).

We refer to the anthropological studies quoted previously to the effect that the development of agricultural practices could provide for much larger populations.⁵⁷ The begetting of these larger populations would entail larger numbers of conceptions and the consequent increase in pain of women. Thus:

Alternate Translation: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth [large numbers of] children;

Then, God cursed man:



NKJV: Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life... And you shall eat the herb of the field (Gen. 3:17-18).

Scholar of the Old Testament Julius Wellhausen has pointed out that Genesis 1 portrays man in a positive sense that is distinct from the negative sense of Genesis 2-3:

What are generally cited as points of superiority in Gen. i. over Gen. ii. iii. Are beyond doubt signs of progress in outward culture... but in its general views of God, nature, and man, Gen. i. stands on a higher, certainly on a later, level. To our way of thinking its views are more intelligible, simpler, more natural, and on this account they have been held to be also older.⁵⁸

Wellhausen sees signs of progress in the narrative of Adam. Accordingly, we translate this verse as follows:

Alternate Translation: Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat [plentifully] of it All the days of your life... And you shall eat the herb of the field.

Lastly, the Bible says God made tunics of skin and clothed Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:20). Here again we may refer to Wellhausen:

The first step in civilisation is clothing; and here this is the first result of the fall. The story is continued in chapter iv. Adam's sons begin to found cities, Jubal is the first musician, Cain discovers the oldest and the most important of the arts, that of the smith—hence the sword and bloody vengeance.⁵⁹

The curses, therefore, could indicate short-term stress followed by the long-term progress.

3. HUMANKIND'S SIN: DEVOURING THE TREE

Scholars say that sin entered the world when Adam violated the command of not eating of the Tree.⁶⁰ However, we have suggested that God never prohibited Adam from eating of the Tree therefore that could not be the point of entry of the sin. We may recall though that another command was given—that of “not devouring the Tree.” It seems God was apprehensive that this command could be violated:

NKJV: Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and *take* also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Gen. 3:22)

Take. The Hebrew word for “take” is “laqach.” It also means “capture” and “seize” as, for example, in 1Samuel 2:16, 1Samuel 7:14 and Judges 5:19. These meanings, especially “seize,” could indicate that God was concerned that humankind may devour the Tree of Life.

Forever. The Hebrew word for “forever” is “olam.” This can also be understood as “long time.”⁶¹

Indeed, the earlier prohibition against devouring was given regarding the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in Gen. 2:17 as discussed above, while the above concern is indicated regarding the Tree of Life. However, both Trees were placed in midst of the Garden in Gen. 2:9, hence it is possible that the prohibition of devouring was made regarding both the trees though explicit reference is made regarding the Tree of Knowledge in Gen. 2:17 and regarding the Tree of Life in Gen. 3:22. Thus we could translate this verse as follows:

NKJV *Alternate Translation:* Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he [individually] put out his



hand and *seize* also of the tree of life [leading to extinction of the tree], and eat, and live [long individually leading to short life for humankind]” (Gen. 3:22).

God placed cherubim to guard the way to the tree of life to avoid such an eventuality (Gen. 3:24).

This attempt to devour the Tree of Life may be the “sin” that was done at the time of Adam—and inherited by humankind. This view would be consistent with sin being understood as attachment to materiality.⁶²

4. TRANSMISSION

Scholars consider the two aspects of the doctrine of original sin to be (1) the origin of that condition at the beginning of the human race; and (2) the sinful condition in which each human life begins.⁶³ Between these two aspects is a third: how did the condition of sin at the beginning of human race got transmitted to the sinful condition in which each human life begins?

In agreement with these scholars, we understand Adam to be a historical person during whose time sin originated. We also know that there were other human beings at that time who did not descend from Adam hence would not have inherited the sin done by Adam. Yet all humankind is today born in sin. Thus, sin has to be transmitted both horizontally to other persons and vertically to the descendants. Only then it is possible for all humankind to be born in sin today.

We have noted above that there is 10% genetic transmission and 90% environmental transmission in the ability to show empathy. We may consider the same to hold for the ability to think independently or the ability to commit sin. Now, let us consider that Adam started independent thinking that may have included the sin of devouring the Tree of Life. It spread like wildfire, say, to all humankind, riding on the 90% environmental basis. Then all the descendants inherited the same independent thinking riding on the 10% genetic transmission. In this way it can be said that Adam was the first sinner. The Federal Headship explanation that Adam “sinned as our head, or our representative” would fit in with the 90% environmental transmission; while St. Augustine’s concept of inherited sin would fall into the second category of 10% genetic transmission.⁶⁴

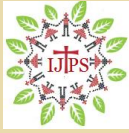
5. REDEMPTION

We agree with the conventional view that spiritual transmission of sin from the time of Adam can be reconciled with science and that the fundamental message of the Bible is, “You are a sinner and Christ is your savior.”⁶⁵ We understand the basic trajectory as follows. Humankind was living in a state of primitive bliss in direct connection with God. Adam started the process of independent thinking leading to separation from God. This was the “fall.” Then through Jesus Christ we can re-establish a conscious connection with God as indicated in John 12:32.⁶⁶ We give our interpretation of Romans 5:12-15 in this perspective:

NKJV: Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Rom. 5:12).

We understand this verse to say that independent thinking entered the world through Adam and led to severing the live connection with God. The independent thinking then spread to all humankind. All used their independent thinking, in part, at least, not aligned with God hence all sinned.

NKJV: For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law (Rom. 5:13).



We understand this verse to say that the capacity of independent thinking was in the world after Adam and Eve were commanded to eat and not devour of the Trees of Knowledge and Life. But the attempt of devouring the Tree of Life was made later. Humankind did no sin until they attempted to devour the Tree of Life.

NKJV: Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come (Rom. 5:14).

We understand this verse to say that humankind used its capacity of independent thinking sometimes, at least, not aligned with God hence separation with God reigned from Adam to Moses. Those who may not have sinned, like the devouring of the Tree of Life, were yet severed with the live connection with God due to their independent thinking. Jesus is like Adam before he ate of the Tree of Knowledge since both were in connection with God.

NKJV: But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many (Rom. 5:15).

We understand this verse to say that the offense of Adam led to the severing of the connection with God in many. The grace of God in Christ abounded to many more.

Similarly, 1Cor. 15:21-22:

NKJV: For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

We understand this verse to say that from Adam came the severing of the live connection with God or death. Likewise, by Jesus Christ came the reconnection with God. Here, the Greek word "anastasis" is conventionally translated as resurrection. It is derived from "anistemi" which means "standing up again" and could indicate reconnection with God.⁶⁷

Thus rendered, the verses are consistent with the Hebrew text, the "progress in outward culture" noted by Wellhausen and our alternative interpretation of the Adam narrative.

CONCLUSION

We have considered the apparent discordance between theology and science in the narrative of Adam. We find that theology and science can be synced by reinterpreting certain Hebrew words and by brining insights from far eastern psychology into play.

We suggest that the creation of Adam from "dust" may refer to the implanting of negative qualities by God to break the primitive bliss and to take the first steps towards establishing a conscious connection with God.

Second, God actually wanted Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree. Towards this end He had placed the Trees in the middle of the garden. Their error was firstly in making delay in eating of it; and secondly in trying to devour the Tree. God placed the Cherubin to guard against the latter possibility.

Third, the serpent was the far eastern symbolism of the unconscious impulses emanating from one's own spinal cord.

We find these interpretations make the Biblical narrative sync with science and also give it a positive ambience. Notably these interpretations are consistent with the majesty of Jesus Christ in helping establish a conscious connection between man and God.



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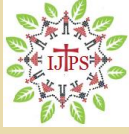
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TEACHERS` REPRESENTATIONS AND BELIEFS ON EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

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ABSTRACT

Children` participation to education is an important concern for the entire educational system, for policy makers, but also for organizations, institutions, employers, etc. interested in what is happening in education, without necessarily being part of this system. With the intention of contributing to promptly identify students in early school leaving situation and to operatively intervene, an extensive research was launched within the Erasmus+ Project "Active Cross-sectoral Cooperation for Educational and Social Success" (A.C.C.E.S.S.), having as target-group teachers and students from the four partner countries - Italy, Portugal, Lithuania and Romania. The research circumscribed a quantitative approach, consisting in the development and administration of two questionnaires - one addressed to teachers and the other addressed to students and to those who leave the school early, and a qualitative approach, conducted by the method of interview-based survey, in the case of students and by organizing focus groups with teachers. One of the aspects with a strong impact on the motivation and involvement / engagement of students in the educational process and, implicitly, on the management of the ESL phenomenon is represented by the representations / beliefs of the school managers / teachers / students. That is why part of our research has focused on investigating teachers' perceptions on these beliefs and representations.

Keywords: *early school leaving; teachers` representations/beliefs; motivation, school engagement, ACCESS project;*

INTRODUCTION

Early school leaving (ESL) is a recurring theme in the European educational space. For at least a decade, numerous analyzes, studies, researches, projects have focused on identifying the causes that generate this phenomenon, as well as on designing and implementing solutions meant to reduce its magnitude, prevent the risk of its manifestation or reduce its effects. The proportions of ESL, amplified by the current pandemic context, are likely to be of concern to EU Member States due to the multiple negative consequences, both individually and socially.

In European Commission documents, *early school leaving* refers to "those young people who leave education and training only with lower secondary education or less and who no longer attend any form of education and training" (European Council, 2011, p. 1).

Statistically, European ESL rates are measured in relation to the percentage of young people aged 18 to 24 who have only completed lower secondary education or less and are no longer integrated into any form of education and training.



It should be noted that in various EU documents, there are two interchangeable phrases that cover the same serious reality: *early school leaving* (ESL) and *early leaving from education and training* (ELET). In 2011, 6,4 million young people in Europe were considered *early school leavers* (European Parliament, General Directorate for Internal Policies, Education and Culture, 2011).

Early school leaving phenomenon predominates among at-risk groups, such as children and young people in rural communities, those from families with poor socio-economic status, belonging to a minority group or students who have repeated at least one year of schooling, or they dropped out of school. Since 2011, the European Council's recommendation explicitly provides that ESL strategies, designed and implemented in each Member State, should include prevention, intervention and compensatory measures, aimed in particular at groups at high risk of early school leaving, including here children from disadvantaged socio-economic environment, migrants, Roma and children with special educational needs (European Council, 2011, p. 2).

All these measures are in line with the *Europe 2020 Strategy*, which aimed to reduce the dropout rate from 15% in 2010, which meant that one in seven young people drop out of school and training too early, at 10%, by 2020 (European Commission, 2010).

It is already a truism that ESL / ELET has important individual, social and economic implications. Thus, young people who leave school prematurely are prone to the risk associated with unemployment or low earnings when they find a job.

Moreover, the financial implications of ESL are major: the cost of ESL calculated for entire lifetime is estimated at one to two million euros for each early school leaver (European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Education and Culture, 2011). The high costs of ESL (private, fiscal and social costs) are analyzed in detail by Brunello and Da Paola (2014).

Understanding the importance of engaging in specific prevention and intervention actions, a number of projects focusing on ESL / ELET have been implemented at EU Member State level. One of these is A.C.C.E.S.S. Project (Active Cross-sectoral Cooperation for Educational and Social Success), carried out within the Erasmus Plus Program, which involved eight partner institutions from four EU member states, namely Italy, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania.

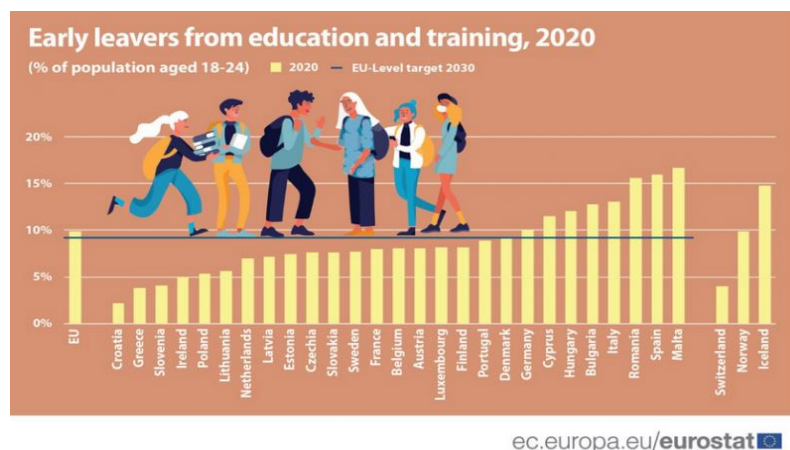
A.C.C.E.S.S. Project aims to address, in a preventive manner, the problem of early school leaving generated, in particular, by school factors, by *strengthening the quality of the pedagogical act*, conditioned by the *improvement of the teachers' competences* and the *creation of a positive learning environment*.

1. EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING IN EUROPEAN CONTEXT

According to a report prepared in 2014, entitled *Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures*, the consistent efforts made by most European countries have materialised in a decrease of the rate of early school leaving. Thus, more than half of the countries covered by this report were below the 10% target set by the *Europe 2020 Strategy*, and about a third of the countries had reached their national targets at that time (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice / Cedefop, 2014). The EU indicator used for the transnational comparison of the weighting of the ESL / ELET phenomenon, updated for 2020, shows important variations in EU member states, from 2,2% - Croatia to 16,7% - Malta. Regarding the partner countries in the A.C.C.E.S.S. project, the following situations are registered: Italy - from 17,8%, in 2011, reduces the ESL rate to

13,1%, in 2020; Lithuania, which in 2011 was below the EU 2020 target of 7,4% respectively, manages to reach 5,6% in 2020; Portugal has a spectacular evolution, reaching from 23% - in 2011, to 8,9%, in 2020, and Romania registers a percentage of 15,6% in 2020, compared to 18,1%, in 2011, but slightly increasing, with 0,3% more than in 2019 (Eurostat, 2021).

Of the four Member States, only two are below the 10% - the target of the EU on the *Europe 2020 Agenda*, Lithuania and Portugal, while Italy and Romania exceed it. In fact, Romania has missed the national target of 11,3%, for 2020, while at EU level, the ESL rate is 9,9%, so the goal set by the *Europe 2020 Strategy* is achieved.



ec.europa.eu/eurostat

Fig. 1. EU – Early leavers from education and training (Source: Eurostat, 2021)

In this context, the focus on ESL / ELET needs to be maintain in the next period, too. The EU 2030 Agenda also integrates this issue, which is still considered a challenge, all the more so as the Covid-19 pandemic has generated consequences in this regard as well. The goal for every EU Member State is for more young people to obtain a higher secondary education diploma, and the EU's associated ESL / ELET target is that by 2030 the proportion of people leaving early education and training systems to be below 9% (European Council, 2021).

Referring to specific ESL / ELET indicators, in Romania, *The National Recovery and Resilience Plan* presents worrying data, especially for children and young people who are part of risk groups. Thus, the lack of equity of the educational system is reported as the main challenge, but also it is the factor that explains, to a large extent, the failure of the 11,3% target.

The same document states that more than 1 in 10 students in a cohort entering the 5th grade drop out of school by the end of the 8th grade (especially in the 7th and 8th grades), and by the end of the 10th grade, the value is about 2 out of 10 students. If in large cities, the ESL rate is below the EU average and correlates with the nationally set target for 2020 (11.3%), rural area, it is at a level of 26%, the trend being upward (Ministry of Investment and European Projects, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic has added to the numerous causes of this phenomenon, exacerbating it, especially for students from vulnerable groups.

Regarding the etiology of ESL / ELET, as we showed in one of our studies, this complex phenomenon is generated by a combination of causes that can be associated with the social environment, the family environment, the school environment and / or emerge

from particular aspects related to the personality structure of those who decide to leave the educational system (Drăghicescu, Marcozzi, Stăncescu, 2021, p. 97).

A conceptual model relevant to the way in which risk and protection factors interact with respect to the ESL phenomenon, similar to a certain extent to the one developed by us, within the A.C.C.E.S.S. (Drăghicescu, Marcozzi, 2020), is illustrated in the following figure.

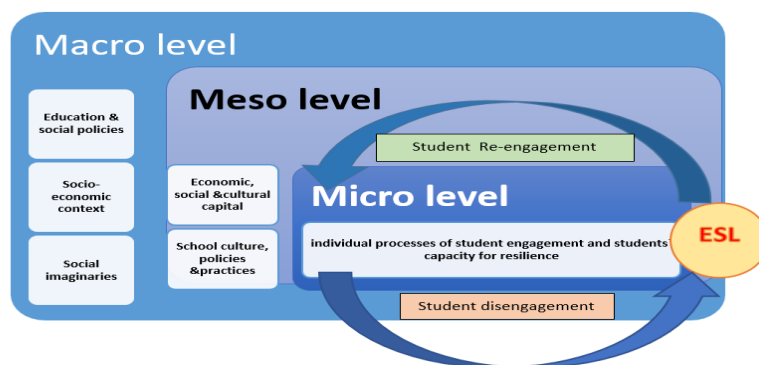


Fig. 2. ESL – Conceptual Model (Source: Van Praag et al., 2018, p. 4.)

Analyzing the results obtained by 2015, based on close monitoring of ESL, the EU Council emphasized that early school leaving is the result of a series of "personal, social, economic, cultural, educational, gender and family factors frequently interconnected and is linked to situations of cumulative disadvantage, which often have their origin in the preschool stage" (European Council, 2015, p. 37).

The model of ESL risk factors proposed in the Orienta4YEL project is in the same direction, highlighting: personal challenges, family circumstances, social relationships, institutional features and structural factors (Brown et al, 2021, p. 8).

As Tomaszewska-Pękała, Marchlik and Wrona (2015, p. 79) have shown, ESL can be analyzed at several levels: individual (micro), school (meso), and systemic (macro).

Most studies focusing on ESL / ELET address micro (individual) and meso (family) factors, highlighting their substantial influence on ESL risk. Those studies identify a number of issues related to the family environment (emotional, physical abuse, disinterest in education, conflicting environment, poor socio-economic level/financial insecurity, low level of education of parents, of mothers, in particular, low expectations, low support for the child, abuse of alcohol/substances, dysfunctional family relationships etc.), but also many elements related to the individuality / personality of the student (low motivation for learning, behavioral disorders, disengagement, learning difficulties, communication difficulties, absenteeism, low self-esteem, low self-confidence, low aspirations or lack of clear, well-defined aspirations, lack of consistency, stress, anxiety, disabilities, etc.), demonstrating the causal relationship with the ESL phenomenon (Traag & van der Velden, 2011; Gonzalez Rodriguez et al., 2018; Araujo et al., 2020; Bayón-Calvo, 2019; Brown et al., 2021; Van Praag et al., 2020; Nairz-Wirth & Gitschthaler, 2020).

Some of the causes, also located at the meso level (according to the conceptual model of Van Praag et al., 2018), are associated with the school environment, an aspect highlighted in a series of studies and reports that address, rather, general problems of educational systems, which can negatively impact ESL / ELET rates, such as repetition of a school year, socio-economic segregation and early guidance, based on academic selection (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice / Cedefop, 2014). The extent to which a



number of teachers' educational practices and attitudes can influence this phenomenon is less highlighted. It is true that both repetition of a school year and school segregation can be associated with teachers' discriminatory attitudes and, above all, with teachers' discriminatory practices, which make the school an unfriendly and hostile environment.

In fact, the phenomenon of repetition of a school year can be explained by the teachers' indifferent attitudes towards students, towards learning process, by the lack of support that they must give to each student, but even more so to those at ESL / ELET risk. Also, another explanatory factor, relevant especially from the perspective of reporting to students with learning difficulties, is the low attention that teachers pay to the process of development of the „learning to learn” competence, a fundamental competence for the management and efficiency of school learning (Drăghicescu et al, 2015), for ensuring school success and, subsequently, indispensable for continuing lifelong learning.

Regarding discrimination, in Romanian schools, there are still teachers whose prejudices, stereotypes, especially those related to ethnic minorities, are objectified in behavioral practices that produce "differences" in teacher-student interactions, with obvious effects on relationships developed among students, on school performance, on the attitude towards learning, towards school, in general (Drăghicescu, Stăncescu, Suduc, 2020, p. 20). And when it comes to minority groups, in particular, discrimination becomes one of the factors that accentuate the risk of ESL or even "push" students to make the decision to leave school.

In the area of factors associated with the school environment, the literature in the field also signals aspects such as: the indifference or carelessness teachers' attitude, "disinterest in everything that is not curriculum or assessment", lack of support provided by teacher; low teachers' expectations; poor students' relationships with teachers, mentors, support counselors; lack of or little support in making the decision on a particular educational / professional path; non-inclusive, oversized classes; poor behavioral management; lack of concern for the student's well-being, for the comfort of learning; exclusion from school; bullying; loneliness etc. (Brown et al., 2021; Haugan et al., 2019; Van Praag et al., 2019; Nairz-Wirth & Gitschthaler, 2019; Morentin & Ballesteros, 2018).

Certainly, it is not easy to identify the weight of school factors in understanding the causes that determine this phenomenon, especially when we refer to the teachers' attitudes and behaviors.

The school, teachers in general, as well as those who manage educational institutions are aware that there are several variables related to ESL / ELET, outside the school environment (Gonzalez Rodriguez et al, 2018, p. 195). However, this does not mean abandoning reflective, observative practices, meant to highlight those aspects of the educational process that are less successful or even dysfunctional, discriminatory, which can sometimes lead students, especially those at risk of ESL, to drop out school early.

Being aware of the major role of education in building a sustainable future for each individual and for each nation, and addressing the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU Council states that education and training systems must be sufficiently flexible and Member States can mobilize to find solutions to continue the educational process, in different ways and forms, so that all learners, regardless of their socio-economic background or learning needs, not to drop out the study and to continue their educational path (European Council, 2021, p. 3).



In this regard, the EU's programmatic documents, which guide the development of national policies and strategies, recommend a number of directions for action focusing on ESL / ELET:

- a national data collection system that ensures awareness of the proportion of the phenomenon, but also monitoring absenteeism and evaluating the effectiveness of policies on ESL / ELET;
- policies to increase the flexibility and permeability of education pathways, with a role in facilitating the transition between different routes / paths of education and training;
- language support for students with a mother tongue different than the language of instruction, students more exposed to the risk of ESL;
- the integration of ESL / ELET in initial and continuous teachers' training programs, so that teachers to be equipped for the necessary support, especially for students who are part of vulnerable groups or show signs of disengagement from school;
- consistent education and career guidance services, including by integrating them into the national curriculum so that all students in the school to be the beneficiaries;
- support for early school leavers to reintegrate into the education and training system (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2021, pp. 18-19).

All these actions must materialize, at school level, by implementing measures that require a collaborative approach, being based on the involvement of the whole school community, with an emphasis on:

- autonomy and accountability when governance, curricula and working methods are at the forefront;
- effective mechanisms for ensuring the quality of education;
- building effective partnerships, both at school level and between schools and other interested institutions;
- promoting a culture of support at the level of the student-teacher-parent triad;
- identification of relevant indicators for school disengagement;
- providing systematic support, through mentoring, counseling, psychological support, especially for those at risk of ESL;
- enriching the offer of extracurricular activities with an impact on the learners' participation, motivation and sense of belonging (European Council, 2015, p. 39).

Teachers' reflective practices, moments of sharing within the community of teachers or even of some reflective practice groups; additional support provided, in particular, to students in the final grades; promoting a pedagogical approach based on differentiation and cooperative learning; psychological and vocational guidance services; teachers' tutorial actions, all these represent also a series of models of good practices, with an impact on the ESL / ELET phenomenon (Araújo et al., 2020).

We cannot achieve profound changes in education, with lasting effects, including in the area of ESL management, without reflective teachers' work. The reflective teachers are teachers aware of the importance of their mission, responsible, willing to learn continually, to cooperate, to share experiences, are teachers who, above all, respect the child, respect their profession (Stăncescu et al., 2019, p. 14).

The action plans designed, the sets of measures associated with them, initiated and implemented at school level, once again hold teachers accountable and require, first and foremost from them, a process of awareness of the seriousness of this phenomenon and the factors that generate it, among which are those associated with the school environment.



In this sense, the initial and continuous training programs for teachers` training must be designed from the perspective of their instrumentation with those types of skills, abilities, competencies, which will allow them to identify and effectively intervene in risky situations that could result. with school disengagement and subsequently in early school leaving.

Moreover, in a previous micro-research, focused on the relevance of continuous education programs, teachers reported training needs that, once met, can help reduce the risk, respectively the ESL / ELET rate in schools in Romania. Among them, we mention: educating children with special educational needs, inclusive school, intercultural education, parental education, conflict management, managing interpersonal relationships, strategies to improve socio-emotional competences, ICT, family/child counselling, managing a class of students or a group of pre-schoolers etc. (Drăghicescu et al, 2018, p. 13).

2. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

Being aware of teachers` key role in preventing and combating ESL, the need for them to provide adequate support to all students, but especially to those at risk of ESL, as well as those who have left the educational system and can be reintegrated through specific programs, such as "Second chance", in our research we aimed to investigate the perceptions of teachers (from all four partner countries) regarding the phenomenon of ESL (focusing on causes, representations / beliefs, specific teachers` competences necessary for the proper prevention / management of the phenomenon of ESL) and the identification of the most effective strategies for preventing ESL.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

a. Target-group

The study involved 256 teachers from all four partner countries, selected on the basis of stratified sampling, so as to represent various categories: women and men, from rural and urban areas, working in high school and middle school, in different stages of professional development (with experience in teaching between 1 and over 30 years).

Table 1. The distribution of the sample, related to the gender, the area where they work and the years of experience in teaching (Source: author`s own conception)

Table with 2 columns: Category and Percentage. Rows include Gender (Female 81%, Male 19%), The area where they work (Urban 74%, Rural 26%), and Years of experience in the teaching activity (0-5 years 13%, 6-10 years 13%, 11-15 years 18%, 16-20 years 21%, 21-25 years 13%, 26-30 years 13%, Over 30 years 9%).

b. Instruments and procedure

The research of the ESL phenomenon involved two types of approaches: *a quantitative approach*, made by developing and administering a questionnaire addressed to teachers and *a qualitative approach*, based on the design and development of focus groups with participants selected from teachers.

The dimensions explored in the investigative approach were: communication / interpersonal / pedagogical competences; the main causes of conflictual relationships with students and the resolution strategies used; challenges in daily work with students; representations / beliefs of school managers / teachers / students, which can increase the students` commitment and motivation; ESL causes; educational strategies specific to ESL prevention; teaching methods used to prevent school disengagement.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

One of the sections of the questionnaire asked teachers to appreciate the extent to which some representations / beliefs (listed in a dichotomic manner: positive factors, negative factors) of school managers / teachers / students themselves influence the students` motivation and engagement in the educational process, in the direction of their increase/decrease (evaluation scale: from 1 to 10 → 1 - minimum level of importance, 10 - maximum level of importance). We will present and analyze, in this part of our study, the answers provided, in this section, by the teachers included in the target group.

Table 2. School managers` representations / beliefs that influence students' motivation and involvement in the educational process - positive factors (Source: author's own conception)

Italy	1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. confidence in the student' s potential 3. tolerance, respect for otherness
Lithuania	1.CPD valorization 2. „good student” 3. good school and confidence in the student' s potential
Portugal	1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. tolerance, respect for otherness 3 confidence in the student' s potential and equal opportunities
Romania	1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. confidence in the student' s potential 3. equal opportunities

Asked to refer to those *school managers` representations / beliefs*, which can be included in the category of *positive factors*, having a good impact on the students` motivation and involvement in the educational process, teachers integrated in the research sample selected similar answers, associated with "good teacher" profile of competences, who builds a solid relationship with his students, based on trust, respect, tolerance and who ensures equal opportunities to participate in education.

If school managers always act from the perspective of their representation of what a “*good teacher*” means, constantly motivating their colleagues to deliver quality education and giving them the support they needed, the “*good*” attribute could certainly be associated with each student and with the educational institution as a whole, thus considerably reducing the risk of ESL.

Table 3. School managers` representations / beliefs that influence students' motivation and involvement in the educational process - negative factors (Source: author`s own conception)

Italy	1. devaluation of the teaching profession 2. bullying, aggression, school violence 3. lack of confidence in the student' s potential
Lithuania	1. management 2. devaluation of the teaching profession 3. lack of confidence in educational system
Portugal	1. management 2. poor/weak school 3. lack of confidence in the power of education
Romania	1. management 2. competition between students/student classes 3. absenteeism

Regarding the *factors that negatively influence* the students` motivation and involvement in the educational process, the respondents placed *management* first, an approach considered in antithesis to *leadership*, followed by the *devaluation of the teaching profession* at social level, *poor/weak school*, *lack of confidence in educational system*, *in the power of education and in the student`s potential*, as well as issues such as *bullying*, *competition between classes and absenteeism*.

We appreciate that, in the respondents` view, the main factors that negatively affect the students` motivation and engagement in learning, which can lead to ESL, integrate systemic and organizational aspects, confirming, to some extent, that managers do not always have the qualities and skills needed to practice an effective leadership. It would allow them to coagulate the efforts of all members of the school community to achieve a common goal: each child participates in education to fulfill their potential, to build a healthy and sustainable identity.

Table 4. Teachers` representations / beliefs that influence students' motivation and involvement in the educational process - positive factors (Source: author`s own conception)

Italy	1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. student-centered educational process 3. positive feedback
Lithuania	1.school success 2. confidence in the student' s potential 3. CPD valorization and „good student”
Portugal	1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. confidence in the student' s potential 3.tolerance, respect for otherness
Romania	1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. authentic, efficient, sustainable learning 3. participation to the educational process

Regarding teachers` representations / beliefs, on *dimension A (positive factors)*, on the first rank are placed similar aspects, concentrated in the area of the paradigm of the *student-centered learning process*.

We can observe that, from the respondents' point of view, the most valued teachers' representations / beliefs are those related to their own competences, those aimed at the ability to design and carry out an educational process according to the students' needs and interests, based on positive reinforcements necessary for developing an adequate self-esteem, with beneficial effects on the conscious, motivated and active participation in the didactic activities, therefore implicitly on the learning process. Such approaches can be considered as parts of the ESL prevention measures.

Table 5. Teachers' representations / beliefs that influence students' motivation and involvement in the educational process - negative factors (Source: author's own conception)

Italy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. devaluation of the teaching profession 2. teacher - knowledge transmitter 3. lack of confidence in the power of education
Lithuania	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. management 2. learning - process of assimilation of information 3. teacher - knowledge transmitter
Portugal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. management 2. lack of confidence in the power of education 3. lack of confidence in educational system
Romania	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. management 2. competition between students/student classes 3. valorizing cognitive/academic intelligence

On *dimension B (negative factors)*, among the answers that registered the most choices, we identify, in particular, aspects that can be associated with a poor/deficient management of the students' class, but also with a retrograde pedagogical conception, respectively attitudes that do not match to the educator's status: *teacher's role of knowledge transmitter, learning perceived as an exclusive process of assimilation of information, lack of confidence in the power of education or lack of confidence in educational system.*

We note that the perception of the teacher mainly as a knowledge transmitter, but also the assumption of the role of manager, are aware as factors that can reduce students' motivation for learning (associated with the occurrence of ESL risk), as opposed to what it might mean, of course, the teacher's assumption of the roles of leader, facilitator, guide, coach, trainer, roles with obvious motivating, stimulating valences for the student.

Table 6. Students' representations / beliefs which influences their motivation and involvement in the educational process - positive factors (Source: author's own conception)

Italy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. school success 3. teacher - facilitator, guide, coach, trainer
Lithuania	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. school - friendly environment 2. valorizing multiple intelligences 3. teacher - facilitator, guide, coach, trainer
Portugal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. school - friendly environment 2. good, effective, competent teacher 3. tolerance, respect for otherness
Romania	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. good, effective, competent teacher 2. teacher - facilitator, guide, coach, trainer 3. suitable/able for school

Focusing on student-specific representations / beliefs, the teachers from target-group choose - on *dimension A (positive factors)* - to put the following aspects in the first places: good, effective, competent teacher, school - friendly environment, teacher seen as a facilitator, guide, coach, trainer etc..

Analyzing the respondents' options, we notice that the main factors that would positively influence students are associated with specific elements of the school environment and organizational climate, but also with the roles that a good teacher must play: guide, facilitator, trainer. These choices demonstrates that the teacher, through his attitude towards students, through the roles assumed and exercised at the classroom level, through the climate he creates, is the most important factor for the students` well-being in the school environment, for their participation and engagement in the process of learning. This aspect can significantly reduce the risk of ESL.

Table 7.Students` representations / beliefs which influences their motivation and involvement in the educational process - negative factors(Source: author`s own conception)

Italy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. lack of confidence in the power of education 2. lack of confidence in educational system 3. devaluation of the teaching profession
Lithuania	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. teacher - knowledge transmitter 2. valorizing cognitive/academic intelligence 3.school failure
Portugal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. teacher - knowledge transmitter 2. valorizing cognitive/academic intelligence 3. competition between students/student classes 4. devaluation of the teaching profession
Romania	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. teacher - knowledge transmitter 2. authority in the classroom management 3. valorizing cognitive/academic intelligence

Analyzing *the factors that negatively influence* students' motivation and involvement / engagement in the educational process, we find that distorted perception of teacher roles and valorizing, often exclusive, the students' cognitive/academic intelligence can alter students' participation and engagement in learning.

Respondents' options confirm the need for change in education, especially in terms of attitudes, teaching behaviors, specific teachers` competences, as they are "called" to rehabilitate the prestige of the teaching profession and confirm that the teacher is the "heart" of the educationa system, the "heart" of the educational process in general.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of teachers' perceptions integrated in the target group of the A.C.C.E.S.S. Project allowed us to find that, among them, the causes of ESL / ELET associated with the school environment are also aware.

However, there is a general tendency to correlate the ESL / ELET phenomenon, rather with factors related to the family or social environment, in a broad sense. In this sense, as *The National Recovery and Resilience Plan of Romania* provides, we consider it is necessary to develop and implement coherent policies and measures, focused on ESL / ELET, designed to help teachers become more aware during the initial training, but also during the continuous training, the challenges they will face in order to prevent / combat this phenomenon.



Topics such as: student-centered learning process, student`s well-being, creating a positive learning environment, working methods for children with behavioral problems, working methods with students at risk of ESL / ELET, relationship with children's families / young people who have left school or are at risk of ESL / ELET, integrated intervention and multidisciplinary team work, preventing / combating discrimination, school-family-community partnership, valuing diversity, etc., should be included in the topics addressed in the initial and continuous teachers` training process.

The EU's 2030 agenda provides, as a strategic priority, the improvement of competences and motivation for the teaching profession, through concrete actions to support initial training, integration and continuing professional development at all levels, in particular to equip teachers with the skills needed to achieve an inclusive education, an education focused on the specific learners` needs, with a role in combating ESL / ELET (European Council, 2021).

In this sense, given that teachers are in the "first line" in the fight against a perfid "virus" - ESL / ELET, they are the ones who decisively influence the efficiency and effectiveness of all policies, programs and strategies designed for the prevention and combating of ESL / ELET, we consider that the priority for Romania, in particular, is the investment in teachers` training and the need to revalue the teaching profession, in accordance with its social importance.

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FALSE SYMBOL OF SCIENCE: FLIGHT TO THE MOON PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF SPACE TRAVEL POSSIBILITIES

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ABSTRACT

Flight to the Moon (1969), according to many researchers of the history of science and civilization, is the greatest scientific and technological achievement of the human race. Thus, a centuries-old dream came true: man left Earth for the first time and stepped on another celestial body. Stunned by the achieved success, the scientists set themselves new, more difficult goals, which seemed feasible to them: conquering the planets of the solar system and migrating life to them. And even more and even harder: going beyond the solar system, deep into Cosmos. Analyzing exactly this, undoubtedly, extraordinary success of human thought, and extending it to the scale of the Cosmos, we conclude in this paper that it is a “false symbol”: The moon is so close to Earth that man's flight to the moon is not a flight to Cosmos. We have shown by calculation that, due to the constants that God has determined perfectly precisely and according to which the Cosmos functions (and which, regardless of the development of science, we cannot change), man will never travel through the Cosmos! Thus, the circle is closed: science has led us to God's instructions as eternal truths given in the Holy Books: God ordained the earth for man's life.

Keywords: space travel; Flight to the Moon; Apollo 11; speed of light; known Cosmos;

INTRODUCTION

One of the great discoveries of modern science is the fact that science can deceive us, that “ideas about the world that we came to the methodology of modern science can be wrong, and in a perfectly concrete and verifiable sense” [1]. Equally, a successful solution to a specific problem cannot necessarily be generalized to other similar situations. A good example of this is the flight of man to the moon, which has become a symbol of the success of modern science, and which is often cited as the beginning of the “conquest of the Cosmos”. By sending people to the moon, the technological culmination of the development of human civilization was achieved: people first stepped on a celestial body other than the Earth.

Intoxicated by the success they achieved, they set themselves new, more difficult goals, which seemed feasible: conquering the planets of the solar system and migrating life to them, and even more: possible travels outside the solar system [2].

Here we want to show that the flight to the moon is such a small way compared to the cosmic dimensions that we have no right to talk about space travel and that, regardless of the constant development of science and technology, man will never travel through Cosmos. For those of us who believe that God created the world, this conclusion about the limitations of human life on earth is expected because God in his Instructions to people speak about it:



„It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth; Moreover His design comprehended the heavens, for He gave order and perfection to the seven firmaments; and of all things He hath perfect knowledge“.

The Holy Qur-an [3]

And said, Hitherto shalt thou come,
but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?

The Holy Bible [4]

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

After World War II (WW2) the focus of science and technology shifted from Germany to the United States. This was especially reflected in the development of the nuclear and missile programs. At the very end of WW2, when it was clear that Hitler would lose the war, the hunt for German scientists began. The United States had the best prey: they captured top scientists in Germany's missile program (led by Wernher von Braun) and about 100 ready-made V2 rockets, which would later, with a small modification, become Saturn V, the famous rockets that took people to Moon) [2].

Due to that explosion of scientific and technical development, the American public accepted the fact that the United States is the undisputed leader in the world, the first in everything in the field of technological development. The Soviets, on the other hand, who were also winners in WW2 and who had a good catch in scientific staff and technical material, worked quietly, without pomp, controlling the informations given to the public.

Because of that, the American public, even scientists, was surprised, even stunned, when the Soviets on October 4, 1957. sent the first artificial satellite *Sputnik I* [5]. His weight was 84 kg. A month later, the Soviets launched *Sputnik II*, which weighed 510 kg, and carried the dog Laika, the first living thing in Cosmos.

Frustrated, the Americans responded on January 31st 1958 with the launch of the *Explorer I* satellite, which weighed 14 kg, which showed inferiority to the Soviets.

Sputnik II, which carried a dog, showed that living beings could be sent into orbit and survive, but they could not be brought back to Earth.

That is why the Soviets on August 19th 1960 launched *Sputnik V*, weighing 4.6 tons, which carried 2 dogs and 6 mice and all were returned to Earth alive.

On April 12th 1961 the Soviets launched *Vostok I*, weighing 4.7 tons, in which cosmonaut Yuri Aleksejevic Gagarin was. It is the first human being to “leave Earth”. He made one circle around the Earth and returned successfully. The flight lasted 108 minutes[5].

To reinforce the impression, the Soviets on August 6th 1961 launched *Vostok 2* with astronaut Herman Titov [5]. He made 17 orbits around the Earth and successfully returned to Earth. The American response was the launch of *Friendship 7* with astronaut John Glenn. He made 3 orbits and successfully returned to Earth.

On May 24th 1962 The Americans are repeating the endeavor: they launch *Aurora 7* with astronaut M. Scott Carpenter, who also made three orbits around the Earth.

The Soviets launched on June 14th 1963 *Vostok 5* (astronaut: Valerij Bikovski) who made 81 orbits around the Earth and stayed without gravity for 5 days [5].

As proof that they were following the Soviets, the American launched on August 21st 1965 *Gemini 5*, which makes 128 orbits and stays in Cosmos for 8 days.

The Soviet Spacecraft *Voshod I* was the first Spacecraft to take more than one person from the Earth: there were 3 cosmonauts in it. It didn't take long for the American response: on March 23rd 1965 the Americans launch *Gemini 3* caring 2 astronauts [5].



The race continues with undiminished intensity: on March 18th 1965 the Soviets launched *Voshod 2* with two cosmonauts. The ship orbited the Earth 17 times, and during the second orbit one cosmonaut (Aleksey Leonov) left the ship through a small opening and took 10 minutes of camera footage: it was the first spacewalk, the first time a human being was in Cosmos outside the spacecraft!!

On June 3rd 1965 the Americans launch *Gemini 4* with two astronauts. They made 3 orbits, and during the third orbit one of the astronauts (Edward White) left the ship in a spacesuit and stayed out for 20 minutes.

Other countries (France, Great Britain, China, Japan) started launching artificial Earth satellites, but their programs lagged far behind the program of the Soviets and the Americans. These countries developed their programs from the beginning, while the Soviets and the Americans “inherited” Hitler's programs, which were at an advanced stage.

On January 2nd 1959 the Soviets sent *Luna 1*, the probe that first reached II cosmic velocity and left Earth. The second cosmic velocity is the velocity required for the spacecraft to leave Earth and not become a satellite, and it is calculated by the formula

$$v_{II} = \sqrt{\frac{2 \gamma M}{R}} = 11.15 \text{ km/s} = 4.014 \times 10^4 \text{ km/h}$$

$\gamma = 6.67 \cdot 10^{-11} \text{ N m}^2 \text{ kg}^{-2}$ - universal gravitational constant, M - the mass of the Earth, R - the radius of the orbit around which the spacecraft orbits before leaving it.

In March 1959, the Americans sent a probe that exceeded the II cosmic velocity and passed the Moon at 60,000 km.

On September 12th 1959 the Soviets launched *Luna 2*, a probe that “hit” the moon. It was the first man-made object to reach the moon.

On October 4th 1959 the Soviets launch *Luna 3*, a probe that orbits the Moon and sends photos of the side of the Moon that cannot be seen from Earth [5].

5 years after the Soviets (July 28th 1964), the Americans launched *Ranger 7*, which fell to the Moon (like Soviet *Luna 2*, 5 years earlier). *Ranger 7* took and sent 4308 photographs of the Moon to Earth. It was visible on them that the Moon was deserted, sprinkled with small craters.

On February 3rd 1966 the Soviets sent a probe, *Luna 9*, which landed “softly” on the Moon (all previous probes hit the Moon hard!). After the descent, the probe remained on the moon, and the instruments it carried were undamaged and sent valuable data to Earth.

The Americans caught up with them: they made such an endeavor on May 30th 1966 by sending the *Surveyor 1* probe, which landed softly, undamaged on the Moon and sent better-quality photographs to Earth.

Soon the Americans send *Surveyor 5*, which landed on the moon in *Mare Tranquillitatus*, had a robotic handle on it to take samples of the lunar soil. It sent more than 50,000 photos.

The Soviets launched *Luna 10* on 31st March 1966, which enters orbit around the Moon and sends photos.

The Americans followed them: on August 10th 1966 they launched *Lunar Orbiter 1*, a probe that orbits the Moon and sends photos of all parts of the Moon's surface. The result is: a map of the Moon.

From this historical overview, it is clear that the Soviets were constantly one step ahead of the Americans in the Space Program (the “conquest of the Cosmos”). It was a bitter bite for a nation that thinks it is the first in the World!



At that time, a miserable major political event took place that shook the World: the Cuban Missile Crisis. So on April 17th 1961 the Americans were humiliated because of the failed intention to invade Cuba. The political leadership of the United States needed a sensational event at all costs to restore American dignity. Thus, there was an increased interest in the Space Program and the achieving American prestige. In May 1961, then-US President John F. Kennedy announced his famous plan: that the United States would land a man (an American!) on the moon. (“ . . . I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth” [5]). By that the *Apollo program* begun.

The first spacecraft from the Apollo program (*Apollo 7*), with a crew of 3 astronauts, was launched on October 11th 1968, made 163 orbits around the Earth and during its orbit examined the possibility of restarting rocket engines in Space.

Followed by *Apollo 8* (December 21st 1968) with 3 astronauts. Their goal was to bring the ship into orbit around the moon and observe the surface of the moon with the naked eye while circling. They made 10 orbits around the moon.

On March 3rd 1969 *Apollo 9* was launched to test the functionality of the lunar module. On May 18th 1969 *Apollo 10* was launched which arrived in lunar orbit, made 31 orbits around the moon, detached the lunar module and carried two astronauts to the surface of the moon, up to 15 km above the surface, then returned to the command module and landed on Earth. Thus, within the American Apollo program, everything is prepared for the final act: the descent of man to the surface of the Moon [5].

On July 16th *Apollo 11* was launched with three astronauts: Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, Edwin E. “Buzz” Aldrin Jr. By July 20th 1969 the lunar module lands on the Moon. For the first time in the history of the human race, man was on the surface of some other Cosmic Body! Neil Armstrong emerged from the lunar module *Eagle* and thus became the first man to set foot on the moon, noting: **“That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind”** [5]. Aldrin was with him. This whole endeavor was watched by hundreds of millions of people on Earth via live TV. They spent 21 hours and 36 minutes on the moon. They photographed, took samples of rocky soil, put the American flag, set up instruments that will send data from the Moon to the Earth after their departure. They returned to Earth safely on July 24th 1969 [6]. In the *Apollo program*, six more trips to the moon were made over the next three and a half years. *Apollo 15*, launched on July 26th 1971 took to the moon lunar rovers. Astronauts drove it on the moon at a speed of 28 km/h.

There have been 6 landings on the Moon: 12 people have walked on the Moon so far! Hundreds of kilograms of rock samples were collected from the surface of the Moon and brought to Earth, to laboratories, for testing. This was a great epopee of humans, a real revolution in science. Man has expanded its horizons beyond the Earth, descending to another celestial body [7]. During the Apollo flights, the Americans hoisted 6 flags on the moon (all American), emphasizing their superiority in conquering the Cosmos and superiority in the world in general.

Euphoria reigned, flight programs to the planets of the solar system were made, and even flight programs outside the solar system were considered, and dreams of traveling “to other stars” were dreamed of. But how far can we really get into Space? Exact calculations sober us up relentlessly: The moon is so close to the Earth (relative to the cosmic distances) that, in fact, we have no reason to say that we were in the Cosmos [8,9,10,11,12]. What is more, we will show that, regardless of the development of science and technology, we will never be able to really go to Space.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question we asked in this paper is: does a man's flight to the moon mean a hint of the possibility of traveling to Space? Our goal is to quantitatively compare the length of a trip to the Moon with the lengths of other, hypothetical, journeys (for example: to the Earth's closest and farthest planet, to the Sun, to the center of our Galaxy, through the entire visible Cosmos). By comparing the calculated results, we report the appropriate conclusions that confirm our hypothesis about the impossibility of traveling through Space. The phrase “space travel”, which we often use as a synonym for flying to the moon, comes from a simplified definition of the boundary of the Cosmos: everything outside the Earth's atmosphere is the Cosmos. In reality, the entire solar system is just one point in the Cosmos, and moving through the solar system we still cannot say that we have “conquered the Cosmos” [13,14,15]

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to break the false symbol of the possibility of space travel and to show that the words in God's instructions [3,4] that speak of the Earth as man's residence and the boundaries that will never cross are scientifically proven truth. Due to the limited lifespan of human life and the numerous values of the constants that determine the function and destiny of our Cosmos, we can conclude that man will never travel through the Cosmos.

The special theory of relativity (Albert Einstein 1905) speaks in favor of this, which results in time dilation, length contraction and mass change:

$$m = \frac{m_0}{\sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}}; \quad t = \frac{t_0}{\sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}}; \quad l = l_0 \sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}$$

Due to the size of outer Space, the speed of rockets that would actually travel into Space would have to be close to the speed of light. In that case, its length would be

$$l = l_0 \sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}} = l_0 \sqrt{1 - \frac{c^2}{c^2}} = l_0 \sqrt{1 - 1} = 0$$

At the same time, its mass would be

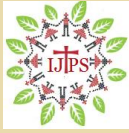
$$m = \frac{m_0}{\sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}} = \frac{m_0}{\sqrt{1 - \frac{c^2}{c^2}}} = \frac{m_0}{\sqrt{1 - 1}} = \frac{m_0}{0} \rightarrow \infty$$

We got a contradictory result: the rocket would “shorten” to extinction, and at the same time its mass would be infinitely large. From this we conclude that a rocket can never move at the speed of light!

4. RESEARCH METHODS

To show how man's flight to the Moon, as an extraordinary endeavor of mankind (some say the greatest achievement of mankind) can not be a symbol of the conquest of Space, can not give hope of flying to other stars or galaxies, we will make strict calculations of flight time to some, for space travels, interesting celestial bodies.

For example: it is convenient to compare the parameters of the flight to the Moon with the corresponding parameters of movement on Earth (walking in the yard).



Then calculate the parameter of the flight to the Moon and compare them with the parameters of the flight to Earth of the nearest planet (Mars) and the farthest planet of the Solar System (dwarf planet 134340 Pluto).

After that, we calculate the flight even further from the earth: to the Sun, to the center of our galaxy. Finally, we observe the entire known Cosmos and, by considering its parameters, draw final conclusions about the impossibility of space travel.

5. FINDINGS

6.1. Walking around the yard and circling the Earth

Imagine the following situation: we watch our neighbor walking in the yard and when asked what he is doing, he answers after a few laps: I walked around the globe on foot. His answer, not only is it incorrect, but it would provoke ridicule: he crossed 100 m and says that he traveled all over the globe!

Let's calculate the ratio of the distance traveled when walking in the yard and the distance that would be crossed when touring the Earth (circumference of the Earth) $O = 4 \cdot 10^7$ m :

$$\frac{l}{O} = \frac{10^2 \text{ m}}{4 \cdot 10^7 \text{ m}} = 2.5 \cdot 10^{-6}$$

This means that the distance traveled when walking in the yard is only 2.5 millionths of the way when traveling around the Earth. And because of that, we cannot accept the claim that our neighbor is a world traveler. Light orbits the Earth in 10 milliseconds, or orbits the Earth in 7.5 times in one second!

6.2. A walk around the Earth and a flight to the Moon

Let us now consider the ratio of the distances traveled in orbit around the Earth ($O = 4 \cdot 10^7$ m) and the flight to the Moon ($d_{ZM} = 384 \cdot 10^6$ m - for simplicity, suppose that the flight takes place in a straight line connecting the Earth and the Moon, which will not change the conclusions).

$$\frac{O}{d_{ZM}} = \frac{4 \cdot 10^7 \text{ m}}{384 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}} = 0.01 \cdot 10^1 = 0.1$$

The distance we travel while traveling around the Earth is one tenth of the distance we travel while flying to the Moon. Well, we haven't parted much from Earth! The light reaches the Moon in 1.28 s.

6.3 A flight to the Moon compared to a flight to Mars

After “conquering the Moon”, scientists moved on further into Space. They wanted to conquer the nearest planet to us, Mars. Let's look at the ratio of the distance between the Moon and Mars from the Earth:

$$\frac{d_{ZM}}{d_{ZM_r}} = \frac{384 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}}{225 \cdot 10^9 \text{ m}} = 1.7 \cdot 10^{-3}$$

The distance of the Moon from the Earth is 2 thousandths of the distance of Mars from the Earth.

Let's look at the theoretical possibilities of spacetravel. The maximum speed of modern spacecraft (probes) is 58,000 km/h. It is possible that higher speeds will be achieved, so it is justified to round this speed to 100,000 km/h = 27,778 m/s. Let's calculate the time it



takes for such a spacecraft to reach the nearest planet Mars, which is 225 million kilometers away from Earth.

$$t_{ZM} = \frac{225 \cdot 10^9 \text{ m}}{27\,778 \text{ m/s}} = 8 \cdot 10^6 \text{ s} \approx 93 \text{ days}$$

6.4 A flight to the Moon compared to a flight to the end of our solar system

Let's calculate the ratio of the distance between the Moon and the distant parts of the Solar System (dwarf planet 134340 Pluto)

$$\frac{d_{ZM}}{d_P} = \frac{384 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}}{6 \cdot 10^{12} \text{ m}} = 6.4 \cdot 10^{-5}$$

The distance of the Moon from the Earth is 6 hundred thousandths of the distance of Pluto from the Earth. The flight to Pluto would take time of

$$t_{ZP} = \frac{4.4 \cdot 10^{12} \text{ m}}{27\,778 \text{ m/s}} = 158 \cdot 10^6 \text{ s} \approx 5 \text{ years}$$

Light from the Sun reaches Pluto in 5.5 hours, and from Earth to Pluto in 4.4 hours.

6.5 A flight to the Moon compared to a flight to the Sun

The ratio of the distance traveled when flying to the Moon and flying to the Sun is

$$\frac{d_{ZM}}{d_S} = \frac{384 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}}{1.5 \cdot 10^{11} \text{ m}} = 2.56 \cdot 10^{-3}$$

Which means that the trip to the Moon is 2.56 thousandths of the way to the Sun. Light from the Earth to the Sun arrives in 8 minutes.

6.6 A flight to the Moon compared to a flight to the Milky Way Galaxy center

Let's calculate the share of the distance traveled during the flight to the Moon and (imaginary) flight to the center of our galaxy, Milky Way:

$$\frac{d_{ZM}}{d_{MW}} = \frac{384 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}}{28\,000 \text{ ly}} = \frac{384 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}}{28\,000 \cdot 9.46 \cdot 10^{15} \text{ m}} = 1.45 \cdot 10^{6-3-15} = 1.45 \cdot 10^{-12}$$

The share of the Earth-Moon path is the millionth of a millionth of the way to the center of our galaxy. Light will travel to the center of our galaxy for 27,978 years, and to its edge for 81,000 years.

The flight to the Milky Way Galaxy center would take time of

$$t_{ZMWG} = \frac{28 \cdot 10^3 \cdot 9.46 \cdot 10^{15} \text{ m}}{27\,778 \text{ m/s}} \approx 15 \cdot 10^6 \text{ years}$$

6.7 Flight to the Moon compared to a flight to the limits of the known Cosmos

The estimated age of the Cosmos (according to the modern Λ CDM model- *A Cold Dark Matter*) is 13.799±0.021 billion years [15]. If we consider the effect of the expansion of the Cosmos (which is an experimentally proven fact), then the diameter of the discovered, observed, known part of the Cosmos is 93 billion light-years (the so-called Hubble sphere). We do not know what is outside the known universe, we will never know [16].

It is estimated that the known part of the Cosmos is less than 1% of the total Cosmos! We can only see the little bubble of the universe. What is beyond that, we don't really know.

But that's where the mind stops, we've reached the limit that God has allowed us to reach, we can't cross that limit and we'll never know what's behind it.

Let's calculate the ratio of the flight time to the Moon and the flight through the discovered part of the Cosmos:



$$\frac{d_{ZM}}{d_K} = \frac{384 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}}{93 \cdot 10^9 \text{ ly}} = \frac{384 \cdot 10^6 \text{ m}}{93 \cdot 10^9 \cdot 9,46 \cdot 10^{15} \text{ m}} = 0,4 \cdot 10^{6-9-15} = 4 \cdot 10^{-19}$$

The journey from Earth to the Moon is 0.4 billion dials of a billionth of the diameter of the discovered Cosmos.

If we compare and analyze the ratios of the paths obtained in points 6.1 and 6.7, we come to a very interesting conclusion: a neighbor who walks around his yard has a much greater right (closer to the truth) to say that he became a world traveler and traveled the globe (distance traveled in the backyard is 2.5 millionths of the way around the Earth), than astronauts who were on the Moon which can be said to have been in Cosmos (the distance traveled when flying to the Moon is 0.4 billionths of a billionth of the diameter of the discovered Cosmos).

Spaceships should use a thermonuclear engine (which is, in part, developed). But interstellar travel, at speeds comparable to the speed of light, requires millions of tons of fuel, so it would be impossible to launch such a ship.

Even if they could accelerate a spaceship to near the speed of light, it would not be able to fly for long, because, at such speeds, even dust particles would lead to its destruction.

A special question is what would happen to man at those speeds and accelerations to achieve those speeds? With physiological processes? With bone structure?

From this we can conclude that spaceflights can only be performed at much lower speeds than the speed of light.

But then the flights would take a long time (thousands of times longer than human life), so they would be meaningless!

Light would travel 46.5 billion years to the edge of the discovered Cosmos.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, by comparing the distance of the Moon from the Earth and some other cosmic distances, we concluded that the Cosmos is invincible, that because of its dimensions and the length of our lives we will never be able to really go into Cosmos.

The fact that humans were on the Moon says nothing about space travel: The Moon is so close to Earth that by going to it we did not separate from the Earth.

The God who created the Cosmos, deliberately, according to the Plan, with certain laws governing the Cosmos, created man [17] and limited its living space to Earth.

The greatness and majesty of the Universe, even if only the part we can observe, really makes us feel small and the only correct conclusion is: The Universe is not a coincidence, it is the work of God Almighty.

Finally, we can conclude that man's flight to the Moon is not a symbol of the conquest of the Cosmos, it is just exploring the immediate surroundings of our Earth, while the Cosmos remains an eternal secret for us.

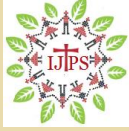
Johannes Kepler, studying the laws of planetary motion, concluded: "Now we see how God, just as an architect, created the world with such precision and thoroughness. God is great. His power is great. His wisdom is infinite. Almighty God, I want to reveal the majesty of your work to people, as far as my limited intelligence can understand" [18].

"The joy of studying nature is unsurpassed. Its secrets are infinitely deep, but we are allowed and given to penetrate deeper and deeper with our eyes. And the fact that nature finally remains incomprehensible, represents for us an eternal charm that encourages us to always approach it again and permanently find new vistas and new discoveries" [19].



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