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Preface

The 2017 No. 5, Year III, of "*Icoana Credinţei. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research*" offers varied and interesting articles, according to the well-established structure of the Journal.

Thus, **1-st section: THEOLOGY STUDIES** starts with the paper by Prof. PhD. ***Spyridon K. Tsitsigkos***, which is entitled: "*Approach of Absolute being. Philosophical, theological and psychological viewpoint*". In his study the author makes a rigorous analysis on the interactions between philosophical, theological and psychological approach of "Absolute being" from the side of a pure thinking man. The second paper, "*John Chrysostom's Catechesis on Baptism in context of the late Fourth-century Mystagogies*" is signed by Prof. PhD. ***Pablo Argarate***. This study is focusing on John Chrysostom's Baptismal Homilies, underlining few aspects like: their timely framework, their connection with other similar texts and the general structure of the preparation for the Christian Initiation. Thereafter, Fr. PhD. ***Florea Ştefan*** is pondering on "*Man - icon of divine beauty*".

The study of Rev. PhD. ***Alexandru-Corneliu Arion***, called: "*The Hindu view on facts (Karman) as reflected in Gītā and Upanishads and their role in Christianity*" emphasises the meaning of the Hindu law of universal causality that binds man and cosmos, and condemns the former to an indefinite transmigration. However, between the Christian teaching on facts and the Hindu philosophy of the act is an insurmountable distance that comes to differentiate these two religions at this level as well. This first section ends with the paper written by PhD. ***Mihai Sebastian Stoian*** and bears the title: "*Priesthood and ecclesiology*".

The 2-nd section: EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND RELIGION STUDIES includes firstly the paper by Fr. PhD. ***Marin Bugiulescu***, "*Religious Education for the young: a stability factor in the contemporary society*", whose subject is the essential understanding of the Education as one of the principal activities supposing, in a general manner, the process of caring for good training of man. The following issue, evolved by Fr. Prof. PhD. ***Leontin Popescu*** is "*Healing the body between medical practice and Christian moral theology*". The author emphasises that the medical world has nowadays become an interesting place of interdisciplinarity, a place in which natural, humanist, and religious sciences, with their corresponding personalities, come together, in order to help the suffering one.

No wonder, Rev. PhD. **Florea Ştefan** muses on the issue of "*Man's responsibility. Decency or libertinism?*". He presents this vast theme by putting forward a personal evaluation, emphasising the role of man's responsibility. The vision revolves around the idea that man has been created "in God's image" in order to attain Divine likeness. The paper of PhD. ***Paul Scarlat***, "*The idea of Santa Claus in terms of Cognitive Sciences. Cultural persistence and interference with the Christian Religion*" presents the notion of Santa Claus from the perspective of Cognitive Sciences and examines the idea of the mysterious individual, bringing clarification to the role of his existence in society. After that, PhD. **Traian-Alexandru Miu** brings new clues in understanding "*The Multiculturalism and the spiritual identity of Europe*". This section ends with PhD. **Edwin El-Mahassni**'s paper, "*Kuhnian Correspondences in Contemporary Doctrinal Development Literature*". The author's aim is to disclose few key aspects of Kuhn's work intersect with some of the contemporary theories in the development of Christian doctrine.

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* THEOLOGY STUDIES

Approach of Absolute being. Philosophical, Theological and Psychological viewpoin

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ABSTRACT

In this poly-prismatic short study is examined historically and totally the diachronic attempts of an approach of "Absolute being" from the side of thinking man. More specifically it is searched philosophical and theological doubting and seeking for the existence of "Absolute being," as for the – conscious or unconscious – its influences above in human mentality. Also, it is discussed generally if firstly is feasible any approach of „Absolute being" by man. Moreover, the various philosophical-theological and religious-psychological ways of approach of „Absolute being" are recorded as also and how this "approach" is meant. Finally, it is reported the theological perpetual process of approach of "Absolute being" as the profound reasons of this „approach".
Keywords: Absolute being; thinking; relation; world; perfection;

Introduction

The subject "*Approach of Absolute being*" constitutes an old but at the same time diachronic question so much for Philosophy, what for Theology and Psychology. Of course, some assessments about "*Absolute being*" require philosophical, theological and psychological concepts and categorems. Today – in the postmodern age – the term "*Absolute being*" does not well-use because, evidently or sub-consciably, creeps a global – horizontally and vertically – practical Atheism [that is to say existential indifference, or rather torpor (*akedia*), for the *Transcendental* and generally the metaphysical questions], a Relativism, Skepticism and Agnosticism.

Theology, certain, considers God as "*Absolute being*", and Philosophy as a supreme Value, or (intellectual or existential) a "Foundation" and a Principle, while, finally, Psychology as certain ideal objectives for a healthier existence of modern man, which however objectives change occasionally, under the effect of Philosophy, Culture or even (individual or collective) experience generally. The all under the above-mentioned title subject is admittedly immense and enormous; it generally includes all almost the history of Philosophy and intellect world. For this reason its approach by necessity will only be limited in a large grains description in order to the panorama of occasionally solutions is delineated, that (solutions) has been proposed for the "approach" – from the side of man – of this "*Absolute being*".

Thus, the contribution of this lies mainly on the one hand in single (overall) confrontation of an examination of "*Absolute being*", something that the older years were not getting used (perhaps because some perseverance in a one-sided or specialized regard) and

on the other hand in the collection of certain conclusions, which is accompanied by a criticism, from the viewpoint of Orthodox Christian Tradition.

We said already that the under development this subject has occupied humanity from the primeval years. In the present paragraph we shall be mentioned succinctly –for historians and only reasons– in writers with their works, which dealt ad hoc with the same speculation.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Amos (787-747 B.C.) writes: "*Seek me that you may live*" (5, 4). This means, according to the Prophet, that the searching for God –from the side of man – doesn't constitute a luxury or a sideline, but need of life; need of search of meaning and aim of the human life. Then, Saint Gregorius Nyssenus (335-394 A.D.), as the philosophical Father of Church – within a Christian environment– talks and writes extensively for this search of God from the side of man.

Afterward, in the 17th century, the known work *Paradise Lost* (1667) of Englishman poet John Milton (1608-1674) is presented, inside that we get elements of search of Divinity.

Then, at the 20th century, German-American theologian-philosopher Paul Tillich (1886-1965) publishes his work *My Search for Absolutes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), with an existential tinge, while in 1974 George Steiner (1929-) his work *The nostalgia of the Absolute*. Similarly, John Lankford writes *In Search of God* (1997), with apologetic vein.

Lastly, Eric Weiner wrote *Man Seeks God – My Flirtations with the Divine* (Twelve, New York-Boston, 2011) with a pan-religious attitude.

In Greece, the following relevant works are published: a) the book of *Seeking Creator with scientific criteria* (Athens 2002) of N. K. Antonopoulos with apologetic orientation, and b) the book *Traces in the Search of Transcentedal* (Athens 2004) of Orthodox Archbishop of Albania Anastasios Giannoulatos with prism ecumenistic and missionaristic.

Here however it will be observed that (philosophical) expression "*Absolute being*" does not correspond (and consequently neither it satisfies) in the beliefs of Religions, very more the Orthodox Christian Theology. Because, according to the Orthodox Tradition, human life, self-consciousness and Triune Godhead is not neither (abstract) philosophically *Absolute*, neither a (created) *being*.

With all these, we are compelled – in the context of a philosophical-theological perspective – to analyze briefly: a) possibility utterance – from the finite man – about an absolute being, b) the meanings and the prehensions of *being*, c) the possibility of somebody elementary definition what we call *Absolute*, d) the arguments and the reasons of existence or not of the *Absolute* generally, as well as of its substantive way, e) whether is feasible or no any approach of "*Absolute being*" from the created and finite man, f) the causes or reasons of approach – from the side of man – of "*Absolute being*" and g) how various occasionally philosophers saw *Absolute*, even if –and this equally apply to so much for the theologians what for psychologists – they do not name it thus.

Next, a theological viewpoint generally of *Absolute* ordains the brevity at least unproductive recording: a) of *Affirmative* and *Negative* ways of uttering of Theology, and b) of the event basically of perpetual approach – from the side of man – of "*Absolute being*" (that is to say God). Moreover, as for the psychological perspective of an approach of "*Absolute being*" we expose the thereupon opinions of various psychological Schools. In the last Chapter ("*Meanings of the approach of the Absolute being*") we describe – such from the viewpoint of Philosophy and Religions, as the Religious-psychology – practical and experiential ways of approach of the "*Absolute being*".

1. Prolegomena in the approach of "*Absolute being*". The possibility of utterance for being absolute

Because *Absolute* constitutes a by definition transcendental concept of the man, we were called, firstly, to answer the question if we can speak for "being" *Absolute*. On this, philosophized thought, intelligentsia and language answer:

a) We know nothing for Absolute (*Agnosticism*),

b) We cannot, or we can speak for this (*Dogmatism*, *Pyrrhonism*, *Relativism*), and

c) We can speak, but under conditions (like *Criticism* of I. Kant and Religions).

In the case of Kant we have the segregation between "*phenomena*", that we can approach, and "***thing by itself***", that we cannot approach it[**1**].

Moreover, in the case of Religions, we can approach the "*Absolute being*" (that for them, of course, is considered *Divinity* or *Sacred* or *Holy*), but under certain presuppositions, that vary in each Religion. Accordingly, man, even if relative and finite, holds resources and ways – even faulty – in order to express itself (doxologically, negatively etc.) about "*Absolute*". Orthodox Patristic Theology rescues as girl of eye this balance between Reason and Silence for "*Absolute*" (i.e. God).

Meanings and apprehensions of "*being*"

Under the term **"*being*"** Philosophy means usually:

a) "God" (if it is one affirmative or even negative *Onto-theology*, which identifies indiscriminately *substance* and *existence*). Similarly, a theistic Philosophic-theology can mean again God, but with the concept of no identification, but union or participation **a substance** (*Logos*) and existence (*thing*). This last one accepts as Judaism (cf. **Davar**) as Christianity (cf. G. Athanasius and Eastern Fathers of Church).

b) "*Beyond of substance*" (Plato), i.e. the "*thereinafter of being*": this, for Plato, was *Good*, for Plotinus, *One*, while for the Irish theologian-philosopher Johannes Scotus Eriugena (815-877) and the German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), God.

c) "Substance" (cf. *Essentialism*), that is to say 1) the (pure) "*esse*" (cf. **Onto-theology** of Thomas Aquinas and Paul Tillich), 2) the *substance* (Augustine of Hippo, Averroes), 3) *Nominalism*, 4) *Realism* and 5) *Conceptualism* (Peter Abelard).

d) "Energy" (see *Energism*), that accepted the philosophers Heraclitus of Ephesus (544-484 B.C.), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831).

e) a *dualism* (Anaxagoras and Descartes),

f) an *identification* between "*esse*" and "conceiving" (Parmenides),

g) a *disjunction* between *being* and "*esse*" (M. Heidegger),

h) a *coexistence* (N. Malebranche, B. Spinoza, Phenomenology) or *synthesis* **between** "*thing by itself*" or *substance* or "esse" or "virtually" (Ch. Wolff) or the *mind* (Berkeley) **and** *existence* or *form* or chance (*symvevikos* = a non-essential) [Avicenna, Averroes] or "*actually*" (Aristotle, Th. Aquinas, D. Banez, F. Suarez) or *matter* (La Mettrie) or *being* or *phenomenon* (I. Kant).

i) *Existence*, according to the Existentialism (S. Kierkegaard, J.-P. Sartre, J. Zizioulas). Nevertheless, if as "being" we consider ***existence***, then de facto this ***being*** cannot be something it constant (as a foundation) – unless the *existence* be "ontologized" (see *Essentialism*)–,therefore we fall in Relativism, vagueness, Discordianism, indeterminateness, uncertainty, tolerance, allowing of everything, pan-freedom (J.-P. Sartre), and, finally, the abolition of each Metaphysics. But, human thought cannot be surpassed thought!

The diversity of philosophical significances of "being" (cf. *Ontology*) not only hinders the work of Philosophy in – from man – investigation of an approach of "*Absolute being*", but also causes unimaginable agitations, conflicts and confusions. Judaic-Christian Revelation, removed from anyone (created) "definition" of "*Absolute*" (viz. God), achieves to exceed the created limits of *being*.

Determining the Absolute

Absolute by definition is not defined. If however it is not limited, it is impossible finite man approaches it anyway. For this reason, various occasionally philosophers and theologians attempted to give a sketchy and broad (generally and vaguely) "definition" of the *Absolute*, so as to they can somehow think it and study. Of course, it is true that the term **"*Absolute*"** is related more with **Philosophy**, while philosophical **Theology** uses usually the term **"*Transcendental*"** or "*Uncreated*".

Under the term **"*Absolute*"** we mean:

a) space-timely, in worthy or intellectually unlimited, infinity and unending (Anaximander),

b) simple, pure, unconditioned (*a priori*), stand-alone and self-contained / self-sufficient (the "*thing by itself*"), i.e. roundly uncorrelated (not depended),

c) the cardinal causally source of each being, that is to say entirely unprovoked (*uncreated*),

d) ultimate authority (as to the knowledge, goodness and true) or supreme force (inflexible and authoritarian),

e) Absolute immoderateness (what however comes contrary to the other definition of *the Absolute*, that is to say of absolute necessity),

f) absolute wholeness, that is to say "complete" (Aristotle), which however comes again contrary to the other definition of *Absolute* as "infinity",

g) absolute perfection, which objects similarly in uncoordinated (that is to say absolute liberality),

h) entirely inconceivable (*indefinable*), and

i) A unique experience, that contains everything by right of corresponding teachings of Hinduism [cf. neo-Hegelian British Idealist Philosopher Francis Bradley (1846–1924)].

All these definitions of "*Absolute*" confirm its indefiniteness and in-determination. Simultaneously however they testify the human contradictoriness, also the weakness finally of the utterance of a single language (see *Babel*) for the concept and the conception of "*Absolute*". Orthodox Theology of Pentecost comes to "covers" and exceeds this "lack".

The existence of Absolute

Any thought, mention and analysis for *Absolute* will be being certainly utopia, if this said *Absolute* did not exist actually (objectively). Thus, in question if *Absolute* exists, Philosophy answers: a) with scepticism (that is to say with doubt), b) with relativism (that is to say with negative answer), and c) with the condition of **dialectic** existence of its opposite that is to say about *the relative* (G. Hegel).

This "passive", the agnostic and a circumspect attitude of all Philosophy vis à vis the existence of "*Absolute*", as it is obvious, facilitates the work "in Christ" of Divine Revelation and (Apologetic) Theology.

Is it feasible any approach of "*Absolute being*" from man?

And here again the answers vary:

a) Agnosticism.

b) absolutely *Yes* (Materialism, Nihilism, Natural Theology, heretic Eunomius[**2**]).

c) absolutely *No* (Scepticism, practical Atheism).

d) Under the (orthodox) conditions:

- no immoderate, extortionate (cf. magic) and psychopathological (neurotic / psychotic) approach (*seeking out*: blackmail) of God[**3**].

- integration between **discovery** ("*conceptualizing*"/"*understanding*": word) and **revelation** (*luceo*, «be seen»: sight / light or *heart*) of the way of approach of God: "*The surprise that we front feel in biggest is not decreased even if the way with who takes place something from paradoxical is discovered*"[**4**].

- Internal **purgation / catharsis** (overshooting of selfishness: humbleness).

- Divine **aid** in the approach of God.

Agnosticism, Skepticism, continuous palinodes and generally the hesitancy, especially of the modern Philosophy, towards the question about the possibility or not approach –from the side of man– of "*Absolute being*" undermine any "tough" and intolerant, particularly in the past, the attitude of the atheistic and materialistic Philosophy.

Man's causes of the approach of "*Absolute being*"

A reasonable question that is caused by the man is why we approach the "*absolute being*". Thereupon occasionally have been formulated three groups of answers that entwine Philosophy, Theology and Psychology:

a. because of metaphysical or intellectual (religious) **needs** (A. Maslow), **propensities**, (unconscious) **expectations** and **sentiments**:

- *the knowledge of God* (Aristotle, Basil the Great, Thomas Aquinas).
- *Divine fear* (that theological it refers in the said relation of *a slave* between man and God).

– *Ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei*. It is theologically an innate *impetus to self-transgression* (E. Berggrav) or theistic *Entelechy* (Augustine, K. Rahner). With this prospect entire the life of the faithful is comprehended as *pilgrimage* (sacred migration), that is to say as a walk, a journey or a continuous spiritual fight to perfection (see *fight of Jacob* or the monocular German god Wodan / Odin, whose name means furiousness / battle). Archetypal examples in the meaning of traveling or spiritual ascent (see *Scale* of Jacob) we have Odysseus or Abraham (the father of faith), that travels [**5**], no however in order to find God, but at the command of God. Similarly stamped in "*imago Dei*" Divine Logos prompts us no simply – with holy awe and respect – to seek as the Ancient Greeks an "*Unknown God*", who exceeds us, but –via of faith– to approach affectionately revealed God.

- *Vital impetus* (Élan vital) of Henri Bergson (1907).
- *apetitus* (Spinoza).
- *unmeasured passion* (S. Kierkegaard).

- *existential famine / void* (retributive relation: *waged*[**6**]), that is made up by "*sovereign Word*" that thereafter is "cultivated" by "*psychoanalytic Word*". This cause psychoanalytically brings us around to adoption of opinion about the procedure of recall from man (cf. infant) a previous situation of beatitude; that is to say man seeks a pre-Fallen "*Eden*" (pre-symbolic *Real*) where did not exist neither biological, neither mental, neither existential, neither metaphysical "hunger" and "thirst". The objective of an eternally unsatisfied wish (that is to say alienable one) –because of Original Sin, according to Christian Theology– is indelible and this of course refers in the primitive division of the subject (cf. the meaning of *jouissance* of J. Lacan). By this we mean that always there is the relationship between a significant and a signifiant (cf. split subject). However it is this precisely the impossibility of satisfaction that keeps live the wish: "*We do not receive never*

what to we had promised but consequently we do not stop never to long for it"[**7**]. In other words, infant based on previous *experiences of satisfaction* that have been registered as *mnemonic traces* in the systems of perception, seeks to re-invest the mnemonic picture of this perception and to recall it, namely to restore the situation of the first satisfaction[**8**].

- being sorely pricked and *Dependence* (Fr. Schleiermacher).
- *Divine Neume (*see *Numen*): knock/call; we mean the attraction that Mystery practices in man (R. Otto).
- *Divine Eros* (Plato, Basil the Great, *Attachment theory[9]*):

affectionately relationship (*son*).

b. because of existence metaphysical or spiritual (religious) cerebral torus (recipient) or specific centre (see *Neuro-theology*), and

c. because of the pursuit of existential meaning (of life): "*Seek me that you may live*" (Amos).

All these multiple reasons of an approach of "*Absolute being*" declare that the universal (pan-anthropic) turn for "Divine" (*Absolute*) neither springs from a primitive fear, neither happens one catholic psychopath. The human nature (*<Imago Dei>*), even if wounded, seeks for its fulfillment to be linked to the source of its origin. On the other side that is to say from the viewpoint of acquired, this inclination of man can be intensified, cultivated, or be slacked, if it is being repressed.

2. Philosophical viewpoint the "*Absolute Being*" in Philosophy

From the ancient until modern Philosophy generally "*absolute being*" is considered – explicitly or implicitly– either as autonomous (*entity*) or as some provider of various values:

a) Transcendent or (either metaphysical or uncreated) God,

b) agnostically (Protagoras), that is to say it is not given to "*Absolute being*" particular gravity and rather it wanted to be ignored,

c) naturalistically (cf. pre-Socratic philosophers) as **Nature** or **Fate** / **Destiny** (cf. *Necessity*),

d) the Whole (see *Holism*),

e) an (national, social, political, religious etc.) Ideology,

f) present (see *Presentism*),

g) past (see *Traditionalism*),

h) future (cf. *Futurism* / *Eschatology*),

i) law (cf. "*symbolic father*", according to Lacanian Psychoanalysis),

j) enjoyment (see *Hedonism*),

k) imaginary or material idols (persons, things, sports etc),

l) Society (K. Marx),

m) closed community or communities (Ch. Yiannaras),

n) fellow-man ("*neighbour*"),

o) zero / *Null* (nothing): *Nihilism* (J.-P. Sartre),

p) chaos (see lawlessness / *Antinomianism*: anarchy),

q) love (*Eros*),

r) war / violence - discord (Heraclitus; cf. *Discordianism*) or "*becoming*" (see Existentialism),

s) collective self-institution (*Politic*),

t) Economy (cf. *Homo economicus*),

u) egoistically (J. Fichte), namely *Ego* itself is highlighted and is premised (see self-referentially),

v) as the (unreachable) "*thing by itself*" (I. Kant),

w)   as something extra-world (K. Gödel, L. Wittgenstein, K. Jaspers),

x) as an internal "substance" (cf. *Phenomenology* of E. Husserl),

y) as "esse" (Parmenides and M. Heidegger) and

z) as "material" (cf. pro-Socratic Hylozoism, Nietzsche, historical Materialism).

Ancient Greek Philosophy (mainly Plato and Aristotle) accepts the existence of *Absolute* or intellectually and abstractly (as the **Ideas**) or as the **"First cause"** (Aristotle).

Later, in the season of Sophists **Absolute** philosophical-theologically be jettisoned, e.g. with the Agnosticism of Protagoras, according to whom "*Absolute*" it is considered subjectively that the particular man considers each time as "absolute". But it is not logic and moral the atomistic desire to become and to function as a measure and criterion (*canon*) of everything because the atomistic desire is always ambiguous. Furthermore, if something of the kind preponderates in the difference between universality and specialness (or between universality and distinctness) will die out. In newer Philosophy, German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) accepts as approachable only *phenomena*, while "*thing by itself*" as thoroughly inaccessible.

Then, according to German idealist theologian-philosopher Johann Fichte (1762-1814), as **the Absolute** is considered the human atomistic Ego, namely infinite position of our self via our self. In other words here the Divine "*I AM THAT I AM*" is shifted to human Ego that it consequently leads to *Solipsism* and *Autism*. Still, according to the *Phenomenology* (German Phänomenologie) of German philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) [**10**], as **Absolute** it is considered the *substance of* things; we approach this "substance" by *intuition* (*eidetic monitoring / eidetic image* = grasp of the type or certain formalities) in conformity with an intentionality or relating (cf. transcendental *reduction*). In this way, we receive an explicitness of all via the *imaginary alterant*.

Moreover, Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) considers **Absolute** as current except of the world: "*The meaning of world* ", he writes, "*should it is found outside by the world*" [**11**](cf. theorem of Austrian-American mathematician and philosopher Kurt Friedrich Gödel). The same, mutatis mutandis, believed German psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Theodor Jaspers (1883-1969): "*Philosophy streams from a level deeper than level of Philosophy*" [**12**]! Finally, for German existential philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) as **Absolute** it is considered "*esse*" distinguishing –via the said "*ontological difference*"[**13**]– between "*esse*" and *being*. These various attitudes of Philosophy for *Absolute* express the distress of thinking human intellect for the seeking of a constant "foundation" in order to it supports any philosophical system, that is to say the meanings of the world and man. Simultaneously, however they show also the vainness, relativity, nihilism and disappointment of philosophizing Theo-logy without of Divine Revelation itself.

A. Atheistic and/or materialistic Philosophy

Philosophy diachronically may be divided –for methodological mainly reasons– into atheistic or materialistic and theistic.

Atheistic (physiocratic / pagan and/or pantheistic) Philosophy, in general lines, may be sub-divided into:

a) *Hylozoism*,

b) *Historical Materialism* (Marxism),

c) Nietzscheanism with Dionysianism (*Bacchism*) [**14**] and "*the death of God*" (cf. Nihilism), and

d) the atheistic Existentialism mainly of French existentialist philosopher J.-P. Sartre (1905-1980), whereas **"*Absolute*"** is placed the ontological Nil.

Moreover, theistic Philosophy we can divide into *secularistic* (see *Immanentism*) and *transcendental*. *Transcendental* Philosophy can similarly be subdivided into "closed" (person-center / personalistic) and an "open" *Theism*.

B. Theistic Philosophy

I. Secularistic (*Immanentismus*).

Secularistic Philosophy (i.e. *Immanentism*) functions *by necessity* pantheistically. Indeed, Stoicism (cf. "*Cosmic soul*") and Gnosticism (cf. Cosmic panspermia) sustain as **Absolute** the "core" or the content of the universal world. Ancient Greek philosophers Xenophanes (570-480 B.C.) and Parmenides (6th B.C. cent.) considered as **Absolute** the *Word* (cf. *Logo-theism* and *Panlogism*), something that will revive centuries later with the "*reasonable Idea*" or the "*Absolute Spirit*" of German philosopher Georg Hegel (1770-1831) via a pantheistic recycling. Similarly, for Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) God and Nature (*world*) are identified. Moreover, German pessimist philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) maintained world Will as *Absolute*. Similar philosophical systems "deified" the world as *Panentheism* (the world exists in God) and *Theopanism* (God is everything) of Irish Neo-Platonic theologian-philosopher Johannes Scotus Eriugena (810/5-877).

II. Transcendental.

We presume as *Transcendental* Philosophy the fiery **Logos** of Heraclitus. This Logos constituting from himself a paradox given that he joins opposite (cf. *Unitas Multiplex*) constitutes harmonious "*coincidence of opposite*" (Augustine, Nicolas Cusanus, Giordano Bruno). Then, as *Transcendental* Philosophy we consider the Platonic *Idea* ("world soul") of **Good** (cf. *Idealism* and *Teleology* of Plato).

Still, "*the First cause*" of Aristotle can be included in *Transcendental* Philosophy as the absolute perfection, i.e. "the intellect of intellect" or the pure intellect, in other words, the mental imago of God, that is to say mindological Theology (Aristotle, Aristotelianism, Thomism, Scholasticism). Similarly, *Transcendental* Philosophy consists in Plotinic Trinity (via of *emanations*), that is to say *Enology* (discourse about One).

Moreover, according to German philosopher Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), God is considered as **identification** *ideal* and *real*, while he is incarnated in History with a lot of forms (cf. the heresy of *Savellianism*), coming out thus from himself and reentering "*to the himself* ".Finally, God as *Absolute* was identified by Saint Augustine with "*summum bonum*" (Johannes Hessen) or with the "*value of values*" (Max Scheler). More specifically, the Neo-Kantian Badische School considered God as the capitulation of values of *true*, *beautiful* and *good*. However, here we shall must observe that *Absolute* or God (uncreated generally) it is not possible to be identified with the human cultural values, since theologically it is not a man who set, designate, determine and judges *Good* and Values, but God. As it is obvious any Divine Revelation (cf. monotheistic religions) comes more nearer to a theistic Philosophy despite serious differences and reserves against to atheistic one.

C. "Closed" and "open" Theism.

Theism is characterized "closed" because it is limited from the "personeidad" of *Divine* (cf. Augustine). In this (but inter- substantial) Theism belongs also Christian Religion on the

one hand because of the Old Testamentical *Imago Dei* on the other hand of the New Testamentical Divine Incarnation. In this sense we speak about a god-man Philosophy (God as empiric and ultra-empiric, passive and apathetic, mundane and transcendental, created and uncreated), or a *Theanthropism* (cf. V. Solovyev, J. Popovits).

Thomas Aquinas (1225 –1274) and more generally all the later Scholasticism in order to argue philosophically the *cosmological evidence of* existence of God, according to the apostle Paul, identified Aristotelian "*cause of causes*" with the personal God of Christianity. Similarly, Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1063) in order to compose the said *ontological evidence of* existence of God identified **substance** and **existence** into God. French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes (1596-1650) moved in the same vein arguing that since the human thought about the "*absolute being*" does not lie and sustain in a present finite world it should derive outside from this world (cf. Ch. Wolff).

And philosopher I. Kant albeit tried to avoid Theo-logy demolishing indeed all the scholastic proofs of the existence of God he could not finally avoid the said *moral evidence of* existence of God by right of the *predicable imperative* of practical reason.

Moreover both *Deism* and *Dialectic Theology* (K. Barth) belong with "closed" (person-center) Theism.

Then, as *Affirmative* (cf. ontological and teleological evidence, Onto-Theology etc.) as *Negative Theology* (God as not being, Null, that is to say as refusal of refusal, according to Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita) talk of a personal God and a union of man with God. German-American theologian and Christian existentialist philosopher Paul Johannes Tillich (1886–1965) attempted to "ontologies" God (see *Ontotheology*), considering God as the "foundation of beings", as *Bottom, Bottomless* or Null (cf. Jakob Böhme, Nickolai *Berdiayev*). Nevertheless, a World-theism via *analogia entis* [**15**] that refers in *Natural Theology* and cosmological Theology, i.e. Eco-theology (that is to say Nature's of form divine) cannot orthodox Christianly become acceptable since an anyone (created) being, even absolute, cannot be identified with the creator of "esse" of beings.

Karl Jaspers is moved with a parallel way considering God as "Constrained" or "Holder together" (who contains the chief matter), that Christianly refers to the meaning of the Almighty (Greek *Pantocrator*), that is to say the One who keeps everything (universe).

3. Theological viewpoint affirmative and negative Theology

Firstly what theologically we name "*Affirmative Theology*" it isn't absolutely something single and concrete; nor, of course, in the *Affirmative Theology* God is identified with the **Absolute** or being, or even with both of them. Moreover, Orthodox *Affirmative Theology* is not identified with corresponding thomistic *"via positivia"* of approach of the Divine. What, in any case, generally appears that characterizes the considerate way of approach of *Absolute* or God in the *Affirmative Theology* is moving from bottom to up about the mode of doing theology as also and the reasonable-philosophical generally array and using of argumentation, insofar as (proportionally / analogically: "*analogia entis*") with scientific methodology (*abduction*, *induction*, *reduction* etc.) of the findings and conclusions of research.

From the other side, the so-called "*Negative Theology*" has happened multiple interpretations and meanings up today –sometimes perfectly arbitrary– with the result an intensified conceptual confusion. From the beginning it will be said that Orthodox *Negative Theology* is not identified absolutely with corresponding (*via negativa*) Westerly one (Thomistic and Scholastic). *Negative Theology* of Orthodox Church is not neither

Agnosticism, neither Scepticism, neither a theology of the so-called sociologically "empty types" (*leerformel*). On the contrary, it is a doxological Theology that does not "*peer*", according to the teaching of the Eastern Fathers particularly Saint John Chrysostom, the *mystery* but respectfully accepts it as "beyond reason". For this, many times Orthodox *Negative Theology* selects the silence before miracle instead of words. When however Negativism does theology it denies every created categorem and every quality in God. So for Negative Theology Christian God is not neither *Absolute*, neither, much more, being.

<div align="center">THE PERPETUAL APPROACH OF "ABSOLUTE BEING"</div>

According to Christian Theology, anyone "approach" of *the Absolute* (as it is "mystery") appears basically a) perpetual, that is to say as an unceasing effort of man that it does not have end (cf. *Orthodox Negative Theology*)[16] and b) experiential psychosomatically.

Concretely, Saint Gregory of Nyssa writes: "*the genuine enjoyment of desirable is continuously someone to get on in the searching of God and never does not stop to go up, because a wish that it is fulfilled, gives always birth another which is found above by this … because the spirit having from this here the life a driver and an ally is ablaze into the love of God and the hot prayer of man who is burned by the Divine desire does not repletion but, as it is said, burned by the love of Good deriving thereby his soul always bigger eagerness; those who eat me they will hunger furthermore also those who drink me they will thirst furthermore* (Syrah 24, 21)"[17].

The perpetual this movement of God, which "quenches" the existential thirst of man does not come contrary to the Divine speech to a woman of Samaria that "*Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst*" [18] or "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*", because on the one hand the religiosity / spirituality of people lies in different levels on the other hand the life of Saints begins from earthly and transitory "perfection"[19] in order to it heads eternally to eschatological perfection[20]. In the beginning we have the first spiritual quenching of the spiritual infant with milk or chamomile. Later in the spiritual adultness of the faithful not only will quench with the cool water of Divine Grace but also self will be become a such spiritual fount [21] "*insofar as the human ability*" [22]. In between as long as more man approaches God so much he longs for Him! But this seeking is not agnostic (cf. altar ancient Greek "*TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*"), nor agonizing (coercive); it provokes more and more spiritual pleasure. Thus, Sober Fathers especially speak eschatologically for an "*imperfect perfection*", "*because there is not end in the eternal goods*".[23]

Also Professor Robert M. Torrance expresses itself proportionally: "*The unfeasible of knowledge finally does not decrease our wish to acquire it; with the research we exceed at repetition present uncertainty in the frame of wider uncertainty that is always found beyond its bounds … It is this search that it has made us, and continues making us, that is what we are*".[24] Also American philosopher and mathematician, founder of American Pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), observes: "*facticity lies in the future*"[25]. Finally, Austria-British philosopher Sir Karl Raimund Popper (1902–1994) remarks: "*We are seekers of the truth and no its owners*"[26].

Affirmative and *Negative Theology* confessedly endeavours to approach – everyone from its viewpoint – "*Absolute being* ", that is to say God. This effort, being human, remains relative and always dynamic. Orthodox (*Affirmative* and *Negative*) Theology believes that whoever human word about God does not correspond exactly with the truth, if previously God he has not also illuminates and hallows the thought and the language of theo-logian. In

other words, no one Theology cannot be authentic, if it doesn't do according to meet for a god.

4. Psychological viewpoint the "*Absolute Being*" in psychology

In Psychology, in which various anthropological, philosophical, sociological and cultural opinions exert influence, as "*absolute being*" can be considered:

a) (conscious) Ego (Humanitarian, Existential and Positive Psychology),

b) *unconscious* – cf. *unconscious* God or Spirit (Eduard Hartmann),

c) the Superego (*Űber-Ich*),

d) Ego Ideal (*Ichideal*),

c) *Libido* (Psychoanalysis of S. Freud),

d) complex superiority / supremacy (Alfred Adler),

e) *will for force* (Friedrich Nietzsche, Germanism),

f) *Collective Unconscious* (Carl Jung),

g) the force of will (Xenophon, Fathers of Church, Humanitarian Psychology),

h) "lack" and symbolic phallus / father (Jacques Lacan),

i) the initial world of soul (pre-symbolic *Real*) or mental unit (K. Castoriadis),

j) (natural and social) environment and *Object relations theory* [27]

k) dimension and prospect of future (Aaron T. Beck and Cognitive Psychology) and

l) "Spiritual" (*Spirit*) or *Divine* (Numen) or *Sacred / Holy*. [28]

Each psychological School by right of psychological *Attribution theory*, as "core" of human psychism, utmost reality and source each healthy or morbid behaviour, recognizes – explicitly ή implicitly– a biological, mental, social, cultural, intellectual or spiritual and metaphysical principle.

An Orthodox answer in all these tendencies would be, according to the eclecticism of the Fathers of Church, the diacritical *integration* all of the operations or forces of psychosomatic existence of man given that depending on the character of each person and his environment when it can be in effect a principle and when the other. What, in any case, for is one more time confirmed here, is the inconceivable and the mystery of the human soul, as well as the endless its possibilities.

5. Meanings of the *approach of "Absolute Being"*

Any *approach of* "absolute being" can be comprehended generally:

a) Intellectualisticaly under the form either e.g. of Scholasticism, either of Isomorphism (there is a parallelism between the figural identity of the intuitive experience, namely of perception, and congruent neurophysiologic process or event of the brain). According to German historian, psychologist, sociologist and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and the professor of Philosophy Michał Kazimierz Heller (1936-), for the one hand the natural phenomena it is in effect (descriptive) **explanation**, for the other hand the spiritual (hermeneutical) **comprehension**[29]

b) noetically (Platonism, philosophical Mysticism): opacity, penumbra, obscurity, darkness, dusk, gloom, quiet, incomprehension / *acatalepsia* (Plato, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, G. Basil, J. Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Ephraim Syros, Cyril of Jerusalem, John of Damascus), mystery, "*docta ignorantia*" (N. Cusanus), ineffable and innominate (*anonymous*) God, unrevealing (*Deus absconditus*); for this, for example, Christ spoke in parables, symbols, signs, marks, he kept his "*Messianic secret*" and he intended suitable moral and spiritual preparation and the progressive initiation, he accepted stages of receptivity, and he presupposed "*from above*" (Divine) light (as the awareness of

nothingness, uncertainty, mystery, and of "*one I Know that I Know nothing*"). So, the alone way of approach of Divine – from the side of man – is divine *doxology*: by the view of light (*deification*) we were led to the revelation (disclosure) of word via word!

c) rationally / philosophically (Barlaam the Calabrian).

d) sentimentally (Naturalism, Romanticism, Schleiermacher, Mysticism).

e) volitionally (Sober Fathers).

f) God likely / doing synergistically Theology by to meet for a god (see apodictically / "*halieutically*"), according to Gregory of Palamas: as (diacritical) unity and no identity (as for energies and as for no the substance).

g) psycho-somatic / experiential "impletion" (*filling up*) – completeness / salvation [mysteries of the Church: penance / transfiguration (*metamorphosis*) in order to man keeps open house and see Invisible into Eucharist].

The above-mentioned multiple these meanings of "*Absolute being*" reveal the "openness" of man as regards in the searching and the approaching of "*Absolute being*", which Orthodox Church accepts since we Orthodoxically Christianly believe that during the union of man with God partake all of his psychosomatic forces.

PHILOSOPHICAL-RELIGIOUS WAYS OF APPROACH OF "*ABSOLUTE BEING*"

Up to today the known philosophical-religious ways of approach of "*Absolute being*" are:

a) via intellect / noesis (Plato),

b) via spread / unfold (Plotinus, Neo-Platonism) or trance / ecstasy (Philo),

c) via logic of Aristotle (see positive and analogical "way" of Thomas Aquinas,

d) via mystical intuition (see biological mysticism of H. Bergson),

e) via logical "bound" [see *absurd* / *paradox*: "*unquestioning faith*" (Fideism) of S. Kierkegaard and Luther],

f) via phenomenological *intuition* (Ed. Husserl),

g) via faith / confidence "*according to knowledge*" (see affectionate mutual respect) in an equivalent relation of Father – son or friend to friend (see *Synergism*).

RELIGIOUS-PSYCHOLOGICAL WAYS OF APPROACH OF "*ABSOLUTE BEING*"

Finally, also other hierographic ways of *approach of* "*Absolute being*" (Divine) exist (no however essentially "orthodox", but rather inclined towards Pantheism) as:

a) various metaphysical (or spiritual) experiences and reveals,

b) intimate affectionate with fellow being,

c) the *necrosis* of will (see Buddhist *Nirvana*, Schopenhauer),

d) *Meditation*,

e) various Mysticisms (see *Quiet*),

f) experiential *empathy* or/and *identification*,

g) caught up (see apostle Paul),

h) secular *spirituality* [union or/and (Buddhist) absorption from the Whole (*Brahman*, universal energy etc.)],

i) holistic Medicine (Medicine of *personage* and *Integrative Psychology*),

j) diacritical union / participation ("*communion*"): synergy Divine and human agent, Divine fear (anguish, swoon) and Divine love.

So much the various philosophical-theological what religious-psychological ways of approach of "*Absolute being*" that phenomenologically we described, testify the wealth and the dynamism of man in his effort of his "contact" with "*Absolute*" (Divine) but in the same time they contain also various mental, biological, moral, social and economic hazards if – indiscriminately– they are generalized, intermingled and become absolute.

CONCLUSIONS

From the short this panoramic survey of the human penchant for the approach of "*Absolute being*" we saw that:

1. the expression "*Absolute being*" does not correspond in the teaching of Orthodox Christian Theology, but Philosophy and Philosophy of Religion.
2. man even if relative and closed-end (*finite*) has resources and ways –although deficient or imperfect– to express itself (doxologically, negatively etc.) for "*Absolute*".
3. the efforts (successful or unsuccessful) of man for the approach of "*Absolute being*" are diachronic, multidimensional and universal.
4. Philosophy cannot avoid the concept of "*Absolute*" regardless of for it is possible to be not this identified with a historical person but either with "being" or with *existence*.
5. the various philosophical definitions of "*Absolute*" confirm its vagueness and indetermination also the weakness of man.
6. any human word about God cannot be authentic, if it doesn't meet for a god.
7. because on the one hand during the union of man with God participate all psychosomatic forces of man on the other hand the essence of God remains completely inaccessible, as for the searching and the approach of God from the side of man functions, at least for Orthodox apperception, a liberality and "openness".

However, this wealth and the dynamism of a man making a bid for his "contact" with "*Absolute*" (Divine), contains various mental, biological, moral, social even economic or material hazards, if – without proper discernment of Holy Spirit – are not observed some "limits" that protect us against subjectivism, arbitrary interpretations, generalizations, improper medleys and absolutions.

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[19] Philip. 3, 12, Α' Κορ. 13, 10-12: "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known".

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John Chrysostom's Catechesis on Baptism in context of the late Fourth-Century Mystagogies

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ABSTRACT

In the use of the united Church from the late forth century was developed the catechumenate, meaning a long and profound preparation for Christian Initiation, usually received in the Easter Vigil. However, candidates would receive explanation of the rites only after they were performed, namely during the Easter week. This practice was based on the so-called mystagogical method, the conviction that rites speak by themselves in a powerful manner. The Catechesis of Jerusalem (of Cyril or John, his successor), the Catechetical Homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia along with the Baptismal Homilies of John Chrysostom in the East, but also both treatises (De mysteriis and De sacramentis) of Ambrose of Milan witness with different nuances to the mystagogical approach, namely the introduction into the mysteries and the Mystery itself by means of ritual actions. In the present study, I will focus on John Chrysostom's Baptismal Homilies, underlining some aspects: their timely framework, their connection with other similar texts and the general structure of the preparation for the Christian Initiation.

Keywords: Saint John Chrysostom; catechumenate; mystagogical method; catechesis;

Introduction

While in the Eastern Churches the Fathers have always constituted a central and essential element of their theology and spirituality, the same cannot be said of the Western Churches. Whereas the Roman Catholic tradition kept them to some extent, their role in Protestantism was very reduced, if existent at all. Roman Catholic rediscovery of the sources (not only Patristic but also biblical and liturgical) produced a powerful renewal in its theology and praxis starting in the second half of the twentieth century. In the last decades we are experiencing the discovering of the Fathers by different Evangelical traditions and with the Fathers very often comes a renewed appreciation of the liturgy as *theologia prima* and the irreplaceable role of symbols and rites in Christian life.

By the end of the fourth century the still united Church faces the new challenge of mass conversions with the development of the catechumenate, i.e. a long and profound preparation for Christian Initiation, usually received in the Easter Vigil. Within this framework some extant documents witness to the role played by symbols and rituals in conforming Christian life. Stemming from the Eastern (Jerusalem and Antioch) but also from the Western (Milan) regions they have in common the belief that rituals speak by themselves and even in a stronger way than rational discourse. The process of catechumenate is marked by rites that gradually introduce the candidates into Christian life, culminating in the Easter night through bathing, anointing, eating and drinking. Significant is, however, that the candidates would only receive explanation of the rites after they were performed, in the

Easter week. At the basis of this approach is the so-called mystagogical method[1], the conviction that rites express by themselves in a powerful manner. The *Catechesis of Jerusalem* (from Cyril or his successor, John), the *Catechetical Homilies* of Theodore of Mopsuestia along with the *Baptismal Homilies* of John Chrysostom in the East, but also both treatises (*De mysteriis* and *De sacramentis*) of Ambrose of Milan witness with different nuances to the mystagogical approach, namely the introduction into the mysteries and the Mystery itself by means of ritual actions.

In the present study, I will focus on John Chrysostom's *Baptismal Homilies*. John, known after the 5th-6th century as the "Golden Mouth", the *Chrysostom* was born around 349, being baptized by bishop Meletios in 368. He became a monk and hermit for some years and eventually he was ordained a presbyter in 386. Twelve years later he was appointed as bishop of the Empire's capital. Tried in 403 at the so-called *Oak synod*, he was sent to exile, recalled, and definitively exiled in 404, where he died in 407.

He is one of the most prolific authors ever and one of the most-read Fathers of the Church, mainly through his moral emphasis and accessible style. Among his immense oeuvre, we can distinguish 16 treatises (for instance, the very popular one "On Priesthood"), 240 letters, and especially more than 700 sermons. Here we have homilies, commentaries (that comment entire books of the Bible) and speeches. The so-called "Divine Liturgy", the most widespread liturgical form in the Eastern Churches may base to some extent upon an authentic work of John. Finally, not so well known as other writings, we have 12 baptismal catecheses[2] (while the Easter homily, read in the Easter night in Orthodox Churches does not belong to him).

These *Baptismal Homilies* have been discovered relatively late. Indeed, two "baptismal" catechesis of Chrysostom were published in 1609. Exactly 300 years later, in 1909 A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus published four catechesis that he had found in a Greek manuscript at the library of the Holy Synod of the Russian Church in Moscow, among which there was also the first of the catechesis published in 1609[3]. Half a century later, in 1955, A. Wenger discovered in a codex of the Stavronikita Monastery, in Athos, a series of eight authentic "Catechetical homilies to the Candidates for Baptism and the Newly Baptized" (from which seven were until then unknown), which he edited and published in 1957. [4]

These twelve catechesis have to be dated to the time John was a presbyter in Antioch, more concretely in the decade 387-397. A more precise timely framework can be drawn from the catechesis themselves. Homily 1 was held for Holy Wednesday of 387. 2/1-4 are from the following year (2/1: 30 days before Easter, 2/2: 20 days before, 2/:3 again in Holy Wednesday, and finally 2/4: for Easter, all of them 388). The next series (3/1-7) take a broader framework: 389-397 (3/1-2: Beginning and End of Lent; 3/3: Easter; 3/4-7: Easter Week). The use in Antioch was different from the one in Jerusalem and Milan, where the bishop was in charge of the instruction for the Christian Initiation. Due to the huge number of candidates in Antioch, many priests had this catechetical task and highly probably (if his catechesis are not dated to his time as bishop of Mopsuestia), Theodore and John held at the same time their instructions. A brief reading of both texts brings to light the clear different approach of both of them to their audience. Theodore, as Cyril, comments the creed of their local Church, while John's presentations lack a systematic view and focus upon Christian life and moral, providing neither a system nor a detailed description of Christian initiation and its rites. Unlike Theodore, Cyril, and Ambrose, John refers only to baptism.

The broad background against which we ought to set John's *Catechesis* is the context of the above-referred baptismal/mystagogical catechesis in the second half of the fourth

century. In passing, it needs to be stated that profound changes take place in the Church of that time. Among other, I want to point out at the emergence and inflation of the notion of "*sacred*", which can be put in relation with the "discovery" of the "Holy Places" in Palestine. This new view had radical impact on the liturgy and the sacraments [**5**]. Relevant for us are contemporary liturgical sources as well; many of which have already been mentioned. First of all are the 16 Catechetical Homilies of John's friend, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* [**6**]. In them, he comments on the Symbol of Faith or Creed (1-10), the Lord's Prayer (11), and then on the rites of Christian Initiation: Baptism and Anointment (12-14) and Eucharist (15-16). I have already referred to the different methods between both Antiochene priests. Also the reception of them is totally opposed; while John has been acclaimed as a Church Father, the situation is complex regarding Theodore, mainly due to the (posthumous) relation of the Nestorian theology with him.

Cyril of Jerusalem is the author of 18 baptismal catechesis, preceded by a "pre-catechesis", in which Cyril after establishing the fundaments of Christian faith, comments upon the Creed of the Church of Jerusalem. In addition to these, we have a set of five Mystagogical Catecheses[**7**]. It has been much debated if these were penned by Cyril or his successor John of Jerusalem. In any case, there are clear liturgical differences between the baptismal and mystagogical catechesis. While the first are to be dated around 349, the latter ought to be in the eighties. These 5 catechesis refer to: 1: Prebaptismal rites 2. Baptism. 3. Anointment 4. Theology of Eucharist. 5. Eucharistic Celebration. [**8**]

Ambrose of Milan is an emblematic character of that time. He stands still today as an ecumenical saint, a witness of the undivided Church, a Church, which was not divided by the diversity of its forms and approaches. A governor suddenly converted into a bishop, who deeply influenced Western Christianity even being instrumental in the conversion and even Christian Initiation of the most important Western theologian, Augustine. Regarding to our topic, we found two writings, *De mysteriis* and *De sacramentis*.[**9**] Also here, much debate has taken place on the issue of the mutual relationship of both works. In any case, they offer the mystagogical method of the bishop of Milan, within the framework of the developing catechumenate and by commenting the different rites, he introduces us into the core of Ambrose's theology and spirituality.

Further relevant sources are the *Apostolic Constitutions*, to be situated by the end of the fourth century also in the Antiochene context, and the previous documents of the *Apostolic Tradition* (beginning of the third century) and the *Didache* (end of the first century); both of them received in the Apostolic Constitutions. In the writings of the end of the fourth century, chiefly in Cyril, Theodore, and Ambrose, we discover clear patterns in the structure of Christian Initiation. In following, I will present this scheme, in order to focus then in the presentation of that Initiation, drawn from John's catechesis.

In the *general structure* of the preparation for the Christian Initiation we find three periods: the Precatechumenate, the Catechumenate, and the Enlightenment and Initiation.

In the *Precatechumenate* the First Step was the acceptance into Order of Catechumens. From then on he or she becomes a catechumen and with this starts the second period: The *Catechumenate*: *Catechumen* (the one who is instructed) or hearer (*audiens*, *auditor*). According to some sources, like the Apostolic Tradition, this period would take at least three years, although many candidates would extend this time. Here the case of Ambrose could be referred, who coming from a Christian family, was not baptized when he was elected bishop of Milan. The catechumens were allowed only to the first part of the liturgy, being required to leave before the Eucharistic part began. This is why that section is still called "liturgy of

the Catechumens". Usually the day before the beginning of Lent, those who wanted to be baptized for Easter had to give their names (*nomen datio*), to register. The following day, within a public ceremony the candidates are brought to the bishop, one by one, and the bishop asks other Christians and the candidates' sponsors about the life of the candidates. Eventually the names of the (successful) candidates are written down by the bishop himself. From then on they received the name of "applicants" (*competentes*), "chosen" (*electi*) or "destined for illumination" (φωτιζὸμενοι, *photizomenoi*).

With this starts the last period the one of Enlightenment and posterior Initiation. The candidates receive a very intensive preparation, consisting of lectures and rites. They took part in the liturgy and listened to catechesis, which chiefly focused on a series of expositions on the Creed, but also in Ambrose had a moral emphasis with stories of the patriarchs or the precepts of the book of Proverbs. The candidates were bound to secrecy about what they heard in those lectures; the *disciplina arcana*. Besides the almost daily instruction, centred, not lest relevant are the rites of exorcism. These took part also daily and where highly dramatic. The different reports inform us with some detail. The candidates were standing, with stretched hands and eyes lowered. They were naked and standing barefoot on sack-cloth.

In addition, they received frequent *scrutinies* by the community and by the bishop and were taught mainly two texts that they had to learn by heart without putting them in writing: the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. They were taught these documents (*tradditio*) and a week later, they had to publicly pronounce them (*redditio*). Lent, as for every Christian, was also for them a time of penance and before baptism they need to confess their sins. After which, they received a prebaptismal bath.

The last and most important step was the *Christian Initiation itself*, consisting of baptism, anointment, and Eucharist. The structure of *baptism*, which takes place outside the church, in the baptistery, often in very dramatic terms, consists of a rite of Opening (*Ephphetha*) only in the West, by which the candidates' nostrils (lips) were touched by saliva or oil, as a symbol of the opening to God's grace. Afterwards, the candidates had to renounce to sin, profess their faith, and get naked, be anointed with oil. Before baptism a prayer is said over the baptismal water. After baptism itself, the recently baptized were anointed with Chrism; their feet were washed and they received baptismal garments. Eventually they were brought into the church and would take part for first time in the *Eucharistic liturgy*. The different rites described are the preparation of the Gifts, the Washing of hands (lavabo), the Kiss of Peace, and the Eucharistic Prayer (anaphora; which has in general the following structure: a. Introductory Dialogue; b. Preface and Sanctus; c. Narration of God's Good Deeds; d. *Anamnesis*; e. Prayer of Offering; f. Epiclesis over the Offerings; g. *Epiclesis* over the People; h. commemoration of the Living and Dead. After this comes Communion, preceded by the Recitation of the Lord's Prayer, the breaking of the Bread, the mingling of Body and Blood and preparation for communion. The celebration closes with the post-communion with prayers and rites.

Having presented this general structure of Catechumenate and Initiation by the end of the fourth century, it is time to focus on the same structure, this time by exclusively drawing from *John's catechesis*. In general, there are not many essential differences from what we have above observed regarding structures and stages.

Regarding the preparation, John refers to the inscription of the names and when it takes place (a period of ten days), as well as the name they received (οἱ μέλλοντες φωτίζεσθαι, *illuminandi*) and the role played by the sponsors ("spiritual Fathers") [**10**]. According to

John, the Pre-Easter catechesis takes 30 days (the inscription of the names, as stated above, started at the beginning of Lent and took ten days). They were held by the bishop and different priests. They were exhortations, rather than a systematic instruction on the fundaments of the faith. After the daily catechesis, the candidates were sent to the exorcists (that in Antioch built an own *ordo* or *τάξις*). There, they had to stand naked in the upper part of their bodies, with their hands on the back, as slaves of Satan [**11**]. "*But something else is made known to us by the outward attitude – the bare feet ant the outstretched hands. Just as those who suffer bodily captivity show by the appearance they present their dejection at the disaster that has struck them, so do those men who have been captives of the devil. As they are about to be freed from his tyranny and go beneath the yoke that is easy, first of all they remind themselves by their appearance of their previous situation and try to understand what they are being saved from and what they are hastening to*" [**12**].

Regrettably, we do not know the texts and prayers of those exorcisms. Another element was the *First Profession of Faith* (from which we have no description by John), After ending the catechesis, the *Redditio* took place with the bishop. *Renunciation to the Devil and Adhesion to Christ*: Here we can observe a liturgical evolution, since at John's time these did not take place immediately before baptism, perhaps due to the great number of candidates. The rite consisted in kneeling, with hands stretched to heaven. Let's listen to John's description: "*Now consider once again the posture of captivity. The priests who introduce you first of all tell you to kneel down and pray with your hands raised to heaven…. After that the priest approaches each in turn and demands your contracts and confessions and instructs each one to pronounce those fearful and awesome words: I renounce you, Satan, … your power, your worship and your works. There is great power in these few words. For the angels who are present and the invisible powers rejoice at your conversion and, receiving the words from your lips, carry them to the common master of all things, where they are inscribed in the book of heavens*" [**13**].

The second part is the association with the Lord. Indeed,"*After the renunciation of the Evil One and all the works he delights in, the priest instructs you to speak again as follow: And I pledge myself, Christ to you*". [**14**] "I renounce (ἀποστάσσομαι) you, Satan, your pomp, your service, your cult and works". And then to Christ: "I unite (συντάσσομαι) to you, Christ". After these rites, came the anointment of the forehead and the Sealing. For the anointment in form of a cross we have the formula: „*So and do is anointed in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*" [**15**].

It is worthwhile noting that this prebaptismal anointment had for John an exorcistic meaning; he did not understand it as transmission of the Holy Spirit. In addition to this, Chrysostom does not refer to any postbaptismal sealing (unlike Theodore and the Apostolic Constitutions). This rite might have been introduced in the last decade of the 4th century. After all this preliminary actions have taken place, Christian initiation – baptism and Eucharist – may begin. Unlike other authors, John introduces a pause in between. The following rites will take place in the Easter vigil. This consists of the anointment of the whole body, the second profession of faith, baptism and the signs of this, the celebration of the Eucharist and, eventually, the Post-Easter Catechesis. The anointment of the whole body occurs with the same oil utilized before. The anointment is carried out by deacons. It is obvious, that women (deaconesses?) would do this with the female candidates. However, unlike the Apostolic Constitutions, John does not explicitly name "deaconesses". That anointment is understood by John as protection against the devil. Immediately before baptism, the second profession of faith, perhaps in a very short form, takes place [**16**]. For

baptism [**17**], each candidate enters naked into the baptismal font and they are submerged three times and baptized with the form: "βαπτίζεται ὁ δεῖνα εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος" [**18**]. The bishop or priest, who submerges the candidate, is regarded as a symbol of Christ.

As the priest pronounced the words, '*N. is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*', he plunges your head into the water and lifts it up again three times, by this sacred rite preparing you to receive the descent of the Holy Spirit. For the priest is not only the one who touches your head: Christ also touches it with his right hand. This is shown by the actual words of the one who baptizes you. He does not say, '*I baptize N.*', but rather, '*N. is baptized*'. This shows that he is only the minister of the grace and merely lends his hand since he has been ordained for this by the Spirit. It is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the indivisible Trinity, who bring the whole rite to completion" [**19**].

As an effect of baptism, appears the transforming *coming of the Spirit* [**20**]. "*Then by those words of the priest and by his hand the presence of the Holy Spirit flies down upon you and another man comes up out of the font, one washed from all the stain of his sins, who has put off the old garment of sin and is clothed in the royal robe*". [**21**] In interpreting the baptism, John bases upon the theology of the sixth chapter of the *Letter to the Romans*. After baptism, the newly baptized receives the sign of a white garment [**22**], being afterwards embraced and kissed by all [**23**].

Regrettably, Chrysostom does not provide us with much information about the *Eucharist*. While he refers to its different names, almost nothing appears regarding the Eucharistic liturgy and its rites. This silence could be explained by the *Arcanum*, although the other authors provide us with much more information in this sense. In any case, John understands the Eucharist mainly as food for the baptized. Finally, there is some mention about *Post-Easter Catechesis*, which take place in the seven days following baptism and Easter. In any case, they are not mystagogical catechesis in the full sense of a theological explanation of the liturgical rites that occurred during the Christian initiation, but rather spiritual instructions. Also here we observe John's moral focus and emphasis.

Conclusions

First of all, it is important to replace John's catechesis within the Antiochene framework, noting in the meantime that the same context led to totally different approaches than his friend Theodore. It is anyway a context, where we have developed structures for the catechumenate and a large number of candidates. This constitutes a real challenge for the Church at that time. John is also witness to a particular stage in the liturgical evolution regarding the rites of baptism and Eucharist. Especially relevant is the absence here of a postbaptismal anointment. In other authors, mainly in Cyril's mystagogical catechesis, we observe a very developed Pneumatology in this sacrament but also within the Eucharist, chiefly in the anaphora. Although John's catechesis cannot be considered mystagogical, at least to the degree we find it in Cyril and Theodore, the mystagogical method, so relevant today in liturgical studies, is not absent. In this sense, he could say: "*It is not without good reason and careful thought that I have explained all these things to you in advance, my loving people. Even before you actually enjoy them, I wanted you to feel great pleasure as you fly on the wings of hope…*" [**24**].

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Man – icon of divine beauty

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ABSTRACT

The concept of beauty has theological grounds, because man himself is considered image of God's Son. The Orthodoxy practiced since the beginnings to the contemporary times an all-inclusive spirituality: the spiritual beauty of the spiritualized person can be seen in the way of living, manifesting itself fully from physical beauty to the beauty of the inter-human relations, of the relation man-creation and of the relation man-Divinity.

Keywords: God; creation; beauty; relation; world; perfection;

Introduction

Taking an attentive look around us, we can make a painful remark: modern civilization has shipwrecked in ugliness; the architectonic over-dimensioning of the great metropolitan cities suggests the Babylon and the infernal, favour a way of living marked by violence, immorality, excessive consumption and pleasure, eroticism and sodomy represent specific elements of the secularized contemporary society. And when this post-modern civilization cultivates **"beauty**", this beauty is the fruit of a pseudo-beauty, because *this civilization has moved man's focus from God and faith to the autonomous reason and science*, and so beauty has become an ordinary merchandise of the consumption society.

Far from God, man got to ignore the ineffable value and the authentic sense of the world, trying to impose on it, via the technique, an artificial and crooked rationality that corresponds to his evident intention of building, by his own powers, an earthly paradise. In this sense, as Christos Yannaras observes: "*what we call "progress' and 'development' has proven to be a violation and a destruction of nature, constituting a permanent threat of death for man as well*"**[1]**. The ecological crisis caused by the irrational human behavior can find no solution except by the transfiguration of this perspective by the divine Revelation, which reveals the rationality and the internal value of the world, its divine sense.

The Orthodox Theology, relying on the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers, shows the special meaning that the creation, the world, possesses intrinsically, because it does not reduce in a dualistic manner grace and matter, on the contrary, in the matter pulses grace, inviting spiritual beings to a meeting: God and man. Nature, the creation is envisioned as the gift of God for man so that, by seeing it, man may lift his thoughts to its Creator and endeavor to commune with Him. The world is the gift of God for the man whom He loved since the beginning and to whom He freely entrusted the earthly paradise, as an expression and model of the love of God.

The world, in its deep and simple meaning, has another sense, which man loses simultaneously to his individualization because of his selfishness and because of the consequences of the lack of communion vertically and implicitly horizontally. The visible

world, whose protector is man, carries a message that God transmits to man, namely that God has made Himself a man for us so that we may be deified. In the world is present God Himself, looking for man, giving man the opportunity to meet Him so that nature may partake of eternity.

1. Man – icon of divine beauty

Thus, the conception of beauty has a theological fundament, because man himself is considered image of God's Son. The Orthodoxy practiced since the beginnings up to the contemporary times a holistic spirituality: the spiritual beauty of the pneumatised person is visible in the respective person's way of living manifesting itself fully, from physical beauty up to the beauty of the inter-human relations, the beauty of the relation man-creation, and the beauty of the relation man-Divinity.

Man has always been preoccupied to give a sense to his inner tendency towards beauty; for this reason, since times out of mind, the search for beauty was at the same time a matter of religious faith and philosophic reflection. Beauty has been since the beginnings part and parcel of man's life. Everything around man bears the mark of beauty: man himself, his existence, the cosmos, and, consequently, logically, God as well.

In the patristic teaching, it has been affirmed that man sums up or reproduces in himself the whole universe, thus his name of microcosm. Leaving aside any controversy on this topic and limiting ourselves only to the object of the present research, we can say that while God's beauty is reflected in the world's beauty, this is valid for man as well, because man is beautiful just as his Creator, both spiritually and physically. For this reason, doubtlessly, Saint Athanasius speaks about "*God's artistic work in men*"[2].

The idea that man is *"priest of the creation"* is understood by some in the frames of reason. Man's duty is "*to interpret the book of nature, to understand the universe in its wonderful structure and harmony and give it a rational articulation. Theology and physics need to pursue, each of them in turn, its objective aim, yet their work, nevertheless, comes in touch, because both of them function via the rational structures of space and time*" [3].

Such a theory on the distinction specific of man and on his role in the creation in the frames of reason, contributed very much to the creation of the ecological problem, because reason can be used in both directions: to constitute a means of referring the creation to the Creator in a doxological disposition (this is the intention of the idea of "priest of the creation"), but also as argument for the submission of nature to man, a fact that is the source of the ecological problem.

Concerning the distinct identity of man in relation to the creation, innumerable affirmations have existed in the world outside theology as well. Thus, among the philosophers of our epoch, a common opinion emerged, namely that the human being is fundamentally different from the animals, especially by the following fact: while the animal, faced with the world it lives in, develops all its "rational" possibilities to adapt to it, the human being wishes to create his own world. The animal discovers the laws of nature sometimes much more successfully than the human beings. An animal may even invent ways of meeting the problem the environment faces it with, surprising us, in this sense, by its cunningness.

All these can be done by man as well, even to a high extent, as it has been confirmed by modern technology, yet only the human being can create a world of his own by civilization, history. "*Man, for example, can reproduce a tree, by the art of painting, as his own creation. He can create events, institutions not just as means of survival and welfare, as birds build their nest and bees their beehive, but as milestones, as points of reference for his*

identity. When someone says, for instance, "I am English", he does not have in view only the simple fact that he is living in a certain geographic region, but understands much more than this. He understands something that has to do with his identity and creativity, with the development of some identity features different from those given by the environment. It is possible for all these to be researchable by reason." [**4**]

Man, by his very high degree of reason possessed by comparison to animals, creates civilization, history, art. Yet against this thesis one can say many things, because the creation of civilization imposes a much more radical difference between man and animal, not just the difference of degree of reason.

Pursuing to create his world, or just to impose his will, he is bothered by the already existing world. This is a thing that all the artists lived. Michelangelo used to exclaim: when will I get to finish with this marble, to be able to start my work? And Picasso comes to say similar things about figures, shapes and colours. Actually, the, creator of the world in Plato's *Timaios*, according to the model of the artist, suffers because he has to create out of pre-existing space and matter, which impose their limitations on him. [**5**]

No creator is ever content with what he has been given. If he submits himself to the "given" he feels uneasy and awkward, which happens with all the creators of all the times. If he does not submit himself to this given he will have to destroy it to create out of nothing. Yet because the creation out of nothing is a privilege of the uncreated Creator, all the attempts of man to create his world in art, in history, or in any other zone of civilization, has led him to disappointment and impasse. Certainly, in history there have been forms of human "creativity" that have been copies of the world itself. Yet, such things could hardly be called art. Man is like the animals in any fact incumbent his submission to what has been given to him. Everything that is free from such submission is a sign of man's presence. This can lead very far away, up to the destruction by man of what has been given to him. *"No animal could resist the rationality inherent to his nature. Man can do this, and by doing it he shows that his distinctive feature is not rationality, but something else: freedom."* [**6**]

"Man is creation by definition. This means that the world has been given to him. The fact that in the biblical narrative of the creation man appears at the end of the creation makes man twice limited: man is given not just the world, but also God the Creator. He can choose what he likes, yet he cannot ignore the reality of 'the given'." [**7**]

Even since its early times, the Christian anthropology insisted on the fact that man was created *"in God's image and likeness"*. This expression has been present since the first moment in the Old Testament, in *Genesis*, in the narrative on the creation. The Christian Fathers and the Christian theology continued it in history. This expression has been given many interpretations; one of them identifies God's image in man with man's **logos** or **reason**. But when we speak about *"God's image and likeness"* we need to refer inevitably to something that characterizes God exclusively. If *"the image of God"* is something that is outside God, then this could not be the image of God. We are speaking, therefore, about a particularity that refers to God and not to the creation. This obliges us to look for *"the image of God"* in freedom. Even since the 4th century, Gregory of Nyssa defines this idea as *"dominion over oneself"* (man's freedom to be master over the world and over himself). If we take this freedom in the sense in which it exists in God, then we are speaking about absolute freedom, in the sense that in front of us there is nothing that has been given to us.[**8**] It is precisely here that another notion, referring exclusively to man's definition, emerges: that of tragedy, of the tragic. Tragedy is the impasse created by a freedom tending to

accomplishment, but finding it impossible to attain accomplishment. The tragic concerns only the human state; it concerns neither God, nor the rest of the creation.

If man wants to become god, he has to face the "given" of his own existence. Since he comes face to face with his reality of created being – which means that the existence has been given to him - one cannot say that he is free in an absolute sense. If the beauty of the Holy Trinity is reflected, although relatively, both in the visible and in the invisible world, it is all the more mirrored in the human being created in God's image and likeness, following the counsel of the Holy Trinity (Genesis 1: 26-28), as partner of the relational dialogue with Him and with his fellows, the people.

According to the Orthodox teaching, based on the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, man has been brought to life by a special creative act (Genesis 2: 7) of the Holy Trinity. By this act, God put his imprint on the human being and life more than on those of any other created being, which means that the human being has beauty as his ontological given and by his special mission in this world man must preach beauty ceaselessly and realize it in the earthly existence, in relation with the Creator, with his fellows, the people, and with the world, being solidary with the whole creation and responsible, in a way, for the creation, in front of God. In this aware and voluntary relation of our being with God, due to the soul related with God, lies the image of God in man. Man is in God's image because, having a soul akin with God, tends to God, or is in a living relation with God. And by this relation he maintains the relation with God unfaltering. Even a biological image maintains its kinship with its model only if a continual power comes to it from the model, or if between him and the model there is continual communion. [**9**]

2. Man - image of the infinite God

Man maintains himself as un-weakened image of God only if, based on a kinship, a living relation, a continual communion is maintained between him and God, in which it is not just God that is active, but also man. Thus, our being shows and maintains itself as image of God by this living relation, and this relation is possible because God made man since the beginning akin with Himself and therefore capable of the relation with Him. Better said, God put man since the beginning in an aware and free relation with Himself, even by inbreathing a living soul in him.

The Holy Fathers say that by this breath God planted in man not just the understanding soul akin with God but also His grace, as manifestation of His relationship with man, which triggers in man his answer to God's relation-founding act. Saint Gregory Palamas says: *"Then the angels' eyes saw the human soul, united with senses and with a body, as another god, not made on earth, (as) mind and body out of the divine goodness, but (made) out of the divine overabundant goodness, and configured according to God's grace for the body, mind and spirit to be one and for the soul to be according to the divine image and likeness, as a fully unitary being made up of mind, reason and spirit (pneuma)"* [**10**].

Although in the image is hidden the virtuality of the likeness, this virtuality cannot become actual automatically, but only under the flame of the divine work or love. [**11**]

Vadimir Lossky says, taking into account the above-mentioned words of Palamas: *"The divine breath indicates a manner of creation, by virtue of which the human spirit is intimately related to grace"*. One could understand this even as an indissoluble relation between our soul and the power of God, Who gives the soul the possibility to subsist in his image, and, in this sense, the image continues to exist even in the fallen man, by an uncreated energy, rather like a relation and an ontological dialogue than as a relation and a

dialogue of knowledge and intuition in relation to God. It is in this sense, as the new interpretation given by Lossky to God's breath, that one can also understand the expression of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, namely that we are "*little parts of God*" [**12**]. "*This means that the uncreated grace is involved in the creative act itself and that the soul receives at the same time life and grace because grace is God's breath, the ray of divinity, the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit. If man comes alive, when God breathes life in him, this is because the grace of the Holy Spirit is the true principle of our existence*" [**13**].

Our being is akin to God by the spirit (pneuma) received, yet our being receives the spirit because it is capable of the spirit, namely because it is capable of the aware relation with God.

Created "*in the image*" of the infinite God, man is called to go beyond his own limits and also beyond the limited margins of the creation and to become infinite. In the image is involved essentially man's tension towards deification. It is in this that man's greatness consists, in the tension-commandment to become deified and not in the beauty of the supreme biological existence, of rational animal. Man's greatness resides therefore in his destiny, that of deification shown by the image of God, which "*supposes the indestructible presence of grace in the human nature, implied in the very act of faith*" [**14**].

In the Greek Antiquity, man's beauty was interpreted as theophany: the settling of the god in the body of a mortal. With the Holy Fathers, man's beauty does not just preserve its sacred character, but it is considered a reflection, a symbol of the divine beauty. In the *Book of Genesis*, God's beauty is reflected first of all in the beauty of the world, in the macrocosm, and at the end of the sixth day, God's beauty is reflected in man as microcosm. Thus, man is the crown of the creation and its brightest adornment. "*And God said: «Let Us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness » ... And God made man in His own image*" (*Genesis* 1: 26, 27). Thus, man is the icon of the eternal image of God, is the living icon of God's Son. Ad just as the divine Logos bears in Himself the uncreated reasons of the whole creation, similarly man bears in himself the created images of the divine reasons. Father Dumitru Stăniloae wrote: "*Just as the divine Logos, the Creator of the images of His uncreated reasons made Himself, by the embodiment, beside the Subject of His uncreated reasons, also the Subject of the created images of these reasons, similarly, the human subject is meant to become, beside the bearer of the created images of the divine reasons, also the bearer of the uncreated reasons of the Logos together with Him*" [**15**]. Therefore, in man are concentrated the elements of the macrocosm and for this reason, all the Holy Fathers call him a *microcosm*.

Man's calling is to master the world and adore God together with the angels compared to whom he is just "*a little lower*" and this only for a short while, as the Psalmist says: "*what is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou dost care for him?*" (Psalm 8: 4, 5)

Man is created beautiful just as his Creator, both as soul and body. All the Holy Fathers clearly affirm that God's image in man refers to the unity body-soul, therefore the divine Beauty is reflected in the beauty of the body and of the soul.

This is how Saint Gregory of Nyssa explains the beauty of the body: God "*gave (man) the exterior beauty because he was made in the image of the very Archetype of beauty*"[**16**]. The Christians have always had admiration for the physical beauty which they saw as an echo of the transcendent Beauty, and when they wanted to represent virtue artistically they turned to the image of a beautiful being.

The human body appears, therefore, as rationality under an artistic form, which expresses the Divine. The Patriarch Photios of Constantinople wrote that artistic beauty is the beauty affirming that it expresses the Divine. The beauty of the human body is manifested in the harmony of its constitutive parts and ascends towards the spiritual sphere. Saint Basil the Great also saw physical beauty in the harmony of the members but added that the presence of the divine grace is decisive: beauty "*is the harmony that flourishes in the way the members are made up and has grace in it.*" [**17**] On the divine origin of the human beauty Saint Ambrosius wrote, as well: "*When God created the first man, made him with a pleasant exterior, with the harmonious makeup of his members, and gave him the most beautiful figure.*" [**18**] Saint Athanasius the Great praises human beauty as God's work of art in men.

The spiritual value of beauty completes the human body, which was chosen by God as place of worship adequate to bear His Son. The Lord's Embodiment does not just restore the image of God in man to his edenic dignity of the paradise, but lifts man up to perfection, to the full likeness with God.

Man's situation in heaven represents the starting point of any theology but can be at the same time a stumbling stone, if the state of the first people in heaven is not well understood, in the complexity of its aspects: man referred to God, to himself and to the nature surrounding him. The Orthodox theology presents this reality with the help of the Holy Scripture, explained by the Holy Fathers. In this warm atmosphere, one can observe, on the one hand, the love that moved the Absolute Being to create and, related to this, man's wonderful situation and condition of *image of God*.

The heaven that God created is the gift of His love for man, something highlighted in these words: "*Behold the honour God has given to man! He created man outside heaven; yet immediately He introduced him in heaven, to feel benefaction by what was made, and know by (God's) actions the honour given to him, when He brought him in heaven. 'And He put there the man He had made'. The word 'He put' must be understood, again, as said instead of the word 'He ordered (man) to live there', for the vision of heaven and the enjoyment there to give him a lot of pleasure and to exhort him to thank God and be grateful, thinking how much good he received without having done anything to deserve it yet*" [**19**]. And the Saint continues: "*Behold one more type of benefaction in the honour of the one who was created! God wanted man to live in heaven; for this reason, he ordered that various trees may sprout from the earth, being, at the same time delightful by their aspect and good to eat. 'Every tree, says the Scripture, pleasant to behold, namely as aspect', and 'good to eat' namely able to delight by their sight and to give much joy by eating their fruit and to give joy by the multitude and abundance of the trees to the one who would want to make use of them. When the Scripture said: 'every tree', it meant that the earth yielded all the kinds of trees that you could name. Have you seen what a living, devoid of want and troubles? Have you seen what a wonderful life? Man was living as an angel on earth; he was dressed with a body, yet he was not subjected to the physical needs. As an emperor adorned with purple and diadem, dressed in purple, this is how man enjoyed himself in heaven, easily having everything abundantly*" [**20**].

Saint John focuses on a word highlighting the state of man which he had in heaven, which God had prepared for him five days earlier. The Saint says: "*'God put man in the heaven of delight'. He did not put it simply: 'In heaven' but added: 'of delight' to show to us the overwhelming pleasure that man was to enjoy due to his dwelling place. And after having said: 'God put him in the heaven of delight' he added 'to work it and guard it'. And this is a*

sign of great providence. But because living in heaven filled Adam with all the delight, because he was delighted by all he could see and by the joy given to him by this delight, for this reason, for man not to slide and fall due to the overwhelming enjoyment and delight – 'For laziness leads to sin'(Syrah 33: 32) – God ordered man to labour and guard heaven" [**21**].

Father Dumitru Stăniloae affirmed: *"man's primordial state cannot be a state of deployment of the image in the virtues in which it manifests this communion, because this requires time. But the primordial state could not have been a lack of the image as ontological structure tending to this communion either, because such a specifically human structure is not won in time."* [**22**]

In the edenic state, man was clean from all evil impetus and tending to the good of the communion with God and with his fellows, yet not reinforced in this cleanliness and in this good. He was aware and free, and in his conscience and freedom he had the tendency towards good. Man was not a sinner, yet he was not adorned with acquired virtues and consolidated clean thoughts, either. He had the innocence of one who had not tasted sin, but not the one acquired by the rejection of temptation. The body of the edenic man was not enslaved by the automatic law of sin, yet it did not have the force strengthened by habit to remain immune to such a state (of sin). The world did not impose on his body and spirit its processes like inescapable chains, yet it had not been brought under the dominion of the spirit imposing its power on it, either. In this sense, Father Dumitru Stăniloae said: *"The world had for man the transparency it has for an innocent child, who shall, nevertheless, have the possibility of experiencing its opaqueness if he begins to do evil, yet it did not have that transparency that it has for a saint, who really defeated its opaqueness. The good sense of reason, in understanding things and choosing actions, had a clarity that has not been preserved in the man drawn towards all sides by all kinds of pieces of knowledge and opinions; yet he had not been put to the test and reinforced in an unshaken firmness by a critical experience won by persisting in good and rejecting evil."* [**23**]

Although God's beauty reflected by His image in man is reflected at the same time on the body and on the soul, man's beauty is realized fully only on the spiritual level. Because the beauty of the soul is *pneumatophoric* (bearer of the Holy Spirit) and goes beyond any physical likeness by far, the actual exterior beauty, true exterior beauty is nothing else except the pneumatophoric beauty overflown on the "*vessel*" bearing it. And this inner beauty is something that does not decrease, but increases ceaselessly, the believer who thirsts for the divine Beauty growing in beauty as he collaborates with the divine grace.

The Holy Fathers affirm, unanimously, the superiority of the pneumatophoric beauty compared to the exterior one; it is about the primacy of the spirit over the body. Clement of Alexandria observes that truly beautiful is the soul that received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. *"The most wonderful beauty is the beauty of the soul; the soul is beautiful when adorned with the Holy Spirit, when adorned by the adornments given by the Holy Spirit."* [**24**]

"Only the virtuous man is truly beautiful and good: and only moral beauty is considered good (...) therefore, beautiful is the just man, the sensible man, in one word, the good man." [**25**] Moreover, Saint Basil the Great draws the attention on the need to purify the soul from sinful passions, to be able to ascend to the contemplation of the divine Beauty: *"to give birth in the soul both to beauty but also to power to accomplish what is necessary to be done, one needs divine grace (...). Beautiful is any soul, viewed in the symmetry of his own power, yet true beauty, namely the divine and happy nature, can be seen, can be contemplated by the one whose mind has been purified. The one who focuses his eyes on*

God's lights and graces receives something from Him, as from a colour these people colour their own image with flourishing brightness. [**26**]

Therefore, God's beauty overflows in man's clean soul, making it beautiful, a truth that will be amply experienced and expressed by Saint Symeon the New Theologian. He describes in details the fruits of the clean prayer of the mind, when, under the action of the uncreated divine energies, the Christian becomes beautiful in the soul and in the body. Grace gives human beauty a unique brilliance, makes man bright, makes him stronger, more dignified and, by this, man beautifies the surrounding world as well. Human beauty communicates, in this way, fully with the Archetypal Eternal Beauty, Which it reflects, for Which it becomes a place of theophany, at the same time bearer of divine Light, Love, Beauty and Goodness. [**27**]

The cleanliness of the heart of the spiritually beautiful man is also apparent in the fact that he looks at the world of God' creation "*with the eyes of the Holy Spirit*", namely seeing everywhere, in the world's and man's beauty, icons of the divine Beauty. This living of the human beauty, as symbol of the absolute Beauty lived by the man purified from sinful passions is described by Saint John Climacus in *The Ladder of Heaven*: "*Someone, seeing a wonderfully beautiful woman, found the occasion of adoring her and of glorifying by his praises the sovereign Beauty whose creation this woman is. Seeing her, he was filled with love for God and a flood of tears sprang from his eyes.* If we do not relate it to its spiritual character, man's beauty has no sense and cannot be understood. The spiritualization of beauty will be, however, made perfect only in the Kingdom of Heaven, as Father Dumitru Popescu states: "*Spirituality tends to transfigure not just the soul, but also the body, a transfiguration that begins in the world down here and will be made perfect in the world to come.* [**28**]

Since his creation, man has a dichotomic constitution: body and soul, which begin to exist at the same time, in full union, and consequently have the same value in the eyes of the Creator. By the dignity of *image of God* the human being has a soul akin to God and is in a special relation with Him, tending to realize the religious-moral values in this life. For this reason, the body, which supports our life, must not be left a pray to the inferior impulses, namely to the sinful passions that grow roots in it immediately after the fall, because its final destination is for the human spirit to work by means of the body on the beautification and transfiguration of the whole cosmos, of the whole nature. The body must be beautified in its senses, for us to transfigure the world by it, as well, on our way to the final target. This example and power is given to us by our Saviour Christ, [**29**] the Being of all virtues, Who humbled Himself down to the image of the slave and manifested the virtues to the people by acts and word, behaving with special beauty and great delicacy to all, [**30**] therefore, by the humility of His kenosis giving to all of us, of all the times and places, the possibility to be deified, therefore to participate to the life of God.

We appropriate this example by the unceasing and sincere practice of the virtues, in the continual fight against all sin and sinful passion, in the realization of which the important role goes to the human soul, being endowed by God with attributes akin to those of the Creator: conscience, cognitive reason, liberty. [**31**] The human soul, due to his conscience, has a special calling to establish a free dialogue with God by knowledge and action and, at the same time, by using the body and the world in a free and aware manner, as gifts of the Creator, to answer by them the endless love of the Holy Trinity and to extend by this the dialogue of love to all the people of all the times and places.

Virtue, specific of the beautiful soul, according to the Orthodox teaching, is always in harmony with God's will and is accomplished by man's powers and with the help of the divine grace, without which the human being could not overcome his limited condition and could not realize the communion with the absolute religious-moral value, the Triune God - infinite Truth, supreme Good and absolute Beauty.

By comparison with different ethical systems, the Christian Orthodox morals accentuate the fact that virtue cannot be conceived except as a harmonious labour of the divine grace and of the powers of the human nature for the realization of the Christian's ultimate aim: his salvation and deification, therefore perfection in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Church, by knowing Him. For this reason, the process of deification or participation of the believer to the absolute beauty of the Holy Trinity, yet without being confused with the Holy Trinity, has as its first step the realization of a life full of spiritual beauty, therefore virtuous, both in relation with God, and with our fellows, in harmony with our Saviour's teaching, and then with the advice or experiences of the Holy Fathers of the *Paterikon*, *Philokalia* or other ascetic works, kept as normative by the Church.

In relation to God, beauty as value, in close relation to good, is materialized in the theological virtues: faith, hope and love, and, in the relations with our fellows, it is realized by the cardinal moral virtues: wisdom, justice, courage and moderation, mentioned as well in the Old-Testament tradition, yet having an inestimable sense and value in the Orthodox Christian morals. These virtues make the soul of the faithful man irradiate beauty, which, in fact, implies them and by the virtues, man is continually moving towards his Creator, having this impulse towards a continual movement meant to attain the beauty of perfection in Christ. In this sense, Saint Basil the Great affirms: *"in the happy contemplation of the image, you will see the beauty of the Archetype. By the Spirit, the hearts are exalted, the powerless are led by the hand, and those on the way of virtue are made perfect. Lighting those who have cleansed themselves of any spot, (the Spirit) shows them spiritual (bearers of the Holy Spirit), due to the communion with Him. And just as (it happens) with the bright and transparent bodies, that when a ray falls on them they become brighter and a new brightness emerges from them, it is the same with the souls illumined by the Spirit, they themselves become spiritual and radiate grace."* [32] Because the beautiful soul does not manifest itself only in what it already is but also in what it tends to be. [33] This is an essential feature of the Orthodox Christian morals: what matters is not just what the Christian is, but also what he must be. Our Saviour Christ is the One Who must be lived by those who believe in Him, according to His Will, in full love and joy. [34]

The beautiful soul exerts a great power over the body, because, by it, virtues are no longer purely individual, but acquire a social character and efficiency. By this, God Himself, the being and the source of all virtue, works by all, for all. Living in virtue is a deiform living, imitation and pursuit of God. By some people's virtue, God works on others by a living dialogue of love. [35] Every effort of ours is meant to increase the beauty of both our nature and our fellows' nature with the virtues of patience, asceticism, love for our fellows, and faith in God, to illuminate us regarding the wise commandments put by our Creator in everything. [36]

Man's life, as a whole, also has a universal communitarian aspect in love which is not full and is not realized except in the theandric community of the Church, having its source in the Holy Trinity Whose love and spiritual beauty descend in those who truly believe by the intercession of God's Son embodied in history, [37] the Head of the Church (1 Col. 1: 24 and 18). The Church, in her turn, is His Body (Romans 12: 4-8; 1 Cor. 6: 15; Eph. 1: 22-23),

completed, nourished in his growth and harmonization by the beauty springing from the communion of life of the Holy Trinity. By Christ, her Head, to those who believe in Him, as actually to the whole creation, the horizon of God's spiritual beauty is opened, and, at the same time, they receive power of life, of unifying love and of well-pleasing beauty from the infinity of the Holy Trinity, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Who is our model, guiding and infilling and marking those incorporated in Himself, who are made more and more in His likeness. [38] In the Church there is, therefore, new life in Christ, full of beauty, ceaselessly springing powerfully from her Head. For this reason, the value of beauty is realized fully and lived to the full only in the community of the Church, in communion with Christ and with our fellows, because it is meant to comprise all that exists: God and the creation.

Conclusion

The spiritual beauty of the Holy Trinity is extended by Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the universal body made up of all those who believe and tend to the ideal of perfection. Beauty becomes a gift of the Holy Spirit forever reinforced by other gifts: the Holy Mysteries corresponding to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The authentic Christian life has for its supreme target perfection, salvation and deification in Christ, namely the eternal life possessed only by our Saviour (John 6: 47) and which cannot be obtained by closing ourselves, by selfishness, by sinful passions, but by opening ourselves to God and to our fellow, by doing good deeds and by practicing virtue, therefore by a life full of moral and spiritual beauty (Matthew 25: 31-46). The Christian life, as a whole, lived in a communitarian spirit, must realize the moral values, therefore the spiritual beauty as well, which is a component of salvation. [39]

The unique and complete value and beauty of the human life in the body was clearly shown by God's Son, Who took on a human body in history, assuming the human body and resurrecting it for eternity. Thus, the whole creation is lifted to the level of the culminating participation to the beauty of His spirituality. Our Saviour Christ was resurrected to put before our eyes the perspective and the hope of resurrection and at the same time to make Himself the source of the power of transfiguration of the present cosmos.

Man's earthly life passes, in our Saviour Christ, towards the divine life, in an infinite progress, because He, by His Embodiment in history, reveals to us the eternal value of each human person, destroying the wall of contempt and hate that used to separate people, opening to them the true, good and beautiful way to God - the source of life and of the existence and the way towards one another in Him. The human person tends to the Absolute - the Triune God - man's characteristic feature being the infinite thirst for spiritual progress and spiritual beauty. Man is able, by his soul, to overcome his limits and go towards higher knowledge by virtue, finding himself in this way in the dynamics of a ceaseless ascension (*epektasis*), as Saint Gregory of Nyssa says, in an endless progress of virtue towards the contemplation of God and the union with God - the absolute spiritual Beauty that cannot be reached except by knowing It in the concrete circumstances of life. Because our Saviour Christ Himself said: "*And this is eternal life: to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You have sent*" (John 17: 3). And to this eternal life we are called, all of us who believe in Christ, in full love, because we are characterized by an expectation and a hope of the full manifestation of our Saviour and of the glory of His truth, good, beauty and love in the world, on a special level different than the one of its present image.

Beauty, as the Christian morals see it, exists everywhere in the world. By the fall into sin, everything becomes opaque, and the image of God in man grows dark. It remains up to

us to discover, each of us in his way, the true essence of the value of beauty and to materialize it, each in our own way, in the Christian life, to attain perfection. Thus, we can say that between man and nature there is an ontological relation, this relation of interdependence having its origin in the divine act of the creation of the first man "*from the dust*" (Genesis 2:7) as a crowning of the whole material world that Adam's body was formed of.

But because man wanted to rule over God's creatures without God and against His Will, he handed over, by his way of behaving, "*the whole nature as a pray to death*". Thus, the forefathers' sin introduced in the creation disorder ruined the beauty and harmony that the surrounding nature had before sin, when everything that God had made "*was exceedingly good*" (Gen. 1:31). By the forefathers' fall "*nature became the devil's domain and tool*" in the power of the evil one (Eph. 2: 2), this is why *"all things are wearisome, more than one can say"* (Eccl. 1: 8).

In his quality of servant in the middle of nature and "*co-worker with God*" (1 Cor. 3: 9), man is supposed to re-establish or heal and make perfect the material world, because: "*since the creation the entire nature has been predestined for the supernatural, which is meant to transfigure it and make it really symbol and temple of the Creator.*" [**40**]

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The Hindu view on facts (Karman) as reflected in Bhagavad Gītā and Upanishads and their role in Christianity

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ABSTRACT

Out of the four fundamental concepts or pillars of Indian religious thinking the present paper aims at disclosing the meaning and significance of the law of universal causality that binds man and cosmos, and condemns the former to an indefinite transmigration, i.e. the law of karma. This pan-Indian term will be underlined as it is reflected in the most important Upanishads and in Bhagavad Gītā, the gospel of Hindu spirituality. On the final part a parallel – between this concept and the teaching about the role of facts in the process of salvation according to the Orthodox Christian theology – will be drawn. In short, karma is a sort of law of causality that makes any action committed by individual leaving behind it a kind of force that causes the joys and sorrows of life, as the action was good or bad. According to Orthodox Church's teaching good deeds is, along with faith and grace the subjective conditions of salvation, i.e. personal appropriation by every man of the objective redemption brought about by Jesus Christ, the God-man. This appropriation called salvation or sanctification is not simply a gift from God, but a permanent action that lasts throughout human life. If the law of karma acts implacably and independently to the will of man, stamping a fatalist character to life and undermining the human freedom, in Orthodoxy, however, man is not alone, but permanently assisted by the divine grace. But grace does not work irresistibly; it respects human freedom, so the facts present an obvious synergetic character. Therefore, between the Christian teaching on facts and the philosophy of the act, as it emerges from the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gītā is an abysmal distance that comes to differentiate these two religions on this level as well.

Keywords: Karman; transmigration Bhagavad Gītā; Upanishads; acts; Brahman; atman; Hinduism; Christianity; God; grace; salvation;

INTRODUCTION

There are four fundamental and supportive concepts, four main ideas that introduce us straight into the heart of Indian spirituality. These are: Karman, māyā, nirvana and yoga. One can write a coherent history of Indian thought starting from any of these fundamental concepts. Briefly, we can say that since post-Vedic era on, India has sought to understand particularly: 1) the law of universal causality that unites man with the cosmos, and condemns him to an indefinite transmigration: It's the law of Karman; 2) the mysterious process that generates and sustains the cosmos, thus enabling the "eternal return" of existences: this is māyā, the cosmic illusion; 3) the absolute Reality "located" beyond the cosmic illusion

woven by māyā and beyond human experience conditioned by Karman; the pure Being (the Absolute), whatever the name, by which it is designated: Self, Brahman, the unconditioned, the transcendent, the indestructible, Nirvana etc.; 4) finally, the means to achieve Being, the suitable techniques to obtain the final release (moksha, mukti). [1]

Subsequently, we will look to analyse the first of four concepts i.e. that of *Karman* as reflected in the most important Upanishads and in Bhagavad Gītā, the synthesis of Hindu spirituality, trying then, a parallel between this concept and the teaching about the role of facts in the process of salvation according to the Orthodox Christian theology.

I. Karma: origin, formulation and its importance in India's religions

From the outset, we should mention that the two terms: Karman (deed) and transmigration (samsāra) of the first fundamental concept of Indian spirituality form a counterpart:

> "Karma is a kind of law of causality that makes any action committed by individual leaving behind it a kind of force that causes the joys and sorrows of life, as the action was good or bad. Moreover, if these results (good or bad) cannot be achieved in the present life, the individual will incur inexorably into a future state, following current life, and whose terms will be determined by the totality of the individual's actions in the present life."[2]

In short, these are the coordinates that are part of the recurrent cycle of life.

In what manner it was to be found however, such a view? Here's a question that has tormented many philosophers, anthropologists, historians of religions, etc., especially from the Western, monotheistic sphere, alien of that concept. Today, the conviction of majority converges towards its correlation with another feature of Indian religions, namely that related to *suffering*. Perhaps more earnestly than did the Europeans, Hindu society members have put since immemorial time the pressing question of the origin of suffering and inequality of social conditions in which people live. Indian solution that comes to solve the great riddle of the origin of suffering and diversity of human conditions is to be found in the very word "karma" that through theosophists (19th century) has become familiar to Europeans ears.

Hindu believer considers, in a practical way, that one's well-being or suffering is merely the result of previous deeds (karma). This solution is not entirely satisfactory for it does not offer an answer about the inceptions. And yet – for Hindus – is a happy one, highly moral and at a large scale, a real one.[3]

Moving on to the haunting problem of *suffering*, it is to be noted that there is no suffering that is based on an undeserved judgment, resulting from social indifference. The entire suffering is fully deserved. Paradigmatic for illustrating this reality is the dialogue between German scholar Paul Deussen and an old pandit at Djaipur:

> "To approach me he was looking for his path in a fumbling way. He said he was completely blind. Ignorant of born, I showed him my sympathy and I asked him what unfortunate accident caused the loss of his sight. The answer comes immediately on his lips and without any sign of bitterness he said: certainly for a crime committed in a previous life." The old man knew so good what the Laws of Manu learned people for so many centuries: Following a residue of guilt, which remains linked to previous crimes, are born idiots, blind, deaf and misshapen people, subjects of virtuous people's scorn.[4]

The doctrine of facts and their remuneration has been made in an early stage in precise terms: One reaps what one sows; no man inherits either good or bad act of anyone.

The fruit is of the same quality with action, and good or evil, there is no possibility for any action to get destroyed."[5]

Hindus, unlike the Greeks and Romans, notices the renowned Romanian indologist Theofil Simenschy not only limited themselves to declare the power of destiny opposing the will, and especially the deed. To the *question*: Why some are doing well, despite the fact they do not deserve it and although they are bad and others are unhappy, although they are good, intelligent and active?, insolvent for the Greeks and Romans, Hinduism respond through the teachings of Karman. This word also means "deed" and "destiny". It is the fact whose tracks are to be seen along the successive rebirths. The act relentlessly influences and changes destiny. This view is quite different from the Greek one, according to that destiny is fixed and nothing can change it.[6]

Despite the fact that the two concepts: Karman and transmigration (samsāra) are interrelated, in this study the focus will be on the former, as crystallized in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gītā.

II. The Upanishads, the quintessence of Hindu wisdom

The Upanishads are certainly among the fundamental texts of human thought. They are part of divine revelation (shruti) and are esoteric complements of "revealed" books of Vedas.

The word itself, *upanishad* was subject to several interpretations. Etymologically, it comes from the Sanskrit verb "sad" (to sit) preceded by the prefix "ni" - (below) and "upa" - (next to, beside), giving it the meaning as such: "Staying down beside [master]" - alluding to the specific attitude of learner in Veda. Hence the sense of "secret teaching", according to the esoteric nature of doctrine, or by extension "mystery".[7] However, not the "philosophical" aspect itself – in the European meaning of the word – is the distinctive character of these treaties, but their metaphysical and symbolic Oriental appearance. Upanishads, written at the dawn of philosophical speculation in India, retain a considerable amount of decadent era's mentality of the Vedas".[8]

Regarding the doctrine evolved by these mysterious texts one should mention that all ideas of Upanishads move around two basic concepts: Brahman and Ātman. The universe is Brahman. Ātman is but Brahman within us: "Verily, Brahman is the Self (Ātman) of us." (Brhadaraṇyaka 4, 4, 5).

The fundamental idea of the philosophy of the Upanishads can be expressed by the simple equation: Brahman = Ātman.

> "This identity of Brahman and Ātman, of God and the soul, is the keystone of the entire Upanishad's doctrine; in a concise fashion, it is expressed by "big words": *tat tvam asi* – "Thou art that" (Chand. 6, 8, 7) and *aham brahma asimi* – "I am Brahman" (Brh. 1,4,10) . So, the authors of upanishadic ideas found the key to unraveling the mystery of nature in our own self when they recognized our Ātman, our innermost essence, as Brahman, the innermost essence of all nature and its phenomena".[9]

III. The conception of deeds (Karman) in the text of the Upanishads

Besides the ontological identity of Brahman and Ātman, another lesson of the Upanishads, regarding the eschatology, however, is that about facts and their position in the Hindu salvation sophisticated device (of salvation).

In the same period, in the writings of Brahmanas, the idea of retribution of human actions is taking shape increasingly stronger. Along with it appears the faith that after death a

man can die again and not only once but several times. Besides, the phrase "repeated death" is used several times, but without indicating the precise content and the existential condition that occurs in the context. Despite that, this belief has been considered as a first suggestion of one of the fundamental teachings of Hindu Weltanschauung, namely the belief in transmigration.**[10]**

If Brahmanas texts had raised the sacrifice conception to the rank of ideology, exacerbating the role of priests, the Upanishads, as a reaction to the Brahmanic speculations about sacrifice, tried to prove its ineffectiveness. As the sacrifices hit the polytheistic beliefs, in the same way, in turn, they will be discredited and removed from practice and religious ideology through the new worldview and anthropology promoted by the Upanishads. Therefore, as when they believed in many gods, the sacrifice was raised to the rank of ideology, creating a distinct literature (Brahmanas), so it will happen with the sacrifices, assimilated and transfigured by the new religious spirit, manifested with the emergence of other literary texts: Upanishads.

According to Maitri Upanishad (I, 2, 9) those who projects illusions about the importance of sacrifice are deplorable because, after they had enjoyed heavens, the high place earned by good works, they will return to earth and will descend in a world below. Neither gods nor rites do really matter to a real sage (ṛshi). His ideal is admirably expressed in prayer forwarded by the oldest Upanishad: "From non-being (*asat*) lead me to being (*sat*), from darkness lead me to light, from death to immortality!"**[11]**

In the Upanishads the Vedic exterior sacrifice is therefore totally devalued: it is a "deed" (Karman) and any action, even of ritual nature, gives negative "fruits", for deeds bog down human being in metensomatosis cycles (samsāra).**[12]** The Upanishads speak, for the first time in Indian thought, about *reincarnation* (samsāra), which is tributary to the weight of our deeds (karman).**[13]**

What were the mechanism and logic that led to this fundamental concept for both Hinduism and other Indian religion (Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism)? The answer consists, we could say, in a single word: *desire*. Man, always driven by a particular desire, act consequently, i.e. in order to achieve it.

The act, especially the ritual act (Karman) always lead to a result, and the link between act and "its fruit" is the warp of any individual life. So with all the facts, including those that must ensure paradise after death, and those that do not seem to lead to a concrete result in this life. Such action, particularly ritual act, condemns man (and the other living beings, too) to be reborn and die again endlessly.**[14]**

This doctrine was shared but only to a limited group of initiates:

> „Yâjñavalkya, 'he said', when the speech of this dead person enters into the fire, breath into the air, the eye into the sun, the mind into the moon, the hearing into space, into the earth the body, into the ether the self, into the shrubs the hairs of the body, into the trees the hairs of the head […], where is then that person? 'Yâjñavalkya said': Take my hand, my friend. We two alone shall know of this; let this question of ours not be (discussed) in public. 'Then these two went out and argued, and what they said was Karman (work), what they praised was Karman, viz. that a man becomes good by good work, and bad by bad work. After that Ârtabhâga held his peace.' "**[15]**

Thus, on the backdrop of corresponding between man and cosmos, Yâjñavalkya formulates the theory of act as a determinant of the condition in a future existence, stressing the esoteric character of this theory. We come across here, presented in a lapidary form, the first witness of the theory of act in the Upanishads.**[16]**

This idea is developed and explained also by the same Yâjñavalkya:

"That Self is indeed Brahman, consisting of knowledge, mind, life, sight, hearing […], desire and no desire, anger and no anger, right or wrong, and all things. Now as a man is like this or like that, according as he acts and according as he behaves, so will he be […] And here they say that a person consists of desires. And as is his desire, so is his will; and as is his will, so is his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap."[17]

These passages, which form the starting point for all speculation on transmigration, suggest two fundamental ideas. Firstly, the individual fate is not put in connection with the divine, and secondly, it is determined by the very acts committed by the individual during his empirical lifetime. What determines the nature of existence after death is: thoughts, words and deeds of man who possess an ontological and moral consequence. This consequence, ontological and moral by nature, lies in the law of Karma (Sanskrit *kri*, = "to do").[18]

Because any act (Karman), religious or secular, amplify and perpetuate transmigration (samsāra), the release cannot be won either through sacrifice or by close ties with the gods, even through asceticism or charity. In their hermitages, rishis sought other means to liberate themselves.

An important discovery was made by meditating on the soteriological value of knowledge. Not knowing the sacrificial mystery was, after Brahmanas texts, what condemned people to a "second death". But rishis went further. They dissociated "esoteric knowledge" from its ritual and theological context; gnosis is considered able to capture the absolute truth, revealing deep structures of reality. Such "science" ends up by annihilating the very "ignorance" (avidya). It is, of course, an "ignorance" of metaphysical nature, because it refers to the ultimate reality, and not to empirical realities of everyday existence.[19]

In the Upanishads, human destiny has nothing to do with a divine agent of a personal nature (as were the Vedic gods), but with impersonal law of karma alone. Thus, from the perspective of Vedic polytheism, of a universe governed by a sovereign god (Varuna) through a law (*rita*) that was subordinated to him, it reached – in the Upanishads – to a pantheistic perspective of the world, in which an impersonal law (*karma*) is governing. In this context, man is alone in front of his own destiny, marked only by the need to escape from the cycle consisting in sequences: avidya-karma-samsāra, a target that will form now on the foundation of all Indian philosophical-religious systems.[20]

The vicious circle *avidya-karma-samsāra* could be blocked only by knowing and annihilating his first cause, the desire:

"He who overcomes hunger and thirst, sorrow, passion, old age, and death. When Brâhmanas know that Self, and have risen above the desire for sons, wealth, and (new) worlds, they wander about as mendicants. For a desire for sons is desire for wealth, a desire for wealth is desire for worlds. Both these are indeed desires […]; after he has done with that strength and learning, he becomes a Muni (a Yogi); and after he has done with what is not the knowledge of a Muni, and with what is the knowledge of a Muni, he is a Brâhmana".[21]

Thus, Upanishads bring a new vision of human deeds, by virtue of which every human action has an effect on its doer, forcing him to return in a new life experience, with a view to reaping the fruit of those facts. There should also be noted the aspect that samsāra disregards the moral value of acts committed, therefore, the good deeds inclusively throw human into a new reincarnation.[22]

The essential of act theory in the Upanishads consists, on the one hand, in giving up any activity (good or bad) because it engages man in the circuit of this world, which is

nothing but illusion (maya), and on the other hand, the objective of supreme science (vidya), the only liberating, is Brahman:

> Let a Brâhmana, after he has examined all these worlds which are gained by works, acquire freedom from all desires. Nothing that is eternal (not made) can be gained by what is not eternal (made). Let him, in order to understand this, take fuel in his hand and approach a Guru who is learned and dwells entirely in Brahman."[23]

At the time of Upanishads – and later – Indian thinking was troubled with the discovery of "the ways" (*marga*) to release from the infernal circle of transmigration, an effort crowned, over several centuries, by the famous synthesis of the Bhagavad Gītā.

IV. Bhagavad Gītā and the new philosophy of facts

As a work drawn from the epic Mahābhārata, Gītā (as it is known in short) recorded the most widespread honour in India and outside India, being considered as a kind of "Gospel of Hinduism" (Louis Renou). If overall Mahābhārata is considered "tradition", Gītā is *shruti* (revelation), equal to the Vedas and Upanishads.

Bhagavad Gītā is an important synthesis of Indian spirituality, because it attempts to assimilate systems like Vedanta, Samkhya and Yoga, along with the devotional Hinduism developed in Brahmanism. More than simply compiling them, Gītā brings to the fore a new item, accessible to anyone, regardless of their social condition.[24]

As it was already noticed, for the Upanishadic thinking, the deed was considered the most serious obstacle to the release, this being yielded with the cessation of reincarnations through exhaustion of facts.

> "The facts, virtuous or non-virtuous are merely projecting consciousness into the flow of rebirth (samsāra) and any condition – even the heavenly one – is obsolete; samsāra is temporality, and every existence is painful by its transitory nature. Indian spirituality (synthesized by Gītā) tried various solutions to exit the act determinism and the infinite cycle of samsāra."[25]

Compelled to lead a fratricidal struggle, the hero Arjuna is faced with the contradiction between individual morality – based on the doctrine of Karman – and obligations deriving from his commitment to life and society. The inner conflict of the hero springs out abruptly the moment he reached between the two armies, and seeing his relatives, Arjuna realized in a concrete way the horror that will take place. Overwhelmed by deep anguish that makes him to crash into his fighting chariot, he is about to abandon the fight. In this situation begins his great dialogue with divinity (Krishna), who presents him the state from the transcendental perspective.

He does exegesis of action in terms of moral and spiritual, theoretical and practical aspect, saying:

> "A man does not attain freedom from action merely by not engaging in action; nor does he attain perfection by mere renunciation. For nobody ever remains even for an instant without performing some action"; No being can exist even for a moment without action. Actions are based on modes (guna) of nature (prakrti) and can never be stopped."[26]

Sentenced to action, for "act is superior to non-acting" (Gītā III, 8), man must fulfil the prescribed works, in other words, "the debts", facts that are incumbent by virtue to his particular situation.

> "It is preferable to perform the duty according to one's own nature – even if the performance is imperfect – rather than perform the duties of others. The actions suitable for the nature of

others should be feared. Death is preferable to preforming actions not compatible with one's nature." (III,35).

Krishna reveals to Arjuna that Being and Non-Being reside in Him and that all creation - from gods to minerals - descended from Him (VII, 4-6). He creates incessantly the world with the help of its Nature (prakrti), but that activity does not enfetter Him because He is but the spectator of his own creation:

> "These acts do not bind Me, sitting as one neutral, unattached to them […] By reason of My proximity, prakriti produces all this, the moving and the unmoving; the world wheels round and round, O son of Kunti, because of this."**[27]**

It is precisely this valorisation, apparently paradoxical of activity that constitutes the capital doctrine revealed by Krishna: by imitation of God who creates and sustains the world without participating on it, man will learn to do likewise. And even if man refrains from action in the strict sense of the word, a whole unconscious set of activity, produced by the three *gunas*, continues to chain and to integrate him in karmic network.**[28]**

This imitation or even identification with God means, firstly, to imitate Him, as far as possible, and when you are a prince, like Arjuna, so defender by sword of dharma, the possibilities are greater. Krishna could, therefore, propose himself as role model.

> "I have no duty, nothing that I have not gained, and nothing that I have to gain, in the three worlds; yet, I continue in action. If ever I did not continue in work, without relaxation, men would in every way, follow in My wake. If I did not do work, these worlds would perish. […] and I should ruin these beings".**[29]**

Here is, therefore, the proposed ideal of action: to act without a proper purpose, without the desire to get certain "benefit". Krishna is not limiting himself to stating that we cannot escape our svadharma**[30]**, but it turns out to prove that fulfilling it, we accomplish the holiest act in terms of salvation, provided we do it without anger or hatred, without waiting for another's reward than divine friendship.

Thus, joining to Krishna in the battle for dharma, Arjuna becomes the "bringer of sacrifices" of this war, one that will ensure the victory of dharma and therefore will allow the continuance of the three worlds.**[31]**

Bhagavad Gītā strives to "save" all human works, to "give ground" to any profane action; for, by the very fact that he no longer enjoy the "fruits", man transforms his acts into sacrifices which help to maintain order cosmic. But Krishna recalled that only the acts committed as a sacrifice are not chaining:

> "The world is bound by actions other than those performed for the sake of *yajna*; do thou therefore, O son of Kunti, perform action for *yajna* alone, devoid of attachment".**[32]**

Every act, as such, must transmute into ritual (or sacrifice), as any effort to kill the desire, becomes, likewise, a war. So it is of no surprise if, in the Gītā we're witnessing a generalization of the use of the term *yoga***[33]** – making it more than ever, impossible to translate. Arjuna's action must be an act of *yoga*, similarly to the act of the supreme deity. And because it is an action, his yoga is a *karmayoga*, or yoga of act. Practicing *karmayoga* eventually takes the seeker to the point of mental purification, oneness with humanity and inner peace by continually offering action selflessly to God and humanity. Ultimately Karma Yoga practise brings true knowledge of the Self and prepares one to be receptive to the divine light of God. The practicing of the selfless service in karmayoga is believed to lead with its purification of the mind and heart, to the turning of one's life into a spiritual act as a whole.**[34]**

> "Karma Yoga, the great principle claims that the individual continue to perform his duties and ordinary activities of life, but with a new attitude of detachment from their fruits, that is to say from potential gains and losses which would entail. The world and the embodiment should not be abandoned, but the will of the individual must be united in act with the universal ground, and not with the vicissitudes of the suffering body. This is the teaching of the Creator incarnate. This is the world's balanced background of the supreme council he addressed to man".[35]

> "The work of *yajna*, gift and austerity should not be relinquished, but it should indeed be performed; (for) *yajna*, gift and austerity are purifying to the wise. But even these works […] should be performed, leaving attachment and the fruits; – such is My best and certain conviction".[36]

In this "ultimate opinion" of Krishna lies the key to transmutation profane activities into rites. Krishna reveals to Arjuna that "man of action" (i.e. one that cannot withdraw from civilian life to save through knowledge or asceticism or mystical devotion) can get to salvation, in other words, can escape the consequences of his participation to the world, however continuing to act. The only thing to be observed is as follows: he must get rid of his acts, in other words, "to give up the fruits of his deeds" (*phalatrşna-vairagya*), to act impersonally, without passion and desire, as if acting by proxy, in place of another. If he rigorously fulfills this rule, his actions will no more sow karmic potentialities, and, consequently, will not enslave him to karmic cycle[37]:

> "Forsaking the clinging to fruits of action, ever satisfied, depending on nothing, though engaged in action, he does not do anything. Without hope, the body and mind controlled and all possessions relinquished, he does not suffer any *evil consequences* [resulting from good and bad actions, for both lead to bondage], by doing mere bodily action."[38]

So, one should not isolate himself from the world, but to live in it, nevertheless completely detached from the fruits of his actions; in other words, he can attain spiritual perfection by abandoning the generator of karma, which is pursuing of the fruit of the action. Krishna formulates herein the famous principle:

> "Thy right is to work only; but never to the fruits thereof. Be thou not the producer of the fruits of (thy) actions; neither let thy attachment be towards inaction"; „Having made pain and pleasure, gain and loss, conquest and defeat, the same, engage thou then in battle. So shalt thou incur no sin."[39]

The great originality of the Gītā is to insist on the "yoga of the deed" which is performed "renouncing the fruits of your acts" alone. This is the main cause of its success, unprecedented in India. For henceforth is allowed every man to hope for salvation, thanks to *phalatrşna-vairagya*, even when, for very different reasons, he will be forced to continue to participate in social life, have a family, occupy functions, even commit "immoral" acts, (like, e.g. Arjuna). Acting with detachment, without being driven by "the desire of the fruit" is to gain self-mastery and a serenity that only yoga can give. As Krishna says: "Although acts ceaselessly, he remains faithful to Yoga". This interpretation of Yoga technique, stresses out *Mircea Eliade*, is characteristic of the enormous effort of synthesis from Bhagavad Gītā, who wants to reconcile all vocations: the ascetic, the mystical, or the one devoted to the activity in the world.[40]

Related to this new philosophy of facts, there must be underlined another idea of the poem, namely the devotion to God (*bhakti*). Complementarity between karma-yoga and bhakti-yoga lies in the double perspective that must be regarded by the follower of Gītā's philosophy: the more disinterested must look to the fruits of his actions the better interested must be in devotion to Krishna, which should become the ultimate goal of his life.

„Those who worship Me, resigning all actions in Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, meditating on Me with single-minded Yoga, – to these whose mind is set on Me, verily, I become ere long […]. If also thou art unable to practise *Abhyâsa*, be thou intent on doing actions – for My sake. Even by doing actions for My sake, thou shalt attain perfection."**[41]**

As an illustration of the central idea of the act philosophy of Gītā, we finally appeal to philosophical comparison, became a classic ever since the ancient Upanishads:

"He who does actions forsaking attachment, resigning them to Brahman, is not soiled by evil, like unto a lotus-leaf by water".**[42]**

So, like lotus leaves, which because of their smooth and oily surface are not affected by water they grow and abide in, similarly, the man settled in his Self: the waves of world he lives in do not destroy him.

H. Zimmer writes down: „The technique of detachment taught by the Blessed Krishna through the Gītā is a sort of "middle path." On the one hand his devotee is to avoid the extreme of clinging to the sphere of action and its fruits, while on the other hand the negative extreme of barren abstinence from every kind and phase of action is to he shunned with equal care".**[43]**

Because the universe is the creation of Krishna (the same with Vishnu), living in the world is not a "wrongdoing". "Wrongdoing" is to believe that the world, time and history have their own and independent reality, that there is nothing outside world and temporality. The idea is, in fact, pan-Indian one, but the most coherent expression of it was received in the Bhagavad Gītā**[44]**.

V. Comparative view on acts role in Hinduism and according to Christian teaching

According to Orthodox Church's doctrine good deeds is, along with faith and grace the subjective conditions of salvation, i.e. personal appropriation by every man of the objective redemption brought about by Jesus Christ, the God-man. This appropriation called salvation or sanctification is not simply a gift from God, but a permanent action that lasts throughout human life.

Unlike Christianity, religions from Eastern sphere (Hinduism and Buddhism) teach that the human being is comprised both of empirically determined and transient being, and of indefinite formless and eternal being, which represents the true self, and that man must take into account, preeminently in this life. Since the empirical world is illusory as ultimate value, the acts of man must contain a particular shade. Committing acts for the sake of the empirical world and of imprisoned life is to transform the relative and finite into absolute and infinite. Therefore, the facts and life of Eastern man bears the mark of detachment, attitude peculiar to his Weltanschauung. Man must work and live through detachment.**[45]**

Moving on to the philosophy of the Upanishads, there is a clear difference between this and the Christian teaching at the praxis level. Thus, in the Upanishads, the action – either good or bad – engages man in samsāra circuit, wherein he returns even after a paradisiacal existence, after having exhausted the outgrowths of his acts. Therefore, he must give up any activity, seeking to free himself from the "fruits" of his acts. This release cannot be achieved except through withdrawal, isolation, meditating on the value of metaphysical knowledge (*vidya*). In the Upanishads, the highest goal is union with the Absolute, and this union can be acquired through *intuitive knowledge* only. In the Upanishads, as in later Indian philosophy, knowledge is the means *par excellence* for achieving liberation. **[46]**

According to Christian dogma, human activity in the body is not envisaged as evil or as punishment but a privilege, because through this activity, the man placed himself in direct contact with the levels of existence – also creatures of God – that he thereby understands, transforms and hence improves. By way of activity it is highlighted the mission of human as master of the nature, mission given to him by God at creation (Genesis 1, 28). And, freed from original sin by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, man collaborates with the Creator to the transfiguration of living creature, as a priest of creation.**[47]**

In contrast with the impersonal agent of *karma*, whereby man can be propelled in a superior noetic and existential plane, Christian, through beneficial activities do not get something automatically and autonomously, for only God is able to appreciate out of the committed deeds our worthiness and as such give us the heavenly joy.

> "Through good works man gives to God something finite, whereas God gives him the infinite, deification by grace."**[48]**

Therefore, is impossible to talk about a qualitative equivalence between facts and their reward, as in the Upanishads.

If the law of *karma* acts implacably and independently to the will of man, stamping a fatalist character to life and undermining the human freedom, in Orthodoxy, however, man is not alone, but permanently assisted by the divine grace. But grace does not work irresistibly; it respects human freedom, so the facts present an obvious synergetic character.**[49]** Thus, the attitude toward facts should not be a negativistic one, avoiding them; on the contrary, St. Paul urges us to enrich this life with good works (I Tim. 6, 18) and "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12, 21).

Regarding the ratio between and knowledge supreme love, Paul Deussen proposes a resolving of it – as a basis for ethics –, appealing to the famous Upanishadic formula: "tat tvam asi" ("That art Thou"). Of course, this view is not his own, but it enrols in the Ātman's metaphysical doctrine, which requires an ethical ideal. He affirms:

> "The Gospels quite correctly establish as the highest law of morality 'Love your neighbour as yourselves'. But why should I do since by the order of nature I feel pain and pleasure only in myself, not in my neighbour? The answer is not in the Bible…but it is in the Veda, in the great formula *That art Thou* which gives in three words the combined sum of metaphysics and morals. You shall love your neighbour as yourselves because you are your neighbour".**[50]**

Starting from the famous Bhagavad Gītā's words: "He who knows himself in everything and everything in himself will not injure himself by himself, Indian philosopher Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan resolves this ethical ideal, writing:

> "Every person round me is myself (me) at a different point of space and time and at a different grade of being. When one realizes that all beings are but the self, one acts not selfishly, but for all beings."**[51]**

We must state here concerning this "golden rule"– as important as in *Christianity* –, that you should treat others as yourselves is demonstrated in an unarguably logical manner, but only under the conditions we accept its premises. The principle of "loving one's neighbor as thyself" has validity in the Christian morality, not because the neighbor is myself or that both are but the Self (divine soul), but because we are all children of the same Heavenly Parent who imprinted in each of us a unique personal identity, unrepeatable and unrepeated.

Also in Christianity, knowledge, like virtue of love, does not lead to a fusion between the knowing subject and object of knowledge. The duality is maintained in the theognostic process, as in the soteriological one. God is transcendent in His being, therefore in Christianity "abyssus abyssum invocat" (Ps. 41, 9), i.e., according to the interpretation of St. Maximus the Confessor, the abyss of mind calls divine abyss. Starting from the transcendence of God, in Christian theognosia phenomenon, the mind remains distinct of Him. According to the theory of Yoga as illustrated in Gītā and Upanishads duality is destroyed, the whole forming an "eternal and unlimited divine 'ego'." In fact, this vision of the philosophy of the Upanishads starts from a pantheistic premise of the world, in which governs the impersonal law of karma, that man's final aim is the resorption or his existential annihilation, by identifying with the Absolute (Ātman or Brahman).**[52]**

In the *Bhagavad Gītā* we encounter a completely different conception concerning the function of deeds. Knowledge alone is by no means the only path that can lead to salvation. This can be achieved also through *bhakti* (devotional faith) or by activity. But activities in order to be effective with a view to redemption must be disinterested. *Karma-mārga* (the path of deeds) has two phases. First, in which the adept must discharge all his religious and social debts in a complete indifference and detachment from their fruits. He offers a sacrifice to the Lord – of all his activities – such that they bind no more his soul to existence. Thus, detached from all desires, he achieved the final release.**[53]**

The next verse, eloquent for emphasizing the central message of the Gītā: „The world is bound by actions other than those performed for the sake of *sacrifice*; do thou therefore perform action for sacrifice (*yajna*) alone, devoid of attachment" (III, 9), has, so to speak, correspondence in the New Testament:

> „Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10, 31).

But the act of Gītā loses any value because it has no moral weight. Moral categories of right and wrong are foreign to it, because the good and evil of any action do not depend on their external effects (on other individuals), but only on inner motivation by which it has been done. "The evil" of an action depends upon an undetached motivation that produces karmic debt, while "the good" holds on one completely detached, thanks to which it accumulates no such debt. This determination of the categories of good and evil is confirmed by Indian philosopher Surendranath Dasgupta, showing that:

> "The characteristic feature of the Gītā is its tendency to give non-moral content to all actions, by cutting all ties between action and its doer."**[54]**

But such an ideology lacks viability in the social plan. Therefore, to act in the world completely detached from the fruits of action is impracticable even in the Gītā, where the hero Arjuna reaches apparently only to enter the battle completely detached, though in reality having changed only the motivation of his action.

CONCLUSION

First of all, in Christianity deed is first of all a morally good or bad act. In this sense, the act for a Christian has a soteriological and community, social value, because the collective good is the central concern of this religion. The saving dimension of deed is still lacking in the Bhagavad Gītā, because if the moral life can raise us up to a better existence, it cannot – by itself – to release the believer. An elevate spirit like Albert Schweitzer (†1965), for example, is right when he argues that "moral behaviour is the only means for a better

reincarnation, but does not produce release", and S. Radhakrishnan concludes that morality requires a separatist vision of life; when we transcend it, we rise above the moral laws."[55]

Secondly, the act, in *Christianity*, has its origin not only in the human dimension but there are two realities intertwined in it: *divine grace* and *human will*. The reality of divine grace and the natural subject of man through his will meet each other, working actively for deeds generation and giving them a sanctifying value. The grace strengthens human nature and helps the will toward good. In this respect, good deeds are "fruits of the Holy Spirit" (Gal. 5, 22-24).

Thirdly, *salvation* is the reward of the facts we have done in life; separation of reward from act, as Gītā teaches, is unjustified. The act and the reward are actually, two aspects of a single reality. Judgment will reward the deed and deed's reward will be eternal life or eternal death, according to the good or bad nature of the deed. Good deed bears eternal life, and for that matter it neither present the effigy of indifference (lack of interest), nor it constitute the result of a debt (as in Gītā), but it is a manifestation of faith and love for God and for humankind. In other words, "the being of good deed, in Christianity, is not indifference, apathy, but love of God and neighbour."[56]

Therefore, between the Christian teaching on facts and the philosophy of the act, as it emerges from the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gītā is an abysmal distance that comes to differentiate these two religions on this level as well. This is due to the fact that according to Orthodox theology, man, the "image of God", a *microcosm* – and a *microtheos* in becoming – has the sacred commitment to continue the divine work of perfecting of the cosmos, by an anabasis movement directed towards God, along with the entire creation. This purpose, so venturesome, is, however, fully achievable because the Christian God is not static or indifferent, but dynamic, active, both at "ad intra" level of the Holy Trinity, and at "ad extra" level, by His descent into the world, encountering the man on the thread of the uncreated energies; and the man can attain to himself only by complying with God, his model, Who is in perpetual motion and activity: "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working" (John 5, 17).

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[15] *Brh.-Up.* III, 2, 13-14, p. 61.

[16] Radu BERCEA, *op.cit.,* p. 131 (in notes to Brh.-Up.).

[17] *Brh.-Up.* IV, 4, 5, p. 84.

[18] Dr. Remus RUS, *op. cit.,* p. 818

[19] Mircea ELIADE, *H.B. & R.I.,* vol. I, p. 252, passim. In this sense, of "metaphysical ignorance" the term *avidya* was imposed in Indian philosophical vocabulary

[20] Ernest VALEA, *Creştinismul şi spiritualitatea indiană* (*Christianity and Indian spirituality*), Ariel Publishing, Timişoara, 1996, p. 27.

[21] *Brh.-Up*., III, 5.1.

[22] Ernest VALEA, *op.cit.,* pp. 25-26. In this regard, the words of Mundaka-Upanishad are exemplary: "Because those who depend on their good works are, owing to their passions, improvident, they fall and become miserable when their life (in the world which they had gained by their good works) is finished. Considering sacrifice and good works as the best, these fools know no higher good, and having enjoyed (their reward) on the height of heaven, gained by good works, they enter again this world or a lower one." (I, 2, 9-10). Cf. http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/sbe15017.htm

[23] *Mundaka-Upaniṣad* I, 2, 12; apud Theofil SIMENSCHY, *op.cit.,* p. 139.

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[25] ***, *Bhagavad Gītā,* translated from Sanskrit, commentary and explanatory notes by Sergiu AL-GEORGE, Societatea Informaţia Publishing, Bucharest, 1994, p. 18.

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[28] Mircea ELIADE, *H.B. & R.I.*, vol. II, p. 234.

[29] *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gītā*, III, 22-24.

[30] From Sanskrit *sva*, 'own', + *dharma*, 'duty, right', i.e. one's own right, duty, or nature; one's own role in the social and cosmic order. Svadharma is relative to one's caste and stage of life (cf. var āśramadharma), and to one's situation (cf. āpaddharma). Svadharma or relative dharma often conflicts with sādhāra a dharma, universal dharma, or sanātana dharma, absolute or eternal dharma. For example, to kill is a violation of eternal dharma, yet a warrior's svadharma (own duty, nature) is to kill. V. "Svadharma", in: *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, 1997, originally published by Oxford University Press 1997.
At: http://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/svadharma

[31] Madeleine BIARDEAU, *op.cit*., pp. 155-157 passim.

[32] *Bhagavad Gītā*, III, 9. *Yajna* means a religious rite, sacrifice, worship, or an action done with a good or spiritual motive. It also means the Deity. The Taittiriya-Samhitâ (I.7.4.) says, "Yajna is Vishnu Himself." See supra note 30.

[33] In Vedic Sanskrit, yoga (from the root *yuj*) means "to add", "to join", "to unite", or "to attach" in its most common literal sense. By figurative extension from the yoking or harnessing of oxen or horses, the word took on broader meanings such as "employment, use, application, performance" (compare the figurative uses of "to harness" as in "to put something to some use"). All further developments of the sense of this word are post-Vedic. More prosaic moods such as "exertion", "endeavour", "zeal", and "diligence" are also found in Indian epic poetry. V. Monier MONIER-WILLIAMS, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: ...with Special Reference to Greek, Latin, Gothic, German, Anglo-Saxon, and other cognate Indo-European languages*, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1872, p. 804.

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[37] Mircea ELIADE, *H.B. & R.I..,* vol. II, p. 235.

[38] *Bhagavad Gītā*, IV, 20-21, pp. 107-108.

[39] *Ibid*, II, 47, 38, p. 57, 51. *Be thou not the producer, etc.:* That is, do not work with any desire for results, for actions produce fruits or bondage only if they are performed with desire.

[40] Mircea ELIADE, *H.B. & R.I..,* vol. II, pp. 235-236. See also idem: *Yoga, nemurire şi libertate* (*Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*), transl. by Walter Fotescu, Humanitas Publishing, Bucharest, 1993, p. 142.

[41] *Bhagavad Gītā*, XII, 6-7, 10. *Abhyâsa-Yoga:* the practice of repeatedly withdrawing the mind from the objects to which it wanders, and trying to fix it on one thing.

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[48] Pr. prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, „Faptele bune în învăţătura ortodoxă şi catolică" ("*The good deeds in the Orthodox and Catholic teaching*"), in: *Orthodoxy*, VI (1954), nr. 4, p. 533.

[49] For Eastern spirituality, human acts are in no way moral actions, but theandric energy, human work inside the divine work. It is paradigmatic in this respect, the formula of St. Maximus the Confessor: "Man has two wings in order to get to heaven: freedom, and along with it, the grace". Apud Paul EVDOKIMOV, *Ortodoxia* (*The Othodoxy*)*,* transl. by dr. Irineu Ioan Popa, IBMBOR Publishing, 1996, p. 112.

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Priesthood and ecclesiology

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ABSTRACT

Reason for being, the significance of the ecclesial ordained ministry, cannot be understood but starting from the Church itself and from the dependency link, from the charismatic-historical life and present at the same time - of Christ who constituted and defined. Starting from this link of the Church with Christ, which is the Body link with His Head through which pours the Spirit life in the whole body, we understand why it exists and must be this ordained, original, «main» or «fundamental» ministry. Starting from here, can be understood, to what extent it is absolutely necessary for preserving the Church's vocation and its mission and how it is possible to affirm that he belongs to its essential structure, in a word as it is deeply ecclesiastic.

Keywords: ecclesology; church; signum; convergence; ministry;

Introduction

Priesthood and ecclesiastic are two notions and two realities involved in Christ through the Holy Spirit who constitute the Church in its quality of the body of humans or the sacramental community with God through Christ. The fundamental charismatic-structure or charismatic-sacramental of the Church not only does not exclude, but on the contrary includes and involves with necessity the ordained ministries instituted by Christ and consecrated by the power of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches. The ordained ministries and the charismatic ministries are against their wills: they have no objection, they would oppose only if the gift received from God would not be seen, if all good and bad and this would exclude any intervention by the community towards Him. A charisma is given forever for a task, for a Ministry, for a function to be carried out and for the Church and referred to the functions (deaconry, testimony and fellowship), which reaches the mystery of the Church: on their own, any charisma is functional. **[1]** And vice versa, there are tasks or functions in the Church which does not sit on a charisma that make them possible and invest them. The double reference to grace or gift of the Holy Spirit and the Christian community for which they are given, and even these are given, is always present; but this can operate in different ways. Forever the charisma or grace received, qualify and make the receiver able to serve, but the role of the community can take different forms.

1. The ordained ministries

The ordained ministries are based on charisma or more specifically on the grace of the ordination, in one of the three steps of the priesthood, given once and for all, permanent, and whatever the originality and function of the ordained ministry, whatever its role as essential and irreducible to all others, the Ministry, is a charisma by all the others, but not outside the Church, or without reference to the Church.

Going over the complex issue of the biblical vocabulary for the first two centuries of the early Church, expressing these ministries, being primarily a matter of exegesis, taking as a basis to develop the ecclesiastic priesthood, the fact that the expression of «ordained ministry» contains the bishop and the presbyter, i.e. the priest first, and then all three steps of the chary ministry: the bishop, the priest and the deacon. Non-distinguishing between bishops and priests (presbyters) giving testimony about the New Testament might ensure very well, stresses Professor J. Hoffmann, to retrieve a meaning, allowing you to see in the Bishop, the essential and fundamental function and lie the Presbyterian (priesthood) in the episcopacy line, whose function he imparts to his level: essentially a function of «presidency», i.e. responsibility in relation to the vitality and unity of the Christian communities, as well as with their fidelity towards the apostolic testimony[**2**].

The Church is related to the event of the Jesus Christ from which it pulls the existence and reason of being: it may not be as sacrament of salvation in the midst of people than by its dependence on Christ with the power of the spirit, which is in it from the Pentecost. The Ministry of Christ finds the source and norm of its own ministry, and the multiple ministries that this express, but which are the work of the Holy Spirit, given in the edification of the Church as the body of Christ (Ephesians IV, 12). *"The Church does not exist and cannot accomplish its mission than being summoned, added from another: Christ, upon which it depends in some way radically and in all the works.*" [**3**]

The Catholic Doctrine press on heavily this total and unilateral dependence to the Church towards Christ and speaks very little of its connection with the Spirit, as if Christ is conceived without His Spirit. Defining this dependency upon Christ, Professor J. Hoffmann specifies: "This addiction is double: on one side of the Church is founded in the work that God had fulfilled "at that time" and "once and for all" through the historic mission, death and resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit, of the other part, it depends on the permanent action of the Risen Christ, Lord of the Church and the world. And there is no Church there, after His truth and cannot determine its mission with these two conditions: a) to recognize the kingship of Christ, confessing that she has no other identity than that which she has received from an initiative that it prevents that receives in the Spirit, and b) to openly acknowledge the One conceded that she confesses as Christ, as Jesus of Nazareth and that she lives in fidelity to the Gospel." [**4**]

2. "The seal" of Christ

It is essential and positive to note that these developments significance toward the Church's dependence on Christ, but Christ who does not necessarily has the Spirit with him. Continuing his reasoning behind this dependency, he says: This double relationship of the Church with the One, and the only Mister who marks the Being of the Church, cannot be ensured unless it is mediated — «médiatisée» — for signs, signed up specifically in the structure of the Church and to decipher the faithful, stating that the Church does not belong to the Church which must bear in his body as a visible sign of the seal, the sign of its current dependence in relation to the initiative of establishing Christ, gathering ceaselessly His Church, and his fidelity towards the Gospel of Jesus at the same time." It is loss of sight, however, one very important thing: the ordained Ministry is not only a *signum* of Christ, which marks the Church's dependence on Christ, is a signum of Christ full of the Holy Spirit and explicit language, a servant of Christ as steward of the Mysteries of God (I Cor. IV, 1). For it is Christ who is present in the Church and works through his spirit. This *signum* is first, immediately after the Ascension of Christ, to the father in order to praise, to that of the

Apostles present in the Christian communities or those who are present through occupation or serving to represent them or to keep ties with them: the bishops. The founder of the Church of Christ is and remains only the one that introduces in history as, the Catholic sacramental community, in the Spirit of Pentecost. The Apostles are sent by Christ to announce God's work of salvation of the world, through life, sacrifice on the cross and resurrection of Christ and to manifest concretely through their presence of sent, that the Church is founded upon Christ and to keep its initiative mission in the world. "*Receiving the Gospel does not take place without recognition of the Apostles' mission; receiving and referring to their Ministry maintained the funds sent by the Christ, expressed, on behalf of the communities, therefore, the confession that they draw their origins not from themselves, but from the origin of Another on sending the Apostles attests and means it. As the Apostolic generation disappeared, the martyrs and original envoys and their disciples - and the distance between the establishing event and the current life of the churches is growing the Apostles' time, increases and is awarded and appreciated as a reference. The Christian communities should not ever stop to be able to build on this foundation which is the Apostles should remain faithful to their testimony*." [**5**]

The apostolic ministry of bishops and then, the followers of the Apostles, is understood in the newer version of the Western theology as a signum that keeps the Church linked to Christ and constantly referring to Christ. And the version ordained by the ordained ministry position with Christ and reporting to the community that by affirming the ministries are working *in persona Christi*. But this means a substitution of Christ himself. The recent theologians seek to accredit a broader ecclesial explanation to this *in persona Christi*, saying among other things: "It is not about having the ordained ministry as „another Christ" (sacerdos alter Christus), to consider that "His representative" or another "mediator", but to express that this Ministry is actually in Christ's ministry to the community, and this in a doubt: on the one hand the Ministry must fall into the version of Christ and His Gospel; but, on the other hand, he is to serve Christ as the instrument and a "sign" for community. The ministry "is not" Christ in the version in which this is to be present as "a ministry version", but the ministry's work for the community send this to Christ current work from which the Church is coming. But in Mgr. R. Bouchez' Report, in the Plenary French Episcopes Assembly, Lourdes, 1973, it is stated: "*The priests and the bishops are the servants and signs for Christ's ministry, for the people of the New Alliance. They are not Christ. They do not take His place. Moreover, they do not take place of the other Christians and their own servants. They are the servants of Christ for allowing the other Christians to live the truth and reality of their vocations and service*."[**6**]

The Ministry is not independent to the community neither outside it nor does claiming engrossment of a responsibility that belongs to everyone. But he "is not a reflex of the community, but his presence and work signifies what Christ gives to be and become the spirit whom he depicted it." And ending argumentation the: "therefore, the ordained Ministry work «in persona Christi» do not have ever considered independently of his work «in persona Ecclesiae». For "the Ministry cannot work in persona Christi only in so far as he himself is a disciple of Christ and a member of this community, that he «represents» ... «And vice versa: If the community recognizes in the Ministry work because he presents the Gospel of Christ, it cannot yet identify itself as Church of Christ, only to the extent that it recognizes this Ministry as working for it in persona Christi". And with this explanation, the ordained Ministry's position remains a position vis-à-vis the community. The one linking the Church to Christ, after the orthodox doctrine, is the Holy Spirit given to it on the day of Pentecost

and which remain permanently in it. He works through all the members of the body of Christ. And if the Bishop represents or expresses the Church and is an iconic presence of Christ in it, this is due to the spirit of Christ given to Bishops by the mystery of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, to work in the Church and together with His Church.

In the priest, in the Bishop and in the episcopate is represented in a manner recognized by all, i.e., «the official» Church community (the Parish, the diocese, the Church entirely). ″*The priest and the Bishop represent the whole community, but not broken by the community, but as a kind of head that has in self-organic connecting with community. He is the spokesman of what lives the entire body and what he himself lives in the body, along with the body. It is seen first in prayer, invocation of the Holy Spirit and in the bringing of sacrifice and in the fact that through these sacrifices of their descending grace, the Mysteries in the Church, in the faithful, it is committed the Eucharistic sacrifice, in order to give the Church and the faithful with all the benefits connected with it.*″ [7]

The Apostle Paul, "sending of Miletus to Ephesus, called to him the priests of the Church" (Acts 20,17). ″This expression, "*tous presbitërous tes ekklesias*", is very characteristic: well-worn houses (priests) are forever linked to a local community, here, that of Ephesus; never in the course of the first century, was this term used to denote an itinerant Ministry. [8] The priest and the Bishop are linked to a specific community (parish or diocese), belonging to them, they identify with them. In their papers, they do not supersede the community, they do not commit these acts «in the name of» the community, but together with it, they do not embody the community in themselves. At mass, the priest says: "he that we have given these new public prayers and pray together and at two and three unite into Your name, you promised to fulfil the requests of them, and now embody the useful requests of Thy servants" (Antiphon, Prayer III at Mass).

The priest is one who says aloud the prayer of those gathered "*in the name of Christ*" and in the Church: "*God, our God receive this earnest prayer of thy servants, and have mercy on us... and send your mercies on us and on all your people....*" [9] and all he asks for them all, saying: "*O Lord, Father of mercies ... those who bowed their heads to you, bless them, sanctify them, guard them, strengthen them, give them their power... and dignify them, without condemnation to share with those of your immaculate and life-creating Mysteries....*" [10] This is because it has been put to it: "*O Lord our God, we have built us and brought us into this life ..., You are the one who put us in this ministry with the power of Your Holy Spirit. Be pleased, O Lord, to be servants of Thy New Law, performers of the Holy Mysteries.... "And once brought the Eucharistic sacrifice, the priesthood power of the same grace that was given by the Spirit of Christ, the priest asks: "Give ear, Oh, Lord, Jesus Christ, our Lord, in thy holy place ... and come to us ... and we consecrate ourselves unworthy by a mighty hand, to be given Your New Immaculate Body and Your Precious Blood and through us to all the people.*" [11] While praying with the community or draw it in his prayer, however, the word of the priest includes and is present throughout the community feeling and praying together with him.

The presence and location of the Bishop in the Church are related to the Eucharist, but he is not alone, but surrounded by priests and deacons: "*You take care not to participate but to one Eucharist, because there is only one body of our Lord Jesus Christ and a single chalice to unite us with his blood, one altar, as one Bishop with the presbytery (the priests) and deacons... so all what you will do you will make after God.*" [12] And the relationship with the members of the Church Bishop is that of coverage through love itself to them, after the example of Christ, the Head of the Church, the unseen Archpriest. [13]

3. The convergence of the ecclesial community

The community lives, it relates to what it says and does the Bishop or the priest, it appropriates what he does; her voice is in prayer alongside that of the Bishop or the priest, but it is not the first voice, that representative. The faithful feel the need to overcome their own subjectivity in their requests to God. That is why they appeal to the priest's prayer and assigns their subjectivity to the priest's words, but associate their interest in the subjective words and acts of the priest who are not biased, because they are not up for it in the first place, but for those who asked him to pray and invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit. Of course, the priest prays for him, but still, bestowing to bring the bloodless sacrifice, the Eucharist, with the power of the Holy Spirit, on it that is «clothed in the grace of the priesthood» [14], to be reinforced towards one or another job from the mysteries of the Church [15], to make it descend the grace of the Holy Spirit upon those who run to Christ in his Church. Without a bishop and without Church priests there, because the faithful cannot get themselves their own subjectivity [16]. This is one of the reasons for which St. Cyprian says: "*If somebody is not with the bishop, he is not in the church*".

In the Bishop, the priest converges as the ecclesial community converges in him who has the leadership, the life and the movement of any body. And this not only in terms of the Eucharist and Eucharistic sacrifice, due to bringing in the highest degree, it is true, but also in terms of the proclamation of the Gospel, that is to say of the liturgy of the word, which reaches its climax and it makes the Eucharist. The subjectivity of the believers in terms of diversity faith is outdate and needs to be overcome, because not any faith saves, but only the right and sound, through what they learn through the bishops and priests themselves.

The Apostles and those who followed them, invested with the power of the spirit in the sacrament of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, Christ has entrusted the power and commandment to teach His Gospel with the sanctification and salvation of their leadership in the Church, assuring them that he would always be with them (Matt. 28, 18-20) and that those who will believe them and will share with the grace of the spirit through the Sacraments of the Church committed by them, in the Church, will be saved (Mark 16, 16). So the convergence of the ecclesial community, the Bishop must be total, as everything must be total and the convergence of the Bishop in the Church should be, indeed, and he has an iconic presence of Christ in His Church.

And because the Church lives unitary, through invoking God by bishops and priests through the responses to them from God, "*God's goodwill must be with those who submit to Him these invocations, as they enjoy the accomplishment on his part, i.e. they must be recognized by God as community representatives. This goodwill is a special grace, granted at the request of the Church, after their submission to God, of course through them that do this invocation of God's grace in behalf of the Church and along with it.*" [17] and if any worthiness to obtain from God, but as a gift of the spirit, and if anything the wolves prayer and personal fulfilment is the fruit of a gift of the spirit, the more prayers for the community feelings can't be gracious than fruit or a special gift he received for the community that

converges in him and as well as personal prayers, life and personal actions are reinvigorate and enhanced by the grace received through the mysteries of the Church , the more prayers and gifts received by someone in the community, must be reinvigorate of a Sacrament grace, i.e. for the community of Autocephalous Orthodox Churches.

The Ministry of the Bishop and the Priest can be defined as a ministry of «presidency», but stating that he always remains within the ecclesial community, bound by it and along with its faithful subjectivities transcending precisely because of the grace of the spirit given to him, in this sense, the mystery of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches. ”A 'presidency' ministry, noted Prof. J. Hoffmann, does not want to deploy ministry trilogy tasks... or to redact the pastoral Ministry of the community, the Ministry of the Word and of the Mysteries, but emitted a fundamental function of enabling the integration of these tasks in a consistent manner”. ”*This presidency is, indeed, a paradoxical presidency: it involves a real authority exercised in the name of Christ, in order to the Church edification, but the nature and legitimacy of its indisputably precise from serving to ensure stewardship action of God in Christ for the benefit of the people. The Ministry cannot exercise its authority only to the extent that he is the servant of Christ and his Gospel; at the same time because this Gospel is a Gospel of grace and freedom, this authority is not genuine unless it is recognized and received as a sign of Christ, the only Shepherd of the Church, and if it is fulfilled in respect of the freedom of the spirit who works in the community*.” [**18**]

But this definition of the ordained ministry presidency is under the Catholic articulated doctrine only in Christ and in Christ separated from Spirit and Himself sufficient. It is a presidency which does not express the communion and does not call to communion with God on those assembled, is a top presidency imposed exclusively, has not the convergence and unity at the same time. The Bishop and the priest work as authoritative works *in persona Christi* - hence the lack of the general epiclesis who has a deep character. All the developments brought about by the Plenary Assembly of the French Episcopate (Lourdes, 1973) to this notion of presidency, regarded as expressing in the most proper way the being and the work of the ordained ministry, remain only in the appearance of authority. [**19**]

Conclusions

Defining the ordained ministry as «ministère de présidence» lacks the pneumatological ecclesial dimension of the own orthodoxy. "The Church conceived as a living organism, held in unity by the Holy Spirit, understood as an interpersonal relationship in the Church, as a personnel fluid that flowed from the head of the Church of Christ, binds the members and the head and makes it impossible to design the exercise of the functions, to any but in Church outside the relationship with the whole ecclesial community. Those who practice the Mysteries in the Church, commit them in the relationship with the community, to which are bound by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit conceived as a relationship between all believers and all ministries, makes it impossible the individualism on general scale or the hierarchical exclusiveness, it is impossible the thesis of an infallibility "*ex sese non ex consensu Ecclesiae*". No believer is by himself in the Church, because that is not an exercise

in isolation, but a gift", and thus no bishop or priest. And hence the natural conclusion: "There is not visible in the Church any Body of the Lord, in addition to any head above the head of the Body, which is Christ. Another head of the Church, but Christ, would make it an autonomous body of Christ, the whole in itself. The admission to the head of the Church of Christ also designed as substituting Christ and would mean that this head be removed from under the interaction of bones, only to be regarded as giving the Body of Christ Himself and not receiving anything of it. And this situation is claimed on behalf of the Pope, when he is assigned the infallibility "*ex sese non ex consensu Ecclesiae". But this is merely impossibility. This means to rise a man to the step of the Divinity, with the sense of identification with Christ or rather a doubling of Christ*." [**20**]

The rapport between the preaching of God's word and of the sacred Orthodox Church work can be fully understood only in the light of the Divine Liturgy, which constitutes the essence of thinking and experiencing the Orthodox spirituality.

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*EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND RELIGION STUDIES

Religious education for the young: a stability factor in the contemporary society

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the principal activities supposing in a general manner the process of care for the good training of man. But Christian religious education is actually a meeting of man with Jesus Christ, the supreme Teacher, which is why it has a special character going beyond the rigid scholastic framework and involving the space of the Church. Family, School, Church and society are the main factors, but also along with the environment, where the education and training process of the young begin. Sure, what must be noted is the fact that religious education is a continual process by means of which man covers the road from person to personality, from imperfection to holiness.

Keywords: religious education; Christ; family, school; man;

Introduction

Religious education is a complex action involving communication as a first stage of the communion, of the connection with God and our fellows. Religious education has a supra-natural imperative going beyond the possibilities of conceptual expression, aiming to lift each human to the state of perfection, of holiness, which involves the space of the Church. According to the Christian teaching, education is accomplished by Christ, He is the Great Pedagogue Who by the Church and the Holy Mysteries lives by grace in the Christians' being, which is why Christian education makes permanent what is noble in our soul, namely Christ the Man-God, making us bearers of God. By education, two great aims are pursued: the first is for the young to receive the general knowledge he will need during his life, and the other is to prepare today's child to become the man of tomorrow, and the crowning of the two takes place when man has the power to obtain that autonomy determining him to reach stability in life, which reveals him as a managerial personality permanently turned to learning and lifelong education.

Etymologically, the word *education* comes from the Latin "*educo, -āre*", a process meaning to take care, to nurture, to lead man, using adequate methods, towards a target meant to give him personality. Education appeared along with man, being fundamental for him, because only by it the human person becomes a personality, accomplishes himself.

Education is a priority that generally involves the process of care in relation to the proper training of man in accordance with the ecclesial rules. Family, School, Church and society are the main factors, but also the environment in which the process of training and education of the young starts. Each of these channels present risks and advantages, generating positive outcomes or failures. A transparent and objective analysis of these results could potentially lead to an effective model of education for young people. Of course, it

should be noted that religious education is a continuous process in which man travels on the road from person to personality, to morality and civic and social spirit. In the vision of Thomas Groome, Christian education is a political activity with pilgrims in time that deliberately and intentionally attends with them to the activity of God in our present, to the Story of the Christian faith community, and to the Vision of God's Kingdom, the seeds of which are already among us [1].

What is the role of Christian religious education in aiding young people to become good people? Our young people are losing their way and falling victim to drugs, violence, prison, and have poor education. The absence of holistic view in education is evident and any serious attempt to overcome such problem has to pay effective attention to religion. Christian religious education is defined as the process where by Christian learning takes place [2]. Unfortunately, today the norms and methodologies of modern psycho-pedagogy place the accent on the humanistic side of education, which generated a relativization of the young's moral life, but also the apparent liberty and the hedonistic and permissive way of life, yet devoid of values. For example, we shall bring into discussion what is proposed today on a global level, namely civic education, sexual education, environmental education, good in themselves, yet which do not offer the young orientation and counseling for the shaping of a good moral character, but institutionalize, professionalize them (because they are intelligent, good IT specialists, good researchers, etc.), yet dehumanized, with no respect to life and dignity (let us think of sexuality, abortion, homosexuality, suicides – the EMO generation, euthanasia, the living together of same-sex people) or more simply let us behold the "look" of a young man full of hideous and morbid tattoos degrading the beauty of the human nature, of the divine image that involves the body as well, created to be temple of the Holy Spirit.

1. Education of the young in a moral religious spirit, basis for the future society

Religion is the free, aware, vivid and personal connection between man and God. The existence of religion is interdependent with the issue of Human existence and the issue of knowledge under all its aspects. The education of the young in a religious spirit is a fundamental problem of enrichment and spiritual continuity both as a nation and especially as a church. A society prevails and resists in history by the force of the faith it practices: in this sense His Beatitude Daniel, Patriarch of Romania, says: "*Religion is an essential and defining part of the European culture. Without the knowledge offered by it we cannot understand the history and culture of this continent and we cannot treasure the cathedrals, monasteries, churches, visual and musical works of art, most of them inspired by religious faith. It is not right to wipe away, in the name of laity, whole centuries of history and culture inspired by the religious faith. One cannot mutilate the soul of Europe ignoring the masterpieces in architecture, painting, sculpture, literature or music, to support a pretended emancipation based on the spiritual void of secularization. We can never replace the constant values of religion with the ephemeral models of a self-sufficient and anti-religious humanism*" [3].

The young are willing to know, run after the information provided easily by the internet, the media, but they often start from agnostic, materialist conceptual principles, promoted by science, having the conviction that the truth is relative and the Christian virtues are impossible to accomplish and useless. Sure, the need and the necessity of the young to have models to follow, in the Christian world is supported by the reality of faith, which, practiced, becomes truly the fundamental axis of existence, and in this sense the examples

are innumerable starting with Christ and the whole community of Saints that followed Him. While in the first stages of life, God is perceived in an anthropomorphic sense (as an older parent), gradually the perception and relation to the divinity will be accessed via the religious knowledge received in the family, in school and in the Church. The result of this triple collaboration is the shaping of a healthy moral character, the young, the adolescent is not just put face to face with reality, with the truth, with the transcendental reality (God), but at the same time on the personal level feels a predisposition for the perennial, profound values by means of which life becomes authentic, activating or bringing back to life the indefinite personal value received by grace from the good Creator, via the divine image. "*Religious education assumes a constant oscillation and guidance of instructional - formative approaches between reason and feeling, aimed at producing concurrent changes in the cognitive (knowledge and assumption of values, principles and religious norms), affective-motivational (favouring the manifestation of religious belief and motivational support required to comply with the norms) and behavioural level (acquiring skills specific to religious behaviour). What we consider to be noteworthy is the emergence of the feeling of satisfaction that the duty fulfilled consciousness offers, a feeling that can sometimes take the form of an emotional state of true happiness. The shades are customized, with each person knowing the feeling of fulfilled consciousness to a greater or lesser extent, according to their own experiences and experiential contexts*" **[4]**.

Adolescence, the age at which perennial truths take shape, is a period full of transformations on the social, physical and psychic level. Related to this aspect, nowadays we are witnessing eccentric preoccupations among the young, in their way of living, regarding the adaptation to the tendencies clothing, and fun in fashion, and also a lack of interest regarding the spiritual life, regarding the Church.

Outgoing, yet sensitive, the young live sudden passages from states of happiness to states of discouragement or depression, from the feeling of power to that of doubt, of decrease of their self-esteem. To face these emotions, the adolescents develop reactions of aggressiveness and opposition to all that means authority (parent, teachers, and institutions)**[5]**.

The psychologists define these states relating them to the following aspects **[6]**:
1. Search of self-identity, search of a personal set of values,
2. Acquisition of the necessary skills for a good social interaction,
3. Gaining emotional independence in relation to one's parents, need of attitudes and activities.

But certainly finding the real meaning of life has to do with the revelation made by God and transmitted by Church. Unfortunately, many young people do not hear the voice of the Church. For this reason, the Church needs to get closer to them and find connection and communication bridges **[7]**.

The Church's pastoral missionary character is directly related to the manifestation in the world, developed in time and space from Pentecost until the end of time, that entrench the threefold ministry of Christ for man and society each time. The church has a special educational influence, due primarily to the presence of our Master Jesus Christ and His eternal teaching. Church proposes a goal and a high ideal, namely perfection, and offers both a model to be followed by Saviour Jesus Christ. "*The Church has the task of educating all humanity to make it worthy of the supernatural life*" **[8]**. The Christian spiritual life involves material existence, but it doesn't rest enclosed between its boundaries, which is why moral-religious education of the youth aims at the just implementation of the spirituality in the

daily life. This process starts within the familial environment, but it has to be extended and socially involved in the ecclesial sacramental frame.

In the name of the scientific light, we must stress the epistemological importance of inter and trans-disciplinary character of knowledge, facilitated by the religious education. Knowing God revealed through word, the man knows himself and discovers what is his meaning in the world, namely to praise HIM, the Creator, through Christ, and to live permanently in word and deed the just and Holy teaching (Matthew 5,17). Jesus Christ, our Savior, has embraced with love and compassion all the needs and sorrows of the world alienated from God and but highlighted the divine revelation in his activity which was put into the service of human salvation seized from sin and death. "*The universality of education and the right to information represent a progress, but they are the moment in which a double rupture occurs: from an anthropological point of view, man is divided between mind and body, and from a theological point of view, man is deprived of a complete vision of the world, contrary to the logical and scientific explanations proposed. It should be noted that, as per the Enlighteners' vision, virtue as a goal of education did not mean following a model or achieving religious values. Reason is at the centre of education, I can say automatic and independent, which excluded a full vision of achieving man as personality*" **[9]**.

By entering into this mission of serving human, religious education is first of all a factor of knowledge and training of a good moral character. Education in general and religious education in particular has a supernatural imperative beyond the possibilities of conceptual expression that aimed at restoring and raising of each individual being created by God but fell into sin, the better condition and why not, to perfection. In the Christian religious plan, this is accomplished by Christ Himself, who is the "Great Teacher" who lives sacramentally in our being, since Baptism, which is why Christian education bring what is noble in our soul: the Christ, God - Man, which gives meaning and light of life. The life in Christ and the right faith support and animate the knowledge of God, as work and fruit of love (Gal. 5,6) because the God desires all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2, 14).

2. The role of Family in the formation of the young's personality

The family has always represented not only a complex system of socio-affective life based on feelings of love that generated interpersonal relationship, but exerted a major influence on the development of man and society.

As a social form the family is the basic unit of any type of company. In the context of every society, human families played a stabilizing role, but due to continuing social, mentality and status changes, the issue of the family remained a reality with a dynamic size and content, continuously engaged in the complexity of human existence in the world.

In a brief comparative analysis, of the Christian thought and the humanist logic, it becomes obvious that the organization of the human species had the family foundation as the core of society; but at its foundation, the humanistic thinking always places the association of two free beings to live together, while a Christendom founded by Holy Sacrament of Matrimony **[10]**.

In Christianity the family is not just a social form, a social group, but more than that it is a reality where God's love is active. The Education is necessary in the family because here is born, establishing the temporarily future, a future for which the Christian family is accountable to the people and to God. "*Christian family has a significant role in the education of the religious-moral character. Education is necessary even since [the child is*

in] the bosom of the family, because it is there that the temporary future begins and is founded - a future for which the Christian family is responsible to people and to God. The Christian family is meant to introduce the child in the religion he belongs to by baptism but also by the shaping of the first behaviours. The first religious notions are received by the child in the family, because parents ought to teach their children God's word, yet they ought to be models especially by their actions, their life and their virtues: charity, kindness, forgiveness, piety to the saints and to the Holy Mysteries of the Church. The relations between parents and children suppose a special mechanism, filtered socially; these relations rely on the norms related to communication, by which a behavioral pattern is realized" **[11]**.

The family is the institution most put into the service of life; it is the first school of personality formation, but also the deepest reality of love. Therefore, the morality in the family life has decisive influence in the process of education and youth formation. The education process always takes place on the background and concomitant with various moral influences exerted on human and therefore on child. In the structure of pedagogical rules, the modern educational reality of the family is linked to knowledge of rights, freedoms and rights of children, and age of the individual features, strategies and educational technologies, methods of training and cultivation of moral and spiritual values.

"*The Education is the only human activity that may oppose negative principles of human life. The education responds principles totality, a fullness, university and perennial* "**[12]**. The family is the first institution of moral education; it is by excellence the medium of childhood education.

The man as an individual and social being was, is and will be sensitive to appreciation of people in the of facts and behaviour. The child's education which begins in family is really focused on building an adequate behaviour in accordance with moral norms and rules that it humanizes because, as I mentioned, morality is a social phenomenon which reflects the established relationships between people. As time went the child's moral skills develop on the parents and peers' behavioural patterns, which influence the formation of feelings and moral skills (the moral concepts and judgments), which later externalize in the child's behaviours and deeds, by sheer will, being previously processed at the level of consciousness and transformed into knowledge and moral beliefs.

The moral climate of the family depends on the morality of the society which interacts with the family. The family relationships are built and developed in two directions: vertically – inter generational relationships (parents-children, grandparents-grandchildren etc.) and intra-generational horizontal – relations between members of the same generation (between spouses, siblings, grandparents, etc.). These relationships complement each other and influence the formation of human behaviour. Therefore, family education includes a whole variety of complex adult actions of caring, upbringing and educating children, oriented towards their cultivation and social integration, focusing on the formation of a civilized behaviour, but also on religious formation. This set of actions with regulatory functions, is involved in achieving education, namely the methods and strategies of education.

Unfortunately the educational policies applied in the family are more stiff and formal than existential and moral in the rich states, and almost totally lacking in poor countries. Let us think about the concrete situation of poverty in which education is not a priority, only religious education is performed, but if that is not revealed, it has no real spiritual purposes, but is transformed into fanaticism and extremism that strikes increasingly more in our world through terrorist attacks, acts of vandalism in the name of faith. Does mankind use this

education? Of course not! Let us consider in this context the families who sell their children. Does this education serve humanity? Of course not! Let's think about the high degree of human trafficking, where most children are corrupts because of lack of education.

At the opposite have modern States with educational systems and rigid civil law, but that is not in the service of normality. To think about the acceptation of coexistence between people of the same sex, who in the abnormality in which they live have the opportunity to adopt children? Does the model of family education received by these poor children is the best? Does this education serve humanity? Of course not! What do the habilitated institutions do for education? Of course statistics, in which man is like an object placed from side to side. What will be the outcome of these exacerbated abnormalities? Definitely dehumanizing nihilism, consumerism that in their finality kills man slowly but surely, at particular by anxiety, alienation and maladjustment etc., and overall creates economic crisis of identity and orientation after which mankind is focused towards material goods and not the human person. On this basis it is actually a strong moral issue. The Christianity and especially the Orthodox Christianity is centred to service of man who acquires the education and training which is necessary for moral life both in the world and especially for the eternal life for which man is preparing on earth.

3. The role of Christianity in forming religious culture and moral personality of youth

The education and training of young start within the family and continues with the action carried out by the school in close collaboration with the Church, which crystallizes moral and civic and moral-religious education.

The mission of the Church aims to rebuild the world and involves communicating an everlasting message – the Gospel, the word of Christ for the world which transforms the man and times, because it frames by grace all which is human and relative in the axiomatic area. The Evangelic word contradicts the cultural requirements manifested in a particular historical stage of ideologies, mind sets or civilizations, weighing eminently humanistic their proving that the true culture is linked to God through the Holy Spirit, even if the time is persecuted by "masters of this world": "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 5.1).

The culture is related to worship, it develops from religious cult. Every religion has an influence on culture as it develops and manifests itself through its faithful intercession both the vertical relationship with God and horizontally with others. As we can see, Christianity was and is a factor of social and cultural perpetuation and continuity because "*Christianity is the religion par excellence and cultural religion par excellence*" **[13]**.
The philosophical thought, scientific knowledge, architecture, painting, sculpture, music, poetry, morality - all is organically included in the religious cult, but in a still vague, undifferentiated form. For example, the oldest culture, the Egyptian culture, began in the temple and its first creators were even priests. Culture is linked to ancestor worship, legend and tradition, it is full of symbolic sacred, in it there are given signs of spiritual reality. Any culture, even material culture, is culture of the spirit. Every culture is based on a spiritual culture, it is "*the product of the creative work of the spirit over natural spectres*" **[14]**.

The church has a special cultural and pedagogical influence, in the first aspect she inserted the man, limited by time and space in the supernatural life through participation in divine transcendence. Christianity proposes and gives man a purpose and a high ideal of perfecting whose foundation is the Saviour Jesus Christ. "*If our religion would not be built on some truths about God, truth which, as such, are clear and can be known with certainty,*

we would not escape the confusion that reigns today in the ideal education on human nature. We must trust in Magisterium of Church, which invites us to possess the truth which gives us a foothold in life and allows us to escape the total obscurity which surrounds our ultimate destiny" **[15]**.

Christian religious feeling is a source of energy and moral power as the model of perfection: God-Man Jesus Christ through the Church is contemporary educator transmitting the disciples (students, all men) true norms that sustain life. Compared to the other religious systems, which cancel, restrict and limit human freedom, in the Orthodox Christian thought, man freely chooses to follow the rules of the divine through by his own will and not by constraint, convinced that God is creator of the world, the ultimate truth. In this spirit the school communicates to the student the Orthodox faith about God and his moral law, but "*the student is not compelled to accept, he will decide whether to accept, at the end of the educational act, the teaching about faith in God and his moral law; only he will decide whether to live and behave morally-religiously or irreligious*" **[16]**.

It is true that there may be an ethical education, civic in the elitist humanistic spirit and thinking. But the difference between the two meanings of education (religious or humanist) is that humanistic ethics relates to the general experience of life of the people and their individual experience and moral religiousness relates to God-Man Jesus Christ the Saviour. Moral and civic education supports the initiation of man as a future citizen, in practicing an active behaviour, capable of tolerance and responsible towards themselves and towards others, aware of their rights and duties they have towards society. The Christian religious education is only possible if Christ himself is received in the soul and that this soul works together with Christ, to perfection, and that is really a path to perfection.

The importance and mission of Christianity in forming moral character is essential, and is done both in the institutional framework provided by the school educational systems in different countries and in the service of public worship offered by the Church. Celebration of faith is manifested in fidelity to the heritage offered by the Christian life and to the Church. The mission of Church militates for fully campaigning for a Christianity that interferes with the social and spiritual dimension. According to the teachings of the Church "*Christian life has meaning and value to the extent that it is a perpetual concern for their salvation*" **[17]**.

Broadly religious education from a Christian perspective is part of efforts to salvation which involves space ecclesial: religious services, the activity of priests, church music, paintings, sculptures, architectural design that not only deepens feelings of respect and piety, but wake up and support the feelings, moral and aesthetic interests and behaviours of those who step into this spiritual perimeter. This entails cooperation between school and church. The school is a living institution which organizes learning experiences, which aims to achieve objectives using scientific methods and means.

The school informs students and forms under certain principles, taking care to assess how skills or educational objectives have been achieved. School is a contributing factor of Christian education; it must compensate and fill the gaps, the weaknesses of the religious and moral education acquired in the family. Families and schools have constant need of spiritual assistance of the Church; its presence is felt in all circumstances of life. Christian norms and values promoted by religious education are meant to create in young feelings of unity, to unite them freely, as opposed to thought individualization and secularization and to contemporary life. Christian education is based on the personal capacity of openness and acceptance through love of neighbour, understanding life as a continuous ebb and flow of

love of justice revealed in altruism, embodied in Christian charity. Through this entire process the young on the path of gaining the moral religious personality, deeply involved in the social area **[18]**.

Christian Education does not involve any fanaticism, it has Jesus Christ as model, who by His teaching has united the world divided and dehumanized with harmony of divine perfection. Christian teaching effectiveness is maximized only when it is lived in everyday life as Christ the Saviour does: "*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*" (Matt. 11, 29; John 13, 5). This living example of Christ recommends St. Apostle Paul, who following in his turn Christ tries to persuade: "*Therefore I urge you to imitate me*" (I Cor. 4:16), or in another part tells the disciple Timothy: "*And so you became a model to all the believers*" (I Thess. 1,7). Jesus Christ lived in his teaching, He did not theorized, He did not created a science about of God, but as the Son of Heavenly Father He made us children of the same Father: "*The Saviour's activity of catechism, His teaching work is not template, but resilient, given the apperceptive body, i.e. age, culture degree, profession and concerns of His hearers. Therefore, Jesus talks about seed ploughmen, about drills, vineyard about vineyard workers, fishermen about the miraculous catch of fish*" **[19]**.

Regarding the form of education, Jesus used mainly the narrative or achromatic one, which man is urged to practice. This form warms human's minds and hearts by the will to move towards work. Therefore, the religious education has highly practical applicability. In this respect the Christian religion manifests itself and grows by spreading its faithful with the initiative, assuming an educational program teaching, able to discover the truth and the life. From the Christian point of view – the theological truth that God is the supreme person, capable of revelation, is not closed, is made known to all men to the fullness of time (Gal. 4, 4-6) in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God Incarnate, which inaugurates, through His sacrificial work, God's kingdom on earth, the Church. Here's how interesting are the calls to education and training from the New Testament, made by the Great Teacher "*I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*" (John 14,6) that leads us permanently, as the apostles, to preach and faith: "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age* "(Matt. 28,19-20). It is the creed of every Christian: either clergy or laity. For cleric religious education is an explicit deontological, pastoral and missionary obligation. The priest must be identified with "*good shepherd who offers his life for his sheep*" (John 10, 11) being a witness of Christ present with His word in your heart and his home to be able to teach others and share **[20]**.

The ultimate purpose of religious formation in Christianity is salvation, the entry into the kingdom of God, the need for such a permanent education, having strong faith, manifested in good deeds. So the task of religious education is twofold: first to strongly install man in his faith and then get it to acknowledge another who has a different faith, so he will not live in a bad totalitarian absolutist system. Religious education models that best respond to the requirements of the school, religion and education, has been formulated and integrated over time into the educational systems, becoming universally valid and accepted for the influences upon the training and educational development of young people. Thus, Christian religious education keeps the teachers' scientific character, but presents specific features: it has the status of a discipline of study and so it is obligatory (in some States is optional, or essentially chosen by the pupils); it assumes the content level aspects of the

confessional, but respects the secular aspect of the school at the level of goals and methods; it can be defined as a systematic study of cultural educational and religious fact, but overall they provide to human indulge methods based on rational, but selfless love completed to the love towards enemies.

The Christian religious education creates harmony in the human life but requires a continuous training into virtue, for to continuous tendency towards the fulfilment of perennial values that become axis and purpose of human life. And we not must forget that the Christian education, as phenomenology and orthopraxis, aimed at the acquisition of a great situation of gracious – holiness, that as absolutization and spiritualization of all human forces on the model of Jesus Christ and the Saints. The Christian religious education is meant to ensure continuity in time and space generations, because it keeps God's teachings and the experience of past generations, but is carried out continuously and trains man in view of the future.

Conclusion

Education is a lifelong process, is an important tool for human development. That is not complete without Christian Religious Education. Christian Religious Education must be received in the favourable time when the children are young with the soft and absorbent minds ready to absorb the moral teachings from the revealed religions. In our confused world of trouble and frustration, the only sure place of solace for man is God. The School to should create a peaceful and tolerant environment for help to the young people to grow to respect and understand different cultures, nations, societies, religions and beliefs. There is the need for schools to adopt a holistic and integrated approach in promoting religious tolerance in our contemporary society.

In conclusion the School needs to promote respect for people of different faiths and beliefs. This in no way diminishes the right to celebrate the good religious values specific for each confession. The first mission of Religious Education in public schools is to nurture moral virtues. A second aim is to initiate children/students into a religious and cultural-spiritual route, with opportunities to worship together in the liturgical and ecclesial space.

The Christian norms and values promoted through religious education have the aim to generate feelings of unity in young people, to freely unite them, as an opposed state to individualization and neo-libertine secularized thought and to contemporary life. The religious Christian education is based on the personal capacity to openness and acceptance through love of the neighbour, understanding life as a continuous flux and reflux of revealed love from altruism, embodied in Christian charity.

The results of the humanistic spirit education generally mean the acquisition of the civic, humanitarian, social behaviour etc., but which may be immoral and against normality, as are the models of coexistence of people of the same sex, accepted and legalized in some states. In contrast, Christian religious education is relating to moral norms revealed by God through Jesus Christ that are always directed towards the good of man and world, a good that is accomplished both on earth and in the perspective of eternal existence in God's kingdom.

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Healing the body between medical practice and Christian moral theology

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ABSTRACT

The medical world has nowadays become an interesting place of interdisciplinarity, a place where natural, humanist, religious sciences, with their corresponding personalities, come together; they are dedicated to helping the ill / the suffering. The greatest challenge, from this point of view, is precisely the capability of integrating various components so as to provide the patient with the best assistance. However, contemporariness shows us that the development of medical means in a sole naturalist direction has led to objectifying disease which becomes itself a reality, independent, looked upon from an exclusively biological perspective, without the spiritual and moral connections of the person experiencing illness and suffering. This resulted in depriving the ill person of his disease, many physicians treating not the person who is ill, but the specific illness or organ.

Keywords: physician; patient; ill person; moral; suffering; pain; person;

INTRODUCTION

There has always been talk on suffering and there will be until the end of time. It is our historical condition, it encompasses us, it suffocates us sometimes, it causes us anxiety, frustration and rebellion. We are born in suffering and we experience it constantly during our lives. Death itself is often regarded as suffering. The topic of suffering and philosophical reflection on suffering has always given rise to some of the greatest questions of human everyday existence, spread throughout each historical epoch: *why? Why is suffering necessary? Which are the reasons behind its existence?* What is the point of suffering when faced with the fundamental and central belief of humanity's religious conscience, that is what is its relation to the existence of God? Aren't these incompatible concepts, living in suffering and the existence of God considered Good and Omnipotent at the same time? And, on an even more serious note, how can one reconcile the suffering of an innocent person and God's kindness and omnipotence, as He is called Father [1]? Here are so many questions that man has been confronted with during his earthly existence and on which he has spent very much time, thinking and material things, trying to find answers. Various successful or unsuccessful attempts at answering stand testimony in the meditations in the History of Religions, philosophy, literature and different human expressive art along the centuries. Throughout time, many religious and philosophical systems have tried to clear up the issue of suffering in a satisfactory way. Many have tried to offer a way out of suffering, redemption by avoiding it. The Buddhist way is a case in point. Noticing that all existence is suffering [2], that living actually means suffering, that they overlap, Buddhist reached the conclusion that fleeing [3] is the best solution, that freeing oneself from suffering is freeing oneself from existence. Taking refuge in the nothingness, in the non-existence, constitutes the only variant for Buddhist thinking in particular and for extremist Oriental thinking in

general. To the contemporary man, suffering can have no spiritual explanation. It seems more of natural degrading to him, one which does not require a spiritual motivation or explanation; that is why the solution is also natural. Man finds no point in it, he considers it absurd and spends his entire life not trying to understand it but struggling to avoid it [**4**].

On the contrary, Christianity gives great importance to courage, to commitment, and redemption without losing one's identity. Christianity itself is the religion of courage, because true courage implies hope. Courage does not mean giving up when you feel that you cannot win, but fighting against all odds that would signal defeat. Suffering is not a phenomenon, a mere chance happening or a reality which is external or which exists outside man, but an event, or better said, an autobiographical experience that is deeply rooted in human experience [**5**]. Disease, suffering, and especially incurable disease touch upon the intimate, profound level of human conscience and the individual becomes fragile, sensitive, unstable [**6**]. Disease, suffering are experienced as a danger: the threat to the individual's own physical, psychological and social identity. And what accompanies it, especially in a paralyzing manner, is fear; the fear that everything is lost, that it cannot be controlled by means of medicine, which leads to the greatest dread: the fear of death [**7**].

1. **Medicine and healing the body**

There are opinions, which at first sight seem incompatible, according to which disease can only be approached unilaterally, medically or theologically. To establish a dialogue between science and faith regarding suffering and its causes, finding common ground is to be preferred, so that the two domains become complimentary. Thus judging things, we will be able to understand how scientific knowledge stimulate intelligence, at the same time allowing for the development of some more profound dimensions of faith, with the double conviction according to which scientific knowledge provides a better understanding of the founding texts of faith and, as a consequence, it creates a free space where science may develop for the welfare of mankind.

From the perspective of laic medicine, the significance thresholds of the pathological, of passing from the normal to the abnormal and to the morbid are not clear, either in the case of somatic suffering, or, even less so, in the case of mental suffering, where the distinction between normal and pathological require a high degree of fluctuation.

In 1958, the World Health Organization tried to define health as *"a state of perfect physical, psychological and social welfare, not consisting only in the absence of illness and disabilities"* [**8**]. This coining of terms, although displaying the advantage of influencing mentalities and implementing new ways of approaching health practices, tends to suggest that one cannot be healthy without that "perfect welfare." Furthermore, the definition could be completed by the moral dimension of man's health and this is because many diseases derive from a person's moral choices: drugs, alcohol, AIDS, violence [**9**]. Having this perspective on things, it would mean that health programs should be conceived so that each individual be brought to a state of physical, mental and social welfare, according to some standards, sometimes "foreign" to the way in which he lives his life, and, maybe against his own will. So as to experience this integral state of well-being, the man must interact with the world, with all that surrounds his entire being: body and soul [**10**]. The human body cannot only be reduced to its significance as a determined network of biological rules. The human body does not represent a vessel, but it is an organ of the spirit. It is body, that is a given in space, matter and time, that science studies with precision and competence. Yet, the body does not represent anything beyond its unity principle.

The human body is the being considered in its material state, whereas the soul is the being considered in its spirituality. It thus results that the human body is the carrier of a life project. It is the carrier of a life wish, an effort towards autonomy and participation. Wish is defined as the inner inclination of a person to do or have something [11]. Autonomy represents the individual's capability of conceiving and undertaking a series of actions capable of giving meaning to his life [12]. By participating we understand "take part in."

Consequently, there are four dimensions to health that cross their paths and coexist: the organic, the psychological and mental, the ecological-social and the moral dimension [13].

Disease does not represent only a biological problem, but also an existential one. It does not only mean suffering, pain and isolation, but also a challenge for faith. Man can see another man as a simple "body," but he will find it almost impossible to perceive himself only as a "body." Any conscious experience of one's own structure is always a complete event, body and soul, and not only an experience of the body. This holds valid the other way around as well, for the moral experience is not only an internal, spiritual one, but a complete experience that also involves the psychical dimension of the body. Apparently "natural" inclinations, needs and feelings are never experienced as being purely biological, but they become a part of the moral conscience [14]. The origin of an illness must always be attributed to complex circumstance: physical, psychological, social and moral components.

From a theological point of view, health corresponds to the normal state of human nature, that of the edenic condition and that is why it can be considered as being inherently good. Yet, for a man, the health of the body cannot be an asset acquired forever. Moreover, in this world, it never exists in its absolute form forever, it is nothing but partial and temporary balance, and we might even say that it corresponds to a state of less illness.

The very concept of ideal health escapes our human mentality, as it cannot refer to any experience possible so far. Health, in our present condition, is always related to some sort of balance.

The Holy Fathers assimilate man's health to man's state of perfection to which he is fated to by his own nature. Saint Basil the Great, answering Question 55 of the Great Rules [15] says that medicine is an art that comes from God to heal the body as training for the wisdom of the soul. And he draws a very beautiful parallel between healing the body by the art of medicine and cleansing the soul of sins. If, for healing the body – he says – we undergo surgery, cauterization and we take bitter medicine, the same way, and for healing the soul we must bear the lash of reprimand words and the bitter cure of cannons. What the Saint wants to emphasize, according to the biblical example of the New Testament where the Savior first heals the soul of sins and then heals the body of illness, is the fact that there is close connection between the bodily and the spiritual illness. Medicine is an art in the Holy Father's opinion, but, as any worldly art, is limited and that is why we need good collaboration between the art of healing the body and the art of souls, which is confession. Healing the body and the soul – rule 55 also says – must be accepted with gratitude to God for His caring concern that sometimes manifests itself in unseen ways, and some other times by material means so that we might acknowledge His grace sooner.

Another issue brought forth by rule 55 [16] is that of the right use of this art called medicine. Saint Basil the Great says: "Therefore, because some people do not make honest use of the medical art, we ought not to shy away from any good that it could bring… It is not right, because of wrong usage of it, to deny God's gift."

Here we may approach, from the point of view of Christian Morals, the relation established between physician and patient.

First of all, we must state that, many times, the relation with the ill is a minimal one, because either of the suffering that renders him incapable of communicating, or of the physician [17]. Yet, we must mind the fact that the ill is a suffering, vulnerable person who needs help. Sometimes, the ill person is incapable of being aware of what is happening to him; he doesn't always comprehend observance of medical prescriptions; he feels that the evolution of the disease is not his; he wants a competent, attentive, merciful, serene, available and patient physician. Above all these, nowadays, any patient is aware of somewhat general deterioration of the quality of medical assistance. This must also happen because of the fact that a physician nowadays is mostly interested in the scientific, technological and even bureaucratic aspect of the medical act, without paying any attention to the individual problems of the ill person. The ill person, who has become the beneficiary, the user of a public service, often comes across simple service providers. We must not forget that, sometimes, the patient is asking for the impossible. And this is because suffering and death are incomprehensible to the human mind and he cannot clearly set limits between the possible and the impossible. That is why it is compulsory for the physician to take upon himself the art of communicating with the ill person.

From a medical point of view, developing a relation between doctor and patient must be built in stages. The doctor-patient meeting is one that occurs between two different personalities, with two different stands. The spiritual state of each of them primarily contributes to solidifying the relation. This is where an adjusting state should come into play, the two psychologically unlocking personal tendencies, feelings, convictions, and prejudice [18]. Once he has established a connection to the doctor, by revealing symptoms verbally and non-verbally, the patient I waiting for a competent-professional answer [19] that would reduce or even eliminate those symptoms. The patient may claim information about his illness but this may often lead to misunderstanding and difficulty in the process of treating and curing disease. The patient has rights and duties which, if observed, lead him to gaining health. Many sick people suffer because nobody listens to them. The wish to be cured with sick people and the need for prevention should rank high [20] in the doctor's mind. These are implicitly followed by the duty that makes him aware of his mission as a healer of the sick. Next is the obligation, explicit in medical rules of social conduct, and so on and so forth, which keep the doctor's will and reason within the limits of morality and human dignity, both in his case, and in his patient's case. Everything that the doctor can do to keep patients healthy, cure them and support their lives must be done with conscience, professionalism, commitment, consideration and love. And, from this point of view, according to the classical definition, the doctor is that *vir bonus dicendi peritus* and his essential virtue is *philanthropy* [21]. Listening, interviewing, conversing, identifying the patient's illness and personality, prescribing treatment, giving advice and warnings are some of ways in which the doctor works over the patient, to which he has to add those of a Christian-religious nature. The physician thus manifests a paternal function towards the patient, similar to maternal or paternal relation [22]. By this – maternal or paternal – model, many researchers understand [23] that the physician must not only be interested in the physical healing of the patient, but also in his moral, psychological and spiritual state [24]. This physician-patient relation model is known to the world of bioethics as the model of "medical friendship" [25]. This "friendship," also translated by an alliance [26], a therapeutical closeness, represents the state in which the physician is capable of compassion

or mercy. Here, the classical model of the Church is the model of the Good Samaritan (Lc. 10, 29-37), whose mercy is translated by AGAPE [27], an almost religious dedication by manifesting feelings of affinity, goodwill, and human nature on the part of the physician. On the other hand, on the sick person's part, there should be manifestation of trust, as an answer to the physician's therapeutic attitude [28]. The less paternal the medical practice is, the more the professional conflict increases. This, together with the utilitarian aspect, lead to an ever more "expert" medicine, more and more specialized, but less and less responsible of the patient as a whole [29]. The more nurses and doctors are informed both in the field of science and in that of Christian religion [30], the more their trust in the patient's chances to be cured increases, by methods and means applied, and, at the same time, the patient gains confidence in the competence of the people who take care of him. According to the doctor's prestige, the patient approaches him with certain confidence or suspicion. To be a physician also means two apparently opposed aspects: your welfare (as a physician) and other people's welfare (those you are trying to heal); the proportion between the two is regulated by the norms and rules of medical practice (norms and laws) [31].

Thus, the patient may open his heart and show the doctor all the manifestations of disease, but also the causes of its appearance, which would lead to a close connection between the two by making the patient observe the physician's indications, by making the doctor trust the patient to collaborate with his treatment, and this would actually mean a good relation that would lead to quick healing.

It is the doctor who possesses information on disease occurrence, on its manifestations and on specific treatments for each disease in turn [32]; not only does he have this information, but he also applies specific ways of treating disease, all these being accomplished in the direct relation with the patient who must collaborate during the three stages towards healing: to show all disease manifestations, to listen and become aware of the diagnosis undergoing treatment, and, thirdly, to take part in the healing process by carrying out the doctor's prescriptions.

This doctor-patient or confessor-repentant relation is one of existential communication. To the patient, the doctor is the worthy instrument, endowed with healing powers by God with a view to serving his fellow-men in healing, and the sick person is in its turn, to the doctor, worthy of being healed, having rights and autonomy [33] without discrimination or prior labelling. Hence, so as to better relate to everything that surrounds him, the patient aims at the healing that the doctor may provide, and, in his turn, the doctor leans over the sick person, resorting to all the elements he possesses in order to help the ones in need. We can, therefore, see that there is an interdependence relation between the doctor and the patient: the doctor has no purpose without the ill, and the ill cannot cure them. The doctor-patient relation implies a time to be manifested, a place, and different states of the doctor and of the sick person, it undergoes connected consecutive stages, it follows various relation patterns [34] and it is extended by having Doctor Christ intervene in it.

2. Different physician-patient relation patterns

A first pattern [35] is the one represented by the so-called *active-passive* relation: one of the two has the power to act, whereas the other ends up by accepting the former's will and actions, in our case usually the physician.

A second pattern is defined as *guidance and collaboration*: the two, physician and patient together, get into action, but in a diverse way: one has all the power to act and takes into consideration the other's wishes and the latter tries to impose his point of view. A third

pattern is that of *reciprocal participation*: both the physician and the patient have the same persuasive skills, matching various notes characterizing the personality of each of them, of course.

These three human interaction patterns are not mutually exclusive in the medical act, as each of them satisfies different particular requirements, brought about by particular situations. What we must keep in mind is that all medical operators must obey *the moral principle of respect and identifying the patient's human values*. This principle must make any medical operator (stretcher bearer, nurse, and physician) see the patient as a person, not an object or a client. The status of being a person is not achieved at the same time with gradual physical or cultural development, as one cannot lose this status even if personal functions are not exercised. Consequently, a person means the zygote, the embryo, the human foetus, the new-born, the child, just as persons are the dying, the old, the disabled, and the comatose. That is why human dignity does not depend on psycho-biological health, or on good DNA functioning, but on the sacred dimension of life invested in every man by God [36].

Faced with all these categories of impossible, unwanted, difficult patients, the first thing that the doctor should not do is label them. Labelling a patient means establishing a barrier in communicating with the patient either about therapeutic aspects, or about treating the patient with respect and observing his rights. One of such patient rights is the of the *patient's autonomy* [37], according to which the sock person, just as any individual, has the right to freedom and self-determination, the right to make choices, the right to be informed on diagnosis, therapy, risks, benefits, advantages and disadvantages of certain therapies. According to the autonomy principle, the physician cannot be the *referee* regarding the sick person's health [38]. From this point of view, professional competence must serve *the integral well-being* of the patient, only as a result of the patient giving implicit or explicit authorization to such a course of action. In other words, the patient must be aware and co-responsible as to the interventions he will undergo. The importance of consensus comes from the reason that he is the main expression of an individual's freedom and his right to manage his own healing [39]. In medical acts, consensus is *implicit* [40] when the patient undergoes prescribed therapies: the patient is certain that the physician is interested and means well, and the physician knows that the patient he is addressing has the utmost confidence in his moral and professional competence. *Explicit* consensus is, however, needed with medical procedures that present risk for psycho-physical integrity or that comes in contradiction with the patient's moral or religious beliefs. A typical case in point is sterilization after repeated C-sections, which, in some cases, is operated without letting the patient know about it [41]. On the other hand, the physician may refuse to perform an intervention or therapy on the patient's express demand. A delicate situation, which has become ever more frequent in Romania, is refusal of medical consensus on religious grounds [42]. For instance, blood transfusions, with followers of the Adventist cult and Jehovah's Witnesses, who regard blood transfusions as a breach of the divine law. In this case, the physician will not resort to force and physical or psychological violence, but will approach competent authorities, either to help the patient, or to avoid being accused of a crime by not performing a certain medical act. Under such circumstances, called, in the medical environment, therapeutic obstinacy [43], discerning plays a very important role both for the patient and for the physician. Yet, even here, only the patient can have an integral vision of values that are at play in his case. The physician is under the obligation to inform the patient on his real situation: diagnosis, therapy, prognosis, while preserving professional secrecy – *privacy* [44]. Although the roles

are distinct and diverse, we must say that, in the physician's and the patient's case, both share the status of a human being who experiences suffering as an existential reality, certainly not as something foreign, and, if we think of the physician, he also gets sick, he may experience disease with members of his own family, and, in doing so, he touches upon his own suffering as well as other people's [45].

The physician must not turn into a preacher or a missionary. But the spiritual advice remains a high ideal of his profession, one that he ought to attain as well as possible, with no constraint, with finesse and respecting the patient's beliefs, without taking advantage of his weakness, insecurity and confusion [46]. Consequently, the Christian physician will treat the patient, from the very first moment, with politeness, with human warmth, not forgetting that the true master is the patient himself, as, without him, the physician would not exist. The Christian physician, who is aware that, before him, there is God's face in every patient, will not address the patient informally, will not patronize him as an all-knowing creature, will not yell or scream at his patient; he will not give him pseudo-scientific and technical explanations related to illness evolution. The Christian physician is under the moral obligation to satisfy the need for self-esteem, for security and respect in the patient; the Christian morale obliges him to respect the patient's human values, dignity, ideas, feelings, and religious beliefs. That is why the most valuable quality of a Christian physician is humility [47]. The Christian physician is the person who lives a moral life worthy of his profession and who meets the requirements of Christian Morale in concrete situations of his profession. According to morale, the Christian physician will refrain from any action that would contravene to the principles of the Gospel regarding man, life and serving one's fellow-men.

The physician must be aware that he is an instrument by which God does His work and a collaborator, with whose help God works to eradicate evil from the world. The gift of healing and medical knowledge comes from God, and the physician has the responsibility to use this gift not against his fellow-men and the world, but to support the dignified existence of the person created and to fulfil the meaning of the individual's existence.

A *first problem* to arise within medical practice, yet being only the reflection of some cultural paradigm of modern Western society, is the tendency to industrialize the medical act. Thus, the imperative of financial profitability lays focus on those elements that allow the patient to be included in a broader class, missing out on those aspects that are specific only to him.

The hospital tends to become a plant, and the employees are constrained to work constantly, paying too little attention, in this process, to the fact that the "material" they are working on in this industry is a live, sensitive and sensible one, not an inert one as with the rest of industries.

A *second problem* that we could notice in real life is the one that emphasizes the fact that, no matter if they practice healing or preventing medicine, the purpose is to regain bodily health, mainly ignoring his spiritual issues (an exception to this being illness related to psychiatry).

Assuming that this one-dimensional approach to man's health relies on several factors: on the one hand, one of the Cartesian paradigms lying at the foundation of modern sciences states that man is a live mechanism. Thus, the body is seen as a self-sustaining reality, with an autonomous existence when compared with the soul. Disease would, consequently, be a flaw of this mechanism, medicine being the science that deals with its repairing. The moment the mechanism is made to function again as usually, automatically,

the spirit may have the machine to drive as it pleases. This concept displays the clear dichotomy of the individual, which would only be a combination, without any inner interaction, of the body and the spirit of man. Curing the man is not the sum of curing his organs. Curing him at any cost is not the correct indicator to assess the value of the medical act. It is, however, an indicator of the efficiency of the medical system as a whole, taking into consideration the fact that this system includes the patient as well, as a party contributing to his own interest to be cured [**48**].

On the other hand, another root of this prejudice by which man is considered healthy if his body is not suffering is a result of implicitly materialist mentality, which considers as authentically extant only that which could be experienced via senses (may those be enhanced with the use of apparatus, amplifying their powers). The notions of *soul* and *body* render possible the good functioning of the human being. But man represents something more than this, he is a *person*. The way in which the human being must be looked upon and treated from the Christian perspective relies on the fact that man was created resembling God's face and appearance (Fac. 1, 27). Therefore, each man wears this face, unalienable in its own conscience, in the depth of his being. This means that there is more to man than meets the eye [**49**]. At this point, we must say [50] that the Church has always paid attention, even if there have often been voices, especially with regard to Orthodoxy, claiming that the Church is conservative and not adapted to the present day. We mustn't go too far in saying that the Church has always talked about man as a *person in dialogue* with God and his fellow-men. The term *person* in Orthodoxy has such great value that Orthodox Theology uses it to explain both the Bodily Existence God's Son [51], and His redemption acts because man is that being that orients himself towards God [**52**] and bears God's face within himself. From this point of view, the Christian Morale states its *prosopocentric* nature by which Bioethics may be better oriented in applying moral principles.

3. Mas as person

When we talk about *man as person* [**53**], we refer either to its irreducible identity and the inner dimension that constitute him, or to his relating to other people, relations that can only be due to his quality as a person. To be a *person* implies ontological order: man either is or is not a person. The status of being a person is not achieved at the same time as gradual physical or cultural development, as it cannot be lost even if personal functions are not exercised [**54**]. Consequently, a person means the zygote, the embryo, the human fetus, the new-born, the child, just as persons are the dying, the old, the disabled, the comatose. Manifesting functions specific to the person or not manifesting them does not alter the ontological status of person [**55**].

From the Christian perspective, this personal identity, which also represents tension towards another, is essentially founded on the Trinity of divine Persons. Christian teaching speaks of a single God multiplied by three Persons. A single divine nature and three divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Nature is common to the Three, but each of the three divine Persons possesses it completely. To Christianity, God reveals Himself not as nature, but as Person. To a Christian, God's nature is inaccessible, foreign, and the Person essentially reveals Himself in the Embodiment of God's Son. By this Embodiment and by all redemption acts performed by Christ, man achieves the climax of personalization that is of dialogue and communion with God, according to the supreme trinity model [**56**].

The same thing happens to man. He reveals himself as person, but his nature is common to all men, and what makes him unique in the universe is exactly the non-recurring person. People are so different from one another that we cannot find two similar people in

the entire human history. What is it that makes man unique and non-recurring? The Holy Fathers and Christian Tradition understood this unique nature of man by the *reality of the person*, a concept previously unknown to Christianity [**57**].

When we say that a *man is a person*, we say that he is not just a fragment of matter [**58**], an individual element of nature, alike other individual elements of nature: an atom, a wheat ear, a fly, an elephant. Man is indeed an animal and an individual, but unlike no other. Man is an individual that guides himself by intelligence and will; he exists not only physically, there is a richer, higher existence embedded in him, by knowledge and love. In philosophical terms, this means that, in human flesh and bones, there is soul which is worth more than the entire universe. The human being, no matter how independent he might be from the smallest accidents of matter, exists by the soul's own existence, which prevails over time and death. At the root of every person there is soul [**59**]. Man is, on the one side, a being apart from physical nature, and, on the other, a unitary and composed being.

The fact that, according to the Holy Scripture, man was created apart from the other creatures shows the unitary, but dichotomy-like or bifurcated, as father D. Stăniloae would say, character of man.

By the fact that man is created not only of nature, dust, but also of God's life-instilling breath, the soul, it is clearly shown that he holds special position not only in relation to nature from which his body was taken, but also in relation to God. Father Stăniloae provides us with an example here, involving flour and dough, saying that, just as the dough raises all the flour, the same way man is made up of a part of nature in which soul; life was instilled, so that it could raise all the nature [**60**].

The approach of the Christian Morale is always connected to the way we value the person. Without a correct concept of the human being, we cannot decipher the values of Bioethics and its purpose. And the first golden rule in the case of Christian Morale is the one stated in the Gospel: "All that you would like other people to do to you, do the same to them" (Matthew 7, 21). Man is called upon to put himself in somebody else's shoes and to act towards him as he would like another to act towards himself. In other words, the rule addresses the human being and it is applied by means of understanding and solidarity with one's fellow-men [**61**].

Conclusion

Outside Christian understanding, medicine generally misses its target [**62**]. Without its orientation towards the Kingdom of God, it risks to become a deformed practice, distorted by politics and economic power, a reality in itself and to itself [**63**], focusing more on the physiological side of man, without taking into account the dichotomy and mysticism of the human being's constitution. Nowadays, more than in the past, we can at least talk about a "humanizing" project [**64**] of medicine, if not about a conversion to Christian morale [**65**]. *Humanizing* the medical act is the preamble to making the Gospel part of the medical act [**66**]. What gives the medical act the ability to make sense, from a moral point of view, is exactly acknowledging the principle of *authority* that must not be mistaken for the only medical competence. According to this principle [**67**], authority lies with the patient/his representative and not with the physician, and the open or implied breach of this principle may be an important source of conflicts. This principle has become the dominant element in making a medical decision. An able and well-informed patient has the moral right to consent to or to refuse the medical intervention [**68**].

The care for the sick person requires, besides technical-scientific competence, responsibility and moral involvement [**69**]. The risk of technical-scientific medicine is that of reducing pain and suffering to only "something" physical, to a mechanism-like model [70], without man's moral and religious experience. Functioning in a one-dimensional manner, medicine has looked upon man as a machine. Disease, suffering have been regarded as things to be fixed at a certain moment in man's existence. This manner of considering man has led to huge problems to solve, and resulted in the development of new branches of medicine, especially in the West, such as psychology, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. On the contrary, today we witness the development of the so-called holistic medicine, which aims at looking upon man as a psycho-somatic organism, whose psychological state influences the body as well, and bodily disease influence, in their turn, the psychological state of man. That is why the field of medicine must be one of interdisciplinary interference: science, religion and culture [**71**].

Radically separating physical pain and suffering from the rest, medicine may turn into an analgesic form [**72**]. Moreover, focus is laid on the usefulness of medicine and on emotionalism, everything being assessed by a preferential calculus in terms of quantity: diminishing pain, excluding the fact that suffering is a complete human experience [**73**]. From this perspective, healing is labelled as "something" that comes from beyond the human being and which is always attributed to professionalism, to the science of the physician who gave the correct diagnosis, who prescribed the adequate treatment. The patient's contribution in this sense consists in listening to and obeying the physician's indications, and not in interacting, in establishing dialogue, in actually experiencing his work [**74**].

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Man's responsibility. Decency or libertinism?

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ABSTRACT

The Christian teaching shows that man has been created "in God's image" in order to attain "God's likeness". "The image" means: intellect, will, affectiveness, love, liberty, responsibility, conscience. We cannot talk about true freedom if we do not take into account responsibility as well, namely the obligation of a person to acknowledge himself as free and aware author of his own actions and to take upon himself the consequences and results of what he does.

Keywords: Christianity; liberty; responsibility; moral imputation; salvation;

Introduction

Contemporary people are, however, aware that society ought to be Christocentric. Since a certain moment of history, in some parts of the world, people have attempted to build an anthropocentric society: *man for himself*. This trend spread, grew, and has come to show its weakness; our society has become erotocentric. At present, the young man has eliminated the word **decency** from his vocabulary and personal manifestations, and encouraged by the erroneous understanding of a virtue given by God, **liberty**, has arrived, using libertinism, in a very dangerous zone. Today, "*we are not dealing only with a materialism dominating "en gross et en detail"; a huge wave of eroticism is tumbling down on us. The number of erotomaniacs seems to be continually growing. Even though this is lacking elegance and discretion, we have to call each thing by it right name: sex without frontiers*" [**1**].

Without borders! There is no longer any kind of borders for eroticism. For the young, neither age, nor personal sensitivities and traditions, nor in any case religion or even physical and mental hygiene are arguments for a return to the previous decency.

Very few people today live as they ought to, *namely in the body as if they were not in the body*, this is why we can say that we are all vulnerable. Yet, the greatest danger is for the young generation. Young people are most targeted, and lately they are in the spotlight from age zero. If we take into account the findings of *prenatal* psychophysiology "*the erotomaniac pressure begins even before birth! A Schengen area from minus infinity to plus infinity*" [**2**].

Our personal conscience doubtlessly has a word to say. It is true that the whole world will not change if I change. But the change in me is the premise of the great change. Each soul sums up, in a particular and immeasurable manner, the universe itself, a universe fully recapitulated in Christ.

By each soul in whom Christ's Spirit is dwelling, God is working on the world. The Savior explains that the efficiency of the faith that can move mountains depends on fasting and prayer, two highly significant means in the personal spiritual life. Secondly, personal conscience has a great role in the restoration of the full trust in man. One of the important factors by which the war idea is promoted is: discrediting man. Each believer has the duty to

do deeds contrary to this tendency, opposing trust to distrust, hope to despair, self-reconciliation to aware dissatisfaction. A clean conscience is a power like no other in the world, because finally the future of the world will not depend on blind forces, but on men[**3**].

Man can only live in relations with others, thus the impossibility of imagining him outside the scope of action. Solidarity among men sometimes goes up to sacrifice. What increases this solidarity is the idea that our fellow has an absolute value just like ourselves. For the Christians, this value of man has been revealed by God Himself. God's Son has come in the world for man's salvation. Man is not a simple means for God, but an "*alter ego*" of His. In other words, man appears as absolute value for God Himself. In the Evangel we are told that God's Son came "*to His own [people]*" (John 1: 11). Considering man as a purpose, never as a means, defines what in Romanian we call *omenie* and in English *humanity*. A man who kills another man kills himself, denying the humanity in the other and in himself. His humanity has turned into inhumanity.

According to the Christian teaching, man has been created "*in the image and the likeness of God*" (Genesis 1: 26). This expression comprises, in short, the entire Christian anthropology.

The Holy Fathers see in God's creation certain conformity, a certain likeness, to the extent to which this is possible, between the Creator and His rational creation. They differentiate between image and likeness. According to Saint Basil the Great, "*God's image is the principle and root of good, planted since the beginning in man's being; while God's likeness is the target or superior moral state that man needs to acquire, by ceaseless good deeds and virtues*" [**4**]. Thus, God did not give us everything for granted, to be perfect like objects, but left us the honor to acquire perfection ourselves. The Christian received the **image** as a gift from God, while **likeness** was set as a moral mission to him. People, created in God's image and likeness, do not have sense and value in themselves, but acquire them from Christ the Model, the real image of God, to whom they must tend incessantly, "*until they have become perfect according to the full measure of Christ's stature*" (Ephesians 4: 13). Sure, this moral mission involves man's liberty (but also God's liberty) and his responsibility (as personal effort).

1. Man's responsibility. Decency or libertinism?

Responsibility is the obligation incumbent to a person to admit himself as free author of his deeds, to take upon himself the consequences or their results. Responsibility supposes imputation, namely the act by which someone is considered responsible, being attributed to him, justly, a deed along with all its consequences. Responsibility and imputation have the same meaning, yet they are applied differently: a) the person is responsible, and his deed imputable; b) responsibility supposes an aware relation of dependence between a doer and another person to whom he is responsible, imputation supposes the relation between deed and its author; c) the main object of any responsibility is the evil deed, and imputation can be involved concerning any deed, good or bad; d) imputation can be emitted as well concerning God, as far as his external actions are concerned, yet one cannot attribute responsibility to Him[**5**]. Thus, we clarified the content of these two notions; despite their differences, they are dealt with together, and most of the theologians plead for their kinship.

Given the diversity of forms of life and of deeds, responsibility takes on various aspects: juridical, political, scientific, practical, social, medical, etc.

Each man, beside other responsibilities, also has **moral responsibility**, which differs essentially from all the other types of responsibility by the fact that it is closely related to moral conscience, which declares us responsible morally, before other institutions give their

verdict in this sense. It obliges us to admit ourselves guilty inside ourselves for our bad deeds, and admit all their consequences, starting with the duty to repair them. This is the specific of moral responsibility, a specific that does not allow identifying it with any other form of responsibility. Beside this difference, resulting from the type of organs by means of which responsibility is exerted, one can observe other differences, as well. Starting from the Christian teaching on personality, consisting in an ontological restoration of the whole human nature, from the old man to the new man, which concerns all our deeds, "*moral responsibility engages all the mistakes of the Christian, actions, words or thoughts, viewed not just from the outside, from the perspective of the objective morality, like the other responsibilities, but also from the interior perspective, aim and intention, as subjective morality, before the objective one*" [6]. Responsibility is characterized, therefore, both by profoundness, looking at the mistakes from their root (Matthew 15: 18-19), and by extension, referring to all the evil actions (Matthew 25: 41-45), words and thoughts by which the moral commandments are breached. Despite all these differences, various responsibilities can be reconciled, when they are one in *responsibility*.

The foundation of human responsibility is given in man's freedom. "*He is responsible, being the subject of his action, since he is its free author. Responsibility is the natural kin of freedom. The animal is not responsible, because it acts out of instinct. Man, however, whose action springs from his inside, from his own decision, is responsible for everything he does*" **[7]**. Even a certain deterministic philosopher, admitting responsibility, acknowledged a definite liberty of man as basis of responsibility.

The Holy Fathers see man's freedom as the most beautiful and precious good [**8**]. They highlight man's capacity to determine himself, the crucial human feature by which he differs from everything that is not subject or person, object or nature, which do not determine themselves in freedom, but are determined. This is the highest form of existence. Man, being placed within the framework of his own power, being the author of his own conduct, is necessarily responsible for everything he does. Of course, because he is a created being with a psycho-physical nature, man cannot have absolute freedom, which belongs only to God, but only relative freedom. This is the psychological freedom, i.e. the possibility of self-determination that belongs to all people, being inherent to the human spirit[**9**].

Freedom and responsibility are inextricably linked, as the two sides of the same act. Freedom is not anarchic but is united with responsibility. Their relationship becomes more evident if we consider that the essence of liberty is not in the possibility to choose between good or evil, but in the permanent tendency towards good, in the stabilization in good. To choose evil is equivalent to exhibiting a deficient freedom, it is not exerting freedom naturally. The reason of sin is not the offspring of free choice, but is the triumph of a sinful passion over the will. The entirety of freedom is given by the full possession of good, as it results as well from the words of our Savior: "*If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free*" (John 8: 31-32). Taken in this sense, freedom constitutes the main basis of responsibility.

Along with freedom, a basis for man's moral responsibility is provided by his conscience, which, under the form of reflection and self-presence, is the faithful witness of our acts. We are aware of what is going on in us, currently, not of what will be, or could be. Our conscience reveals to each one of us the presence of our individual self, as a determining center of our deeds. Through it we feel that we are the real causes of our deeds and we feel that we are responsible for them. Saying "I" we consider ourselves as causal

centers of our life. Responsibility in this case is not a simple logical attribution of the acts to the self-determining self, but a real, moral, causal responsibility. Moreover, our conscience can be counted as a basis of our responsibility also by the fact that, being the truthful witness of our acts, it valorizes them morally. Our conscience shows to us the path of goodness, which it urges us to follow, and signals the evil, warning us not to commit it. Good appears in our conscience as an imperative, but its fulfillment depends, however, on each person's free will. The Christian, knowing God's will, feels obliged to accomplish it, and therefore is responsible if he does not accomplish it. God's Will is a must for our free will. This obligation refers only to those goods necessary for moral perfection, as the virtues, without which the moral nature is missing what it needs to realize its essence in us, and for this absence it is us who are responsible. The conscience of the obligation to comply with the moral order supposes that this order is required for the realization of a supreme purpose. Responsibility therefore is closely related with good, moral order, and the ultimate goal [**10**].

Other bases that may be brought in support of responsibility are: the attention and reflection before doing a deed, our instinctual appraisals, both on our acts and our fellows, etc. Fatalism and determinism suppress responsibility, not admitting an actual causality coming from man. But their objections rather highlight the reasons reinforcing responsibility. "*Responsibility is real, because we are real causes; we are causes, because we exist in reality, because nature and society do not cancel at all the personality they condition; we are morally responsible because we are moral persons with actual causality; we are not what nature and society do in us sometimes also without us, but we are through all that we do ourselves and to the extent to which we do ourselves*". [**11**]

Therefore, the grounds of responsibility are identical to the grounds of subjective morality: freedom and conscience.

Since God is not one Person, but Three Persons possessing a single nature, similarly man has in himself the relation with other persons, bearers of a common nature. Human nature does not feel good in isolation; it asks for replenishment, it gets rich by reciprocity and dedication. Every human being has God's image in himself, yet, in another sense, the image of each one of us is according to that of our fellows. The free and aware relation between persons forms the content of human life. From this relation springs man's personal moral responsibility towards his fellows. [**12**]

We live the feeling of responsibility towards other people, only when we feel that they are equal or superior to us, when we consider them as sons of God. When we look at our neighbor as at someone having eternal value, to whom, through our lives, we could endanger not just a transient life, but an eternal life, when we see him in the name of God, then our sense of responsibility towards him is ever present.

Any attitude an animal may have toward man, man will not get angry with it, will not feel offended by the attitude of the animal, will not consider it responsible; man will feel offended only by another man, "*this is so because man recognizes the value and the freedom of his fellow and waits for an act of closeness and dedication from him, to get richer. When a neighbor refuses this dedication or causes harm, man feels offended, disregarded, because he has a value that must be respected, and requirements to be fulfilled by his neighbor*" [**13**]. The Christian morality emphasizes precisely this dedication among fellows. Christian morality is service to God, proven by our service to our fellow. Christ our Redeemer asks of every Christian to be "*salt and light*" (Matthew 5, 14-16) for his fellow, to be an occasion of help, an exhortation and an impetus to moral renewal.

On the contrary, if a Christian does not make himself the "*the fragrance of Christ*" (2 Cor. 2:15-17), toward the life of his fellow, but commits acts that are hostile to God's commandments, making himself a stumbling block (2 Cor. 6: 3-10) for his neighbor, he is responsible for the misdeeds of his fellow, which he produced, directly or indirectly, by being a stumbling block for his fellow. His responsibility doubles in this case. Our responsibility is greater than the one of those we scandalized. "*If the responsibility for our acts is heavy enough, what will happen when the acts of our fellow are going to be added to it, how are we going to be saved? If not to save another is a sin, it is all the more a sin to scandalize, to occasion the failure of our fellow's salvation*" [**14**]. You can see from this that responsibility for our fellow's mistakes triggers, therefore, responsibility for his salvation. Scandalizing his fellows, the Christian not only does not edify, does not serve his brethren, as he should, on the contrary, he tears down the creation, and not a human one, but God's Creation. Our responsibility for our fellow's salvation is also shown by Saint Paul the Apostle, when he says: "*do not destroy by what you eat that brother for whom Christ died*" (Rom. 4:15).

2. Life is the prime responsibility for Christians

The Christian is responsible to his fellow first because through his bad deeds, he takes towards him an attitude contrary to the Christian morality, causing him harm and suffering; then, he is responsible for the mistakes of his fellow, caused directly or indirectly by him. "*Such people sin against Christ; by the stumbling blocks they produce, they batter their brethren's conscience, they hurt the Lord's mysterious body, which includes the scandalized person as well. Such people want to tear down, by their ambition and immorality, what our Savior Christ has built by His holy life and His Sacrifice*". [**15**]

The Christian is responsible for the misdeeds of his fellows for which he is not a direct or indirect cause, but which he did not exhort his fellows not to do. He must find the right time, place and tact for his observation to be fruitful and not lead to the aggravation of the evil. "*When we see our fellows arguing furiously or committing other sins, how can we remain passive, or, even more painfully, how can we enjoy ourselves feasting our eyes on this scene? What can be more inhuman? You see them tearing one another, and you remain with your arms crossed? Are they beasts? No, they are people who have the same nature as you. Do not just look at them, but stop the argument, bring them back to their peace and honor. Make them blush for their unworthy conduct. How come you do not feel that through them you dishonor yourself, because you are a partaker of the same nature?*" [**16**].

The Christian is responsible to his fellow also for the good deeds he could have done for him, but which he did not do. "*So the person who knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*" (James 4: 17). This condemns the attitude of indifference towards the needs of our fellow. "*Let no one seek his own advantage, but that of the other*" (1 Corinthians 10: 24). The Christian cannot pass his fellow by indifferently. He must follow the example of our Savior, Who "*came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (Mark 10: 45). God gives man gift through his fellow. This means that each of us has a great responsibility, namely to always be available to God, as a mediator of His benefactions to our fellows. In this case, the responsibility to our fellows is comprised in that to God. On the basis of human solidarity, the personal responsibility for the deeds of our fellow, the way that they have been analyzed, extends infinitely. [**17**]

The measure of responsibility is the measure of guilt: we are responsible to the extent to which we have worked with freedom and knowledge. Total, partial or no guilt is followed by total, partial or no responsibility. Various causes such as: lack of knowledge and mistake,

dementia, coercion, sinful passions, mental diseases may suppress, decrease or cancel responsibility. Regarding the lack of knowledge, we need to differentiate between innocent and guilty lack of knowledge, since the latter entails responsibility. Similarly, coercion, in some cases, when it cannot affect the acts and the interior states of the Christian, triggers responsibility. Various circumstances may increase or decrease responsibility, giving rise to intermediate levels of responsibility. Acts arising out of habit, which cannot cancel freedom, entail responsibility.

The sphere of responsibility is immense. It has no other limits than those of the present and future mankind. The society prolongs up to the infinity every word, thought and deed of ours, so the limit of responsibility is the infinity. Trying to hierarchize responsibility, we can set several levels: "*one of man in general, one of the Christian, which in turn can have several levels. That of the simple Christian, and another one, a much higher one, for the one called to lead the Christians to salvation; we can speak of an unimaginably high responsibility of the monk, who, out of his own will and without being forced by anyone, has dedicated his life as a gift to God. This [responsibility] grows when ordination is added to it.*" [18]

Generally, the level of responsibility increases according to the talents, hierarchic level, knowledge of each person and it is divided in nuances according to the nature of the body, individuality, age, temperament, sex, education, heredity, social status, internal and external influences in the framework of which a person lives. "*That servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will be beaten with many blows. But the one who did not know and did things worthy of blows will be beaten with few blows.*" (Luke 12:47-48).

Our responsibility also increases when we rather throw ourselves in the way of temptations and run away from the way of virtues. It increases with the easiness of avoiding the mistake, with the presence of the advice not to commit it, with the awareness of the malice of the deed, with the high degree of straining and deliberation required by an action. When the decision is your own your responsibility is heavier than when you were counseled or exhorted by another to do some act. Saint John Chrysostom often warned his believers when they were clapping their hands at the sermon, telling them that, by this, their level of responsibility increases [19]. Then, responsibility grows proportionally with the number of fellows who have been scandalized or drawn towards sin. We should not believe that if we found collaborators to sins, we shall be justified; this will add to our punishment, just as the serpent has been punished more than the woman, and the woman more than man.[20] Our frequent attempt to decrease our responsibility to the detriment of our fellow, invoking various mitigating circumstances is mere illusion; we remain responsible.

The forums deciding on responsibility are: our conscience, human judgment, and the last, absolutely valid, is God's. It is very hard to decide on the degree of responsibility of a person. Therefore, it is recommended that, when we are not obliged to do so formally, we ought to leave it to God, the Judge of all, and we ought to be as demanding as possible with our own person. This does not annul the endeavor of each one of us, of straightening, in the spirit of love and humility, the one fallen into sin. As a consequence of responsibility, good deeds bring perfection to each person, setting human nature free from the bondage of sin, and guarantee everlasting life and happiness. Evil deeds, on the contrary, destroy human nature more and more, chaining it in sins and jeopardizing man' perfection and salvation, leading man to eternal punishment.

The Christian, when he has committed a sin, has fallen, he no longer has the same value that he had before, because sin brings a loss for its author as well as for other people. As a result, "*it is necessary for the author to repair these losses and nullify their consequences*" [**21**]. Not to do so would be to commit a new mistake, namely breaching the law and the duty to repair the mistakes for which you are responsible. Any sin is moral disorder, preparing the way for other disorders. Hence, the need for the guilty person to realize a "*restitutio in integrum*" of the moral order, in him and outside him.

A direct restoration of a moral order is not possible, but only an indirect one, giving back to the order what has been taken from it, i.e. destroying the sin committed and healing the disease produced by committing it [**22**]. This can be done only by an ontological moral transformation, determined by heartfelt repentance. It is an act of will, since the will comes to hate the evil it once loved, wants not to have wanted it, wants to want it no more. By it, we become full masters over the past full of mistakes, which as act of historical chronology cannot be changed, but whose sense can be changed, from obstacle to good, into basis of a new life. Every moment of our past life, without being thrown out of us, can be cleaned from the evil in it, as one can clean a spring from the mud in it. Taking hold of the past, by remembering it with regret, we can change it, not leaving it empty of the regretted act, but filling it with a basis for a new life. In the place of a sin, thus springs a source of the new life. Repentance must not refer only to certain acts, but to the whole life, so that the new man may rise and grow instead of the old man.

But repentance is not just an individual matter, but also a matter of relationship with God and our fellows. By repentance, we admit ourselves guilty for having disregarded this relationship through our unworthy life. To do this, we need to show our repentance to God by our confession in the presence of the Confessor, as our fellow. It is to God that we can and must admit ourselves accountable, guilty, because it is to Him that we are superlatively accountable. The mending of our errors and the renewal of our life is a common work of God and of ourselves. By this, our responsibility diminishes up to total abolition; this happens by virtue of the promise of our Savior: "*Receive the Holy Spirit! Whoever's sins you forgive, they stand forgiven; whoever's sins you pronounce unforgiven, they remain unforgiven.*" (John 20: 22-23).

The conscience of responsibility is a main factor on which progress depends, both in the moral life, and in other fields of activity. It stems from the awareness of the moral dignity and sense of every person in this life. "*If I preach the Gospel, I do not have a ground for boasting, for it is my duty to do so. Woe is me, if I do not preach the Gospel!*" (1 Corinthians 9: 16). Saint Paul the Apostle was continually pushed by his awareness of his responsibility for his life of persecutor of God, then for the mission received and for the salvation of his believers. For this reason, he worked more than all the other Apostles.

John Chrysostom says: "*we consider only the faults surrounding us and do not think at all about the grievances and wrongs we commit every day. Hence, our complaints. If we were to make an accurate calculation of the wrongs done in a single day, then we would see how many evils we are responsible for. Say no more: I do not know what ought to be done and therefore I am not guilty, if I do not do that. If you were to do all the things you know to be good, the others would be revealed to you in the end*". [**23**]

The awareness of the responsibility for the past mistakes gives a strong and permanent impetus, driving us towards progresses in the future, thus helping us advance in the moral life. And, however high we may rise on the ground of our achievements, this conscience is always above them. It is colored with regret for the sins of the past, with

discontent for the imperfection of the virtues achieved, a discontent sprung from the awareness that it would have been possible to work more and better, that what we have achieved is only something insufficient compared to what could have been achieved. In this regard, responsibility entails, as we said in the beginning, good works as well, because every virtue has an imperfection of it. Today's progress becomes an accusation for the past. No matter how many good deeds someone could do, he will feel that he has not done enough. "*We are unworthy servants; we have done no more than we were obliged to do*" (Luke 17:10). In fact, this is the correct and full meaning of what the Christian understands by humility. Therefore, one cannot talk about good deeds in excess. It is precisely here that the ever living dynamism characteristic of the Orthodoxy lies. From it, a powerful zeal is born, new decisions, for the good to get incarnated in all the actions of our individual and community life. The sense of responsibility is the needle with which God spurs our hearts incessantly; responsibility is His hand pulling us higher and higher, to Him [**24**].

Conclusion

Responsibility has, therefore, a double character: regret and dissatisfaction for the past deeds and unfailing confidence in one's possibilities for the future; it is awareness of one's sinfulness, yet without losing hope. In this sense, it can be counted as a virtue not in itself, as the others, but always remaining dissatisfied with the achievements of the other virtues, regretting the sins, while driving the virtues ahead, being a sort of engine for them.

The Holy Fathers strongly recommend the awareness of responsibility as a factor of progress in life. This awareness should not be exaggerated, in which case it could lead to discouragement and disillusionment. This cannot be counted as something unimportant either, in which case it would lead to indifference and recklessness. It ought to be well-reasoned, proportional to the mistakes and virtues committed, with one's talents and hierarchic level, and with all the other criteria specific of each person.

In this case, the awareness of responsibility also becomes a factor of cultural and material progress, in social life. Having this feeling, each man, as a member of the society, understands his mission, understands that the welfare of his fellows depend on him, too, that he also has his share of responsibility for his fellows' suffering. *This feeling always reminds every man that in the place he has in the society, he has the mission not to be served but to serve, not to exploit his brothers but to do good to all, not to satisfy his selfishness but to sacrifice himself for his fellows' good, as our Saviour Christ has served and has sacrificed Himself for the salvation and the welfare of all the people.* Accomplishing his work in this way, each one of us is contributing to the good progress of the society on the path of welfare and happiness desired by each of us. Thus, each one of us breaks his shell of life draining selfishness, comes back to life, becomes a brother to his fellows, realizing a social harmony in which each of us finds the environment needed to develop his personality to his advantage and to the benefit of the society he is part of. [**25**]

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The idea of Santa Claus in terms of Cognitive Sciences.
Cultural persistence and interference with the Christian Religion

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ABSTRACT

The idea of Santa Claus is a universal one, which has been carried on for generations despite many obstacles. Although related to fantasy and imagination, he belongs to all cultures and for children he maintains a real presence. Cognitive Science examines the idea of this mysterious individual and brings clarification to his existence in society. Because this "superhero" plays a part in society, he needs a mental structure that can be imagined, a particular and specific cognitive structure. The study identifies the cognitive mechanisms by which the idea of Santa Claus is generated. The history of Santa has interfered with religion since ancient times. He is sometimes confused with religious figures. Cognitive Sciences as applied to religion seem to confirm the universality of religious beliefs and a certain similarity between the idea of Santa Claus and that of holy persons, such as St. Nicholas. However, there are opinions within this field of research that differentiate between the two areas: fantastic and religious.

Keywords: Cognitive Science; Santa Claus; St. Nicholas; mind; ideas;

INTRODUCTION

It is known that Santa Claus is a positive mythical character, who brings gifts to all the children on Christmas night. In 2016, greater than 25% of the global population was under the age of 15 **[1]**. As such, in a population of approximately 7.5 billion people, 1.8 billion children should have received a gift from a lone individual, in one night. In Romania, only 16% of the country's population was under the age of 15, and so to a population of 19.8 million people, 3.1 million were brought joy, on one night, by the presence of Santa Claus **[2]**. How is it that this one person can be everywhere, can travel around the globe in a single night? He seems to defy the human condition through a particular *omnipresence*.

He delivers gifts with the help of a flying sleigh, which is led by his reindeer. He inhabits a northern land (commonly Finland or in Canada) from which he departs annually. He enters houses via chimneys, even though his physique does not appear to enable this action, or perhaps he enters through a window, without it ever actually being opened. He seems to defy the laws of physics. It needs to be added that modern imaginings of Santa Claus see him dressed in red clothing, with a long, white beard. He is, as such, a person of significant age, capable of *superhuman or super physical* feats.

Santa Claus comes when he is called. He recieves letters from children throughout the world, which contain their deepest wishes. The Ethnology magazine counts no less than 7,097 languages and dialects spoken worldwide in 2016 **[3]**. In theory, each language could be used by a child in each culture. It is extraordinary that Santa Claus can therefore understand all these languages and the wishes of all children, without any confusion among the requests made of him.

And yet, does not come to all children. Therefore, the effort to visit all children is smaller and with it the effort of visiting each and every one of them is reduced: he only comes to those children who have been good! He knows in detail what children have done every day, throughout the years, if they listen to their parents, if they received good academic grades, even though he was not present at every occasion, positive or negative. There is nobody who supplies this information by which he judges every child, thereby making it a mystery how he comes to know the life of each child. It can be said that there is omniscience to Santa Claus.

As such, Santa Claus is a remarkable character, who defies human standards in bringing happiness to a host of children. A fantastic mythological personality, who works in mysterious ways, which are both unknown and surprising. From an anthropological point of view, there exists a similarity between him and other personalities of a religious nature being that they all possess the afore mentioned characteristics. Cognitive science shows that the manner in which a person believes in or imagines a person such as Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas is universally determined by cognitive mental mechanisms which can be both observed and analyzed. For this reason, this paper will often refer to cognitive science applied to religion in order to analyze the idea of Santa Claus. Finally, we will use the same instruments in attempting to define the two domains: fantasy and religion.

Children are the ones who imagine and believe in Santa Claus. In a survey interview based on a sample of 72 children, evidence was found connecting a predisposition to fantasy and causal thinking. The latter grows throughout childhood, causing the idea of Santa Claus to remain among the impossible of fantastic [4]. At the age of 7 it seems that this change occurs being that by the age of 9, almost all the children in the group no longer believed in the reality that is Santa Claus. It is to be remarked that the recommendation is that children should believe in this persona, even in a time when the idea is over-commercialized. The sense of generosity that comes discreetly, of altruism in the family or of cohesion between the generations is positive aspects that should not be lost [5]. It is very interesting that children so effectively attribute the same power to both Santa Claus as well as God [6].

1. Cognitive Science describes ideas as a product of a mental mechanism

Cognitive science or cognitivism, by which it is also known, represents a new wave of research of the human mind as was borne in the Anglosaxon world between the years 1950 and 1960, at the same time as the cybernetics of Norbert Weiner. The appearance of artificial intelligence and the development of the computer increasingly grow until it includes the explanation of human intelligence and transforms psychology into cybernetics [7]. As with a machine designed to calculate, the mind is defined as computations with symbolic representations, it is formed by structures which operate by routine and repetitive algorithms. A mind that knows does nothing other than manipulate elementary units (symbols) following precise rules. Fyodor was among the first to view the mind as a grammatical game of representations, such as „language of thought" (*mentalese*) [8]. To better understand the reduction of symbols to mental grammar, we must cast our minds back to Turing's machine [9]. The metaphor which forms the basis of the research is the calculations of a machine which analyses using a binary code of zeros and ones. The human brain is also a machine that calculates. Although many criticisms have been made of this reductive model, it remains the main fest behind all other theories that support this scientific approach. In turn, the brain – the privileged place of the mind, is described successively as

the sum of elementary units (neurons) which operate following precise biochemical principles.

The objective is to study the mental processes through which information is obtained by the cognitive system, after which they may be expanded, memorized or recovered. However, if cognitive science begin by analyzing the human mind as an information processor (a thinking machine), then it is transformed by analytical interpretation in its entirety, body and mind. In its latest version, Cognitive Science does not limit itself to a body that ontologically depends on a mind; it understands that the biological mechanisms of the body are rules for the functioning mind. Here we can reflect on the latest research with a view to Embodied Cognition **[10]**.

The model used to explain the mental process is similar to software used to expand external information (*input*) and retransmits information (*output*) in the form of representations, organized in semantic, or cognitive, networks. In this way, importance is placed on a series of phenomena relating to the human experience as a whole: perception, sensation, impression, thought, learning, rationalizing, memory, problem solving, attention, language, emotion and faith.

In its framing, Cognitive Sciences include multidisciplinary research, the object of which is to study cognition/knowledge of a system that thinks, naturally or artificially. Of the connected disciplines that operate in different areas of research, yet which together propose to clarify how the mind functions, the following can be included: psychology, artificial intelligence, linguistics, philosophy of the mind, as well as ethnology, genetics, anthropology, economics, mathematics, as well as religion. Cognitive Science seeks to move ideas or beliefs to a biological basis, and as such, its last frontier is neuroscience.

This is how any entity that studies ma, who makes any contact with him, is translated through prisms of mental mechanisms, which gives knowledge, memory, feelings. The experience of Santa Claus can be reduced to an observable anatomical process, because it is a way of interpreting an event, as has been observed – mythological, in the form of mental calculations. The premise, on which this is based, is confirmed by social data. Santa Claus is a universal individual. Therefore, perhaps the human mind possesses the characteristics to generate, memorize and recall the idea of a similar person. The hypothesis is that there also exists a universal algorithm for the idea of Santa Claus.

The cognitive and biological theory of Santa Claus, the mythical character who appeals to the human system of belief, is strongly tied to the brain's modularity and the mind's capacity to sustain this representation in this time. The idea of Santa Claus is generated in a way similar to a mental compartment, a mechanism designed to resolve specific cognitive problems. Yet Santa Claus belongs in a superhuman, or fantasy sphere, and as there exists a specialized way of interpreting language or processing visual information, the person who imagines this individual has to have a specific way of thinking. There exists a classic distinction between the right side of the brain (creative, religious, artistic functions) and the left (concrete functions). Even though the two spheres of the brain have a symmetrical structure, some intellectual functions vary: the left hemisphere contains language and logical functions, while the other controls emotions, perceptions, spatial knowledge, creative capacity and creative problem solving. The idea of Santa Claus would be constructed predominantly in the right brain: "*the world children confront is predominantly novel, so their dominant right hemisphere is willing to consider all sorts of possibilities. Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy can seem reasonable to a right hemisphere. The school's focus on the left hemisphere analysis, precisions, and efficiency might thus*

reduce student's interest in and ability to develop insightful solutions to problems that already have a conventional solution" **[11]**.

2. Construction of the idea of Santa Claus. Agency and Anthropomorphism

The origins of the idea behind a supernatural persona – be they based on fantasy or religion, have a natural impact on the hyperactivity of the mind. Following American psychologist Justin Barrett, the human mind formed of three main mental modules, which function in an automatic way, subconsciously **[12]**. The primary level of understanding the basic formation of the world: the animal kingdom, plants or machines. Man organizes perceptions and distributes them according to internal mental criteria, in an unconscious way. The secondary level attributes intention to objects *(agency detection device)*. In other words, man is gifted with a mental mechanism through which he knows when a being thinks or is willfully aware of their actions **[13]**. The mind creates a scenario and assigns to it *agency*, this means it sees the world through mental disposition and creates a meaning in a hyperactive way *(hyperactive meaning-maker)*, as Gazzaniga stated **[14]**. The tertiary level, named *facilitation* by Barrett **[15]** refers to interpretation and prediction of peer behavior, such as faith, intention, hope and will. In practice, a particular form of *agency* arises around the age of 4 which is also called the theory of the mind. The central idea of *agency* comes from the innate tendency to identify a cause in all observed phenomena **[16]**. The concept of Santa Claus could be generated by a mechanism which searches for sense in an inexplicable action, such as the way presents appear overnight without an identifiable best owner.

The same author, Justin Barrett, conducted a series of experiments to demonstrate that humans have two distinct modes in which they consider the divine: reflexive (theological or dogmatic) through which „non-human" characteristics are attributed, and non-reflexive through which human characteristics are attributed **[17]**. The first ideas usually oppose logic: the divine is capable of giving simultaneous attention to a greater number of things, occupies more space, comes alive, moves through walls, etc. However, if an immediate response is required, it is observed that divinity gives attention to a singular detail; it moves from one place to another, it has to be seen to be believed. This understanding of God is in reality faster than that of theology and is far more present in daily life. It can be affirmed that at an instinctual level the supernatural is thought of in an anthropomorphic way, i.e. it is personified to be similar to those who discover it.

Human evolution has created mental predispositions which lead to the belief that most actions undertaken are done so with a certain level of intention. Anthropomorphism is a general and universal characteristic of human thought through which individuals explain non-human phenomena in humanized terms **[18]**. Although science concerns itself with mechanical analogies: planetary systems for describing the atom or waving motions for describing behavior of particles. As such, anthropomorphism is a method of knowing/interpreting in a manner that is direct, immediate and natural. In a well-known analysis, Guthrie comments that religion is the result of anthropomorphism because humans assigned intelligent causes to natural phenomena, calling them divinity.

Guthrie notes that anthropomorphism is a way of human life. More so, in those instances when individuals find themselves faced with ambiguous clues in their surroundings, they tend to see human faces in the clouds or landscapes **[19]**. It is highly probable that the selection of a human model for interpreting mysterious or strange phenomena is linked to the fact that humans are in essence complex creatures, which creates surprise or novelty more than any other mechanical or biological process from their

surroundings [20]. Anthropomorphism can be maintained by a number of motivating factors: the natural tendency to see an animated world, the mind's inclination to solve ambiguities gaps in perception, knowledge which is not a simple imprinting (rather an interpretation), and especially as the mind tends to objectify any feeling or idea. The final motivation is important in understanding that any religion promotes immanence which comes with transcendence, a hierophany of the sacred. When discussing gods, spirits and demons, the human mind has a universal tendency to materialize them, to transform them into objects and impose on them the laws of nature. The brain is a device which tends to see persons and objects [21].

Memory and transmission

A culture is a combination of two types of recurrent representations: on the one hand there exist beliefs and their interpretations; while on the other there are texts and rituals, that is, any kind of public manifestation of a material nature. Dan Sperber differentiates between those representations which are in the mind and those which are tangible: the former are cognitive models of the brain, while the latter are verbal and non-verbal expressions of material culture. In reality there exists a close connection between the two, which emerges from the cultural study from a cognitive perspective. The two types of representations are not to be confused and given positivism, they are maintained autonomously and are reciprocally determined through their close ties. Sperber seeks to reduce the two types of representation to a natural dimension. There are natural laws which determine the relationship between them and his goal is to discover these laws. They find themselves at the ultimate level of culture and explain phenomena in an objective manner. One text dedicated to this project, *Explaining Culture. A Naturalistic Approach,* is most recently translated as *Contamination with Ideas* (in Italian) [22].

Sperber takes the position of a reductionist. Natural reductionism of the mind is the attempt to eliminate the distance between natural science and the science of psychology, in order to identify material causes for all cognitive processes [23]. His method of study is to look at the processes which interfere between one's mind and environment. In these contexts, some ideas (such as that of Santa Claus) are transmitted with greater ease between two people, which cause us to forget that they possess particular characteristics and are sustained by typical psychological mechanisms which are universal. Similar to the spreading of an epidemic, these ideas invade the human mind and spread with ease, seemingly immune to human defences. Such an epidemic spreads with such speed that it reaches whole populations and remains with entire generations. They have a certain autonomy with which they trick a person's cerebral immunity and synchronize themselves with the cognitive structure. Ideas such as that of Santa Claus or those of a religious nature seem to use the mind's mechanisms which are predisposed to certain types of functioning. To be memorized, information does not need to grow in quantity or face new contexts. For a greater incidence, it needs to be poetic and interpretative, that is, to be applicable to a multitude of perceptions. The sole criteria That Sperber accepts for belief in mysterious persons, is that they must be reflexive and open, that is; they must continually build a meaningful experience.

Counterintuitive ideas

However, ideas of Santa Claus and those of a religious nature (God, saints, angels, etc.) are not limited to spontaneous processes of anthropomorphism, but contain information which is counterintuitive, that is which contradict ontological categories which these representations tend to evoke. The main thesis of cognitive science is that *Santa Claus has a representation dependent on the natural capacity of the mind.* In other words, the idea of

Santa Claus manages to remain and to transmit itself if he adapts to particular structures of the human mind.

The discovery of cognitive science is that ideas which are not completely understood remain in the mind and do so for a longer period. We can consider simple expressions such as „the sky is crying", „the caressing sun", „nature suffers"; all of these are representations without definitive interpretations and as a result of this motive, more remains in the cerebral machine. On deeper analysis, it is observed that these ideas not only exist longer, but are also communicated more frequently, in the sense that they attract immediate attention and are more easily remembered. Memorizing these incomplete ideas is involuntary, more than a conscious and voluntary act of learning.

Counterintuitive ideas such as that of Santa Claus are cognitively effective as they function in a large perceptive sphere; they create cognitive representations where visible and evident clues are absent. The human mind can assume, even in the absence of the physical.

Sperber divides mental ideas between those which are intuitive and those which are reflexive [24]. Put it simply, those which are intuitive give common descriptions to worldly everyday things, be they unconscious and innate. It is said that a table is a solid, not liquid, object, and as such an intuitive idea of what a table is, exists. Reflexive ideas do not have a direct correlation with objects and are representations of a second order, which is combined with intuitive ideas. For example, a person is assigned a specific spatial place, while at the same time Santa Claus is given many, even though he is a personification. God is omnipresence. One of the dogmatic definitions of Jesus Christ is "*risen from the dead trampling over death by death...*" [25]. All are reflexive idea being that omnipresence does not exist as an intuitive common to humans. Reflexive ideas are conserved unclearly and are presented as „*representations by half"*. They are not explicit and allow space for successive mental speculations. With their symbolic power, they call the mind to continual cognitive tricks and do not limit themselves to unique and precise solutions. In other words, in our day Santa Claus embodies different forms dependent on geography and culture, however continues to possess an air of mystery.

Reflexive ideas are „rationally incomplete". Sperber affirms that *they are not errors*, but have differing rationalizations to logical and empirical science. In comparison to logical science they are meta-representations and will never be considered intuitive. They are borne of man's evolutionary capacity to represent a phenomenon in a different context in which it initially existed [26].

Boyer proposes a more detailed description of the mental mechanisms which influence knowledge of a religious type. Religious ideas are counterintuitive. Counter intuitiveness is that which opposes classic definitions, logic, intuition, concepts and acceptable everyday behaviors. We can call to mind that Santa Claus flies on a sleigh. It is interesting that this opposes classic methodology, which saw in religion an extraordinary and out of the norm phenomenon, to propose something religious as a natural manifestation [27]. Cognitive sciences propose a supernatural experience within the limits of natural human cognition. The author observes that ideas of a religious nature share a common feature: they all differ from natural concepts and oppose explicit physical intuition creating a new imaginary ontology of objects and people. A person is capable of defying ageing, as he remains old (Santa Claus does not die). More than a concept, counter intuitiveness has properties which alter natural concepts. A being is described as unknown, comes from an unknown place, yet has a spatial place and is capable of knowing one's thoughts even when they are not verbalized. Pascal Boyer believes that counterintuitive ideas are formed

following an optimal conceptual construction *(conceptual optimum)*, thus it implies a maximum of attention and conceptually intuitive schemes **[28]**. It contravenes expectations without eliminating them. This characteristic is supported by Justin Barrett within the concept of minimum counter intuitiveness **[29]**: unlike theological claims which employ a variety of counter intuitiveness, religious ideas connected to everyday life need limitations as they guide human actions. Everything remains balanced between what is real and imagined, in which fantasy is part of that which is natural. Religious ideas as that of Santa Claus are not complicated; they possess natural elements which lend to their appeal. They must contradict natural intuition, yet also maintain elements of the everyday. At this level Barrett's observation, which complies with the idea that representations which lose themselves in too many counterintuitive abstract characteristics are therefore more difficult to pass on, seems valid **[30]**.

3. The difference between the idea of Santa Claus and Saint Nicholas

The connection between Santa Claus and religion is a timeless one and continues to create confusion. I would mention that the first source of inspiration for Santa Claus is a figure from Christianity, Saint Nicholas of Myra of Lycia (present day Turkey)**[31]**. Nicholas lived in the fourth century and was a Christian bishop from the Anatolian Byzantine province. He became known throughout the world for his generosity towards the needy, his love of children, as well as his concern for sailors. All these gestures of almsgiving he did *discreetly*. For these reasons, his popularity grows in the countries of Occidental Europe, from which colonizers were sent to the lands across the Atlantic. Worship for Saint Nicholas, before the Reformist years, was the strongest dedicated to a religious post. It is not surprising that such a popular personality also reached America, under the name of „Sinterklaas" (the derivation of „Sint Nikolaas").

At first glance, not only does historic and religious idea of Santa Claus intersect. Cognitive Sciences, to which I turned to in order to accomplish this study, seem to introduce transferable validation criteria between Santa Claus and Saint Nicholas. Both persons would appeal to love based cognitive structures of anthropomorphism or counterintuitive ideas. As seen in the introduction, Santa Claus boasts qualities such as omnipresence and omniscience. Saint Nicholas is a historic personality who has been raised to the realm of the saints. A mediator of divine powers, this can be almost simultaneous for believers who turn to him in prayer, he can understand a multitude of languages in which prayers are offered and can read people's minds. Saints are looked upon in this way.

However, there are major differences between the idea of Santa Claus and God or Saint Nicholas. Yet, numerous researchers have stated that fantastic or mythological personalities (such as those in stories, cartoons, or Santa Claus) are perceived differently to religious figures (such as God, saints and angels). For example, the very famous and well known Mickey Mouse combines intuitive elements for becoming a supernatural hero; however he is not an agent of religion for at least three hypotheses **[32]**:

- The 1-st basis itself on a lower grade of anthropomorphism accorded to the agent: people are predisposed to imagine the divine or saints with the same human mind which differentiates from characters in cartoons for the following reasons: **a.** they have an interest in the social dimension, that is, they know from the beginning what their followers are doing and thinking, and **b.** they have some degree of access to strategic social information, that is, they are up to date with all manner of facts and find themselves to be life companions. Santa Claus is yet different to fantastic personalities, such as Mickey Mouse, as he interferes in

human activities and reads the minds of parts of a population (children), even though the information is not strategic. He does not simply exist aesthetically or for entertainment, but intervenes in real life.

-The 2-nd hypothesis highlights the differences of content in meta-representations (meta-representations are representations of representations or beliefs about beliefs). While Mickey Mouse is the same character drawn as the background to everything he represents, superhuman agents, as with saints, have meta-representations which somehow indicate or symbolize their reality (the icon represents the real presence with transposition into another world). Santa Claus differs to Saint Nicholas, because he is a legend, a myth formulated within a meta-representation on a cultural level.

- The 3-rd hypothesis stems from the role of actions which validate, in a specific way, agents of a religious nature. For characters from animated cartoons there are no actions to validate them in the real world, just as with Saint Nicholas there are rituals, prayers, processions, or acts of piety such as the worship of relics. Santa Claus is validated through the creation of a real life context, a type of ritual, in which children receive gifts and sometimes even visit him. Studies show that children from families in which these validations take place, enacting these representations, are more likely to believe in Santa Claus (meta-representation) as opposed to those who merely talk about him.

However, religious ideas not only activate the imagination and create counterintuitive ideas, but also stimulate a person's mind and guide their behavior. Belief in God or in Saint Nicholas builds and nourishes social relations, communal rituals, group identity and a profound emotional state **[33]**.

Meanwhile, Barrett affirms that the idea of Santa Claus is dissimilar tot that of God **[34]**. From the point of view of cognitive science for a religious concept (Saint Nicholas) to be successful it must fulfill the following conditions:

[1] To be counterintuitive
[2] To be an agent of intention
[3] To be in possession of strategic information
[4] To be able to intervene in the real world
[5] To be able to motivate the faithful and strengthen the faith.

As such, Santa Claus seeks to fulfill these conditions; he does not aim to be worshipped in a religious way. This is (1) counterintuitive (he flies); (2) agent of intention (he wishes to bring joy to children); (3) he possesses strategic information (he knows whether children have been good or bad); (4) his actions are visible (he leaves gifts); (5) he motivates actions which express and strengthen faith (children leave him food). However, upon closer examination, the limitations of Santa Claus arise from the fact that he is represented around the world in ways that contradicts these criteria:

- Rarely is he pretended to be counterintuitive: numerous films depict him to have exclusively intuitive attributes (*Rudolph the Red-Nosed* Reindeer, the *Year without Christmas and Santa Claus is coming to Town*). In focus group of 12 people aged between 19 and 21, only half associated counterintuitive attributes with him (immortality, omniscience);

- He is an agent of intention;

- He has strategic information, whether in general or more specifically. He knows whether children have been good or bad, but does not know of the specific events relating to either state;

- Saint Nicholas acts in a detectable way in unpredictable moments and places. The actions of Santa Claus are limited to a single night and in expected places (under the tree);

- Being encountered only one day of the year, children write letter, prepare their boots or their socks at the window, leave biscuits and endeavor to be better behaved for the month of December. It is not a drastic change of behavior. More so, very often Santa Claus ignores the pleas of children and delivers gifts despite what they have done and their public displays of promise. It does not matter if they more or less well behaved. Of the group of 12, only a single respondent maintained major changes in behavior.

Therefore, the idea of Santa Claus does not correspond with criteria for the concept of Saint Nicholas a God. So differing from animated characters through the fact that he intervenes in the real world, he remains a mythological character limited by type, space and action. What is more, with all the cultural and familial efforts to hold on to this personality, Santa Claus disappears in the middle of childhood. The reason for this being that his do not correspond to the criteria of a person of a religious nature conceptualized by the cognitive science of religion. Even though is good and strong, he does not have the conceptual bases to become a type of saint.

CONCLUSION

New theories brought about by the Cognitive Sciences in the studies of the idea of Santa Claus persistently explains it in light of children as well as among most cultures universally. He is different to other personalities encountered. He is not of this world, with characteristics that contradict reality. To have similar success, cognitive science affirms and discovers mental structure which sustains processes of knowing Santa Claus. The discovery of these structures leads to yet another interesting assumption: these structures which are predisposed to belief in anthropomorphic personalities, with counterintuitive qualities are the same which are activated in familiarity with religious persons, the divine, or saints. Although displaying similar superhuman characteristics to religious figures, Santa Claus cannot identify with the idea of Saint Nicholas, as the differences are maintained even by some within the field of Cognitive Sciences.

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The Multiculturalism and the spiritual identity of Europe

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ABSTRACT

Europe must manage the large number of cultures that practically "collide". This is the result of increasing migration and excessive emphasis on economic development at the expense of revaluation of spiritual roots of this civilizational space. In this context, the multiculturalism has become a leitmotif of Western policy. In fact, the multiculturalism can be defined as a normative political theory, which wants to regulate the new situation created by cultural minorities. Unlike the cultural pluralism, which aims acceptance of different cultures and the living together in a given society, the multiculturalism promotes the multiplication of diversity, the idea of blurring nationalist trends, the ridding of minorities traditions and our immersion in the hipermodernism. In the reality imposed by multiculturalism matter only the progress that is inconsistent with the idea of cultural heritage. Today, more and more voices in the political world began to criticize the political and social model imposed by multiculturalism and reaffirm the return to spiritual and cultural values that define Europe.

Keywords: multiculturalism; cultural pluralism; spiritual identity; hipermodernism; cultural minorities;

1. Introduction

What is happening today in Europe? What will be the future of this continent and how it will solve the problems associated, on the one hand, with the multitude of cultures and, on the other hand, which are valences of the meeting between them? In fact, we must ask what is Europe - a geopolitical space or a model of civilization? What were its identitary basis, how did it work? He did it and makes it work only economic engines? These are questions that require more attention from us, are challenges addressed both those who believe in a united Europe that is based on a spiritual identity, but also to those who consider the European project as being "kept alive" only by the economic factors. Becomes acute the alarm signals that warns that Europe goes through a critical period. Is the desperate cry of various forms of crisis: economic, demographic, and migrational and, primarily, of the spiritual identity. In this article I will briefly analyze the challenges of multiculturalism in Europe and those of the spiritual identity of this part of the world.

2. Multiculturalism versus Cultural Pluralism

Should be made clear from the outset that the multiculturalism is a political theory with normative character, differing from the cultural pluralism which involves the coexistence in a society of at least two cultural communities (ethnic, national, religious), each aimed preserving their characteristic identity, values and traditions of its members.[1]

As political theory with normative sense, multiculturalism reacts to "*one of the phenomena resulting from the presence of multiculturality in most of the current states: the explosion of applications to accommodate the difference from the cultural minorities. These claims have not come or do not come only from ethnic minorities, national or religious.*

Many of them came or come from the sexual minorities, feminist organizations, people with unconventional lifestyles or persons with disabilities" [2].

The *cultural pluralism* is a concept that aims acceptance and living together of different cultures in a given society.

The first to use the term "cultural pluralism" is Horace M. Kallen, in 1915, he imagined a nation made up of multi-ethnic European nations, built after the model of "American civilization", who use English as the common language. In Kallen's view, the outline of a great and truly democratic commonwealth can become perceptible. The form that would have it would be that of a federal republic, that would have as "engine" the democracy of the nationalities meant to cooperate voluntarily and autonomously through shared institutions.[3]

The cultural pluralism is the very basis of a society in which individuals can form and develop communities despite the differences in race, age, sex, religion, language and lifestyles. These communities are open systems, and the members can choose to belong to one or several communities simultaneously.

This condition can only exist in a society where there are two or more cultural functional communities, and these communities to adhere to a code of valid values for each one and to promote the use of society's resources for satisfying the needs of all its members. This is considered to be achieved in a society where different cultural communities are recognized and are allowed to participate in, and control those functions and resources considered vital for the proper functioning of the community. Cultural pluralism can not exist in a society in which different cultural communities are living in isolation from each other and / or in competition, in unequal conditions for the sustainability of life or to increase the resources that society produces.[4]

Among the main objectives of the cultural pluralism we can mention the following: helping the ethnic groups in order to strengthen and preserve their identity; overcoming the barriers they face when they want to participate in social and cultural life of the society which received; increased cultural exchanges; supporting immigrants for the easily adaptation to new cultural processes; intercultural fusion.

The multiculturalism was born as a reaction to the cultural pluralism, being a political theory with normative character that wants to regulate the new situation created by cultural minorities. So, in itself, between pluralism and multiculturalism is not a gap, there is no incompatibility. In the event that the multiculturalism is perceived as a form of highlighting the existence of several cultures in a society, it does not conflict with the pluralistic conceptions about the world. Between cultural pluralism and multiculturalism the incompatibilities arise when the latter is considered as a "priority value". In this case the risks of a conflict are evident.

The pluralism involves the assumption of diversity, but do not promote the multiplication of diversity, does not consider that a better world necessarily mean a world very diversified. Pluralism presupposes tolerance and the tolerance means acceptance not promoting of otherness. The aim of pluralism is the integration, and for it to be done it is recommended that the percentage of assimilation to be in relation to the need for integration, not to be overcome, not to arriving at homogeneity, which is not desirable.[5]

Unfortunately, "today's dominant version of multiculturalism is one anti pluralistic. In fact, its intellectual origins are Marxist. Before stopover in the United States and to Americanize, the multiculturalism extracts its vigor from the neo-Marxists Brits, in their turn powerful leaven by Foucault; and spreads on Universities (Colleges) with the introduction of

the "cultural studies" which focuses on hegemony and "domination" of a culture on others." [**6**]

3. The multiculturalism in the European area

The multiculturalism has now become a kind of leitmotif of Western policy, bearer of primordial, universal and undeniable values. Multiculturalism has managed to impose himself by changing the meaning of modernity which no longer corresponds the balance between what we inherited and progress, between memory and utopia. In the reality imposed by multiculturalism counts only the progress, that is inconsistent with the idea of cultural heritage, and creating a world where borders to be abolished.

Because it the ideals of multiculturalism to have finality, is promoted the idea of diminishing nationalistic tendencies, also the elimination of minority traditions and our immersion in hypermodernism. This leads progressively to the disqualification of popular sovereignty in favor of potentiation of the political factor, leading to a substitution of human rights with democratic sovereignty.

The European Union promoted the multiculturalism through the political elites to the masses of people, creating institutions that preserve and cultivate diversity and, at the same time, to monitor and protect the "*rights and identity of the cultural or the religious minorities. The slogan 'unity in diversity' of the European Union is edifying for the philosophy approached by this supranational organism, through the emergence of a common identity, consciously accepted, synchronous and politically motivated by all the constituent parts for accepting European identity. Different moments of formation of the component parts - minority community is formed in existing society a priori - and maintaining of group identity are reflected asymmetry of the multiculturalism.*"[**7**]

European Union perspective on the multiculturalism, influenced by the theories of sociologists Émile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tönnies, envisages the developments on the social level, from the stage where communities arise because of certain common features (language, code of ethics, cultural similarities, external physical resemblance etc.), reaching gradually to the birth of a community that is based on the interdependence of individuals within the same group.[**8**]

In Europe, the multiculturalism is primarily address to the first or second generation of immigrants or refugees.[**9**] And, in this situation, over time, the multiculturalism has suffered numerous critics. Thus, in October 2010, the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, referring to the vast Muslim communities in his country, said about multiculturalism that is "a total failure" and the idea that members of different cultures can live happily "side by side" did not work.[**10**] In the context of immigrants crisis, in December 2015, at a meeting of her Christian Democratic Union party, Angela Merkel said that "*those who seek refuge with us also have to respect our laws and traditions, and learn to speak German*"[**11**]. Also, referring to the multiculturalism, she said that "he leads to parallel societies, and therefore **multiculturalism remains a grand delusion**."[12].

After the declaration of Angela Merkel in October 2010, another great European leader, David Cameron, affirming the need for a national identity as strong in order to confront and dismantle extremist ideologies, in February 2011, declared: "*Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream. We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values. So when a white person holds objectionable views – racism, for example – we rightly condemn them. But when equally*

unacceptable views or practices have come from someone who isn't white, we've been too cautious, frankly even fearful, to stand up to them." [**13**]

Joining the growing number of critics of the multiculturalism, in February 2011, the European political leader Nicolas Sarkozy invited to a show of the TV station TF1, declared that the multiculturalism is a "failure" in Europe. In connection with this subject, said the following: "*The truth is that in all our democracies, **we're too concerned with the identity of the people coming in and not enough with the identity of the country that's taking them in**. We don't want a society in which communities co-exist alongside each other. If you come to France, you agree to base yourself in a single community, the national community. If you don't accept that, you don't come to France.*"[**14**] Next, Sarkozy spoke of the impact that has Islam on French society, but in the context of in which Islamic community in France is the largest in Europe, he believes that his compatriots Muslims "*should be able to live and practice their religion like anyone else ... but it can only be a French Islam and not just an Islam in France. ...Our Muslim compatriots must be able to practise their religion, as any citizen can, but we in France do not want people to pray in an ostentatious way in the street. ... The French national community cannot accept a change in its lifestyle, equality between men and women and freedom for little girls to go to school*"[**15**].

The statements of these three important European political leaders are significant in this context in which immigration boomed in Europe. Multicultural policies, that have been promoted within the European Union, seems to do not have the desired effect, therefore, now is trying an affirmation of the fundamental values of each state, an applied integration of immigrants into the national communities.

4. Spiritual identity of Europe

The European Community puts today, more often, the issue of the Christian roots to build the Europe of tomorrow. During the drawing up the European Constitution in 2005, the debate on recognition of the role of Christianity in forming Europe was very tense, the end result being the rejection of the mention of the Christian roots in the Constitution.

The issue of the Christian roots of Europe was again restarted on 9 May 2016, when the European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Pierre Moscovici, former Minister of Economy and European Affairs in France, was asked what he thinks about election as mayor of London of an Muslim, Sadiq Khan, a first in the history of Western Europe for a capital, he responded: "*Europe, even if it's true that on our continent a majority of the population are, let's say of Christian religion or culture, **Europe is not Christian. I don't believe in the Christian roots of Europe**. I believe Europe is diverse, united and diverse*"[**16**].

From a historical perspective, denying the Christian roots of Europe is a serious error. Europe was born on the ruins of the Roman Empire, Christianity became the official religion thanks to the proclamation of the Edict of Milan in 313, by Emperor Constantine the Great. It is also the result of the long and the ordeal confrontation between the Germanic peoples converted to Christianity to dominate the continent politically. The baptism of Clovis in 498, then the Carolingian alliance with the pope, was decisive stages that have led to the formation of Europe. Charlemagne's empire, proclaimed in 800, which included in large part the territory that corresponds to Western Europe, was Christian. Charlemagne sets the target to convert its neighboring peoples and the beginning of Muslim Spain reconquest. For almost thirteen centuries, until the eighteenth century, Christianity was the one who was the link between the European societies. It must be said that during the Middle-Ages obscure periods, when Europe suffered from the chaos of invasion, monasteries and abbeys were

keepers of the cultural heritage of Christian Europe. The Christianity, along with his rituals, leaves its mark on everyday life of citizens. Through the Church are created the first educational institutions, first hospitals, the first charitable operas are performed. Everyday life of European citizens is governed by the spirit of Christian living. So whether it is about epidemics or healings, rich or poor harvests of the field, victory or defeat in military campaigns, all are subordinated to divine Providence. Architectural Heritage of Europe itself clearly bears the imprint of the Christian influences, churches are those that have a decisive role in this regard, by their presence everywhere.[17]

If in the Middle Ages Europe could be characterized as a *universitas Christiana*, from about 50 years was promoted the model of a multicultural Europe, which denies its Christian contribution to the formation of Europe. Denying the Christian roots of Europe is the consequence of secularization and of the whole corollary of postmodern and hypermodernist influences, between them the secularization occupies a prominent place.

Referring to the future of Europe, at the social-political course and its cultural-spiritual identity, the great French medievalist historian Jacques Le Goff, said the following: "*Europe is under construction. Behold a great hope that will come about only if it takes into account the history: a Europe without history would be orphan and miserable. Because today comes from yesterday's, and tomorrow is the fruit of the past. A past that must not paralyze the present, but to help them to be different in fidelity and progress in new. Between Atlantic, Asia and Africa, our Europe really exist by very long time, drawn by geography and shaped by history, since the time when the Greeks gave her the name it bears. The future must be based on these legacies which, since antiquity, even in prehistoric times, have enriched Europe gradually, making it extraordinarily creative in unity and diversity, inclusively in a wider global context.*"[18]

Unquestionably, Europe still is not lacking in a Christian soul and can still assert its spiritual dimension, but for this to happen it requires effort and sustained involvement of European Christianity as a whole, therefore of all Christian confessions. Europe vitality is the consequence of Christian spirituality, from whose heart pulsates and propels values.

5. Conclusion

The multiculturalism as a policy strategy is becoming increasingly contested by the high European officials and by people who make up actually the true European unity that has developed feeding through its Christian roots.

Certainly the numbers of those who, like Pierre Moscovici, want a uprooted Europe, are many. They believe in a Europe in which only the contribution to the economic welfare matters. In fact, it is possible that their project to be based exactly on Europeans uprooted, in order to create a "Union", in future, where to be received countries such as Turkey, countries that forming the Maghreb, or even the entire African continent. Is it desirable and will be functional a Europe in which nationalities does not matter anymore, particular cultures to be replaced by a "culture of money", to prevail the immigrants, as cheap labor exponents? Certainly the parents of the European project, Monnet, Schuman, Adenauer, De Gasperi, Spaak, Mitterrand, Kohl, Andreotti, Delors did not believe in a European Union where the market prevail. A Europe without Christian roots will be nothing else but a soulless Europe, handcuffed by the non-values dictated by financial markets, by the banks a society of selfishness and of mediocrity that will not in any way take account of the true values.

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Kuhnian Correspondences in Contemporary Doctrinal Development Literature

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades, there has been a plethora of literature that has analyzed and discussed the development of doctrine with much of it challenging the theories of Vincent and Newman. Some of the disagreements are not whether tradition should be a criterion or a factor, but rather to what extent it should be so. Coincidentally, just over fifty years ago, Thomas Kuhn, a philosopher of science challenged the traditional view through which science progresses. Opposing Karl Popper's assertions that science is completely objective, Kuhn believed that although it may follow long periods of stability and steady growth, occasionally there would be watershed moments which would completely revolutionize a particular field leading to a revaluation of long-established idea with not every reason attributed for these revolutions being neither rational nor scientific. Further, there has also been growing awareness in the literature of doctrinal development on factors which influence this progress in Christian teachings. In this paper, the aim is to understand the way some key aspects of Kuhn's work intersect with some of the contemporary theories in the development of Christian doctrine.

Keywords: Kuhnian Correspondences; Contemporary Doctrinal; Literature;

Introduction

Arguably the first treatise on the development of doctrine came from a French monk who sought to refute Donatism and Augustine. Written in 434, Vincent of Lerins authored the *Commonitory*. He believed that the Scriptures were the source of all authority yet knowing that there could be a myriad of possible interpretations, he argued that universal tradition should be a criterion in determining whether a doctrine should be accepted or not.[1]

It would be well over a thousand years before the theme of doctrinal development would again be rigorously tackled. In 1845, the ex-Church of England turned Roman Catholic theologian, John Henry Cardinal Newman, wrote *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine.* Therein the aim was to refute the Reformation and affirm the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church and its teachings. He reaffirmed many of Vincent's thoughts and maintained the importance of tradition on the one hand, and skepticism of new doctrines on the other.

However, over the last few decades, there has been a plethora of literature that has analyzed and discussed the development of doctrine with much of it challenging the theories of Vincent and Newman. Some of the disagreements are not whether tradition should be a criterion or a factor, but rather to what extent it should be so. Coincidentally, just over fifty years ago, Thomas Kuhn, a philosopher of science challenged the traditional view through which science progresses. [2] Opposing Karl Popper's assertions that science is completely objective, Kuhn believed that although it may follow long periods of stability and steady

growth, occasionally there would be watershed moments which would completely revolutionize a particular field leading to a revaluation of long-established idea with not every reason attributed for these revolutions being neither rational nor scientific.

Further, there has also been growing awareness in the literature of doctrinal development on factors which influence this progress in Christian teachings. In this paper, the aim is to understand the way some key aspects of Kuhn's work intersect with some of the contemporary theories in the development of Christian doctrine. Kevin Vanhoozer, Alister McGrath, Rhyne Putnam and Alan Thiselton are discussed and understood with respect to three crucial aspects identified by Thomas Kuhn with respect to scientific progress: the tension between tradition and the development of doctrine, the importance of interpretation in the development of doctrine and the role of communities in the development of doctrine.

For the first theme, Kuhn believed that the tension that exists between tradition and the progress of science is not explicitly stated and is implied in textbooks under assumed paradigms. [**3**] In science, there are problems which are stated where there are universally accepted solutions. However, the training that takes place in the student is to prepare him or her to solve problems for which there are no existing unequivocal answers. Kuhn wrote this paradoxical statement "*the student requires a thoroughgoing commitment to the tradition with which, if he is fully successful, he will break.*"[**4**] Here, an analogy is made with Kuhn's views in this area to the development of doctrine.

Secondly, Kuhn also asserted that worldviews and paradigms play a major role in the development of doctrine. That is, scientific progress does not occur in a vacuum and so results are understood within a background of assumptions and axioms which a scientist brings into his or her work. As he noted "*Scientific knowledge is embedded in theory and rules; problems are supplied to gain facility in their application.*"[**5**] Hence, problems and solutions in science take place within an understood framework which are presumed to be true. The manner by which interpretation takes in the formulation of Christian doctrine will also be investigated in relation to Kuhn's work.

Thirdly, Kuhn was one of the first philosophers of science to state that a community of practicing scientists is crucial in the way science progresses. It is a community who, through sheer weight of numbers, asserts the dominance of a particular paradigm so that any scientific progress is carried out under the auspices of a group of people who are in agreement over a core set of assumptions. This symbiotic relationship between paradigms and communities [**6**] is also analyzed with respect to the development of doctrine.

1. The tension between tradition and the development of doctrine

Thomas Kuhn's work is best known for positing that the progress of science is neither smooth nor free from controversy. Rather, although for the most part it steadily adds new knowledge and advances by the accumulation of new theories, there are times when revolutions take place. Science occurs under an overarching framework or paradigm which acts as a filter through which new results are to be interpreted. When new results appear and cannot be reconciled within this paradigm, then this can be thought of as an anomaly. A single anomaly on its own is not enough to cause a revolution which overthrows an existing paradigm. Rather, one anomaly might become two and two might turn into three and so on. When enough anomalies come to prominence, a crisis might ensue and a search for a new paradigm which can adequately account for the existing theories and the new anomalous occurs.

Naturally, there is an inherent tension present if science does indeed take place in this manner. On the one hand, a dominant paradigm guides and influences the way research is conducted and results are to be understood. New theories do not tend to be surprising and rather they seek to strengthen the status quo and quash any potential dissenting views. Kuhn wrote

No part of the aim of normal science is to call forth new sorts of phenomena; indeed those that do not fit the box are often not seen at all. Nor do scientists normally aim to invent new theories and they are often intolerant of those invented by others. Instead, normal scientific research is directed to the articulation of those phenomena and theories that the paradigm already supplies.[7]

Thomas Kuhn believed that textbooks play an authoritative role in giving the impression that the progress of science has always been accumulating endeavor: "*partly by selection and partly by distortion, the scientists of earlier ages are implicitly represented as having worked upon the same set of fixed problems…No wonder that textbooks and the historical tradition they imply have to be rewritten after each subsequent revolution.*" [8]

Tradition is also of great importance in Christianity, as is the authority responsible for upholding it. Gonzalez remarks "*much of the history of Christian doctrine has been a struggle over tradition – that is, over the question of who is the true representative of tradition, and whose views uphold or deny the tradition.*"[9] McGrath is even more emphatic and echoes Kuhn's thoughts on the subliminal nature of history. He writes

The past, however, remains an obstinate aspect of the present. We do not live within a vacuum, but within a context, the intellectual, cultural and social contours of which have been shaped by the past…The influence of the past paradoxically, is at its greatest precisely when it is undetected or unacknowledged –when certain present day axioms and presuppositions, allegedly self-evident, in fact turn out to represent the crystallized prejudices of an earlier generation. [10]

Subsequently, McGrath proposes that a model which aims to describe doctrinal development must have the following four points: [11]

1. It will be descriptive, not prescriptive so that it is based on the historical study of Christian theology without reference to any preconceived notions.
2. It will acknowledge the parallels between the episodic and discontinuous development of scientific theories, and the development of Christian doctrine.
3. It avoids foundationalist assumptions.
4. It recognizes that the developmental pressures which may be identified can point in different directions, sometimes leading to different local outcomes, or occasional appearances of stagnation or retrogression.

An existing paradigm must allow and even encourage new and unprecedented results which are completely unexpected. Again, Kuhn wrote "*…and this is the point- the ultimate effect of this tradition-bound work has invariably been to change the tradition. Again and again the continuing attempt to elucidate a currently received tradition has at last produced one of those shifts in fundamental theory…*"[12] Wiles was perhaps the first person to note a parallel with Kuhn's scientific revolutions and the way doctrines develop.[13] He also described the issue of development of doctrine yet the need to safeguard it against subjectivity. He proposed that perhaps the unifying thread is that there is a continuity of doctrinal aims. [14] Wiles wrote with respect to the Church Fathers "*Their doctrinal affirmations were based upon an appeal to the record of Scripture, the activity of worship, and the experience of salvation.*" [15] Yarnell notes that while tradition was fixed in the

apostolic age, there is the work of the Holy Spirit which also means that the Scriptures are not merely relegated to a historical account. He maintains "*Although the revelation is affixed to the Bible, its illumination by the Spirit is dynamic in that it is not limited to previous perceptions. And yet there should also be a deep respect for the work of the one Spirit in the entire history of the Churches of the one Christ…*"[16] Yarnell has a deep respect for the infallibility of the Scriptures but understands that there is a dynamic aspect which must be present in the way the Scriptures are revealed to a believer. A very recent book by Putnam notes this is of fundamental importance for understanding the development of Christian doctrine

If history is any indication, postcanonical doctrinal development is an inevitable reality in the Christian theological tradition. But such development can also serve as a significant threat to the identity and continuity of the received tradition. Can theology present expressions of belief and remain faithful to the unique authority and sufficiency of the Bible? More practically, can the contemporary systematic theologian address current crises and still maintain continuity with biblical faith? The theologian who takes up the so-called *problem of doctrinal development* assumes that God has once and for all revealed himself through the medium of human language in Scripture and must by some means explain how Christian doctrines, which purport to be grounded in this revelation, continue to grow or develop even after the epoch of canonical revelation is closed. [17]

Putnam gives a detailed summary of Thiselton and Vanhoozer's work on doctrinal development and remarks that while Thiselton provides a descriptive account of doctrinal development, Vanhoozer's work is normative in nature. For Thiselton, against the backdrop of truth claims about the nature of God or biblical history, situations arise which require new responses or ways of taking a stand. [18] Framing these beliefs in terms of dispositions, these are difficult to change and can be multifaceted and do not merely involve the individual but are also communal. [19] This resistance to change, according to Putnam, is what allows for continuity in development. Commenting on Vanhoozer, Putnam notes that continuity exists because of its missiological criterion and write "*Doctrines may grow or develop in ways that are not exact duplications of past formulations, but they may retain continuity or identity in a shared mission found the gospel of the triune God*."[20] In conjunction, there is impact of culture in preserving doctrine. Under the assumption that different cultures have rules of law and other stable norms, then this aids the continuity of doctrine. [21]

For Christianity, if one is to *strictly* define paradigms only in the way that Hans Küng describes them, [22] then not much of an argument can be mounted for there being a continuity of doctrine.[23] On the other hand, if the paradigm is that of orthodox Christianity then clearly the Scriptures are at least an everlasting source for the development of doctrine. Vanhoozer has taken a novel approach in describing the role of doctrine and asks individuals to engage in the "drama" of what God is doing to renew all things in Jesus Christ. He insists "*On the one hand, if doctrine does change, what criteria can we use to distinguish legitimate developments from heretical distortions?*"[24] Although, like Yarnell, he affirms the foundational authority of the Scriptures, he nevertheless maintains that "*Doctrine's direction must therefore be susceptible of fresh appropriations in new cultural-historical settings.*"[25] The tension already highlighted by Kuhn with regards to science also seems to be present in the way doctrine should be communicated and expounded upon in Christianity.

Vanhoozer also expands on the work of Lindbeck who believed non-theological issues, which were cultural and social in nature, have led to an emphasis of individual religious to the detriment of traditional propositional understandings of religion. [26] Apart

from the cultural appeal, a benefit in highlighting these factors are that they allow for interreligious dialogue by encouraging the expression of symbols as evidence of an ultimate, unifying reality. However, the problem is that such an approach can quickly descend into a relativistic morass. Aside from being subjective, they are also restricted to a place or time. Lindbeck noted that despite some Roman Catholic theologians' efforts in trying to meditate a middle ground so that transcendental experiences must be normative (e.g. the Bible), there is a growing gap between these experiential expressivist forms and the more theological approaches.[27] Vanhoozer also makes the Bible the starting point of doctrine but recognizes that doctrine is a multidimensional task that involves historical, literary and ideological approaches [28].

Thiselton also discusses this problem but has a slightly different take on what is the root of the tension. He briefly mentions the work of Küng and Tracy[29] and asserts that this essentially boils down to the problem of a dialectic between theory and praxis[30]. Thiselton expresses the importance of a community[31] and in the end seems quite content with letting a plurality of voices from the Bible speak on their own without artificially trying to harmonize them; and yet this does not mean that they are contradictory. Thiselton writes

Two points are especially important for a hermeneutics of doctrine. First, the canon is not artificially contrived set of books awaiting a decision or imprimatur from the third or fourth centuries…Second, the writers in question (of *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*) demonstrate their respect for the integrity of specific voices without attempts at artificial harmonization, and let the interaction between different viewpoints speak *together* as *different* (but not contradictory) voices. [32]

But, this plurality of voices emanating from the Bible must ultimately be understood by human beings with particular worldviews. It might be the case that for a considerable period of time, a particular worldview prevails and ultimately silences other voices which are just as valid or justifiable. For instance, Thiselton cites the example of Ecclesiastes and Job being different yet complimentary to Deuteronomy and Proverbs with regards to providence.[33] But, a person or a group of people going through incredible hardship might relate much more with Job than Proverbs, but someone who is perhaps not going through fiery trials but is seeking more wisdom might be tempted to read more on the vignettes that Proverbs offers. A particular situation or context renders itself much more likely to a particular Scripture than another. Hoyningen-Huene, in analyzing the work of Thomas Kuhn, makes the interesting point that the concept of incommensurability in scientific paradigms might have been misunderstood.[34] It is easy to see how Kuhn's words on the nature of competing paradigms, namely *"the competition between paradigms is not the sort that can be solved by proofs"*[35] might be taken to mean that this implies discontinuity between paradigms. However, Hoyningne-Huene believes that this is a misunderstanding because after a revolution, some parts of normal science remain. [36] Hence, again continuing with the example of Job and Proverbs: a particular season might lend itself to a reader identifying with the sufferings of Job; and yet better times do not mean that what was learned or gleaned from reading that book imply those insights are now false or invalid.

Yarnell stressed the ultimate authority of Scripture and its sufficiency. The presence of the Holy Spirit, assumes that though variety exists among individuals, there is a unity and a common understanding. Vanhoozer, following on the work of Lindbeck, discusses the importance of a given culture to portray and give a voice to the Scriptures but with due consideration to the different possible approaches. Thiselton remarks that the different voices present in the Scripture do not constitute the presence of contradictions but rather the

importance of context within which each takes place. In short, for Christianity, a shared rational understanding, endowed by the Holy Spirit, allows for the development of doctrine and for the flexibility of historical context, both in terms of the writers of different parts of the Scriptures and with respect to the different interpretative approaches, to be taken into account. This statement which takes on the different aspects that each writer identified underlines not only a plurality but also a commonality. Van Huyssteen echoes this sentiment and believed this is possible because of a common rationality, i.e. "*The fact that the rich resources of human rationality are shared by and significantly overlap in scientific and theological rationality, as identified in the quest for optimal understanding, responsible judgment, and progressive problem-solving...*"[**37**] This point by Van Huyssteen is also one that is shared by Hoyningen-Huene who discusses another common misunderstanding with regards to incommensurability, namely that incommensurable paradigms are incomparable. He writes

Any juxtaposition of the two theories must have a holistic character, in the sense that all theoretical moments, hence all differences must be considered more or less simultaneously. To be sure, some facts may be formulated in one theory but not in the other. Yet the holistic comparison of the potentials of the two theories is not thereby ruled out.[**38**]

If this applies to the development of doctrine, then this suggests the presence of both continuity and fixity. There is fixity because two paradigms can only be compared if there is at least a point of commonality, and there is obviously continuity because a change in paradigm allows for the integration of anomalies which were not previously possible and for the development of ``normal science'' which would not have been normal under the previous paradigm. The existence of a paradigm, nevertheless, gives rise to another key element in the development of doctrine, namely, interpretation.

2. The Importance of Interpretation for Development of Doctrine

The influence of interpretation and communication on the development of doctrine has already been mentioned to some degree in the previous section. Of course, varying and different approaches to hermeneutics might open a Pandora's Box and invite the charge of relativism. It is interesting that this same accusation has also been labeled at Thomas Kuhn with regards to his views on the way science progresses. He writes, with some lament

…my views, it is said, make of theory choice "a matter for mob psychology". Kuhn believes, I am told, that "*the decision of a scientific group to adopt a new paradigm cannot be based on good reasons of any kind, factual or otherwise." The debates surrounding such choices, must, my critics claim, be for me "mere persuasive displays without deliberate substance.*" [**39**]

Even though he goes on to describe criteria such as accuracy, consistency, scope, simplicity and fruitfulness as suitable for determining the adequacy of a theory, these do not seem to have abated his detractors. If they are right about Kuhn, then a consequence would be the presence of complete discontinuities present in the development of doctrine. Yet, as already mentioned, this does not seem to bear true. McGrath suggests that doctrine far from being a subjective and culturally dependant endeavor; it is rooted in history and tradition.

Christian doctrine may be regarded as the present outcome of that long growth of tradition in which the Christian community has struggled to arrive at an interpretation of its foundational traditions, embodied in the New Testament, which both does justice to its own present place in tradition, and attempts to eliminate those doctrinal pre-judgments which are

to be judged as inadequate. It is a historical phenomenon, grounded in history and conscious of its own historicity. [**40**]

Nevertheless, in case this implies doctrine is stale, McGrath also notes that "*doctrine is an activity, a process of transmission of the collective wisdom of a community, rather than a passive set of deliverances.*" [**41**] When one thinks of doctrine in this manner; as a context dependant exercise but which is anchored in its history and past, then that frees Christianity from the shackles of traditionalism for its own sake but also from the dangers of socio-cultural factors overstretching their impact on the Church. He also lists three criteria for the development of doctrine. These are: 1) doctrine is a social demarcator, 2) doctrine is generated and interpreted by the Christian narrative, 3) doctrine interprets experience and 4) doctrine makes truth claims. [**42**] Before McGrath, Toon also maintained every Church and denominational doctrine is "*historically and culturally conditioned.*"[**43**] Doctrine is not created in a vacuum by gleaning the Scriptures without reference to society and the culture around it. Rather, doctrine is historically molded as a response to questions put to the Church. This means the same truth is viewed differently according to different perspectives and circumstances so that development is not in the form of regular organic growth, but it is rather complex and intricate. Yarnell, however, criticized both McGrath and Toon in that they elevate either tradition and/or rational theories as necessary to supplement the Scriptures. And although Yarnell commends the fact they allowed a place for Christ and the Scriptures, he believes they are weak in the roles pneumatology and ecclesiology play in doctrinal formulations. [**44**]

Vanhoozer described the process of interpreting and understanding doctrine as being a *drama.* Citing Serene Jones, he writes "Doctrines are "*like loose but nonetheless definitive scripts that persons of faith perform; doctrines are the drama in which we live out our lives.*"[**45**] There is a constant interaction between texts and not only the way those texts are understood but also lived out in a believer's everyday life. It is interesting that just like Thiselton, he also mentions the theory/practice dichotomy by noting that this way of viewing drama is a way of overcoming that problem. Vanhoozer again notes

The drama stems from the clash between ideology (read: theology) of the text and that of the reader, on the one hand, and from the conflict of disciplinary approaches, methods, and rival ways of reading the text, on the other. One goal of the present work is to model a post-critical approach to biblical interpretation that respects both the principle- or rather, practice – of *sola scriptura* and the location of the interpretive community that nevertheless results in performance knowledge and doctrinal truth. [**46**]

Of course, not all Christian denominations will ascribe to *sola scriptura* – the principle that the Bible or Scriptures should be the sole rule of faith, but they all would agree that there is an unshakable and unquestioned authority. This definitive authority and the teachings that they carry must be interpreted and lived out by real people. For Putnam, authority is crucial in the way a text is to be interpreted. They act as a guide towards determining what is heterodoxy and heresy.[**47**] Evangelicals take Scripture as their primary source, while Roman Catholics defend the ecclesial tradition embodied in councils, as well as the papacy being a supplement to revelation.[**48**] This is linked to establishing a worldview which is shared across a community and "*provides a frame of reference to develop new knowledge and understandings.*" [**49**] However, the Christian faith is more than a mere set of propositions. It is a faith that is lived out and practiced so that, according to Putnam, the development of doctrine should not be reduced to a single strategy or method.[**50**] Nevertheless, Putnam believes that doctrinal development has much in common

with the natural sciences. Using Kuhnian terms, Putnam notes "*Doctrinal statements, like scientific theories, may strive for reality depiction but also like scientific theories, they are corrigible or open to revision and correction if deemed necessary.*"[**51**] And while both science and theology work within frameworks of belief and, in accordance with McGrath and Van Huyssten, even though in both domains "*models or theories may grow, change, or be discarded*"[**52**], they are trying to articulate scientific and theological realities respectively.

In science, the emphasis of "living out" a theory is understandably either non-existent or rather trivial. However, an analogy can be made with the way scientific theories are or are not distinct from observations. Any struggle to reconcile both of these aspects of science would mirror the mentioned difficulties of theory and praxis in the development of doctrine. Hoyningen-Huene, in discussing Kuhn's work, rather than focus on this binary categorization, instead discusses *ways of learning concepts* [**53**]. He remarks that when laws and theories are used to help with concept learning, a student will typically apply that law in a specific situation and then seek to apply those laws to other analogous contexts: "*These similarities permit the specification of the law-schemata for new situations by analogy with the specifications of appropriate to familiar situations. In other words, they make it possible to apply the concepts occurring in the schemata to new problem situations.*"[**54**] The scientist although, he or she is using theoretical concepts well-established, nonetheless appropriates those learned methods and techniques in a manner which is particular to the problem that is currently being tackled. There is an interpretation of a general principle and concept that is applied in a specific manner.

Recall Yarnell highlights a person's freedom to read the Scriptures by him or herself and understand them with the aid of the Holy Spirit and God-given intellect, which again speaks of a shared paradigm or worldview from which the Scriptures are interpreted. And, by citing Marpeck, Yarnell employs the writings of an English Methodist historian as an exemplar of the views of Free-Church historians to describe development of doctrine. Interestingly, this subtly showed that in formulating doctrine, there are factors that are outside of Christianity which are crucial. That is, Yarnell's selective use of previous theologians' work to support a particular view of doctrinal development shows that it is not only bolstered through proofs or evidences, but it is also guided by motives.[**55**] Indeed, it could be argued that Vanhoozer's use of the Bible as the founding cornerstone by which doctrine should proceed also reveals his personal biases and preferences, even if he does go to great lengths to stress the importance history, interpretation and culture play in the way a doctrine is to be communicated and lived out.

Culture is indeed important and shapes interpretation of particular texts or situations. Lindbeck described a cultural-linguistic approach which takes into account the importance of culture but does not elevate it to an authoritative status. The cultural-linguistic approach advocated by Lindbeck, defines religion as an idiom. It is a guide, rather than a set of regulations which set out in hard and fast rules what is or is not permissible. He remarked:

A religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that the entirety of life and thought…It is not primarily an array of beliefs about the true and the good (though it may involve these), or a symbolism expressive of basic attitudes, feelings, or sentiments (though these will be generated). Rather, it is similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments. Like a culture or language, it is a communal

phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities. [**56**]

The cultural-linguistic approach must be able to *"…handle anthropological, historical, and another non-theological data better than do the alternatives…"*[**57**] This model appears to place some boundaries on the extent human experience is shaped and molded because it is constrained by cultural and linguistic factors. Vanhoozer, however, disagrees with Lindbeck on this point. Vanhoozer believes that Lindbeck places too much emphasis on community practice and downgrades the standing that the Scriptures should take. The question here is the basis or the foundation or authority by which interpretation should take place, not whether interpretation should take place at all. Vanhoozer writes:

The aim of Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach is to initiate persons into and preserve the set of grammatically correct linguistic practices that structure the life of the church and shape Christian identity…In Lindbeck's regulative theory, doctrine does not direct community but is directed by it. Doctrine stands in a second-order relationship not to Scripture but to the use of Scripture in the church. What seems to matter most in cultural-linguistic theology is *"socializing" persons into a set of authoritative communal practices*[**58**]. *According to Putnam, Thiselton borrows much from Thielicke with respect to authority. On the one hand, Thiselton is respectful of authority, but asserts the authority of the self in determining what is true for the present."* [**59**] This also means that hermeneutics is paramount to Thiselton. In fact, Putnam asserts that for Thiselton experience is hermeneutical. Interpretation cannot be planned or be deliberate by method and is an exploration of what it means to be human.[**60**] And for Thiselton, the hermeneutics of doctrine has a transformative effect on the interpreter and the believer. He writes:

Biblical hermeneutics explores levels of meaning, strategies of reading, historical distance, appropriation, engagement, and formation, and often features patient and attentive listening…Can these habits of mind, with the historical, intellectual, and moral resources of hermeneutics, be placed at the service of understanding, exploring, appropriating, and applying Christian doctrine? [**61**]

Yarnell focuses on the Spirit's role in developing doctrine which is based on an infallible source – the Scriptures. Vanhoozer stresses the importance of culture, while Thiselton believes that experience and an individual's reception of it are critical in the development of doctrine. All of these may not agree with one another, however, they all underscore the impact of non-rational or contextual factors in understanding the way doctrine develops.

Kuhn also understood that interpretation was very important in the way science progresses. He maintained that this can only be done through the lenses of a paradigm.[**62**] When a paradigm changes through a revolution, this cannot be fully explained by reinterpretation.[**63**] This does not mean that interpretation does not occur, but only that the constraints imposed by a person's paradigm, may limit extravagant developments and thus constant upheaval. However, Christianity does not merely exist within merely an individual's mind. The body of believers is often referred to as the Church and as such the role of the Christian community is paramount; and this is now discussed next.

3. The Role of Communities in the Development of Doctrine

Kuhn had a lot to say on the role that communities play in scientific progress. He believed that in order for science to advance and accumulate new theories, there is a group of people that take charge and steadily come up with novel results. However, these results are

not revolutionary and are not unexpected. They are all conducted within a paradigm which provides a set of rules and axioms through which all research is to be conducted.

In the development of doctrine, there are theologians who state that this is the also the case. In fact, McGrath believes that this social aspect is what demarcates doctrine from theology:

...it will be clear that the distinction between 'doctrine' and 'theology' serves to emphasize the social function associated with the former, yet denied to the latter. Doctrine identifies social communities. Ecclesial bodies may indeed 'receive' – in the technical sense of the term – theologies, thus altering their status to that of doctrine: this process of reception, however...takes place at the communal, not the individual, level. Theology may be received as doctrine; without reception, it remains theology [64]. Hence, doctrine defines a community which receives and takes it as given an interpretation of a Christian narrative or experience. [65] Vanhoozer makes a similar distinction when he writes "Theology here becomes a matter of ecclesial self-description, of unpacking the implicit logic of Christian worship, doctrine, and ethics. Doctrines are thus, to paraphrase Schleiermacher, *accounts of the church's corporate expressions set forth in speech.*" [66]

McGrath, again, also expresses a similar sentiment and goes into more detail in attempting to describe the role of social constructs in developing doctrine and makes the following points:[67]

1. At least some aspects of the process of doctrinal development and reception are socially constructed.
2. Social constructs are subject to constant reappraisal and revision in the light of advancing knowledge and experimental observation.
3. A realistic approach to God or to the world is not called into question through the recognition of socially constructed aspects of the theories developed by either Christian theology or the natural sciences.

Thiselton also argues that "*doctrine carries with it inextricably a communal commitment and communal formation.*" [68] The parallels with Kuhn's depiction of what constitutes scientific communities are obvious when he noted:

A scientific community consists, on this view, of the practitioners of a scientific specialty. To an extent unparalleled in most other fields, in the process they have undergone similar educations and professional initiations; in the process they have absorbed the same technical literature and drawn many of the same lessons from it. [69]

While Vanhoozer affirms the importance of the Church as a community, he is, however, quick to point out that this community will have rules and behaviour only as far as it conforms to the Scriptures.[70] Yet, this community is indispensable since "without a people to embody it (the holy script), the script lacks something essential, for the canon "*delivers its meaning only as it is 'played out' in patters of human action in Church and society.*"[71] These rules and behaviour which Vanhoozer depicts are analogous to the paradigm by which a group of scientists would work under. Similarly, Kuhn noted "*scientists...require criteria to tell them which particular symbolic version should be applied to which problem, and these criteria, like the correlation rules that are said to transport meaning from a basic vocabulary to theoretical terms, would be a vehicle for empirical content.*" [72]

Yarnell describes a congregationalist view on the way the Church should be run. Hence, it is not surprising that he takes a very egalitarian and inclusive position in how doctrine should be developed. Recalling the work of Marpeck, he writes "*...their (as in the*

congregation as noted by Marpeck) belief that the Spirit broke to the entire community as it read Scripture together encouraged Anabaptists to seek conversation with other Christians. Theology, for them, was always done best in communal Bible study... The Anapbatists seemed more than willing to enter debates with the state church theologians, even when it led to persecution." [**73**] Of course, however, the assumption was that this was always done by appealing to the authority of Scripture.

McGrath is well aware of the role that a community has in balancing an earlier section: the tension between the need to preserve or continue the past and that of developing doctrine to make it relevant for a given time and place. He notes that the preservation of the Christian tradition rests on the shoulders of a community when he writes:

The past generated a tradition to which the present is heir. That tradition involves modes of discourse, ways of conceiving the world, and so forth, which it impressed upon the world, and which was perpetuated in a definite historical form, being mediated through both institutions and individuals. A community arises as the bearer of this tradition, thus establishing its continuity over extended periods of time. Those standing within this tradition detect a resonance of values, language and concepts with the past, in that their outlook has been shaped by a community tradition precipitated by the past. [**74**]

Hence, for McGrath, the tradition and the history of Christianity serves as a paradigm for the community. It is the framework for which doctrine may or may not develop. In specific Kuhnian terms, "the values, language and concepts" serve as the instrumental commitments by which can be legitimately used to carry out research.[**75**] There is feedback loop mechanism which is also present between doctrine and social communities. On the one hand, social constructs, as noted earlier, play a role in developing doctrine; but on the other, doctrine may also function as a social demarcator so that it "…*enhances the sense of identity of a community, and facilitates its distinction from other communities.*"[**76**] However, McGrath, is also of the opinion that while this may have occurred throughout the history of Christianity, the possibility of seeing doctrine function as social demarcators between ecclesial traditions, then ecumenical approaches might be possible. [**77**]

McGrath, however, is not a propositionalist. He does not believe that all doctrine can be neatly derived from the past through these rules and guidelines. There is also a place for doctrine as an interpretation of experience. He recalls Schleiermarcher's thoughts that "*the continuity of Christianity is to be established at the experiential level of the Christian community…and articulated in a purely descriptive manner at the level of doctrine.*" [**78**] An emphasis or stress on the importance of interpreting experience as a means of doctrine can have an analogy in the sciences. The first is that of logical empiricism. Also known as verificationism, it is the idea that statements verifiable either logically or empirically would be cognitively meaningful. Rejected later on by philosophers such as Gödel and Popper, Kuhn also dismissed this idea on the basis that there might not be "*a complete and full account of nature.*"[**79**] This is not to say that Kuhn rejected truth, rather he repudiated the notion that there was a correspondence between true statements and facts about the world. The implication is that even if an entire community agrees on a particular scientific theory, or in this case, a doctrine, this does not meant that it corresponds to an actual fact.

Putnam has also recently mentioned Kuhn within the context of theology.[**80**] Noting a parallel between scientific revolutions and the role of hermeneutics, the role of rationality is "*an interpretative framework established by local, historically situated communities of knowledge for the purpose of theorization.*" [**81**] Recalling also Thiselton, doctrinal development occurs between the two extremes of an "*authoritative corporate*

memory and its critical appropriation or analysis."[82] That is, there are social and historical aspects which play a part in determining the way doctrine is developed. And although "*distinctives of her theological tradition inevitably color her process*" [83], this "*takes place in light of the limitations and/or advantages posed by her own view of a doctrinal topic.*" [84] Putnam believes that for Vanhoozer, the importance of community is more authoritative than the text itself, because it is the performance of the community ultimately establishes the meaning and belief of the community.[85] Vanhoozer is not so naive as to believe that there will always be a single possible interpretation, and in fact, it is this potential plurality that can allow for doctrinal development. [86] However, it must be remembered that this can also lead to the introduction of heresies and doctrinal corruption. Hence, not all interpretations are equal, but even then, these can, ironically, be rejected by the exposition and development of true doctrinal development.[87] Putnam also demonstrates that the role of communities intersects with tradition and interpretation, the previous two sections.

Perhaps the question comes back not to a theory of correspondence between facts and experience, but rather what is the true source of authority by which all theories and experiences should be grounded on. Although Vanhoozer does place the Scriptures above tradition, he does not relegate the latter as unimportant. He presents an interesting take on their respective roles: in his analogy as doctrine as drama, he posits that the Scriptures are the 'script' and tradition is the performance. [88] In this context, tradition rather than living in the past, it is a performance and is made dynamic by a community.[89] The role of tradition as a performance is put by Vanhoozer in the following manner:

Scripture may be self-interpreting, but it does not *perform* itself. The principles of general hermeneutics alone do not tell us how, for example, to relate Old and New Testament, or for that matter, how to bring Scripture to bear on contemporary bioethics. This is neither the thrust nor the intention of *sola scriptura*. On the contrary, *sola scriptura* stands for a certain church practice, a certain way of using Scripture in the church. Some have rushed to the conclusion, therefore, that it is a certain way of using the Bible, and not the Bible itself, that is authoritative. What ultimately counts is the performance, not the script.[90]

This apparent relegation or subjugation of tradition to Scripture may not be satisfactory to Roman Catholics. But, Vanhoozer is a Reformed Presbyterian theologian and to even suggest that tradition not only has a part to play in Christianity, but is also a necessary component to be played by the Church community seems to be quite a remarkable concession on a controversial aspect arguably thought of at best unimportant, and at worst heretical, to the Reformed denominations. Yet Vanhoozer does not believe that affirming tradition in this manner downplays or lowers *sola scriptura*.

Recent literature in the development of criteria has reaffirmed the importance of a practicing community in the formulation of new teachings. Theologians like McGrath and Vanhoozer have stressed different aspects with regards to a community's role: McGrath believes that it is the communal facet that distinguishes doctrine from theology, while Vanhoozer maintains that the community is critical in the *performance* of the Scriptures; and Thiselton also remarks that "doctrine is not a matter of monologic discourse produced by a single person and addressed to individuals in abstraction from corporate worship and the life of the church." [91] Further, as has been demonstrated, the role of the community does not exist in isolation to the need to balance tradition with development and the way a text is interpreted to develop doctrine.

CONCLUSION

Kuhn's Revolutions were written over 50 years ago and applied to the way science progresses. Here, it has been shown that his ideas can be applied to the modern and contemporary literature in the development of doctrine. The tension between long-standing tradition and the need to develop new teachings; the role that a particular text is interpreted and the importance of practicing communities have been identified as influential by theologians who seek to understand doctrinal development. Further investigation, for example, could also concentrate on contrasting and comparing the importance of tradition between the sciences and theology. Another interesting study could also focus on whether, just like in the sciences, there exists a single dominant worldview for a particular doctrine or rather there is a plurality of voices which would be equivalently accepted as orthodox Christianity.

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[81] *Ibid*., 231.

[82] *Ibid*., 233.

[83] *Ibid*., 233.

[84] *Ibid*., 233.

[85] *Ibid*., 249.

[86] *Ibid*., 309-10.

[87] *Ibid*., 310-1.

[88] Vanhoozer does admit that these relative weightings may not be agreed to by everyone.

[89] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, The Drama of Doctrine (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 152-3.

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