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Preface

This current issue of our International Journal deals with an interesting series of theological and spiritual problems, which are circumscribed into two sections: *Dogmatic Theology studies* and *Education, morality and spirituality*.

Thus, 1-st PART comprises valuable studies such as: “*Metanoia in the thinking of Saint John Chrysostom*”, by Rev. PhD. Vasile **Răducă**, where the author stresses on the Mystery of Repentance and its practice in the thinking of the celebrated Cappadocian, the first Church Father who gave special attention to the spiritual aspect of repentance.

PhD. Marin **Bugiulescu** presents “*Theological and dogmatic definition of the God-Man Jesus Christ Person*”. The central dogma of Christianity is the Trinitarian one. Regarding the Person and the work of Christ, the Church officially stated that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly Man, and His Person includes the divine nature, from eternity, yet united in time with the human nature, each nature having its own will, and the human will following the divine one.

PhD. Florin **Vârlan** tries to demonstrate that *Jesus Christ is our divine teacher and guide*. Prof. Ben Carlo **Atim** in his “*The (Re)Turn to the Prophets: Prophetic Portrait as a Paradigm of Critique for Post-Secular Society*” introduces the idea that a portrait of a prophet is a doable paradigm for critiquing the socio-political, economic, and cultural condition of the post-secular society and attempts to find the prophets in our age.

In the 2-nd PART, Prof. Lehel **Balogh** tries to investigate and compare the thinking of two highly influential Christian philosophers of the 19th and the 20th century: Søren Kierkegaard and Paul Tillich. Both of them attempted to “redeem” and reaffirm the significance of feelings and the subjective side of reality.

“*A bioethical perspective on man’s life and death*” is an attempt of Prof. Florea **Ștefan** to tackle an interdisciplinary approach to the problems of bioethics related to the human existence, namely life and death: abortion and *euthanasia*.

PhD Lect. Alexandru-Corneliu **Arion** examines in his paper: “*The concept of persona in Hinduism and Christianity*”, analysed from theological point of view. Despite the insistence on a personal relationship between man and divinity that we find at some classical Hindu thinkers, ultimately, what remains is the absolute and impersonal reality of Brahman, whereas in Christianity, the problem of person and that of hypostasizing nature is expressed in such a way that excludes simultaneous emphasis on unity (One) or plurality (Multiple).

In his “*Existence of the evil in the world: a challenge for philosophy and theology*” Prof. Leontin **Popescu** considers maybe the most difficult problem man has tried to decipher in his history: the existence of the evil. And even if man and universe feel its consequences, it exists not as something given, but as possibility.

Olanrewaju Abdul **Shitta-Bey** introduces us into a space quite alien, once his study deals with a “*Human will debate between Western and Yoruba philosophical traditions*”, peculiar to Nigerian population, and PhD. Traian-Alexandru **Miu** presents the topic of *Ethnocentrism*, viewed as the danger of cultures’ collision.

PhD. Mihai Sebastian **Stoian** focuses on *the sacramental nature of man and creation* and last but not least, Constantin-Valentin **Bugiulescu** reviews an oft-discussed dogmatic topic: “*The soteriological hypostatic union*”.

DOGMATIC THEOLOGY STUDIES*Metanoia in the thinking of Saint John Chrysostom****Fr. Prof. PhD. Vasile RĂDUCĂ**Faculty of Orthodox Theology, "Bucuresti" University,
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ABSTRACT

The present article deals with the Mystery of Repentance and its practice in the thinking of Saint John Chrysostom. Saint John's contribution to the evolution of this Christian practice is exceptional. He is the first Church Father who gave special attention to the spiritual aspect of repentance. In the approach of this aspect, he is similar to what we see in the Father's Apothegms, however, without taking these aspects from there. He had found them in the practice of the Church of Antioch and demonstrated their worth like no one else in his time. This aspect of Saint John Chrysostom's thinking, along with others, highlights his extraordinary personality and quality.

Keywords: Repentance, metanoia, sin, restoration, charity, prayer.

Introduction

Repentance has been a constant practice in the Church, since its beginnings. We know that St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to examine their conscience before coming to the Lord's Supper. This examination of one's conscience was not going to disappear at some point in time to see it emerging at a certain moment, in the monastic environment as we see in the Apothegms (Sayings) of the Desert Fathers. The apothegms the modern researchers are referring to were put down and collected at the end of the 4th century, or more likely during the first half of the 5th century. The practice of spiritual counseling in the monastic centers is not an invention of those living in those centers, but the practice existed in the Church and was transferred from one monk to the next, without its sacramental character, given the fact that most of the monks were not priests – on the contrary, for a long time the monks represented a category of lay people that were more pious and had more zeal.

I consider that St. John Chrysostom did not have access to these Apothegms, but lived within certain ecclesial communities where repentance was practiced, as a very important current activity in the life of the Church, both under its penitential aspect, and under its psychological-spiritual aspect.

Situating himself along the traditional line of the Church, Saint John Chrysostom considers that *metanoia* is essential for salvation, given the fact that it supposes a psychological-spiritual change, absolutely necessary in the one who repents, on the one hand, and due to the fact that his behaviour in the ecclesial and social environment will be different from that of someone who considers that he needs no repentance, no continual renewal of his mind and of his behaviour.

Metanoia really supposes a transformation of the way of judging, of judging yourself and of evaluating yourself, first of all according to three landmarks: God, your fellow and your calling as a man. It gives a new dimension to the human soul and a new way of living

to him who repents, facilitating his return to the point from which he had drifted away: intimacy with God and with his fellow.

According to Saint John, repentance is a gift of God and a possibility offered by Him, for us to return not just from the state in which we have fallen by sin, but from the enemy of the human nation to God. Repentance is “a hand held out” that God is offering to us. It is not just a state of spirit and an individual process of return to normality, but a community act and a state of communion in which we involve our fellow by the way we behave with him, re-establishing the communion with him interrupted by the mistakes towards him or by simply involving him into ways of thinking and behaving ill-assorted to those necessary for salvation.

Repentance is the way of re-establishing the communion with God Himself, to Whom we often sin, neglecting the way of the communion with Him, the *only certain way* to salvation. Helping man to get re-established in the true love to his fellows and to God, repentance shows that within it and by it, man is not alone. He falls alone, yet he gets up helped by others, namely God and his fellow: “Therefore, brothers”, says Saint John, “let us offer to ourselves repentance as a redeeming medicine, or rather let us receive from God the repentance that cures us. Because it is not us who are offering it to us, but He Who has given it to us... Consequently, my brothers, let us receive repentance as a medicine unto salvation, let us accept it as a cure that wipes away our sins” [1] (p.170).

Repentance is not just the psychological state someone has reached due to someone’s words or due to our own convictions, but also the concrete action that man engages in with his entire personality. “It is not the one [namely the repentance] preached by words, but the one shown in a practical manner, springing from the bottom of the heart and cleaning the dirtiness of sin.” [2]

Repentance is not just being sorry for sins, simply crying for having noticed the fall into sin, seeing that “weeping justly expresses the mourning, yet does not lead to straightening” [3], whereas *repentance* brings the joy of strengthening and the power to speak openly with God (*παρησια*) because God loves, waits and forgives. Repentance situates us in a special freedom, that of being able to speak with responsible courage with God. It makes the tendency of shunning the real dialogue with God and with our fellows disappears from us.

In this sense, St. John says: “God not just does not turn his face away from us when we return to Him, but receives us with a joy by no means smaller than the joy He shows to those who have acquired virtue; He not only does not ask for punishment, but comes Himself to look for those who had been lost, and rejoices much more for finding them than He rejoices for those who are saved. Therefore, we should not lose our hope when we notice that we are in the category of the sinners and at the same time we should not become daring when we live in virtue. Consequently, when we live piously, we ought to be afraid not to fall because of the trust we have in ourselves, and when we sin, we ought to repent!” [4].

By this text, and others like it, St. John signals that, in this life, the process of moral perfection, which includes the virtuous life and repentance, is not a completed one, but one that is just begun. It supposes risks both for him who accepts the fall, and for him who is endeavoring not to fall, living virtuously. They are both on the way, not at the end of it.

The great stake of repentance is salvation by the real and definitive access to God’s Kingdom and, at the same time, by becoming worthy for God to “establish His kingdom” in us. God does not make Himself present in places that are not adequate for His presence, and similarly, in God’s Kingdom, a dirty and defiled man cannot enter, says St. John, except

after having left out all uncleanness and evilness. St. John draws the Christians' attention to the fact that the Bridegroom's Father sent away from His Son's wedding the one whose clothes were dirty, not "because his clothes were dirty, but because he had entered with these clothes on", he had not given up on what the dirty clothes were symbolizing. "You were", the Lord says, "at the crossroads begging, and I did not turn away from you, ashamed of your poverty, and I did not feel sick because of your lack of honour, I have led you in the mystery room, and have given you the honour of inviting you to the royal dinner and have lifted you up to the heavenly honour, you who deserved the worst punishment. However, with all My benefactions, you have not become any better, but have remained at your evilness, despising both the wedding and the Bridegroom. Go away from Me immediately, and suffer the punishment you deserve for this lack of sensitivity!" [5].

We ought to remember that the help we receive from God has the goal to make us become better. The actual participation to the joy of being present at the Bridegroom's banquet and also the punishment are the logical consequences of the adequacy or lack of adequacy for one or the other state. The Master's intervention is the moment when He signals to everyone for which of the two states he who has been invited at the banquet is *adequate and prepared*.

In man's straightening by repentance (synonymous with the effort of becoming better), God's mercy is active, but the straightening is not just the effect of God's mercy (in other words, the straightening is not the exclusive product of grace), due to the fact that we only confess the faith in Him, but it also supposes the collaboration between God and man. The weight in this collaboration certainly goes to God, but He is waiting for a small *pretext* from us (attention, we do not do the beginning, but we offer to God a motivation and justification for His work), to crown us with the liberty (*παρρησία*) brought by repentance [6]. "The pretext" that God is waiting for in order to bring on man the fruit of repentance consists in the *disposition of man's soul* [7] and in *his endeavour not to sin again*. "Therefore, establish a beginning to your return and everything has been solved. Stop the evilness and do not go down any further in it and you have already acquired everything. For, just as in the case of the diseased, for whom the fact that the illness is not getting worse can be the beginning of the improvement of their health, things are all the same with evilness. Do not get any further in it and evilness will come to an end! And, if you do this for two days, the third day you will go away from it better and, after three days, you will be able to say afterwards twenty days, then, one hundred days and then your whole life. Because, the more you advance, the easier you will see the way and you will stop on the summit and will delight in the good things." [8].

Waiting to receive this "small pretext", God is the One Who will offer to us all we need for our straightening due to his love for men [9]. "The pretext" that God is waiting for takes on two forms: acts worthy of repentance (present both at the beginning and during the repentance process), according to the model of the prodigal son, who returned effectively to the father who was waiting for him and at the same time awaiting the effort made by God Himself for "the lost sheep". In the act of repentance, we are dealing, therefore, with two aspects of the divine-human synergy, in which the weight and the accomplishment of the whole process of restoration of the Christian back to the state from which he fell by sin goes, nevertheless, to God. He awaits and receives benevolently (the case of the prodigal Son) or is looking for the lost one and is putting him on His shoulders, on condition that the latter let God "place him on His shoulders" and bring him to the flock. This is the equivalent of total trust in what God does for man, allowing God to rule in you by everything He does out of love for man: His dominion in you.

The need of repentance is unfortunately imposed by the sins committed by man after his Baptism. Sin is disease. St. John calls it “terrible paralysis or, better said, not just paralysis, but also something frightening, because the sinner not just does not do good deeds, but also commits bad deeds” [10].

Repentance for sins is the healing medicine because out of people made of earth, the sinners can become people made of gold [11]. Often the disease of sin can be neglected or regarded with superficiality, ignoring its real consequences and its diverse symptoms, behind which one can find the devil.

1. The devil and the absence of repentance

According to St. John, “there is wound, but there is also medicine for it. The wound is sin, the medicine is repentance. Sin means shame, humiliation, it leads us to dishonor, whereas repentance means courage, fasting and offers straightening.” [12]

St. John signals other symptoms of sin as well, such as: insensitivity and indifference to the performance of an evil action, shame and sadness (which can lead both to repentance and to losing hope), being sorry without repenting (which can either lead to nothing or can lead to despair). In all these symptoms of sin, is not excluded Satan’s power, which by its negative force inhibits in man the tendency to escape the abnormality brought by sin. For this reason, St. John asks himself regarding the sinner who does not take the step towards repentance: why is he not ashamed when he commits the shameful deed, yet he blushes when this deed is signalled to him? In this attitude, St. John sees the deceiving work of the devil. “The enemy does not let man be ashamed the moment he is sinning, but lets him do the sin, and even in front of everyone, because he knows that if man is ashamed, he will avoid sin. When man considers repenting for sin (because this also supposes confessing sin), the enemy makes him feel ashamed, so that, precisely because of this shame, man will not repent. In this way, the devil acts maliciously under two aspects: drawing man to sin, but also driving him away from repentance” [13].

The devil leads the sinner into a state of spiritual insensitivity, making him insensitive to his precarious spiritual condition, which either will lead him to perdition or will make him lose his hope in God’s power to forgive. When man is surrounded by despair from all sides, he gets suffocated [14].

Satan’s special effort is to lead man either to spiritual insensitivity, synonymous to what the Scripture often expresses using the expression “petrification of the heart”, or to despair. Considering the second state of spirit induced by the devil (despair), St. John exhorts: “never lose hope! This is precisely why the devil does not rejoice so much when we sin (because repentance may intervene), as when we lose hope” [15].

With the optimism of the one who has known God’s love, St. John insists to convince the person fallen into sin that however low sin may take man, it is limited, whereas the almightiness of God’s forgiveness is unlimited, so that “God wipes away lawlessness so well that He leaves behind no sign of it, no trace of it, no scar.” [16]. “Consequently, St. John will say, are you a sinner? Do not lose hope! I will not stop giving you these medicines forever, as I know how great an arm against the devil it is not to lose hope. But if your sins are burdening you, do not lose hope! I shall not cease saying these words to you, and even if you sin every day, repent every day.” [17]

St. John says that in front of repentance and of God’s grace there is no sin that will not cease, the moment you want to be good. Surely the devil stops man’s impetus towards

doing good deeds, yet it has no absolute power because, the Holy Father says, “You have chosen to do good deeds and in this choice you have attracted God as your ally.” [18].

The condition for God to be man’s ally in the fight against Satan and in order for man to do well is that man chooses God himself. “Therefore”, says St. John, “God does not want to save you out of necessity and by force, but by your own will... God, Who has made everything not out of His need, but for your salvation, will not want to keep you by force” [19] by His side.

2. God respects man’s self-determination

God assumed the risk of respect for man’s freedom so that, if He were to intervene in his way of self-determination, this would mean an attack against the integrity of his image. It would mean turning His image into something else.

To stimulate man’s self-determination, God, says St. John, announces punishments and reward. The objective of these announcements is to bring man to a virtuous life. “If He sees us running away from evilness and coming to the way of virtue and taking care of the good deeds, He will also receive our repentance and, after having delivered us from the burden of our sins, He will offer us His gifts because we do not wish so much our salvation from our sins and we do not ask so much for our salvation as the Lord insists and endeavours to free us from our sins and offer to us the joy of salvation.” This salvation is possible, yet only if the Christian shows true repentance, if he moves away from evilness and if he follows the way leading him to virtue. “He who repents and follows God’s advice can easily acquire what is good.” [20].

Repeatedly, Saint John presents as examples of repentance heroes of the Holy Scripture such as the citizens of Nineveh and King David. Updating the way they repented, St. John offers a true pedagogy of the realization of true repentance, of the obtaining of forgiveness from God and of the full reintegration of the Christian in the community of the Church. “The Church”, says St. John, “is the hospital offering forgiveness of sins to those who repent, not the tribunal looking for the guilt for sins”. In this way, he highlights the healing character of repentance, and not the penitential one, practiced in a more marked manner in the Western Church. “The Church is more important”, says St. John, “than Noah’s Ark, because Noah’s Ark received the animals and kept them as they were, whereas the Church receives living beings and changes them... There, in the Ark, falcon went in, falcon went out, wolf went in, and wolf went out. Here, in the Church, someone came in falcon and came out pigeon, came in wolf and went out sheep, came in snake and went out lamb, not because he changes his nature, but because his evilness goes away by repentance.” [21]

These metaphors have a fantastic force. They underline the work of God’s grace, which, really, heals the powerless and completes the incomplete ones. They highlight the fact that repentance, whose aim is to change man for the better, is possible efficiently only in the Church.

Regarding the time of repentance, using the example of David’s repentance, St. John says that repentance needs to accompany us throughout our life. Commenting on Psalm 6, verse 6, St. John concludes that King David repented all his life for the sins committed, unlike many of us who, “after having cried for a day and, often, not even for a whole day, we go back to laughter, to the pleasures of a cosy and dissipated life.” [22]

Repentance is necessary throughout our life, not just because we always sin and we continually need to change, to renew our mind. “We can be unwavering in good”, St. John

says, “only after having escaped the waves of this life and reached the peaceful shelter of heaven.” [23]

Repentance can be useless when it is not real and when it is done at a time when it no longer has any effect. An example of useless repentance is the repentance of the rich man in the parable of poor Lazarus and in that of the unreasonable virgins. [24]

St. John signals that the refusal to cry in this life (where our tears bring forth the fruits of salvation) will necessarily make us cry in the future life, yet uselessly. “There [in the other life], crying will be for us an occasion of confusion, here it is a title of glory.” [25]

We cannot invoke the faith in God’s goodness in order not to repent in this life. God’s goodness is real, and so is His mercy, but we cannot invoke God’s goodness and mercy to motivate what is missing to us or to sin. “Because God’s goodness leads to repentance, not to a greater evil (εις μετανοια σε αγει, ουκ εις πλειονα κακεια). If you become guiltier due to God’s goodness, in this case, instead of honouring, you are rather dishonouring it in front of men; because I see many who are rising against man’s justice, so that your reward will be punishment, if you do not use it (God’s goodness) in what you ought to. God is a philanthropist, yet He is also a righteous judge. He forgives sins, but he also gives everyone according to his acts. He forgives injustices (sins), wipes away all lawlessness, yet he also weighs the acts justly.” [26]

Showing faith in God’s goodness, accompanied by a superficial and negligent moral life, is not a proof of honouring God, but rather of dishonouring Him. For this reason, the Christian is invited by the great Church Father to confess God’s goodness by a way of living honouring the things believed because living differently from what we believe is falling from faith, with all the consequences coming from here. God’s goodness must not be dissociated from His justice.

3. The steps of repentance

St. John is very realistic regarding the sins’ effects in us. Unfortunately, this is a sad anthropological reality. Advising others on repentance, he does not consider himself immune to sins. On the contrary, he considers himself solidary with all those who need forgiveness by repentance. “I myself”, he says, “need healing.” However, the Christian must not lose hope, because his Doctor is stronger than the disease caused by sins, so that, even if we were to get to the lowest limit of evilness, He ordains many ways for our salvation.

Out of the ways that God chose for healing our wounds, by the process of repentance, we shall enumerate a few (repeated by St. John in several works), namely:

1. *Forgiving our fellow*, not just when he makes a mistake, but also when his mistake is the expression of his anger. In other words, our fellow needs to be forgiven when he gets angry and he gets to hurt us. “Because, being people, it is impossible for us not to trespass against others or for others not to trespass against us.” [27]

St. John signals that there is nothing else that God hates and condemns more than bitterness against our fellow. This sin has in it something so deadly that, as the Holy Father states, it simply makes the help of the divine mercy cease. [28]

2. *Charity*. If you do charitable deeds, your sins shall be forgiven, for it is written: Ransom your lawlessness by charitable acts (Daniel 4:24).

3. *Prayer*. If you pray persistently, you will receive forgiveness, as the example of the widow teaches you, who, by her prayers, changed the heart of the unjust judge. It takes intense and continual prayer, because, if we keep on talking with God, says St. John, the devil can no longer steal our thoughts.

4. *Regret* for sins and *confession* of these sins to authorized persons. St. John refers a lot to the practice and to the need to confess one's sins as a stage in the process of receiving forgiveness. In his time, the confession was realized privately, not publicly. Regret for sins is considered by St. John as the greatest medicine for sin. Confession with no regret for the injustices committed does not meet the demands of metanoia, but is a simple psychological act. The injustices committed can bring suffering to him who has committed them. This suffering needs to be assumed and accepted with patience, considers St. John: this patience (in suffering) will purify your soul. Patience when evils follow sin and crying for sin are necessary [29], yet to the tears we need to add virtue, as well [30].

5. *Mercy and care* for the widows and, certainly, for all those in need (Isaiah 1:17-18) [31].

From the several ways of realization of repentance, we can see that it needs to be a very complex process of straightening. It is "the furnace in which sins are burnt" [32], but also a repositioning of the human being in his natural dynamism by the cultivation of certain virtues making you worthy of honour again.

Profoundly engaged in the missionary-pastoral activity, St. John deeply understood the role of repentance in the Christian life. No unitary doctrine had been elaborated yet regarding the mystery of repentance; however, he analysed the practice of repentance under all the aspects that the theology of this Holy Mystery will suppose later on. He goes beyond the quite formal and penitential character of the first Christian centuries, highlighting essential aspects of this Mystery, in the direction of which the teaching on repentance will be constituted during the next centuries.

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- [1]. Out of practical reasons, a part of the references will be cited from the Crestomathy made up of Saint John Chrysostom's works by Father Benedict the Hagiorite (in Romanian: Benedict Aghioritul), entitled "Cuvinte de aur" (Golden Words), vol.VI "Pocăința, Spovedania, Postul, Dumnezeiasca Împărtășanie" (Repentance, Confession of Sins, Fasting, Divine Eucharist), translated by Fr.Victor Manolache and edited by Editura Egumenița in 2014;
- [2]. *Despre pocăință* (On repentance), 7, *op.cit.*, p.171;
- [3]. *Ibid*, 8, p.195;
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Theological and Dogmatic Definition of the God-Man Jesus Christ Person

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ABSTRACT

The present paper presents the Theological and Dogmatic definition of the Person of the God-man Jesus Christ, as it has been formulated by the Orthodox Church in the course of time. In the Ecumenical and local synods, the Church proclaimed against the heresies various definitions of faith or dogmas. Dogma, in its essence, is a truth of faith revealed by God, unchangeable, formulated and transmitted by the Church, for man's salvation. The central dogma of Christianity is the Trinitarian one. Regarding the Person and the Work of Christ, against the heresies promoted by Arius, Nestorius, Eutychius and Macedonius, at the Ecumenical Synods III (Ephesus 431), IV (Chalcedon 451), VI (Constantinople 680-681), the Church officially stated that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly Man, and His Person includes the divine nature, from eternity, yet united in time with the human nature, each nature having its own will, and the human will follows the divine will. This union of the divinity with the humanity in Christ is actually the basis of man's salvation realized objectively in Christ and actualized personally by all the Christians in the Church, by means of which evil and death are defeated by the resurrection leading to eternal life.

Keywords: Jesus Christ, God-Man, dogmatic definition, theology

INTRODUCTION

The Person and especially the Activity of our Saviour Jesus Christ is the heart of the teaching of faith, because He is the One realizing the salvation of the world and of man by deliverance from the slavery of sin and death. The teaching about Jesus Christ the Embodied Son and Word of God (John 1:14; Hebrews 4:15) as it was formulated and preached by the Church in the Ecumenical and local Synods has been accepted by the Christian community becoming a dogma - a definition of faith and a norm of Christian life, definition of the right faith or the Orthodoxy.

Jesus Christ's person is formed of the two natures: - divine and human represent the perfect reality by which humanity is intimately united with divinity. This is why salvation is possible only by the union with God realized by Christ, true God and true Man. The formulation of the Christological norm was realized by the Orthodox Church when heresies emerged, solemnly proclaiming in the Synods the dogma of salvation. At the First Ecumenical Synod (Nicaea 325), the Church fights against Arius' wrong teaching, according to which Christ was subordinated to the Father; and the Synod proclaims that the divine being (the Godhead) comprises the Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; at the Second Ecumenical Synod the Church formulates the teaching on the Holy Spirit as true God and along with it the teaching on the dogma of the Holy Trinity; at the Ecumenical Synods III (Ephesus 431), IV (Chalcedon 451) and VI (Constantinople 680-681), the Church defined the Christological dogma, which also comprises the work of Christ, the Embodied Son of God, realized outside the Triune Being, in time, in order to save man.

1. The notion of person - premise for understanding the Christological dogma

To correctly understand the Christological dogma, as it has been formulated by the Church, we need to get to know the notion of *person* via the explanations of the Cappadocian Fathers.

The term of “person” comes from the Greek *prosopon* (προσώπον) and the Latin *persona*, i.e. mask that used to cover the artists’ face during the Antiquity, when they were interpreting a role. In this sense, man is seen as a concrete face, a real representation or a *persona*, as the Latins have translated this reality. By the term “person” attributed to man as well, one understands that man is a spiritual being. What makes man a person is not his body or his appearance, but his spirituality, his metaphysical dimension, which gives the whole psycho-physical organism the character of person.

By man’s spiritual dimension, one understands the rational and free nature, self-knowing and self-determining. Yet, as a “**person**”, man is not understood only according to his spiritual aspect, but especially according to his given dimension of “**hypostasis**”, namely autonomous unity, as an entity whose centre of existence and life is in himself, permanently available to relating, open to the communication with the other relational beings, namely: the other people, the holy angels and, last but not least, the three divine persons of the Holy Trinity. Since “hypostasis” is the common name for all the concrete rational or un-rational individual existences (hypostasis-individual), the Christian theology used the term “person” for the rational, “spiritual” existences [1], while, for the un-rational ones, it used the term “individual”. Each person is an autonomous unity (individual) and has its unique specific among the other persons (individuality). The Greek philosophy uses a lot the notion of individual, ignoring that of person. Yet, the Holy Fathers, in order to define the Holy Trinity, use the term *person*, a term which, after the Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon (451), entered Christology and Christian anthropology with the implications of *hypostasis* included in the definition of the word *person*, which unlike *being* or *matter* or *essence* “*defines the way of holding the unique human being and of participating to the unique divine life*” [2]. The person is, therefore, a way of existence penetrating and making the whole being personal. The person is the subject and bearer to whom the being as such belongs and in whom the being as such lives [3].

Saint Basil the Great shows that *ousia*, *essence*, *being*, indicates the fundament of the common nature of several individuals, of the same species, which makes one thing be itself and not something else. The being is affirmed by the hypostasis, yet it is fully encompassed in each of the hypostases of the same species. For this reason, hypostases do not differ one from the other regarding the being, but regarding the accidents, namely the characteristic features. These characteristic features, however, belong to the hypostases and not to nature. “*The hypostasis is defined as: the being together with its accidents. For this reason, the hypostasis possesses what is common together with the particular and the existence in itself. The being, however, does not exist in itself, but is considered in the hypostases*” [4].

Regarding the being and its differentiation from the hypostasis, Saint Basil the Great says: “*Therefore we understand that: What is specified in a particular manner is shown by the word hypostasis. Indeed, when you say “man”, your ear receives – by the indefinite specification of this word – a quite vague idea, so that while nature is indicated using this denomination, what is implied and actually indicated by its name is not specified. On the contrary, when you say “Paul”, then you show precisely the being indicated by this name...*”

Ousia is the fundament of the nature common to several individuals of the same species for example: humanity, while hypostasis is the concrete individual: Peter, Paul, John” [5].

Certainly the term *person* with all its theological implications was defined by the Church to express first the Trinitarian dogma. In an ontological patristic sense, without person or hypostasis there is no being or nature and the other way round, with the mention that the hypostasis is the cause of the existence of the being. As the 4th Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon (431) remarks: *person - prosopon* is the psychological aspect of a being turned towards his own inner world, while *hypostasis* appears as the open being going beyond himself in the relation with God and fellows. The fact that “*a hypostasis is what is constituted distinctly from self, if the hypostasis - as they (the Fathers) say – is the being with properties (with special personal features), differing in number from the other beings of the same kind*” [6] does not involve at the Christological level a distinct hypostasis of the human nature (the individual), because human nature was enhypostatized by Christ, a teaching clarified by Saint Maximus the Confessor.

The theological concept of person supposes liberty from nature, alterity. The person is free from any determination. The human hypostasis cannot be fully realized except by his own will in renunciation and generosity toward other persons. Thus, the person of our fellow is really an image of God, absolutely necessary to communion. What corresponds in us to God’s image is not a part of our being, but the person in the full nature, as Leontius of Byzantium shows by enhypostasis (ένυπόστατον), a term defining the nature comprised in the hypostasis, thus nature being the content of the person and the person - the existence of the nature.

Taking into account all these, patristic theology affirms that each person reveals himself by enhypostatizing and this is why a hypostasis involves the person that one concretely relates to nature but also to the person’s properties, to relating, to a certain state, showing how someone is. Although identical from a Christian perspective, between person and hypostasis there is no perfect synonymy, but we need to mention that the person is precisely the hypostasis of the being. Above all these, in the thinking of the Holy Fathers, man is defined as a theological being, situated in a direct and personal relation with God by his virtues. “*Because man is neither just he who has hands and feet nor the rational man, but he who practices faith and virtue full of piety*” [7]. In this sense, the natural ontological state of the human nature is the one of Christ the New Adam, a state made accessible to all and appropriated by every Christian sacramentally by the Church.

The Chalcedon formula uses the terms “hypostasis” and “prosopon”, which mean person, yet with different nuances. Prosopon is the psychological aspect of the human being turned toward his inner world, toward self-conscience and in this quality follows his evolution going through the ages of his own knowledge and through the stages of the appropriation of the nature he bears. The hypostasis has the aspect of the being that opens himself and goes beyond himself toward another. This second aspect is decisive to understand the teandric dimension of the person, without forgetting that the Person in an absolute sense exists only in God and that any human person is but His “image” [8]. “*The person finds his sense and happiness only in the unlimited richness of meanings and consequently in a living and in their infinite mutual communication with other persons and with the personal Word (Christ), infinite source of all the meanings, lover of all the persons in whom meanings are included.*” [9]

2. Formulation of the Christological dogma in the Ecumenical Synods: III (Ephesus 431), IV (Chalcedon 451), VI (Constantinople 680-681)

The Third Ecumenical Synod of Ephesus (431) condemns Nestorius who was blaspheming the Savior Jesus Christ and Mary the Virgin by his teaching as he was saying that Christ has two Persons: divine and human, the divine Person born since eternity from the Father and the human Person born in time from Mary the Virgin, whom he was considering only mother of man or mother of Christ, namely Antropotokos or Christotokos.

The Christological issue began with great impetus by the fight between Saint Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius, who unites with Bishop John of Antioch to consolidate his heresy. In Rome, Pope Celestine in the year 430 in a synod declares Nestorius' teaching to be a heresy, and in Alexandria, Saint Cyril held a synod in which he presents 12 Anathematismata against Nestorius and his teaching. On the background of these disputes, the Synod of Ephesus (431) was convoked, which, based on the Cappadocians' and Saint Cyril's teaching condemns Nestorius and his wrong teaching, declaring in the synodal formula the Christological dogma: *"We confess our Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; begotten of the Father before the ages according to the Godhead, and in the latter days, the Same, for us and our salvation, born of Mary the Virgin according to the manhood, the Same consubstantial with the Father in the Godhead, and consubstantial with us in manhood, for a union of two natures took place. For this reason, we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. According to this meaning of the unconfused union we confess the holy Virgin to be Theotokos, because God the Word was made flesh and lived as a man, and from the very conception united to Himself the temple taken from her. .."* [10].

Our Saviour Jesus Christ, speaking about Himself, attributes to Himself a Divine nature and a human nature, calling Himself Son of God and Son of Man. In the dialogue with Nicodemus, he reveals His divine nature calling Himself the One-Born Son of God, therefore having a divine nature, Who came down from heaven by embodiment, yet existing in heaven as God (John 3:15, 16, 18).

In the dogmatic definition of the Third Ecumenical Synod, Christ is called truly God and truly man, having a rational soul and being of a human body, yet being the same (of the same being) with the Father according to the Godhead and of the same being with man according to the humanity taken by Him as a body, certainly except for sin, by the birth of the Holy Spirit and of Mary the Virgin.

The Holy Fathers, faced with numerous Christological heresies, are unanimous in teaching about the two natures (divine and human) in Christ, defined as Son of Man and Son of God, and so they formulated clear and precise evidence based on the Holy Scripture, but also a series of rational arguments in this sense, out of which we shall remind:

- as a Mediator between God and man, Christ has to be God and man (1 Tim. 2:5).
- as a perfect teacher, as the Light of the world (John 8:12), the Savior has to be God-man (Luke 4:18), this is why no one else could have announced the Father to the world except for His hypostatic Word (Romans 11:34)
- as a Redeemer and Restorer of the human nation (Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 12:22), the Saviour Jesus Christ had to belong to both the Godhead and mankind.

The Christological dogma reaches its complete depth in the Sixth Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon (451). Eutychius, one of the fiercest fighters against Nestorius, interprets completely at the opposite pole the union of the two natures in the Person of Christ, the Son of God, compared to Saint Cyril. Eutychius affirms that Christ had only one nature

(monophysitism), the divine one, because - at the embodiment - the human nature was absorbed by the divine one and disappeared completely. The negative consequence of this heresy is that if Christ did not have any relation with the human nature, then the world's salvation is not possible either.

The definition of the 4th Ecumenical Synod, fighting against monophysitism (Eutychius' teaching), shows that in Christ Who is God there are two natures: divine and human, in one hypostasis, *“to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably (έν δύο φύσεσιν άσυγχύτως, άτρέπτως, άδιαιρέτως, άχωρίστως - in duabus naturis inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter), the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person (prosopon) and one hypostasis, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have preached concerning Him and as Jesus Christ Himself has taught us and the Creed of the Holy Fathers has handed down to us”*, and the Sixth Ecumenical Synod of Constantinople (680-681), fighting against monothelism (heresy claiming that Christ had only the divine will) shows that each nature of God has its own will and work, *“the human will submitting itself to His divine and almighty will”* [11].

Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae shows that the expression *“in two natures is equivalent to the expression agreed by the pre-Chalcedonian churches of two natures. Because the whole expression sounds as follows: - One and the Same Christ, Son, Lord, One-Born, known in two natures in an unmixed, unchanged, undivided, unseparated way”* [12]. The term *to be acknowledged* refers to the subject, accentuating the unity and the uniqueness of the person or the person of Christ.

The unity of the divine and human nature comprised by the person of Christ is the key to understanding the Christological formula, because: *“unity itself is not a compositum, a juxtaposition of parties related in a more or less marked manner between themselves. It is a juxtaposition greater than any juxtaposition”* [13]. To clarify the unity of the natures in Christ, important is the theology of Leontius of Byzantium, who by the enhypostatization formula shows that in Christ the human nature is not a stand-alone entity, yet by this observation it does not remain a simple nature without hypostasis, because this thing does not exist, but is included in Him together with the divine nature: *“Hypostasis and enhypostasis are not identical as the essence is one and what the essence means is a different thing. The hypostasis points to someone, while enhypostasis points to the essence; the hypostasis delimits the person by its characteristic features; the enhypostasis points out that there is no accident having its existence in another and not considered in itself”* [14].

As far as the expression: *“one person in two natures”* is concerned, it shows that the union with the human nature was real, without the human nature undergoing change; at the same time, the divine nature undergoes no change or blending, each having its own properties, yet collaborating. This teaching reveals Christ the Embodied Son as truly God and truly man. Therefore, *“the God of the Revelation, the Christian God is love, more precisely agapé - αγάπη... meaning descending love”* [15]. In Christ's Person, God is united to man and the communion is maximal and unique, because they become a perfect unity, without being mixed.

The heart of the Christological formula is the Logos, Who is perfectly God and perfectly man, identical with Jesus Christ. Saint Cyril of Alexandria insists on correctly understanding the fact that the Logos is one. Christ, the Hypostatic Word of the Father: *“In*

the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1), eternally born of the being of the Father, is truly God and truly man, having His own Hypostasis in two natures: divine and human, with two wills, possessing all the attributes and features making Him equal to God and to the Holy Spirit: “because there was no time when God the Word was not – as Saint John of Damascus says – God has the power of His Word through Him; is not non-hypostatic... is hypostatic, ...His birth is the act by which is taken out of the being of He Who gives birth the One Who is being born, the same with Him according to the being” [16]. Or as Saint Cyril of Alexandria expresses it, the eternal birth of Christ is: “ontological birth free from any separation, maintaining Him fully connected and coexisting [with the Father]” [17]. In order to avoid the mistaken understanding of the Son as produced from something external to God’s being, it is stated: “He is the First Born for us since He has made Himself like us, and One Born, given that it is only He Who came out of God the Father’s being” [18].

The Orthodox Chalcedonian Christology includes, in short, the teachings:

1. The identity of the Logos preceding the embodiment with the Logos after the embodiment, namely with Christ.
2. Jesus Christ is true God and true man, consubstantial with the Father according to the divinity, and consubstantial with man according to the humanity assumed completely, except for sin.
3. Jesus Christ is the only begotten before the ages of the Father as God, and the first born in time according to the humanity of Mary the Virgin, as Man.
4. Christ’s birth of Mary the Virgin took place for our salvation.
5. Mary the Virgin is Mother of God - Theotokos.
6. Christ’s person consists in two natures: divine and human, united without mixture, change, division, separation
7. The union of natures (divine and human), in Christ’s person does not suppress the differences between them, each of them keeping their specific properties, with the mention that the human nature, with its will, completely follows the divine will.

The dogmatic definition of the 4th Ecumenical Synod, presents Christ’s person as follows: *“We, then, following the Holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like us, except for sin; begotten before the ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of Mary the Virgin, the Mother of God, according to the Manhead; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and being united in one person and one hypostasis, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the Holy Fathers has handed down to us.” [19].*

Summing up this definition, we shall affirm: **Jesus Christ, the Embodied Logos, has a single Person or hypostasis, with two natures: divine and human, with two wills and corresponding actions. The Person of the Embodied Logos remains the sole**

undivided subject of the two natures. The way of union of the two natures is without division, separation, compoundness or change.

The 4th Ecumenical Synod completes the above-mentioned definition proclaiming, against the monothelites, the following: “*We learn to confess in one and the same Christ two natures and two natural activities, in an unseparated and undivided, unchanging and uncompound manner; at the same time, two natural, not contrary wills, but the human will following and not being opposed or fighting but rather submitting itself to His divine and almighty will.*”.

The way the union of natures occurred in Christ’s person is mysterious. We shall mention that the divine and the human nature have been united in the Word’s person by “*mutual inhabitation*”, by interpenetration, called by Saint John of Damascus perichoresis, which expresses at the same time both the two natures and the unity of the person.

CONCLUSIONS

Our Saviour Jesus Christ is God’s Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity Who encompasses the human nature by His birth from the Holy Virgin Mary. By assuming the human nature in Christ’s person, it is not the entire Holy Trinity that was embodied, but only the Word, God’s Son, and nothing changed in His divine nature, because we know that all the persons of the Holy Trinity are in absolute communion and community.

The formulations and dogmatic definitions of Jesus Christ’s Person show that the Son of God took on a human body, made Himself a man assuming in Himself the whole manhood, except for sin, yet He remained truly God. In Christ’s person is comprised both the divine nature but also the human nature, united for eternity, in an “*uncompounded and unchanging, undivided and inseparable*” manner, each nature having its own will, with the mention that the human will completely follows the divine one. This union is eternal and occurred for the benefit of man’s and the world’s salvation, because the mankind subjected by sin could not have overcome death using its own forces, but in Christ’s universal person, by the power of the divine nature, death is defeated for all the people, and this is actually what **the resurrection** means, as the chant of the Easter celebration proclaims: “**Christ is risen from the dead trampling over death by death...**”.

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Jesus Christ - our Teacher and our Guide

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ABSTRACT

The teaching aspect of our Saviour Jesus Christ's mission, along with the priestly and kingly service, completes the array of Messianic works encompassed by the redeeming activity of the Embodied Son of God. As a Teacher, Christ our Lord teaches us, in the most complete and easiest assimilable way, the truth about God, about the creation, about His most beloved being – man and his destination: the Kingdom of Heaven. His sermon does not limit itself to a discourse but, using as a teaching means the parable, determines the auditor to let himself carried away in familiar and at the same time unknown universes, because by means of usual images, the listener is introduced into the mysterious universe of the divine works.

Keywords: Messianic activity, Evangel, Christian teaching

INTRODUCTION

The commandment given by our Saviour to His Holy Apostles: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ...” (Mt. 28: 19) concerns not just those disciples, but all the disciples of all the times. Consequently, preaching the teaching inherited from the Embodied Son of God becomes a mission for all the Christians, and preaching the Evangel means speaking about God and about His love, overflowing on man and on the whole world.

Reading and learning the words of our Lord Jesus Christ is everyone's duty; yet, explaining them is incumbent only to those who have gone, somehow, beyond the stage of novice and dare to share with others from what they themselves have received. The word of the Scripture, being a divine word, has a mysterious charge, which can hardly be understood by the human mind. It is precisely for this reason that our Saviour Himself has tried to present His teaching in a language as simple as possible, and, where it was necessary, He gave the explanations necessary for understanding the message. In this sense, His parables have always been an attraction, both for those who have been listening to them, and for those who are reading them.

The Holy Scripture provides answers to the essential questions man is asking himself, regarding God, regarding the world and regarding his own person created from the clay brought to life by the divine breath; yet, only in relation with the Spring of knowledge can we understand the mysteries lying at the basis of these realities. It is precisely for this reason that the human person needs to be understood rather like state of communion with God, starting from man's search of Him and continuing with man's attempt to draw close to Him, using, in his approaches, both the experience, and the words, to render the discovery lived.

The calling of man to existence, by means of the Holy Trinity's counsel: “Let Us make man in Our image and after Our likeness” (cf. Genesis 1: 26) entails the calling

towards perfection, represented as an ascent towards eternal life. But this spiritual ascent cannot be realized except in close connection with God, from Whom the voice that is calling comes and to Whom we ought to turn our whole being. From here results the need to know God, as a desideratum guiding our life, as our Saviour confesses: “this is eternal life: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You sent” (John 17:3).

1. JESUS CHRIST – THE TEACHER OF THE WORLD

Whenever the Messianic activity of the Embodied Son of God is mentioned, His three works or services are indicated, namely: Teacher or Prophet, High Priest and King. Next, we shall expand on the first of these dignities, that of teacher, trying to highlight not just the content of His teaching, but especially the form under which it has been transmitted.

Our Saviour is The Teacher by excellence [1] - Rabbi, as He shows Himself to be: “One is your Teacher: Christ” (Mt. 23:8, 10); He is “One” not in the sense of singularity or exclusivity”, as Father Constantin Galeriu writes, “but of supreme reveller of the truth” [2]. Regarding this aspect, Father Dorin Opri considers: “By His uniqueness one must not at all understand the desire of being the only preacher of the whole truth, transmitted with might in order to be able to awaken and purify the spirits, to make them partakers of the Truth” [3]. He is not a teacher like any other man, but, in the activity He is accomplishing, He takes this mission of teacher to the highest level possible. Father Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae says in this sense: “He is the Teacher in the supreme sense by His very Person, because it is from His very Person that His teaching comes, which shows man’s true road towards the perfect eternity of the existence” [4].

Having the qualities of a perfect educator, the Lord Christ was called in the patristic literature The Pedagogue. Clement of Alexandria, in his work bearing this title, justifies for what reason only our Saviour can be called this way: “The Pedagogue is Christ. Sometimes He calls Himself the Shepherd, saying: «I am the good Shepherd.» (John10:11-14). According to a metaphor, inspired by the shepherds shepherding the sheep, Jesus ... is the Pedagogue taking us, the children, unto salvation. The word spoke very clearly about this by Hosea, saying: «I am your teacher.» (Hosea 5: 2)” [5].

As a Teacher, our Saviour Christ reveals to the world the Evangel, namely the good news of the divine mercy arrived upon man to save him, and the eternal truths regarding God’s Person and His eternal Kingdom. In His mission, Christ the Lord has in view to transmit everything that man needs to know about God, about the world, about himself, the essence that would lead him to salvation. “As the Son of God, He reveals the Triune God glorified, as the Logos, the creating Word, He gives to us the authentic meaning of the creation, as the Son of Man, He is offering to us the model and the plenitude that the human person is called to attain” [6].

His arrival in the world was under the sign of the discovery, from the source, of the life and love of the Most Holy Trinity, which determines Him to affirm that: “I speak about the things I have seen while with My Father...” (John 8:38). The speaking about the Father springs from the deepest intimacy, in which movement, circulation of the light and love cannot be shaded by sin [7]. In His word, Christ the Lord insisted on the concrete meaning of the Law and of the prophets of the Old Testament, law and meanings that He did not want to change, but to make full (according to Mt. 5:17), completing what was actually missing: the revelation of the great love of God, Who “so much loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16). God’s universal and unconditional love becomes an example to be followed for

Christ's disciples: "A new commandment I give to you: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another." (John 13:34).

Beginning His Messianic activity by the words: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4:17), Jesus Christ also indicated the central topic of His sermon: God's Kingdom; yet, closely connected to this topic, he also identifies the primary conditions necessary to the access to eternal happiness: repentance and faith. "Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk. 1:15) are the first words put down by the evangelist Mark as signifying the beginning of the Saviour's preaching, words that come to illustrate the truth that in order to be the beneficiaries of salvation we need to have the power to begin a new life, we need to have the power to change our old life lived in sin by that of grace, which we receive from Christ as a reward for our faith: "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives to those He chooses" (John 5:21-22), but also as a consequence of our judgement.

Repentance opens to us the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven and, at the same time, awakens our conscience, determining us to admit the state of sinfulness we are living, to make the decision of making things right, fighting against the sinful passions in order to be reborn to a new life, pleasing to God [8].

Faith, at the same time, is our answer to God's calling, towards which we need to show our total availability as soon as we have heard it. According to Saint Paul the Apostle, "faith comes by hearing the message, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17), a truth showing the importance of God's teaching brought to the people by the Embodied Son of God and inviting to receiving His words to partake of His life: "I tell you the solemn truth, the one who hears my message and believes the One Who sent Me has eternal life and will not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life." (John 5:24). The apostles themselves got to confess their faith in the divinity of their Teacher only after they had listened to His words and were convinced that in them they find eternal life.

Christ the Lord is the supreme Teacher also because we learn not just from His divine words, but also from His example; His entire life is a sermon, is the Light of the Kingdom reflected on all those who follow the road of salvation. "I am the Light of the world", says our Saviour, "the one who follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12). He presents Himself as an example when He says to the Apostles: "Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt. 11:29). He is the "Teacher" and "the Prophet", culminating by His very Person, because He is not just man, but also God and, consequently, He has in Himself and irradiates from Himself the true teaching not just about God, but also about the true man, as he is realized in Christ and as the others need to become [9].

2. ASPECTS OF THE SAVIOUR'S TEACHING FOUND IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

His strong voice gathered around Him multitudes of people willing to know the words of eternal life. The evangelists put down just a part of His words, which they concentrate in different groups, depending on certain themes, one of them being known as the Sermon on the Mount. Referring to this aspect, Father Professor Leon Arion affirms that "the sermon on the mount is not a stenographic rendering of a sermon, written down word by word, but a well-rendered summary... It is unitary in its content, because the psychological connection between the groups of thoughts drafted is preserved, being penetrated by a unitary plan and a common goal, namely to orient man on the road of salvation" [10].

The Sermon on the Mount offers us a group of teachings in which our Saviour expresses His attitude concerning certain aspects related to the moral Law, and concerning certain practices imposed by the Law of the Old Testament (fasting and prayer). Viewed as a whole, all this group of teachings is seen as a model or perfect guidebook of the Christian life, a sure way of drawing close to God, in our way to salvation. At the same time, relating this complex of teachings to the whole teaching activity of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we can say that The Sermon on the Mount synthesizes in its content the whole essence of the evangels and of the entire New Testament.

From this perspective, a special place is occupied by the Blessings, nine ways of reaching perfection, the true happiness; another reality, superior to the one that carrying us along every day, expressed by an ascent of nine steps. As a good knower of the human soul, Christ the Lord knows that at the basis of all man's desires and efforts is the nostalgia after the primordial happiness tasted by Adam in heaven, happiness to which man is called even since the creation, and manifested as a desire of ours to partake of such an indescribable state. This is why we say that the blessings "reveal the ultimate goal of the human existence, the ultimate target of the human acts: God is calling us to His own happiness. This ultimate calling is adressed to everyone, in a personal manner" [11].

Using the expression "blessed are...", our Saviour is calling everyone, poor and rich, to follow His exhortations, showing that our acquiring true happiness does not depend on our social or material condition, but on the way man refers to his relationship with God. It is precisely for this reason that He relates the happiness of acquiring the Kingdom of Heaven, which He announces as present and of which we can partake, to the extent to which we do the divine will in our life. Anyone who will endeavour to embody, by his actions, the divine precepts, will be liked and loved by God, receiving as a reward the true and intransient happiness.

An important feature of the Blessings is their spiritual, contemplative sense, which exhorts to reflecting more on your inner state and less on your external state. From this perspective, the Blessings focus more on to be than on to do. The conditions they propose are not dictated and do not come as an external imposition, but they need to become inner determination, a conviction of our own conscience. Becoming characteristic of the human soul, they manage to create in man another conception about the world and about man's vocation.

From this perspective, the "nine Happiness" come as a counterpart to the commandments of the Old Testament, exhorting man to act out of his own conviction, not as a constraint marked by the fear of punishment. The ten commandments of the Mosaic Law were mostly drafted in the negative, punitive form. The new principles of the Messianic kingdom form strong convictions in the believers' souls, attracting by their persuasive character, determining our actions to start not out of the fear of punishment, but out of the desire to acquire eternal happiness.

Consequently, viewed in relation to the Decalogue, the Blessings are no longer inscribed on cold tables made of stone, but are engraved in the warm hearts of the human soul according to Jeremiah' prophecy: "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt... I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people" (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

By this, we must not see an opposition between the Old Law and the New Law, but need to understand that our Saviour, by the nine exhortations, desires to encourage towards another way of knowing the Word of God and of practicing virtue. Growing in virtue is the result of our collaboration with God; God, always helping us with His grace, is waiting for us to be strong-willed and perseverant in doing good.

The great principle of perfection is proclaimed by Christ, the Lord and the Teacher, by the words: “Be perfect, just as Your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Mt. 5:48). Perfection leads to the state of eternal happiness, which we acquire as a reward for the accomplishment of the commandment of unconditional love, as Christ Himself taught us by His Passions and His Sacrifice.

Having the teaching from Himself as God, He speaks to the people revealing to them the divine things, yet being also true Man, He dresses His ideas in words that His public can understand, using images and examples taken from the daily life and from the occupations that were so familiar to His listeners. “He embraced with love and mercy the needs and the sadness of a world estranged from God and highlighted the divine revelation in the middle of the surrounding nature, in the valley of Nazareth, in the serenity of the Genezaret Lake, along the picturesque Jordan Valley, or in the silence of the mountains of the Promised Land” [12]. All these have led to the affirmation of the truth that His teaching is from the Father, as He Himself confesses (John 7:16; 8:28) or as it is admitted about Him: “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God”, Nicodemus, “a man of the Pharisees ... and ruler of the Jews” will declare to Him, coming to Him at night to feed on the divine Truth (cf. John 3:1-2).

CONCLUSIONS

Presenting Himself as God become man, the Saviour announces the Kingdom of Heaven about to reveal itself and to develop to the extent to which those who are listening to Him believe in Him and in His message. His word is also a calling to the people to truly know and receive the Kingdom, as this represents their only chance of true, eternal and full life [13].

Our Saviour Christ is the Teacher by excellence, Whose teaching attracts by the sublimity of its content and by the simplicity of its transmission, because although the ideas are unfathomably deep spiritually, they are nevertheless taught using methods accessible to all the people, regardless of their status on the social scale or the scale of the intellectual values. A special place among these methods is held by the parable, “to which He will give a unique, never ever equalled brilliance” [14].

In His speeches, the Saviour approaches the important problems related to the earthly and the future existence. He was teaching the people “with power”, not as the scholars were teaching (according to Mt. 7:29), using both the direct approach, as one can see in the Sermon on the Mount, but also an indirect, hidden approach, as one can observe in the content of the parables.

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The sacramental character of man and of creation

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ABSTRACT

God made Himself a man for man to reach the likeness of God – this is the essential idea of the oikonomia of our salvation, dear to all the Church Fathers, from Saint Irenaeus to Saint Athanasius the Great and the essence of Christ, mystery and original and fundamental sacrament of our meeting with God and of our salvation, of all of us, in Christ, and of the acquisition by each man of the fruits of salvation and deification through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, in His Church. Christ's mystery and sacrament begins by the Embodiment of the Father's Logos. The Passions, the cross, the tomb and the resurrection are its continuation. And all these translate the mystery of the reason why God created everything and the very mystery of man - participating to the original mystery, namely Christ, and the Church, as sacrament. Therefore, Christ is the Mystery and the sacrament by excellence - original and general -, spring and content of all the mysteries and sacraments, condition and explanation of all these.

Keywords: Sacrament, Logos, Creator, embodiment, image, man.

Introduction

The creation is a free act of the will and not a natural overflow as the irradiation of the divine energies, is the work of a personal God, of the Trinity that has a common will that belongs to the nature of God and which works according to the decision of God's thinking, this is what is called: "The eternal and unchangeable Saint of God" [1]. The creation is a free act of His will and this is the only ground of the beings.

Any creature has its point of contact with the divinity; everything is contained in the Logos. The Logos, God the Word, Who appears as a divine centre from Whom the creating rays emerge, particular logoi (reasons) of the beings, a centre towards Whom the created beings tend, in their turn, as towards their ultimate target. Created to be deified, the world is dynamic, tending towards its ultimate target, determined previously in the ideas-wills. The latter have their centre in the Logos, hypostatic wisdom of the Father, Who manifests Himself in everything and Who brings everything in the Holy Spirit to the union with God. In God there is nothing to cease, nothing to have an end. The Word of God is born, but does not pass. God did not create for a certain time, but for eternity; He brought the being into existence by His creative Word: "because everything that was created by God in the various natures comes together in man as in a melting pot, to form in him a matchless perfection, as a harmony composed of different sounds". Therefore, man was finally created to be introduced in the universe as a king in his palace, "as a prophet and as a priest". The world was made out of nothing only by God's will, this is its origin. The world was created in order to participate to the fullness of the divine life, this being its calling. It is called to make this

freedom perfect in union, in free agreement of the created wills with the uncreated will of God.

1. The grounds of man's mystery.

An important aspect of the cosmology is the creation of man in the image of God. While the whole relation of the creation, with the evident veiled implications of a Christological discourse, becomes deeply logotic in the light of the New Testament, the interpretation of the term *image of God*, in the light of Pauline theology, acquires profoundly Christological meanings: "For the Holy Apostle Paul, "Image (eikon) of the unseen God" (Colossians 1:15) is Christ. And man is, as we will see, an image of the Image (eikon eikonos). But also the Christological term met in Saint John "word (logos) of God" has, as we know, a close, if not identical content as significance with the Pauline term: "Image of the unseen God" [2].

Christ represents, therefore, the Archetype and the Telos of the human existence: "Saint Irenaeus of Lyon says that "The historical Christ was the Prototype that God had in mind when He created the first man, who was to appear on earth. The Creator foresaw and created Adam according to this future Prototype. Consequently, Adam was created in the image of the Word, Who was to assume in time, as Christ, the human nature, and show Himself as a perfect man on earth" [3]. It is understandable that man does not find the archetypal structure of his creation only in the deified humanity of Christ, but in the Logos of God Himself, and, finally, even this humanity is deified by the Logos according to the model contained in Himself.

The statement that man is the most complex being is justified. No matter how many books we were to write on him, one cannot exhaust the content of man's mystery. This happens because man is the image of God, and his mystery is eternally related to the mystery of Christ. Man was created according to the model of the Logos, for the created being to correspond with God. Certainly, in the eternal plan of God there was also the possibility of the Embodiment since the eternity, but the One through Whom man was created, according to the divine plan, namely the divine Logos, is the One Who makes Himself a man, so that His work may be accomplishable precisely since it belongs to Him as to the One Who has put His seal on it. He was the Model of the created being. So, God's Son created man out of love, able of love and of dialogue with his fellows and with the Trinitarian Persons, possessing, inscribed in his psycho-physical constitution, his adaptability to the divine and a capacity of receiving the divine message. God made man, since the beginning, related to Himself. God's Son did not assume anything else except the human nature that He Himself had created, together with the soul [4].

The Logos is the actual centre of the world and the grounds over which all the created things are placed. By virtue of his special relation with the Logos, man is not a secondary centre of the creation, because everything was created for man and ordained according to man's destiny.

To support the idea that man occupies a central place in the world, Saint Maximus the Confessor developed a whole theology. Man has a central place to the extent to which he preserves the communion with the divine Logos and manifests himself as another logos, as a factor of activation of the world's rationality. Saint Maximus shows that man holds, physically, by the property of being in relation with all the aspects of the reality, the power to unify all the dimensions of the world. Man's calling is to be an active factor of the harmonious union of all the beings, guiding them towards God and bringing them together in Him [5].

Regarding man's relation with the world, although it manifests itself by means of the body, however the body appears as an entity of an infinitely complex sensitivity, due to the soul. It is in the soul that man perceives all the vibration of the world, and it is also through it that the complex relation of the human person with the world is expressed [6]. For this reason, the mystics of the Christian East, from Macary the Egyptian to Seraphim of Sarov, affirmed that the communion with God is realized by the human being as a whole and that the divine light can irradiate from the body of the deified man [7].

The Orthodox theology does not know the opposition between created and uncreated, between matter and grace and, for this reason, according to it, grace penetrates in the materiality of the human body; moreover, it claims that "only the whole man can receive grace and not one or the other of the components of the human complex: his imagination, his soul, his body, taken separately [8]. If the body is penetrated – as the whole world matter – by the uncreated divine energies by which God is present in every little part of the universe as a deifying, transforming and preserving power, if God is not excluded and considered absent from the creation, it is only in this way that we can have a theological perspective on the creation, a perspective permitting us to see in the creation the gift of God and to perceive it as a means of sanctification and salvation for man.

Not just the soul, but also the human body participates to the character of image, namely man in the entirety of his being is "in the image of God". In this sense, Saint Gregory Palamas underlines: "The name of man is not applied to the soul or to the body separately, but to both of them together, because together they were created in God's image" [9]. Maybe out of the same reasons, namely the intimate union between body and soul, Tertullian and the Blessed Augustine could see the image of God in man, the man's likeness with God, precisely in man's body [10]. According to the divine Revelation, Christ is not just a Redeeming God, as some Christian confessions teach, but is also the Pantocrator, the Holder of everything in the universe, present and active by the internal rationality of the cosmos [11]. And the embodied Logos is Christ. It is dignified and adequate for God's Son to take on a human body, because it has been created by Him, and man is made up of body and soul, therefore he has carried the image of the Logos.

The relation between creation and salvation is expressed the most briefly and clearly by Saint John the Evangelist, saying about God that "He came to that which was His own" (John 1:11). Commenting on this syntagm, Father Stăniloae observes that there are two meanings in it: 1) "His own" are created and supported by Him or through Him; 2) "He came to that which was His own" means that He took on our human nature. But this means – as Father Stăniloae says – that "he had something in Him close to our own, a fact shown in our being created "in His image"... He is, in a way, our model or our prototype" [12]. Understanding and accepting this relation between the Logos and the creation is capitally important for the world's destiny.

2. The significance of the Logos for man

"Everything is contained in the Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Who is the first principle and the ultimate target of all the things created". So, any creature has its contact point with the Divinity: this is its idea, its reason, its Logos, Who is at the same time the target to which he tends. The ideas of the individual things are contained in higher and more general ideas, as species are in genres" [13].

Man, as a created element, can find again his origin only in the Logos: "In a special way, He is the Prototype of man, who is in essence the words that express him and all the

things he is connected with, as things that come, too, from the Supreme Word. The Word, creator and holder, has in Himself the words or the reasons of all, of some as subjects of words, of others as their content, different from the content of the persons subjects of the words, but meant to become theirs”.

The creation of man in the image of God is reflected in man’s features. Thus, if this image of God is identified with the Logos, and the Logos is thought of as a Person, it is necessary for man to be a person, too – a subject of communion: “The human subject is the thinking personal reason, created in a correspondence with the things thought by the Divine Logos before creating men. The Logos does not create just subjects brought into existence according to His Image, but subjects meant for a dialogue with Him.”

At the same time, if the Logos is conceived as a Person hypostatizing a being, then man, too, must respect the same structure. For this reason, “Man is at the same time the person and the nature or, more precisely, the person concretizing and revealing the nature, because he is an Image of the Son, representing a distinct personal hypostasis of the Unique and Indivisible Being, common to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.” [14].

Man conforms to his Archetype not just on the level of His ontological structure, but also in point of mirroring His essence (not of reproducing Him). Thus, a man created in the image of Reason must necessarily be rational and is called to partake in this Reason: “Since he represents an image of the Creator’s all-wisdom, man’s wisdom (sophia) has the power and the duty to ascend to all-wisdom, as well. Saint Athanasius the Great says: “But in order for the creatures not just to exist, but also to exist in Himself, it pleased God to let His Wisdom descend to the creatures, to settle a certain impression and a seal of His Image in everything, for those that were made to show themselves wise and worthy of God. Just as our word is an image of the Word who is God’s Son, so is His wisdom, in which (created wisdom), having the possibility of knowing and thinking, we make ourselves receivers of the Creating wisdom. Man is understood by the Holy Fathers ontologically only as a theological being. His ontology is Johanneic”. Man’s rationality can be found both on the level of his capacity of thinking, and on the level of his potentiality of being a speaking being: “It would be correct to understand that man is a reasonable-speaking being, because he was created in the image of Christ, Who is the Reason – the Hypostatic Word of the Father. Saint Athanasius the Great, who ponders over this theme, in particular, formulates it clearly: “After His own Image He made them, also giving them the power of His Word-Reason; so that, having it in them a sort of outline of the Word-Reason and making themselves rational, they may be able to remain in happiness”.

As a person created after the model of the Logos, man represents a subject of communion, who can enter a dialogical relation with God, and as a rational person, he can collaborate with the Divinity: “In this way, we can understand that man is a creator (demiourgos) because he is the Image of the Word-Reason, creator by excellence: “And in this concern, man is made an image of God, because as a man he collaborates (sinergoi) to the making of man” (cf. Clement of Alexandria). “Consequently, it becomes clear that the essence of man is not to be found in the matter out of which he was created, but in the Archetype (model) based on which he was conceived and to which he tends. As the truth of the icon is to be found in the person depicted in it, similarly the truth of man is to be found in his Model” [15].

The Logos or the Word Himself made Himself a man to change and bring back to Him the human nation. Man is therefore a rational Being, made up of soul and body; he is the union and the unity of these two. God called the whole man, not just a part of him, to life

and to resurrection. In the Book of Genesis 1:26: “Then God said: “Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness” [16], the use of certain images and symbols to express this truth of faith is determined by the need of human expression and understanding.

Man possesses, by his very nature, the reason of attaining the truth. Only the Logos, the supreme Reason, could have protected man, His most qualified representative in the middle of nature. The contribution of the Logos is made visible especially in the creation of reason: “which is light to the mind and ground for judgement” [17], whereas the Holy Spirit endows the heart with the gift of the virtues and with the heat of divine love.

The Embodiment of the Logos created the teandric and Eucharistic realism, by His embodiment in man. The Logos lifted man to an overwhelming dignity. God created Adam neither immortal, nor mortal, but able of both situations, endowed with the power to want and to be able of everything, namely of good and of evil. Since Adam to this day, nobody has been saved by the power of nature, but by the grace of the Holy Spirit, in faith in the name of Jesus, “for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12) than the name of Jesus Christ [18].

The decisive arm of man is his freedom. Man has a unique freedom of will, not so much as a unique hypostasis, but of a unique nature. The will of man or of the human nature can only derive, therefore, from his divine nature. The Man-God contains in Himself each individual. Each man is virtually a true brother of Jesus Christ, a moment of the creature participating to the universal or symphonic personality of Jesus Christ. Only in Christ and with Christ does man acquire a personality. “Man is *per se* impersonal; each man is a virtual Christ”.

The human nature is the participation to the Logos, and life is a becoming towards Christ. It is by the Logos that the multitude of things was made, the Logos is throughout everything because “they who have the Spirit of God are led to the Word, namely to the Son and the Son takes them and offers them to the Father and the Father gives to them the unrotteness (incorruptibility)” [19].

The Logos was sent by God to the people, as a king sends his son, a king for men, to save them by conviction. By the embodiment, “the Logos recapitulated in Him the whole human nature”. As the first Adam was born out of the earth by the Logos of God, it was proper for this Logos, He Himself recapitulating Adam, to be born as well like Adam. “When the fullness of time had come, the Word made Himself a man, to recapitulate everything in Himself.”

When the Word takes on the human nature, He established the communion between God and mankind. The Logos introduced God to the people in order for them to have Who to progress to.

“Christ’s presence in the creation, by the power of the Spirit, is the only means by which the world was opened and by which it can open itself again to God” [20].

Man is treasured and lifted, he is “God’s image” [21], equal in honour, rights and duties with all his fellows. Man is meant to grow up to the full measure of Christ’s stature; man is a social Being, therefore he cannot live in isolation, but in community with the others.

The rationality of the cosmos reveals itself as a spiritual ground impressed on the creation by the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. Man is the Son’s image and consequently he is “in the image of the Father”. As an image of God’s Word, the man subject of the things or co-subject together with his fellows, having the responsibility to see in things their divine reasons and, by them, the Logos itself as their supreme subject, is

meant to develop the communion with his fellows, as together-subjects of the things, according to the image of the divine Logos.

3. The man without Christ

Today everybody agrees that life is becoming increasingly unbearable, the world increasingly insecure, that happiness is, in our age, an illusion. As a contemporary Orthodox hierarch says, “The tragic character of man and the feeling of his contradictory nature are increasingly intensely highlighted by the historical events” [22]. Because evil is no longer a particular, isolated and unextended reality, but, given the present technique, it is rapidly becoming the universal reality, influencing the history of the planet. For man there is no other solution but the return to Christ, because, since the Embodiment of the Logos, man is related by his very destiny to Christ. Jesus Christ’s coming in the world or the Embodiment of God’s Son brings in the world not a Law and a Reason, but *the* Law and *the* Reason, not some conception on life, but *the* supreme conception on life. “In Jesus Christ the measure of all things and of all the values in this world is revealed to us. Just as He is the centre of time, starting from Whom we count the years towards the world’s beginning and towards the world’s end, similarly He is the measure to which we refer the levels of life reached by Him or after Him.” [23].

Man’s separation from God as a consequence of the modern and postmodern thinking determined man to consider himself “the measure of all things” and adopt a conception of life that does not correspond either to his earthly destiny or to the high aspirations for which he has been created. In this free choice lies the origin of the drama of the contemporary man and society.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov observes that “there are, today, at the limit, only two alternatives for man, absolutely irreconcilable: faith in the world and in the religion of the self, whose fruit is death; and faith in Christ, God’s Son, the Only One in Whom there is Eternal Life”.

At present, man is in a state of crisis and he must return to his natural state. And man’s natural state is the one defining him as truly man; the man who is truly man is the man of virtue, the virtuous man, settled in good, the one who demonstrates strength in the opposition to sin and in whose life one can see the presence of Christ by behaviour and attitude. Man’s natural state consists in the preoccupation for the superior, spiritual things, in taking on the responsibility for himself and for his fellows, in the cultivation and the affirmation of man’s personal dignity. Man’s natural state is precisely the state of grace, and he can only have this if he is in communion with Jesus Christ-God and with his fellows.

For the Christian, the ideal accomplishment in Christ consists in attaining “*to mature adulthood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:13)

Conclusions

Man is made in the image of God so that, having a soul related to God out of the principle of life produced in man by the breath of God, he tends to God and is in a living relation with God. And by this relation of life, man maintains undiminished his kinship with God. The relation between man and God is possible due to the fact that God made man even since the beginning related to Himself. Making man in His image, God put man even since the beginning in an aware and free relation with Himself.

Moses’ expressions about God’s work in man’s creation wonderfully highlight the difference between the types of works manifested by the Creator “because, describing the creation, the great prophet observed that all the other creatures were produced by God by the word”, but He made man with His own hands. Man was brought into existence after all the

creatures because he represents the being that makes the creation perfect and because he unites in Himself the material world with the spiritual world.

The divine-human person of Christ shows to us as obviously as possible that man was not created for autonomy, but for the communication with God. In His quality of true God and true Man, He constitutes the connecting link between the cosmos and the Trinity, by which the Spirit descends in the world, for the world to ascend towards communion with the heavenly Father.

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The (Re)Turn of the Prophets: Prophetic Portrait as a Paradigm of Critique for Post-Secular Society¹

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ABSTRACT

The paper has two main objectives: (a) it aims to present that a portrait of a prophet is a doable paradigm for critiquing the socio-political, economic, and cultural condition of the post-secular society and (b) attempts to find the prophets in our age. By understanding the life of the prophets, one can find robust insights that will guide us to clearly establish relations and connections between the past and the present real situation using a historico-critical and sociological approach.

Keywords: post-secular society, prophetic paradigm, critique, prophetic portrait.

INTRODUCTION

The paper has two main objectives: (a) it aims to present that a portrait of a prophet is a doable paradigm for critiquing the socio-political, economic, and cultural condition of the post-secular society and (b) attempts to find the prophets in our age. By understanding the life of the prophets, one can find robust insights that will guide us to clearly establish relations and connections between the past and the present real situation using a historico-critical and sociological approach. As we are all aware, the biblical prophets exemplify moral greatness, overwhelming courage, indisputable will power, strong conviction, and enormous spiritual influence in articulating their visions and oracles received from God. It is shown in their character the remarkable power of conceiving a unique linguistic attitude as well as the ability to penetrate the very being of their audience. Their acute and blatant criticisms against the oppressors and indifferent individuals are necessary to bring the issues and problems of their time within the fore of consciousness. These same characteristics demand our attention today because these are integral in social transformation. There is a call for “prophetic integration” of ideals, roles, and principles rooted in the values of the biblical prophets to be assimilated in our daily practices. Our society today, seen from the perspective of enlightened avant-garde discerners like the prophets of old, is characterized as frenetic, decentralized, dysfunctional, and disintegrated whose structures and functions are obviously degenerating and retarding. Hence, this paper tries to show that the portrait of a

[1] By *critique* I mean a reflective and systematic inquiry on the subject to be examined. This is akin to the Hegelian and Kantian concept of *critique*. The post-secular society is taken from Jurgen Habermas who claimed that the society has already entered another period where secularization no longer becomes viable instead the return of religious form of reasoning and its influence in the public sphere have been overlooked by secular-political theorists. Peter Berger calls this new phenomenon “desecularization of the society”.

prophet will help us see, examine, and critique using the “prophetic lens” the present condition of our society.

In order to achieve this, the paper will articulate on the following essential points: first, the idea that the exemplary life of the prophets can be an inspiration to all of us today who are situated in a kind of society not so different from theirs; secondly, the themes common to almost all of the major and minor prophets especially Amos, Jeremiah, Hosea, Isaiah, and Ezekiel have to do with their outright denunciation of social injustice and moral decay caused by the perversion of humanity towards God’s divine love and compassion; thirdly, the visions, exhortations, and oracles by the Hebrew prophets transcend the time of their proclamation because even today the content of their messages describes the state of the current society; fourthly, the root of social illness and human decadence can still be attributed to the “royal kings”² or the select few. Fifthly, although the Hebrew prophets are limited in a sense that they spoke *in* their time, but the characteristics and the role they played remain essential in examining the present situation. By looking at the present, those characteristics are still evident and being practiced by daring individuals. Lastly, drawing from the understanding of the essential attributes of the Hebrew prophets, the paper tries to locate the prophetic character within the present socio-political and cultural sphere. Hence, it will only endeavor to examine and interpret the attributes of the prophets – a portrait, and their message sociologically as we try to relate them to the present condition. The caveat, however, is to understand the entire corpus as a discourse intended to articulate and make it more apparent in our consciousness also the role of God in human history. For the prophets, God is always active in history. The dubious faith in human rationality has caused rampant inequalities, perversions, failures, injustices and exploitation.³ This is due to total neglect of the divine presence of God working in history and an outright denial of his divine act in human struggle. In what follows, I intend to offer a reflective discourse on the issues the paper aims to articulate.

PROPHET: DEFINITION, MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

There is a grave misrepresentation and misconception of the prophets from the point of view of an ordinary Bible reader. To an ordinary believer, the prophets are known to be seers, diviners, or clairvoyants who are capable of “seeing” the future by performing rituals similar to animistic practices by the pagans.⁴ These prophets are also compared to some sort of fortune-teller who cast their predictions through the use of instruments believed to be reliable in knowing the future.⁵ Although the Bible contains several accounts regarding this

[2]Taken metaphorically, the “royal kings” of today have undergone a quite radical and subtle transformation morphing into another form or personality no longer a single individual but can be an institution or any form of entity whose character are similar to that of the earthly kings of old.

[3]Science for instance affirms the authority of reason over faith and sees everything in the light of reason alone, dismissing the instrumentality and function of faith in making the world a better place. However, despite this science unconsciously creates instruments hostile to human flourishing and instead allows wider space for dangerous activity.

[4]Animism has been considered as crude religious practice, which uses living or non-living things as object of worship. In animistic culture those who perform the rituals are called shamans or diviners. In the Philippines, they are called *babylans* or *catalonans*. They take charge of the religious affairs and possess full authority on religious matters. They serve as advisors of the chieftain and the sole source of predictions.

[5]Those who are categorized as fortune-teller used various methods in interpreting the future such as cards, stars, and horoscopic symbols.

perception about the prophets,⁶ the Hebrew Major Prophets essentially laid the ground for a quite different view, which clears our understanding of them.⁷ Despite this, it remains in the consciousness of the people the parasitic view about prophets who have the capacity to perform rituals or doing other forms of practices in uncovering the divine will. The definitional meaning of the word derived from Greek language more or less brought this about. The etymology of the English word is derived from the Greek preposition (*pro*) and a noun (*phetes*) that means an agent. The preposition *pro* has three main senses namely, temporal, spatial, and representative.⁸ According to Privost, the Greek preposition has been favourably taken by the Christian tradition in its first sense (temporal), which is equivalent to the term ‘predict’. This gives us an idea that by its etymological definition, we have an understanding of a prophet as an individual “who spoke in advance, who predicted events to come, and, in a quiet way, the coming of the Messiah and the different aspects of his mission.”⁹ Hence, due to short of knowledge, people crudely understood the prophets as those professional futurologists. To avoid this erroneous understanding, the Hebrew word for prophet must be invoked. In Hebrew, a prophet is someone who is called or perhaps someone who announces or proclaims the message of God.¹⁰ The Hebraic view avoids our tendency to misconstrue the biblical prophets. These prophets such as Amos, Jeremiah, Hosea, Isaiah and the like are neither diviners nor seers as the Hebraic definition reveals. They do not perform divination or any kind of similar character the Bible strongly condemns.¹¹ Rather the Hebrew prophets are individuals who are called by God to be his messenger and spokesperson of his message. There is no technique in receiving God’s message. The message God wanted to convey is transmitted in a profoundest and inexplicable manner by which the prophet himself cannot fully understand. This means that the use of external instrument is totally unnecessary to the delivery of the message of God, let alone words as pronounced by the sacred mouths from a divine source suffice. Needless to say, prophets have direct contact with the divine, “either when they are possessed by the divine or when they supernaturally transcend the human world to enter the divine realm.”¹² However, this direct contact should not be understood literally since such entails logical problems. By direct contact we mean that prophets receive their visions, perform oracles, and provide exhortations by serious discernment on the issues or problems at hand while recognizing that in the process of discernment the divine presence is invoked and ever-present. For Ratzinger, the “essential element of the prophet...is to tell the truth on the strength of his contact with God; the truth for today which also, naturally, sheds light on the future.”¹³ In this manner, the utterances of the prophets are, though words are flowing from

[6] In the Old Testament accounts on divination and other forms of prophesying can be found in the earlier books (deuteronomistic tradition) where the known prophets are those who serve the kings and predict the future mostly favourable to the plans of the kings.

[7] Although earlier than these prophets, the books of Kings and Judges already provide template for distinction. A classic example is Micah in the book of 1 Kings. The writer distinguishes the true from false prophets.

[8] Privost, Jean-Pierre, *How to Read the Prophets*. Translated Bowden, J. SCM Press Ltd., 1996, 6.

[9] Ibid., pp.6-7.

[10] Ibid., pp.7.

[11] This condemnation shows a negative attitude towards those who are into divination contrasting them with those of what the writers considered a ‘true’ prophet.

[12] Wilson, R.R. (1987). *Early Israelite Prophecy* in *Interpreting the Prophets*. Eds. James Luther Mays & Paul J. Achtemeier (1987). Fortress Press, U.S.A.1987, p. 6.

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their mouth, yet not their own but of God. Since the biblical prophets are essentially God's chosen messengers then their assumption of apostolic work requires tremendous effort and sacrifice.

Being a prophet is a great task and not without great difficulties.¹⁴ Moreover, there is a great deal in understanding the prophets not only by the message they have but also by their historical context and the manner they have shaped their message. Privost laments that "all that is remembered of Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and the rest is that they spoke of the Messiah, and there is no thought of the specific historical context of each prophet and the particular coloring which he gave to his message."¹⁵ This view is valid since God's chosen watchdogs are historical and situated within a particular realm marked by a specific historical situation people have failed to realize. They cannot be separated from their historical background. Hence, we have to include in our schema the historical condition of the time to conceive a portrait worthy of them as God's prophets.

The Context

One cannot fully understand the contents and the complex social structure of one's own life or the life of particular society without considering its historical milieu. History plays a crucial role in human affairs as well as in the formation of human condition and thought. This lays the possibility of better understanding not only of ourselves but also "by understanding the forces, choices, and circumstances that brought us to our current situation."¹⁶ This brings to mind the practical role history plays in the direction of mankind. It provides a framework in which we assess or examine our life, in understanding our pursuits, desires, ideals, principles as well as our *telos* – the "ultimate end of mankind, the end which the spirit sets itself in the world."¹⁷ History directs and situates us in a proper context for a purpose. With this in mind, what we have gathered and collected from the texts on the essential roles and characteristics of the prophets are but the by-products of continuing historical examination and reflection. The constructive historical knowledge we have of the prophets is due to our continuing effort to account for their relevance beyond their own time. The hinge of understanding their life is but historical, and not textual. In this manner, deductions are based not only on the connections and relations of ideas or thoughts embedded in the text but also on the historical condition. For instance, Amos' and Hosea's radical opposition and sharp criticism regarding social injustice and moral decay is due to the historical forces of the time driven by the people's selfish desires.¹⁸ Isaiah's vocal opposition to the plans of the king to be a vassal of an alien nation brings into surface his own

[14] For instance, Amos' possession is perilous (3:8), Hosea realized he was considered a mad man (9:7), Isaiah on the other hand, suffered mocking by his hearers (5:19; 28:9). See Wolff, Hans Walter, *Prophecy from the Eight Through the Fifth Century* in *Interpreting the Prophets*. Eds., James Luther Mays & Paul J. Achtemeier. Fortress Press, U.S.A. 1987, p.14.

[15] Privost, J. *How to Read the Prophets*, p.1

[16] Little, Daniel, "Philosophy of History", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/history/>>.

[17] Hegel, G.W.F. (1857). *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, translated by H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975. 63.

[18] Amos has a clear target, which is the rich that he condemns for the oppression of the poor. On the other hand, Hosea has no particular target of community but the same condemnation is found. "There is no truth, no love, and no knowledge of God in the land; Swearing and lying, killing and stealing, and committing adultery, they break all bonds, and blood touches blood." Hosea 4:1-2. Hereafter Bible reference is New American Bible (NAB)

character.¹⁹ Hosea on the other hand, by employing a quite remarkable metaphor of “marriage” and acute charging of the nation as “harlot” intimates a type of unique character. These characteristics expressed in the text can be deciphered hermeneutically but cannot be taken out of historical context. One salient point to consider is that behavior and attitudes are shaped and reshaped by external forces. Neither Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, nor Ezekiel could become so dramatically acute, drastic, ferocious, and fearless in their pronouncements and exhortations against the people of Israel and to the powerful elite if they have not seen the necessity to do so.

Therefore, drawing from historical context the need to fully comprehend a complex view of the prophets’ characteristics and the content of their message as well as the embedded technique used in bringing the Word to the world is essential. This same approach in understanding the predicament of the modern period can be understood historically will also be taken up by this paper.

INTERPRETING PROPHETIC MESSAGE: AMOS, HOSEA, ISAIAH, JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL

Knowing the life of the prophets, one cannot but appreciate with great wonder how they have overcome great trials and sufferings in the teeth of opposition as well as against the deafness of the people towards God’s Word. Their task is sustained by strong faith in God and a unique kind of hope that despite all bitter criticisms and apocalyptic discourses of doom, at the end of their discourse they cannot but still hope for conversion so that salvation through God’s infinite mercy and kindness will be given to them. God is working in history and salvation can only be achieved or gained if man has the desire to obtain it. Any struggle requires action. Any judgment by a prophet is a judgment hinging on his spiritual/theological discernment. The prophets and the lives they have lived can be considered as lives in active contemplation. They are always active and engaged and such engagement is public, not private. They were able to disclose themselves to the world, hoping that the world will in turn disclose itself and will hear them. They have exposed their very being and are willing to be harmed if necessary in order to dialogue with the world. However, the disclosure on the part of the world is almost always half-hearted and the engagement is nearly one-sided. The world has not yet disposed to fully reveal itself so that a genuine dialogue and active engagement could take place. This difficulty is seen in the struggle of the prophets to make a good reception of their message by fellow human beings. Their litany of visions, oracles, and poignant images/metaphors seemed to comprise a cacophony. The world has advertently disengaged itself in a quite inimitable discourse for what it hears destroys its hearing. Heschel describes it very well that “The prophet is human, yet he employs notes one octave too high for our ears. He experiences moments that defy our understanding. He is neither ‘a singing saint’ nor ‘a moralizing poet,’ but an assaulter of the mind. *Often his words begin to burn where conscience ends.*”²⁰ This leads us to realize that the primary work of a prophet is to carry the Word despite its sharpness and bitterness. The prophet is ready to open up and is prepared to speak in a language the world can understand. But it is not in mere speaking where the value lies but on the message of the spoken words.

[19] Isaiah fearlessly calls Judah a “sinful nation”, “rebellious children”, “a people of unclean lips”. These scathing remarks are redirected to those who are involved in leadership: elders, princes, and priests.

[20] Heschel, 10. The italicized statement is mine.

One of the essential characteristics of the prophets is that they are first and foremost men of the Word, of *Logos*. Such characteristic best defines their mission. Privost argues, “They are people who have spoken, who have come forward, and whose ministry has been devoted to the service of the word.”²¹ Jeremiah proclaims, “The word of the Lord came to me: Go cry out this message for Jerusalem to hear!”²² The Word is like a double-edged sword, which brings happiness and sufferings to the prophets. The *logos* transform their individuality as well as their being-of-the-world. It gives them happiness and joy when the *logos* they proclaimed touches the sensibility of the earth and of the community to whom it is directed. It brings suffering and sadness to the prophets when the hearers consider the Word loathsome, hated, despised, and irrelevant. Yet they have to continue fulfilling their mission notwithstanding the difficulty they have experienced. The passion to fulfill their mission is beyond reproach. As Privost describes,

The Word is their sole passion, in both senses of the word. That is, the Word is what brings them alive, animates them and leads them to commit themselves to transforming the world and changing the future of their people. But it is their passion in the sense that it is the Word that makes them suffer. It is because of the Word that they are persecuted and rejected.²³

When God chose these people to become his messengers they might have been at first hesitant or reluctant to immediately accept such task for they know the difficulty of the said task yet they have without doubt accept the call.²⁴ The prophets therefore had submitted themselves fully to the protection of God. Describing a life of a prophet, Heschel purports, “His [the prophet’s] life and soul are at stake in what he says and in what is going to happen to what he says.”²⁵ This paradox of the Word which both tastes sweet and bitter in turn is best described by Jeremiah and Ezekiel:

When I found your words, I devoured them;
Your words were my joy, the happiness of my heart,
Because I bear your name,
Lord, God of hosts.
I did not sit celebrating
In the circle of merry-makers;
Under the weight of your hand I sat alone
Because you filled me with rage.
Why is my pain continuous?
My wound incurable, refusing to be
Healed?
To me you are like a deceptive brook,
Waters that cannot be relied on!²⁶
He said to me: Son of man, eat what you

[21] Op.cit. 8.

[22] Jeremiah 2:1-2

[23] Privost. 8.

[24] Heschel says that “none of the prophets seems enamoured with being a prophet nor proud of his attainment. 17.

[25] Heschel, 6.

[26] Jeremiah 15:16-18

Find here: eat this scroll, then go, speak to
The house of Israel.
So I opened my mouth, and he gave me
The scroll to eat.
Son of man, he said to me, feed your
stomach and fill your belly with this scroll
I am giving you. I ate it, and it was as
Sweet as honey – in my mouth.²⁷

Indeed, the Word that comes from the lips of the prophets is notoriously guileless and scathingly sharp but sometimes kind. The prophets' "tone, rarely sweet and caressing is frequently consoling and disburdening, his words are often slashing, even horrid – designed to shock rather than to edify"²⁸ is a typical character of a true prophet who is guided by the divine spirit. Jeremiah describes Word as "fire" and the people "wood".²⁹ From this observation we can say that the prophets who are tasked to bring the Word alive and transform the world into a new one are unorthodox and avant-gardes. They are daring and ruthless with their words and actions. Because of this ruthlessness and contemptuous criticisms, they are stigmatized as madmen by their contemporaries, and, by some modern scholars, as abnormal.³⁰ Amos laments, "They hate him who reproves in the gate. They abhor him who speaks the truth."³¹ Prophets do not speak of what people want to hear but what they do not want to hear. Their duty is to speak to the people and the powerful "whether they hear or refuse to hear."³² This tremendous courage made possible because the Word gives them the assurance that what they express and proclaim are of divine origin who upholds truth.

We can say that the prophets are engaged in discursive activity whose task is to shatter the old world and to form and evoke a new world by reshaping public opinion and perception, and cause people to relive their experience. But the shattering and forming of worlds is not done just like as a potter makes clay bowls. It is more similar to how a poet or a painter re-describes the world. In so doing, prophetic speech must stand out, unconventional, unpredictable, or unexpected by the utterer.³³ They assumed the work of iconoclasts "challenging the apparently holy, revered, and awesome. Beliefs cherished as certainties, institutions endowed with supreme sanctity, he exposes as scandalous pretensions."³⁴ The prophets then are imbued with unique ability to speak the Word, shape it, and pronounce it in a quite peculiar and daring way. It is their character to make people scandalized by their utterances, awed by the sublime rhetoric, and left them terribly anxious. This kind of linguistic enterprise is tantamount to committing a primal act of subversion. With such subversive imagination, attitude, and activity is seen in the character of Jeremiah whose words are disquieting, sometimes scandalous, and offensive. Only in a harsh but realistic, vulgar yet simple, honest and brutally frank manner is when they get the attention of Israel.

[27]Ezekiel 3: 1-3

[28] Herschel. p.7.

[29] See Jeremiah 5:14 and Hosea 6:5

[30] Heschel, 18.

[31] Amos 5:10

[32] Op.cit. pp. 19

[33] Bueggemann, W. *The Book of Jeremiah: Portrait of the Prophet* in *Interpreting the Prophets*. Eds. James Luther Mays & Paul J. Achtemeier (1987). Fortress Press, U.S.A. pp. 118

[34] Heschel, 10.

But we are also reminded that despite the prophets' proclamation of the Word as if it were a "sharp sword, he is not necessarily criticizing organized worship and institutions. His mandate is to counter the misunderstanding and abuse of the Word and the institution by rendering God's vital claim ever present."³⁵ Here are the words from Jeremiah that sounded blasphemous:

To what purpose does frankincense come to Me from Sheba,
Or sweet cane from a distant land?
Your burnt offerings are not acceptable,
Nor your sacrifices pleasing to Me.³⁶

Related to the first essential characteristic of a prophet is their ability to disturb the sensibility of the people. The prophets are good in using a unique linguistic device in bringing to life the words that they proclaim. Aside from being men of vision – a prophet with the penetrating gaze – they, with their words, too, create disturbances to people's consciousness and that of the powerful. While the royal throne is surrounded by great ministers- the "yes-saying" people, the true prophets stand as a sort of "loyal opposition". They hardly believe in the judgment of the rulers. Always the prophets are the adversaries of the king – the "no-saying" individuals. The king employed people to be members of a guild – the great 'yes men', the royal court professional prophets. Outside the palace is where the true prophets lived. The prophets like Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah are good examples of prophets who radically oppose the political policies and decrees of the reigning king, arguing on the basis of divine goodness. But their efforts are to no avail, their words were easily dismissed despite the tragedy this people have experienced, "Neither the words of the prophets nor the experience of disaster seemed to shake the self-reliance of the people of the Northern Kingdom. In pride and arrogance of heart they boasted."³⁷ For instance, prophet Hosea is situated in a historical moment when the power of the northern kingdom of Israel is deteriorating. The decline was witnessed by the prophet himself and such event was caused primarily by the untrustworthiness and unfaithfulness of the people to God.³⁸ Brown describes Hosea as the "prophet of the decline and fall of the Northern Kingdom, and stood in the same relation to Ephraim in the eighth century as that in which Jeremiah stood to Judah a century and a half later."³⁹ During this time, the northern kingdom committed political promiscuity that Hosea described as "harlot". This promiscuous affair horrified Hosea, "A vulture is over the house of the Lord!"⁴⁰ This lack of trust and faith in the power of God leads to Israel's disastrous end. Hosea spells out the disastrous consequences of trusting in human power or foreign alliances rather than trusting in God, "But you have ploughed wickedness, reaped perversity, and eaten the fruit of falsehood. Because you have trusted in your own power/ and in your many warriors."⁴¹ Just like Amos, Hosea is engaged in a prolonged and sustained condemnation of Israel's religious faithlessness in terms of adultery. Isaiah also grieves:

[35] Ratzinger, J. (1999). *The Problem of Christian Prophecy*.

See: <http://web.archive.org/web/20030114205158/http://tlig.org/ratzfull.html>

[36] Jeremiah 6:20

[37] Heschel, 62.

[38] Ibid., 39.

[39] Brown, S.L. (1932). *The Book of Hosea*. London. pp. xvi

[40] Hosea 8:1

[41] Hosea 10:13

The bricks have fallen,
But we will build with hewn stones;
The sycamores have been cut down,
But we will put cedars in their place.⁴²

Prophet Isaiah fervently called the king to be careful and not to be reckless and gullible regarding his plans of forging an alliance with a more powerful and superior empire. But king Ahaz neglected the admonition by justifying his action as motivated by piety.⁴³ The conflict between the prophet and the king is characterized by the obvious difference in worldview and principles. Heschel best underscores the chasm between them:

The gulf was separating prophet and king in their thinking and understanding. What seemed to be a terror to Ahaz was a trifle in Isaiah's eyes. The king, seeking to come to terms with the greatest power in the world, was ready to abandon religious principles in order to court the emperor's favor. The prophet who saw history as the stage for God's work, where kingdoms and empires rise for a time and vanish, perceived a design beyond the mists and shadows of the moment.⁴⁴

In this sense, Isaiah disturbs the sensibility of the king by trying to convince him not to pursue the path he has planning to embrace. However, the king neither listened nor bothered to change his mind. Despite the king's obstinacy towards his plan, the admonitions given by the prophet somehow disturbs the overall vision of the earthly king. The forging of power between Ahaz and Assyria was a success but such success will bring havoc and disaster. Isaiah argued that Assyria would bring disaster.⁴⁵ The same momentous and disparagingly tragic situation happens in the time of Hezekiah who succeeded his father Ahaz.

In general, prophets disturb the people by way of bringing into their senses the issues that they may be aware of but choose to remain blind and silent. If the people can easily resign to silence, the prophets cannot. Prophets cannot simply remain idle amidst these pressing problems. Hence, they were necessarily involved in conflict, which exists between them and the kings, temple authorities, as well as the people themselves.⁴⁶ With outright opposition to the alliances being forged between their nation with the neighbouring powers like Egypt and Assyria.⁴⁷ Critical of the religious practices, prophets severely criticized and denounced religious formalism and triumphalism of the worship since it contradicted the life of injustice and infidelity by the people. They have witnessed the irony and hypocrisy of those people who uphold with great esteem their religious practices and rituals yet were substantially faithless. Prophets have scrutinized and brought into the surface the outright neglect of the people in weighing faith and religious commitment. They may have been too committed to their rituals and the like but such commitment is insufficient in order for one to be considered faithful to God. Despite the people's strict observance of religious life, the people still lacked something essential – faith in God. Because of this, it became deplorable in the eyes of the prophets the faithlessness of the people towards God and their failure to

[42] Isaiah 9:10

[43] Isaiah 7:1-12 "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to test." Ahaz said.

[44] Heschel, 66

[45] Isaiah 8:6-8

[46] Privost, 15.

[47] Isaiah 30:1-5

know the covenant and its demands.⁴⁸ Hosea lambasts the people by declaring, “Hear the word of the Lord, Israelites, for the Lord has a dispute with the inhabitants of the land. There is no fidelity, no loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land.”⁴⁹

THE PORTRAITS OF THE PROPHETS

One of the most important themes their character has revealed to us is their being deeply rooted and connected to the present. They are God’s chosen spokesmen grounded in the reality of the present not of the future or of any other time dimension. The prophets are absolutely neither diviners nor futurologists. They are interested first and foremost in the present, “their own present and that of their audience.”⁵⁰ Their immediate concern is about the present not the future. What really interests them is changing the present condition that is deplorable. Their oracles speak about the present history of their people. Relating this to our present situation, the oracles may not have the same weight or even depict the current situation of the time but what is important is we are able to make sense of these oracles and find significant connection to our present condition. In the words of Privost, “it is not enough to repeat the oracles of the prophets of the past. These oracles require to be meditated on assimilated and then adapted to meet the needs of the moment.”⁵¹ The point is very clear. Despite the great gap between two different “presents”, the connection still remains intact. This connection is maintained by the eternal wisdom hidden in the oracles of the past prophets. The text gains new life every now and then. Perhaps it may not only be their insights that have been secured in the text over time that is relevant but the prophets themselves too. “They speak out *of* our age but *to* it, because the Word of God is in their mouth.”⁵² Scott said:

The remarkable contemporaneousness of these ascent spokesmen of religion and the perennial freshness of their message, spring from their power to penetrate past the maze of appearances to underlying human and religious facts stated in universal terms, but with notable concreteness.⁵³

Similar to this notion is what Isaiah proclaims, “The Egyptians are human beings, not God, their horses flesh, not spirit; When the Lord stretches forth his hand, the helper shall stumble, the one helped shall fall, and both of them shall perish together.”⁵⁴ This concreteness of the prophets’ utterances cannot be denied for what they say should not only be heard but understood. Both their thought and personhood is relevant in the present. What they have spoken in their time, their unequivocal judgments are rooted in the presence of the present moment is applicable today. Although of different historical contexts, in the eyes of God, difference is but eternity. Seen in God’s view, all struggles confined in a particular historical horizon have no singular difference to God. Difference lies in the mind of the finite beings.

Considering this character of the prophets, we have added another figure that would complete the “portrait”. Corollary to our belief that the prophets are men of the present, their

[48] Privost.. 16.

[49] Hosea 4:1

[50] Privost, pp. 9

[51] Ibid..10.

[52] Scott, R.B.Y. (1968). *The Relevance of the Prophets: An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets and their Message*. London: MacMillan Company.

[53] Ibid.. 217.

[54] Isaiah 31:3

observation is indispensable – that is, they cannot escape within their visual field the moral condition of their time. Almost all Major Prophets if not so explicit, implicitly articulated their disgust towards the ominous shattering of morality. There is a “vehement denunciation”⁵⁵ of the moral putrefaction and social injustice shadowing the entire nation. Amos for one was so critical about the sins of the nation. He almost criticized everyone, the middle class, the governing body, the priesthood, the establishments, and the king himself because they were all inundated by a superficial kind of pietism. Heschel observes “The prophets consistently singled out the leaders, the kings, the princes, the false prophets, and the priest as the ones responsible for the sins of the community.”⁵⁶ For Amos, lack of moral discernment and proper use of reason contradicts as well as destroy the connection between theory and practice. Being just and good to God must also be rendered to fellow human beings. This principle fails to be realized by the people of Israel. While glamorous, pompous, and extravagant festivities were offered to God, Israel’s poor and needy were neglected and deprived. This leads Amos to denounce the wealthy, the powerful and the way these people treated the marginalized. To illustrate this dramatic rhetoric by Amos, some passages are worth reading:

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who live on the mount of Samaria: Who oppress the destitute and abuse the needy; who say to your husbands, “Bring us a drink!” The Lord God has sworn by his holiness: Truly days are coming upon you when they shall drag you away with ropes, your children with fishhooks; You shall go out through the breached walls one in front of the other, And you shall be exiled to Harmon – oracle of the Lord.⁵⁷

There is a wonderful pun here. The wealthy women of Samaria are referred to as cows of Bashan. Bashan is considered as a very rich pastureland and also such name is very common to refer to the nobility, and even to gods, with terms like bull or ram or cow. The words may seem revolting and insulting but were not. Amos, when he refers to the cows of Bashan, it is a flattery. Yet the pun is quite fantastic because these women more or less are going to end up like fat cows, as slabs of meat in the butcher’s basket. What a horrendous end.

Another scathing attack on the idle life of the carefree rich who ignore the plight of the poor can be notably seen in the following passage.

Woe to those who are complacent in Zion, secure on the mount of Samaria, Leaders of the first among nations, to whom the people of Israel turn... Those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge upon their couches; Eating lambs taken from the flock, and calves from the stall; Who improvise to the music of the harp, composing on musical instruments like David, who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the best oils, but are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph; Therefore, now they shall be the first to go into exile, and the carousing of those who lounged shall cease.⁵⁸

No wonder why Amos unhesitatingly spews such heavy and derisive comments against the elite class – the oppressors par excellence. While the powerful are enjoying the pleasure that

[55] Kaufman, Y. (1972). *The Religion of Israel*. Trans. Moshe Greenberg. New York: Schocken Books. 347.

[56] Heschel, 203. Also see Hosea 5:1 and Isaiah 3:14-15

[57] Amos 4:1-3

[58] Amos 6:1, 4-7

their wealth has brought them and indulging them in extravagant lifestyle, the people below - the ones who sacrifice and suffer from oppression and abuse were left miserable and hopeless. Due to moral decay, greediness, and the indulgence of the elite class, this causes social injustice that for Amos shocks and outrages God.

Hear this, you who trample upon the needy and destroy the poor of the land; 'When will the new moon be over,' you ask, 'that we may sell our grain, and the Sabbath, that we may open the grain-bins? We will diminish the ephah, add to the shekel, and fix our scales for cheating! We will buy the destitute for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals; even the worthless grain we will sell!'⁵⁹

What is clear in this series of scathing attacks by Amos and the denunciation of such moral indecency is the relevance and the prevalence of the same crimes committed today. The crimes that are denounced as utterly objectionable to God and infuriated God are kind of crimes we see around us every day. Moral decay and social injustice remain a problem of our time. Graft and corruption, bribery, extortion, lack of sympathy and charity to the poor, and indifference to the plight of the sufferings are just few among many things that contribute to the degradation of our morality as well as keeping social injustice a useful tool for the elite.

In the eyes of the prophets, social injustice is a severe result of the perversion of justice.⁶⁰ "When warped and garbled, justice yields strife and distrust"⁶¹ says Heschel. Hosea provides a good description: "They utter mere words; with empty oaths they make covenant; so judgment springs up like poisonous weeds; in the furrows of the field."⁶² Indeed, the shepherds are "stupid" according to Jeremiah and "Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against the shepherds; I will require my sheep at their hand" uttered Ezekiel.⁶³ What is then common during their time is the presence of injustice. What is scarce is justice. Modern thinkers may have a very simple meaning of what justice is – that is giving what is due to a person who ought to receive what he ought to receive. It can also be understood in light of trying to escape or avoid a tendency to commit injustice, which means an "active process of remedying or preventing what should arouse the sense of injustice."⁶⁴ But in the minds of the prophets, their view of justice is in relation to the absence or the presence of oppression and corruption. This means justice abounds when there is an absence of negative values while injustice is the presence of the said negative values. This conceptual view, though simple yet rooted in the reality of the world where the prophets have lived. They see things in concrete way and express what they have seen or observed in same manner.

What can we say about the portrait of the prophets? There could be a lot more of possible entries to form a good picture of the prophets but what we have here are relevant to the task. This particular portrait of the prophets guides us in our critique of the post-secular society. Since what we have discovered upon the examination of particular moments in the historical lives of the prophets as well as in bringing to the surface the architectonic of their oracles, visions, and exhortations are organic ideas and insights as a result of historical

[59] Amos 8:4-6

[60] Heschel, 202.

[61] Ibid. 202.

[62] Hosea 10:4

[63] Jeremiah 10:21, Ezekiel 34:10

[64] Cahn, E.N. (1949). *The Sense of Injustice*. New York. 13.

movements. The prophets as we have said are bearers of logos, unorthodox – avant-gardes par excellence, acute defenders of morality and denouncers of injustices, emphatic advocates of the well-being of the poor and the oppressed, and not to forget their unconditional love and trust to God. Having this in mind, we have a portrait of a prophet who is deeply rooted in the love of God, to his own social context, who is aware of the oppressive and unjust forces operating around him, who is not afraid to publicly articulate and denounce such sinister forces⁶⁵ even it gravely disturbs the people, and exquisitely use God's Word to soften the hardened hearts of the notables and the entire people of Israel.

THE PROPHETIC PARADIGM: ON HOW TO INTERPRET THE POST-SECULAR SOCIETY

How are we to make sense of the prophetic portrait paradigm? There are three important points to consider: first, the present social condition and the eternal recurrence of the human predicament – overcoming one's network of idiosyncrasies developed by the highly secularized society; secondly, the locus of the new prophet is scattered within the web of human relationships and interactions; thirdly, in the age of highly secularized, relativistic, groundless, and decentralized society, difficulty in articulating the cause of decadence in religious worldview arises. Going back to the prophets is a good start. This I do not mean that only through the prophetic tradition one can only profoundly articulate the social condition of the present in religious terms but just simply trying to underscore the depth of the contribution of prophetic tradition in the life of the Church.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in one of his lectures criticized the modern attitude of men who are rabid adherents of reason as well as the belief that reason is the sole arbiter and determinant of knowing good and truth. This attitude is seen in a deliberate removal of the term "God" in the preamble of the European Union. This type of behaviour is symptomatic of a highly secularized world where religious actuations and language are irrelevant in forming public reason.⁶⁶ But Ratzinger is quick to remind us that:

Even the rejection of the reference to God, is not the expression of a tolerance that desires to protect the non-theistic religions and the dignity of atheists and agnostics, but rather the expression of a conscience that would like to see God cancelled definitively from the public life of humanity, and relegated to the subjective realm of residual cultures of the past.⁶⁷

He strongly asserts and reminds us that what "characterizes today's world is not between various religious cultures, but that between the radical emancipation of man from God."⁶⁸ This response from an ultra-conservative defender of the Catholic tradition and faith is directed to those who considered God remains a hypothesis impossible to be proven by natural science. Moreover, the secularization thesis reverses the values with religious import by taking away the unnecessary elements of religious importance. When Friedrich Nietzsche

[65] Demeterio, F.P.A. (2012). *Antonio Gramsci and Edward Said's Image of a Modern Day Intellectual and the Filipino Roman Catholic Priest*. Volume 23 No. 2. Lumina. Bohol, Philippines

[66] Richard Rorty in one of his books raised the issue about the value of religious talk in public sphere by asking if religion is a conversation-stopper or not? Rorty responded in affirmative. However, Habermas in his later works recognizes the importance of religious tradition and total abnegation of which is a sweeping generalization.

[67] Ratzinger, J. (2005). *Meaning and Limits of the Present Rationalist Culture*. Retrieved Feb 28, 2014 from <http://web.archive.org/web/20061002191500/http://www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=74826>

[68] Ibid.

declares that “God is dead”, modernity embraces a new and unfamiliar terrain which morals are merely reduced to subjective feelings and emotions. This modern disposition also changes the tenor of the human mode of identity, meaning, and struggle. So much so that such paradigmatic shift from the traditional views of human existence to a more liberal acceptance of unstable and unsecured human destiny is without hesitation upheld by secular men. There is a deafening and awkward silence of the religious as the world clinches tight to secular values. However, within these historical moments of the present time, intermittent dialogue with religion by the secular society produces little progress. Even such progress is so little it creates holes and gaps, which allows the possibility of continuing dialogue with religion for inclusivity in forming public reason.

As the society tries to distance itself from the religious influence, it also situates people in a position where s/he finds no focus and whose values no longer sustain him in various aspects of his personal struggles and search for meaningfulness of life. As the world becomes highly individualized and decentralized the more it needs guidance not from itself but from the outside. The secularized society proves that it can self-regulate, able to sustain itself from disastrous anomalies and repair itself eventually. However this is no longer the case today. The secular society has to admit its shortcomings and should renew itself by welcoming outside force.

Either secularization or de-secularization, the world becomes a place where danger is eminent. Living dangerously becomes part of human consciousness everyone has to emphatically accept. The rise of polymorphous agencies and institutions that promote abuse and oppression continues as the new kings in the form of capitalism, relativism, indifference, lack of empathy, and apparatuses of power greatly affect and destroy the arteries of human organisms. In recent years intermittent uprisings and revolutions in most of the Arab countries exemplify the discontent and intense infuriation of people against those in power – the highly respected but corrupt notables.

God no longer works in a history of a particular nation or country. He is now working and actively participating in the history of mankind. God’s Israel is no longer a particular civilization or ethnic group but is the conglomeration of different civilizations. Total annihilation or destruction of one civilization after another is not a matter of choice or preference by God but rather an outcome of man’s failure to recognize in his present mental and conscious state that God participates and involves in the making of history. Taking cue from the prophets, condemnation and termination of lives is inevitable likewise hope.

The depressing human life presents us how deplorable and pitiful we are as human beings. Relying on our own potentials for clearing out our deficiencies and shortcomings are not enough in making our lives meaningful. Self-creation no longer provides interesting motifs to transcend the transitoriness of our being as well as the inherent anxiety of human existence. More is needed and required for us. It is high time for God to return to the center.

CONCLUSION

Who are the present prophets? Does the prophetic portrait as a paradigm of critique helps us understand and reflect the present social condition? What about “prophetic integration” of ideals, principles, and norms? In the above discussion, it has argued that a prophet based on the essential characteristics we have identified is first and foremost a man of the Word, someone who disturbs people, and denounces moral evil and social injustices. A prophet is deeply rooted in God’s love, and who is well aware of the oppressive and

injustice forces around him, always situated and connected to the present reality as well as someone who is not afraid to articulate the pressing problems and issues of his time despite of danger he will face. With this kind of portrait, we can examine in-depth the issues and problems hidden beneath the intricate structures, apparatuses, and dynamics of our society today. Prophetic integration is important for the formation of human beings to become better persons of the post-secular society. The need for the return of the prophets as well as the re-assumption of God to be in the centre is indispensable to sustain mankind and avoid God's wrath due to contemptuous and unacceptable human actions.

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The soteriological importance of the hypostatic union*

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the dogma of the union of the two natures, divine and human, in Christ's pre-existing Hypostasis and the redeeming importance of this union for man's deification as full realization in Christ. Christ, the pre-existing Hypostasis, becomes by oikonomia a hypostasis uniting in Himself - in an undivided and unseparated, unmixed and unchanged way - two different principles, two natures united in a special way, we could even say a completely special way. This new way of union and living makes the fallen human nature be lifted by the oikonomia of love to the state of partner of the Father, oikonomia realized by and in Christ's community of hypostasis. Christ is the One Who gives everything back to the human nature in order for it to be accomplished, but, moreover, He realizes in Himself the accomplishment of all the potentials and virtualities that used to constitute the human nature and which, because of sin and implicitly the deepening in it (the fall), decreased in intensity so that they no longer had the power to generate the good existence that comes and is directed through the creation towards God. Christ's embodiment - as a completely special way of assuming the human nature - generates, on the one hand, the re-establishment of the fallen nature and, on the other hand, by the assuming, by Christ, of all the things pertaining to the nature, except for sin, and His descent on their level of existence and power of development, our deification is mysteriously realized, as well. It is by the embodiment that Christ "becomes a man for men but also of men", born as a man of the Virgin Mary and of the Holy Spirit, "for us, men, and our salvation".

Keywords: Logos, assuming, human nature (humanity), hypostasis, perichoresis, kenosis, hypostatizing, enhypostatizing, deification.

INTRODUCTION

Man's deification represents the process of personal completion and ascent of man to the state of "son" of God. Even by creation man tends to ascend, through love for God, "by love for the uncharitable love, up to the point where he receives the hypostatization or personalization of his nature in the Word" [1]. All the divine oikonomia, from the creation and up to the embodiment of God's Son, pursues this personalization of the humanity that will become complete in the future life. This personalization, as Father Dumitru Stăniloae says, "is founded on the humanization of God's Son and results, on the other hand, in our deification, which relies on the deification of the human nature assumed by Christ" [2].

The Son's embodiment and our community of nature with Him produces in us this personalization or full realization of everyone in Him as well as the hypostatization of all of

us by Him. This union of everyone realized in Him is the product of the hypostatic union of the two natures of the Hypostas of Christ. The unity of the divine-human person is the factor of direct union of the creative divine Logos with the people and the creation, based on the relation we have with our fellows and the human nature present in Christ along with His divine nature. In Him, Father Stăniloae says, “we see and realize the human nature fully transparent for God and the divine nature fully given to us” [3].

Jesus Christ’s embodiment represents the maximum capitalization of the human nature before God, Who created it to deify it and not to lose it. The embodiment is, therefore, as Saint Maximus the Confessor says, the illustration in the body “of the image of the living of a divine form [of life], which gives us the hope of resurrection and eternal life” [4].

1. The mystery of the Embodiment or God’s love for the people

The embodiment of the Son makes God’s work directed to the people much more efficient, it is the passage from the work of relation, realized before the embodiment, to God’s personal and direct work of deification and transfiguration of the world. By the embodiment, God’s Son Himself became maximally united with the human nature, producing the maximal advancement of God to us. Father Dumitru Stăniloae speaks about the highest and full realization of God’s and man’s union in Christ. In Christ, says Father Stăniloae, “the maximum unity is realized, He is the One Who fulfils and unites the divine will of unification with us to the human thirst of union with everybody in the divine centre unifying everyone”. The un-confounded and hypostatic unification of the natures in Christ realizes on the one hand the resettlement of man in harmony with the divine will, “who wishes and thinks fully rationally the good of all in agreement and solidarity with everything”, and on the other hand, what is fully realized is the union of God with the other people. Christ becomes, as Father Stăniloae says, “the man for men because, in Him, man is for God or the human nature opens itself fully to God” [5]. In Christ, one lives really, completely and directly the opening of the human nature towards boundlessness and infinity. This openness is the exclusive product of the divine nature towards those who participate and live the real hypostatic existence of the embodied Logos. In Christ, each hypostasis lives the accomplishment of his hypostasis, the boundlessness and the infinity, as a need springing from the persistent will to full achievement of one’s own hypostasis. By this, Christ becomes Hypostasis of the hypostases or as Nicholas Cabasilas says, Christ is the “Head of the limbs” [6], in Him being realized the fulfilment of the human nature and of all the persons by the fact that the Logos becomes the direct Hypostasis of the human nature and the ultimate Hypostasis of the human persons.

Christ’s Person, composed “of two natures” [7] expresses on the one hand the un-confounded union of the two natures in the One Hypostasis, and the impossibility of separating them *in actu*. The union of the natures in the Hypostasis Christ is the eternal act of deification of the human nature and humanization of the Word, is the eternal act of passage of God in the human mind and nature, as Saint Maximus the Confessor says. [8] This union actually produces as well the eternal closeness of the two partners, God and man.

The un-confoundedness of the natures in the hypostatic union of the Word, as well as the keeping in unity of the difference between the natures, makes it possible to know one nature through the prism of the other. Thus, God is known by the human nature based on the relation of union that it has with Him in the Hypostasis of Christ, but man also becomes the object of God’s knowledge. This is about the mutual knowledge between man and God as an effect of the mutual interpenetration of the natures, whose support is the Hypostasis able to

unite in an undivided and unseparated manner the two natures. This eternal hypostasis of the Word, beside the fact that it offers both of the natures the integrity of their specific way of being, at the same time, keeps them united in an uncomponded and unchanged manner. "All these actions are of One and the Same, although they come from different natures" [9] says Leontius of Byzantium. The divine nature lives the human things by the complete human nature present in Christ, just as the human nature lives the complete God present in the same unique Hypostasis. This is about a mutual communication of the features specific of each nature, relying on a dynamic perichoresis activated in both of the natures to the full in the pre-existing eternal Hypostasis of the Word. "This, says Saint John Damascene, is not a work of the nature, but a sort of oikonomic condescendence" [10]. It is the action of the hypostatic will present in the Hypostasis Christ, a will that is one and the same with the Trinitarian will, because "the ideas" (the wills), do not belong to the being but to the common will of the Trinity. This is the mysterious action of the divine love.

The community of nature with Christ leads to the transmission on us of the qualities of His deified nature. "The deified body, says Father Stăniloae, being received in the body of the other people, resurrects and deifies our bodies as well" [11]. The Person of God the Word as a person accepted freely totally explains the union of all the people, but also their deification. "To us, Christ is neither just a model for us to imitate, nor just a great legislator that we should listen to. He is neither just the simple cause of our justice, but is the very Life and Justice in us." [12]. The hypostatic union is the one that settles between us but also in us the life-giving spring. The hypostatic union, says Vladimir Lossky, makes Christ our Mediator to God. Christ is the "mediator reconciling people with God by the Cross by which He abolishes the enmity" [13].

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus sees the oikonomia of salvation as a skilful plan of God meant to turn the tables on the slyness of the evil spirit, consequently freeing mankind from the tyranny of death. "It was necessary", says the Saint, "for God to make Himself a man and die, in order for us to be able to live again... There is nothing like my salvation. A few drops of Blood reconstitute the whole universe." [14]. It is from Christ's human nature deified by the uncreated divine energies that we take the power to become deified. By His deified human nature we also receive these deifying energies springing from the divine being present in God as partner of the hypostatic union. Thus, the hypostatic union is completely hypostatizing. In Christ is realized our own union with God. Christ is the one who assumed and eternally assumes the human nature because "What is not assumed cannot be saved" [15].

The hypostatic union means, on the one hand, the assuming by Christ of a human nature of His own, and on the other hand also our possibility to be assumed in Christ's Hypostasis. Therefore, our nature, says Vladimir Lossky, is "made up as well of two elements, just like Christ: Christ's deified human nature and our nature or rather the deifying divine energy and our nature" [16]. As we can notice, our own nature becomes in a certain way a part of Christ's deified human nature extended towards the world as Church. The Church is actually Herself Christ's Body meant to be as well "the fullness of the One Who fills all things in every way" (Ephesians 1:23). The target of the Church is a precise one – everyone's unity with Christ on the basis of the community of nature and grace established by the Holy Spirit in the Church by the Holy Mysteries. Because if Christ is "Head of the Church Who is His Body", the Holy Spirit is "the One Who fulfils everything in everyone". This unity is understood by Origen in the sense of a progressive unity of everyone with Christ that is realized in the Church, is "the mystical wedding", says Origen, of the human

soul with the divine Logos allegorically described in the Song of Songs. [17] In the Church, Christ is lived both as man and as God. In the Church is lived the hypostatic but also hypostatizing union, the Hypostasis of the Embodied Logos being the link uniting all that had been separated. Thus, the One Hypostasis becomes a cosmic hypostasis recognized by everyone, both by the spiritual nature and by the rational nature.

The entire Christology of the Holy Fathers is the Christology of the Logos unifying everyone by reason and love. Because reason is the link uniting the things separated once, and a lack of reason means but disunion of all the things united, love being the great unifying force present in man. "Receiving grace as Christ's love", says Saint Maximus the Confessor, "people unite their nature with the nature assumed by Christ, consequently returning to the same redeeming and deifying reason and will" [18]. Saint Maximus the Confessor sees the salvation of the human nature as a cause of Christ's bodily birth. "God the One Born", says Saint Maximus, "made Himself fully man in order to be able to work our salvation by means of a body active by nature, animated by mind and reason" [19]. In everything He made Himself fully man, except for sin, sin being not a component that is part of the human nature, but being an addition, something extra and a residue of the nature fallen as a consequence of the resistance to God's love. Christ made Himself a man among men and one of the men, in relation with all the men and implicitly with the whole cosmos, considering the divine nature present in His hypostasis, reason of the coming into existence of the whole cosmos. In Christ, says Saint Maximus, "man made himself the image of God and God made himself the image of man" [20], love being the one that makes man a god and makes God be like and show Himself like a man. Consequently, "God descends in the world, makes Himself a man and man ascends towards divine fullness, makes himself a god" [21].

Therefore, the reason and motive of God's Son's Embodiment is our salvation and deification, whose bedrock is the Father's redeeming and deifying love for men, because "so much did God love the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). For this reason, Saint Maximus sees the act of the Embodiment strictly related to deification, one being implied by the other. "The Mystery of the embodiment of the Logos", says Saint Maximus, comprises in Itself the sense of all the symbols and enigmas of the Scripture and also the hidden sense of the whole sensible and intelligible creation. But he who knows the Mystery of the Cross and of the Tomb, also knows the ontological reasons of all things. Finally, he who penetrates even further and is initiated in the Mystery of the Resurrection learns the reason why God created everything since the beginning." [22].

The embodiment is the "philanthropic" act designating and highlighting God's providence towards us, the people. Christ's work is an "oikonomia of the mystery hidden since eternity in God" (Ephesians 3:9), a decision since eternity that was accomplished in Christ because "the union", says Vladimir Lossky, "is the ultimate goal for which the world was created out of nothing" [23]. "It is not sin or the fallen nature that are the cause of the Lord's coming", says Maximus the Confessor. Sin means distancing from the union, sin is the one that breaks up, diversifies, and does not have the quality of uniting. The cause and the necessity of Christ's coming is Christ Himself, for Whom and by Whom everything was created (John 1: 3). "Adam", says Saint Maximus "had been given the aim of gathering in his being the various spheres of the cosmos to give them deification getting to the union with God. If these successive unions or "syntheses" that go beyond the natural separations are realized, however, finally by Christ, is because Adam did not listen to his calling. Christ is the One who realizes these things one after the other, according to the order given to the first Adam" [24]. In this sense, Christ is also called "the New Adam", as the One that

accomplished the service to which man was called since his creation by Adam. Christ as a man is the first and the only one who was able to cover inversely the inseparable relation between nature-sin-death in the union of the different natures, by His Embodiment, ending with the victory over death, freeing mankind from the burden of sin sheltered in man by his own will, because “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” (1 Corinthians 15:26).

2. The hypostatic union, model and way of our union with God

The creation of the world represents a descent of God down to all the levels of understanding of the creation. This descent occurred in a certain succession but also all of a sudden. God was able to light at the same time both the spiritual and the material world by His embodiment. Saint Maxim the Confessor considers essential the act of descent of God to the human nature (kenosis) in order to lift and deify the human nature. This refers to the humanization of the Logos and the deification of man in the loving kenotic act of the hypostatic union. “Everyone’s ascent in Christ”, says Saint Maximus, is co-ascent of Christ with them.” [25]. By this, Saint Maximus manages to closely unite the mystical union and the accomplishment of the of the whole cosmos by Christology. Consequently, man’s ascension in God coincides with the ascent and the gathering together of the sensible and intelligent world in Christ and by Christ in God. Christ is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (1 John 14:6). Breaking up from Christ, denying Him is nothing else but breaking up from life and from the truth. It is by Him that the ascent of the emotions, the deification of the weak, the accomplishment of what is ongoing are realized. [26] “Man’s road of perfection”, says Father Dumitru Stăniloae, is the road from the Christ descended to our level of now to the eschatological Christ that will show Himself in glory at the end of the centuries” [27].

In Christ is realized “the intimacy with God” but also “the union of love”. In Christ, says Saint Maximus, “is given the proof of God’s most perfect love for men”. [28] He is the One that unites in Himself both the divine Hypostases and the human hypostases, in Him pre-existing the models of all as an extension of the Word in everything, a prolongation of God’s presence in all of us.

The renewal of the human nature was realized in the Person of the Embodied Logos by its being assumed and taken into His Hypostasis. “The descent of the Word, says Saint Maximus the Confessor, is the ascent of the human nature”. Here, assuming is in the sense of lifting the human to the quality of part of the divine person. This is why, in the case of Christ, “assuming” involves the pre-existence of he who assumes, this is what Saint Maximus shows by the words “He made Himself a man, not He was made a man”. Christ’s hypostasis, although compounded, is not compounded like the human hypostases, which are compounded by the fact that their components are of the same age, brought together involuntarily, supposing one another; His compounded Hypostasis is explicitly the work of His liberty. “The Word of God compounded Himself in an ineffable manner, by assuming, with the body, the way to compounding” [29], says Saint Maximus, or as Vladimir Lossky says, “His Hypostasis includes both natures; He remains One, yet becoming the other” [30]. To allow an understanding as clear as possible regarding the way the human nature is assumed and regarding its inclusion in the eternal Hypostasis of the Word, Saint Maximus uses the analogy of the iron reddened in the fire (red-hot iron), he says: “In each work of Christ, one can see two different works, as in the case of a red-hot sword, which cuts but also burns, cuts in its quality of sharpened iron and burns in its quality of fire.” [31]. The two natures remain different after the union, because the union does not change the natures at all,

yet they continue to remain are the same time united in a single hypostasis. Following this union, the natures will begin to experience an interpenetration (περιχωρησιζεις αλληλας) similar to the perichoretic union between the persons of the Holy Trinity. This interpenetration of the natures in Christ produces the descent of the divine energies and their communication directly to the human being. Yet, this perichoresis, says Saint John Damascene, is unilateral: “it comes from the divinity and not from the human nature” [32]. Therefore Christ’s human nature is a deified nature, being penetrated by the divine energies even since the moment of the Embodiment.

Christ lives man in His divine nature and lives God in his human nature being helped by His Hypostasis that preserves the distinction between natures supernaturally, but does not accept their division and separation. “We are amazed, says Saint Maximus the Confessor, seeing how the limited and the unlimited - realities rejecting one another and which cannot be mixed together - are found united in Him and show each other mutually one in the other. Because the unlimited gets limited ineffably, while the limited extends to the level of the infinite” [33]. Love is the one that makes Him – Who is unadaptable by nature – adaptable into our nature. Thus, between the two natures of Christ there is a perichoretic relation, yet not one imposed by any of the two natures as it happens with the relation between body and soul. “The soul and the body”, says Saint Maximus, “are not counted in a man, they being united, and even when they are separated at death they are not counted, but they involve a reference of one to the other.” [34]. By this, Saint Maximus makes a clarification regarding the fact that although there is just one Hypostasis of the Logos, Which is given one worship and honour, This Hypostasis is a hypostasis made up of two separate natures that are kept together in unity in an undivided and unseparated manner by Him.

To give a correct meaning to the Christological dogma, the Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod turned to apophatism in the case of the hypostatic union as well. The four negation adverbs: in an unmixed way (ασυγχυτως), in an unchanged way (ατρεπτως), in an undivided way (αδιαιρετως), in an unseparated way (αχωριςτως) present Christ as the divine person that has in Him two principles distinct and united at the same time. The dogmatic definition of the Fourth Synod confesses the existence of the union of two natures in a single hypostasis, Jesus Christ, Hypostasis Who existed as a person previous to the embodiment: “One and the Same God, truly God and truly man, of rational soul and body, of the same being with the Father according to the divinity and of the same being with us according to the humanity, in everything like us, except for sin, before all ages born of the Father, according to the divinity, and in the latter days, born of the Virgin Mary, Theotokos, according to the humanity: known in two natures, in an unmixed, unchanged, undivided, unseparated manner, the difference between natures being never destroyed at all because of the union, but rather the characteristic of each nature being preserved and flowing together in a person and a hypostasis” [35]. Thus, by this hypostatic – apophatic union – is “guaranteed”, as Father Dumitru Stăniloae says, “the maximal value of the human persons, but also their eternity” [36].

The final aim of the assuming of the human nature in Christ is Salvation, ascending and being seated as a man at the right hand of the Father – the lifting of man to the state of partner of God. “All the mystery of the oikonomy is found in the kenosis of God’s Son” [37] says Saint Cyril of Alexandria. Christ renounces His own will, out of love, to accomplish the Father’s will, being “obedient unto death, even to death on the Cross”. The divine will in Christ, says Vladimir Lossky, was the common will of the Three: “the will of the Father - spring of will, the will of the Son - obedience, the will of the Holy Spirit - accomplishment”

[38]. “Because there is nothing that the Son can do and the Father cannot do” [39]. For this reason, Christ’s work accomplished on earth is a work attributed to the Holy Trinity, from whom Christ as God’s Son cannot get separated, having the same being and the same will as the Father and the Holy Spirit. “It is not the same to want and to want in a certain way” [40], says Saint Maximus the Confessor, showing by this that in Christ there is no possibility of activating and updating the human nature obligatorily and against its will, in an individualistic and selfish manner, according to personal and not common aims. The updating of the nature in Christ’s hypostasis occurs willingly but also in agreement with the needs and powers of the nature. Christ, by assuming the human nature, does not exclude its human will claimed by the human nature, but its way of activation and actualization is realized by the Hypostasis of Christ, Which desires the divine things and does not breach in any way the natural ones. Christ actualized the human nature in His Unique Hypostasis according to the individual, but also the common good at the same time. He gave satisfaction both at the individual and at the general-cosmic level. Of His human nature, actualized (deified) in the fullest manner, benefit as well - as of a spring of life - the other human persons hypostatized individually in Christ. He is the Unifier of all since “the person, being a unity, involves and always refers positively to the other persons” [41]. Thus, Saint Maximus says: “Though Christ had His natural will as a man, He always wanted in essence what God naturally put in [His divine] nature, when He gave Him the existence by the creation.” [42].

As one can observe, out of the above, the whole reality exists in order to personalize Him in a hypostasis. The whole reality is meant to become hypostatized nature, undergoing an endless enrichment. For this reason, the soul has been created by God with certain tendencies of organization of the matter in the body, actually each soul is meant for getting united with a body of its own, more than for remaining in a unity with the other souls. The union with God is realized in hypostasis and not according to the being. Christ is the One Who perfectly unites, in His special Hypostasis, God with man and with the whole world. This ascension of ours towards the unitary Hypostasis is realized only in grace with the voluntary support of the mind and of reason towards the increase of faith and of the virtues. Christ is the unique and the most comprehensive Person enhypostatizing [43] the whole species, nature, substance. Yet, this species is at the same time hypostatic, aware and free – in an absolute manner – to the detriment of the common Hypostasis of the Logos. By this, Saint Maximus shows that this is not just about enhypostatizing, but this also involves a growth of the human nature in Christ by composition, so that the whole human nature hypostatized gains in Christ its own identity. Therefore, Christ is, by His Hypostasis, in which the two natures are united, a unifying bridge between God and the humanity. “The Same both One and two” [44], says Saint Maximus, Who unites in His Unique and special Hypostasis both parties, in an entirety, the entirety being the unity of the person, the parts being its composition. “Christ”, says Saint Maximus, “is not just out of parts, but is also in parts and better said is these [parts]”. In Christ, the person is made up of the two natures, which remain always distinct and unchanging, bearing in them the seal of the same hypostasis. Only in this way, says Saint Maximus, “His is the cross and the death and the tomb and the resurrection and the ascent to heaven” [45], because all the things that happen in His components are His, are lived by Him. This aspect is grasped by Vladimir Lossky when he says: “God’s Son suffered, died on the cross, yet with what had the possibility to die and to suffer, namely His human nature. At the same time, we will be able to say that while being born as a baby in the manger of Bethlehem, being hanged on the cross or resting

in the grave, He never ceased to rule – by His almightiness – over the created world, by virtue of His divinity, which undergoes no change at all” [46].

Consequently, from Christology, Saint Maximus the Confessor draws conclusions of spiritualization of man. Christ’s Passion had the ontological meaning of lifting of the human nature from the weakness and death that follow sin, so that we, too, may have the possibility to free ourselves from these weaknesses. By His Embodiment, Christ gathered to Himself and in Himself the whole human nature. His Embodiment has, therefore, a redeeming sense: by the Embodiment, the human nature is lifted from sin and put in a close relation with us and at the same time with God. Consequently, we can say that the Embodiment, which involves the un-confounded union of the distinct natures in the eternal Hypostasis of the Logos, is the first act of our salvation.

Conclusions: Christ – our salvation and deification

Any Christian is called to discover his own nature in the personal communion with God and with the other fellows, in order to make it present by the perseverance in doing good and therefore in acquiring virtues, supported by reason. By creation, man has a natural power to maintain himself in this communion, a power represented by the relentless movement of the nature, incessantly tending towards action. A nature without power cannot exist, the power of the nature being manifested in action, because “what has no power, says Saint Maximus the Confessor, has no action, either” [47]. The action of the nature depends, therefore, on the power, on the power of the substance, and therefore there is a permanent natural tendency of the beings towards purifying and perfecting their earthly existence. Yet, we do not have everything by the action of nature, the action of the human nature is maintained as seizing, we can seize and at the same time we can acquire through it all that is given to us, and so there is an increase, depending on and according to what we receive. He who does what is good consolidates himself in life, namely in the eternity. For this reason, as Father Dumitru Stăniloae says, “man has, sown in his nature, the need and the capacity of communion with God, as the eye has, sown in its nature, the capacity to see the light, distinct from him”, and by participation to this communion with the help of reason, man becomes the bearer of God’s features, man appears as God, is deified. The deification is not the explicit work of our natural power, but is the work of God’s action. Thus, the human work experiences, feels and lives the deification, but it is not the human work the one that produces this deification, but it is the result of the persistence of the human being, of its will and work in this union with God, by mutual circumcision [that property by which the Divine Persons, by reason of the identity of their natures, *communicate* with each other] up the total impression of the divine goods in the human being, which Saint Maximus the Confessor calls “the perichoretic action” by which man’s eternal rest will keep forever the character of communion.

This resettlement and full revelation of the human nature was realized and is realized to the full in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, more truthfully said the man-God, “Who, although He was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:6-9). So much, says Saint Maximus, did God descend and make Himself a man, without sin, “that it seemed to the unbelievers that He is no God” [48]. His descent became the condition of our salvation. To the assimilation by God of the human nature must answer the assimilation by us of the divine nature. The human

nature becomes in Jesus, the Hypostasis of the Word, a personalized nature, a nature impressed by the divine features, yet not as a necessary effect of it, but by the will of the Hypostasis of the Word, namely by the oikonomia of the Son, Who works both kinds of things, the divine and the human ones, according to their nature, through the participation of one to the other without a separation of them. We understand by this that “the same Hypostasis, of the Logos, is the hypostasis of the two natures” [49] as Saint John Damascene says, carrying out all the things that are human in a divine manner and all the things that are divine in a human manner, because “He, being rich, became poor for us, to make us rich by His poverty” (2 Corinthians 8:9), to make us gods, too, in the union with Him, by grace. In this sense, Leontius of Byzantium said: “the only remedy of our disease is the descent of the Son” [50]. In the hypostasis of the two natures, therefore, takes effect the humanization of the Logos and the deification of the human nature. The Self of the Son, says Father Dumitru Stăniloae, includes after the embodiment the human nature as well, making himself hypostasis for the body as well. [51] The Logos becomes a hypostasis of everyone by His embodiment, uniting in His Self both the divine nature and the human nature, and His Self does not penetrate in God as in someone foreign, because He Himself is infinite God, which makes the human nature assumed realize the return to God in a state of grace, in a familial state by the affiliation between it and the divine nature realized in the Hypostasis of the Embodied Son.

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EDUCATION, MORALITY AND SPIRITUALITY*The Redemption of the Feeling in Kierkegaard's
and Tillich's thinking****PhD. Lehel BALOGH**Department of Philosophy, Kyungsoong University Busan,
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ABSTRACT

In the modern era, with the development of the “objective”, scientific method, subjective, personal feelings and emotions have gradually become somewhat dubious sources of knowledge. A few religious thinkers, however, particularly those emerging from the existential tradition, have come to revitalize the belief in subjectivity, along with the trust in the authority of faith and inwardness in finding out important truths about our personal existence and about the human condition in general. In my paper I wish to investigate and compare the thoughts of two highly influential Christian philosophers of the 19th and the 20th century, respectively; those of Søren Kierkegaard and of Paul Tillich. These two unique thinkers, although living under considerably different historical circumstances, carried out strikingly similar analyses about the role of emotions and faith in human life, and through the emphasis of such phenomena as anxiety and despair they both attempted to “redeem” and reaffirm the significance of feelings and the subjective side of reality.

Keywords: subjectivity, inwardness, anxiety, truth and faith, religious existentialism

KIERKEGAARD'S QUEST FOR AUTHENTIC SUBJECTIVITY

Existence and inwardness, in other words, bringing the ontological truth of subjectivity to the fore: this is what elevates Kierkegaard's philosophy to be the prototype of all other existential philosophies. While combating the then dominating *Systemphilosophie* of German Idealism and especially that of Hegel, he gradually formulates and develops his own characteristic philosophical attitude. This attitude provides central ground to the individual's personal subjectivity, and believes that what is really at stake in philosophical thinking is precisely this singular and irreproducible intimate reality, that is, the subjective reality of the self, which always slips through the cracks of rigid systematical thinking. Under the influence of the late Schelling's lectures and writings, *Existenz* became the key concept in his thinking, and the elaboration of this concept extended along his entire oeuvre.

What makes this thinking so unique and exemplary for other existential philosophers? One approach could be that he seems to be the first thinker in the modern era who was able to divert the course of philosophical thinking from being occupied primarily with general concepts and universal ideas toward the importance of human singularity, the unrepeatable nature and the contingencies inherent in the human condition, that is, toward the actual *differentia specifica* of the individual human existence. In absolute terms, he was not the first one to do so in the history of Western Philosophy but Socrates who inspired

Kierkegaard greatly. This emblematic Greek thinker's philosophy was characteristically of a personal nature, and this personal nature is exactly what Kierkegaard – who is sometimes labeled as the “Socrates of Copenhagen” – attempted to revive when he analysed the concept of irony (*On the Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*), or also when he engaged into a polemic discussion with the teachings of Socrates regarding the concept of sin in *The Sickness Unto Death*. Ultimately though, what brings these two – both spatially and chronologically – distant philosophers together is not so much the convergence of their thematic interests, but the way in which they cultivated philosophy.

A few lines earlier I have mentioned the “*differentia specifica* of the individual human existence”. How are we to understand this? Kierkegaard waged a philosophical as well as a personal war against the dominance of the all-absorbing, all-consuming monstrosity of the Hegelian system that seemed to devour the individual self just as well as every other part of reality. His famous thesis – “the truth is subjectivity” – was conceived in this spirit: “Contained in the principle that subjectivity, inwardness, is truth, is that Socratic wisdom whose undying merit is to have heeded the essential significance of existing, of the fact that the knower is one who exists...”. [1] In so far as epistemology falls into the exclusive competence of the individual subject, would there be still any place left for such categories as “*differentia specifica*”? Wouldn't this be, one might ask, a sure way of sliding back into the abyss of *Systemphilosophie*? For instance, the conceptual analysis of “anxiety” that features so prominently in Kierkegaard's work, is it to be understood as an objective or “merely” a subjective analysis? As a matter of fact, Kierkegaard in his analyses worked out a sort of proto-phenomenology that antedated the one Husserl is to develop some 60 years later. The analysis of the concept of anxiety is, for instance, neither the accurate and detailed jotting down of Kierkegaard's own experiences of anxiety, nor is it a logically necessary description of an objective, natural law, but a conceptual framework, a mode of discourse that provides a viable alternative to the objective idealistic approach which exalts the abstract while neglecting the concrete.

It is important to point out right from the outset that in his inquiries Kierkegaard always remained in relation with religiosity, and, in particular, with the Christian God. Christianity supported him with a basis on which he could build up his anti-systemic reaction to the challenge of Hegelianism. For him, the human individual is a dynamic complex of references that has a fundamental feature of becoming-ness (*werden*), hence it is always amidst continuous change. The ideal *telos* of this change is the authentic form of being which, by passing through different life phases, enables the individual to fulfil his inner potentials, and eventually to become his true self. As we shall see, this true self is unattainable for those who reject faith, religiosity and irrationality *en bloc*; in other words, for those who refuse to accept and embrace the belief in the many paradoxes that are intrinsic in Christianity. There is no authenticity for the self-outside of the properly understood and appropriated Christian religiousness, claims Kierkegaard: “It is Christian heroism (...) to venture wholly to become oneself, an individual human being, this specific individual human being, alone before God...”. [2] But, one might ask, why would anybody strive to become his true self? The answer is this: “because to have a self, to be a self, is the greatest concession, an infinite concession, given to man, but it is also eternity's claim upon him.” [3]

What does the Danish thinker mean by the *self*? “A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation...”. [4] The individual is, hence, a

synthesis, namely, first of all, the synthesis of body and soul, and secondly, the synthesis of the spirit with the synthesis of body and soul. The self in an incessantly moving, dynamic system of relations, in which there is a vigorous tussle between such opposites as freedom and necessity, infinity and finitude. Kierkegaard maintains that an eternal, divine part exists in man, and the name of this eternal component is spirit. The individual human being, however, has a completely individual constituent as well, which belongs exclusively to him, and which he can either win or lose. This implies that being our true selves is not a natural state or a default position of the individual, but, in order to become ourselves, we must actively search for our authentic selves.

It is well known that Kierkegaard distinguished three stages of human life: aesthetic, ethical and religious. While in the aesthetic stage one's unreflective and particular passion is dominant, in the ethical stage: boredom, passivity, impersonality and the levelling of individual differences are characteristic. The ethical stage extinguishes the uniqueness of a personality, since personalities exist by differing or deviating from the generic, and the ethical attempts to eliminate exactly these very differences. At any rate, ethics cannot be reasonably grounded, according to Kierkegaard, as there is no such thing as an "individual *per se*", therefore in order to answer the fundamental question of morality – how should I live? – we can only give particular answers which cannot be universalized. Furthermore, *passion*, which is present in the aesthetic stage but absent in the ethical, will be, in the religious stage, that instrument and crucial impulse which helps the individual swing over his resignation and his feeling of guilt, in the direction of faith. After all, as Kierkegaard put it in *Fear and Trembling*: "the highest passion in a person is faith." [5]

If man cannot expect proper guidance from the world without, then there is only one place left to turn to: the world within. What do we find inside the soul? We find *anxiety* – sounds Kierkegaard's grim answer. If anxiety is what we find, then what is characteristic of this specifically human "symptom"? Here is the description from *The Concept of Anxiety*: "it is altogether different from fear and similar concepts that refer to something definite, whereas anxiety is freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility. For this reason, anxiety is not found in the beast, precisely because by nature the beast is not qualified as spirit." [6]

A few lines earlier ago, I have called anxiety a "specifically human symptom", and now we can see why it is apt to call it exactly that. Anxiety is the symptom of the presence of the spirit. The more intense the anxiety, the more fully the spirit is present, claims Kierkegaard. Consequently, it is absent in animals or even in new-born human babies. But what may be of more interest at this point is that anxiety is clearly distinguishable from fear, inasmuch as the former has no definite object while the latter always has one. Kierkegaard argues that if anxiety has no object, its object is nothing, in short: anxiety is anxiety from nothingness. The picture becomes even more nuanced when it is further asserted that "anxiety is freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility". [7] This concise definition points to the fact that in anxiety the possibility of possibility becomes real. To put it more simply: the very possibility becomes reality that one might become one's true self.

"Anxiety is a *sympathetic antipathy* and an *antipathetic sympathy*". [8] Thus anxiety is fundamentally ambivalent for the individual, and it is ought to be so, since the terror that is an inseparable element of it may lead the individual to the correct path in search of his true self. Inasmuch as "[t]he history of individual life proceeds in a movement from state to state", [9] it is "an adventure that every human being must go through – to learn to be anxious in order that he may not perish either by never having been in anxiety or by

succumbing in anxiety”. [10] In short: having to face anxiety will always be an inevitable part of our lives. As a result, one of the main things in life is to learn “to be anxious in the right way”. [11] The educational impact of anxiety involves directing our attention to the infinite possibilities, or rather, to the possibility of the infinite, that lie ahead of us. The possibility of the infinite manifests itself in the fact that through the experience of anxiety the individual’s existential quest turns toward faith, and it may govern the subject in the direction of absolute faith in God, which, in Kierkegaard’s assessment, is the ideal state: the true stage of religiousness. The person, who, in truth, learns from the experience of anxiety, imprints into his mind that “the assaults of anxiety, even though they be terrifying, will not be such that he flees from them. For him, anxiety becomes a serving spirit that against its will leads him where he wishes to go”. [12] How are we to understand that “against its will leads him where he wishes to go”? It may be interpreted that in the temporary paralysis of anxiety one forgets all his wishes and wills, and his instinctive reaction is to escape the horrible discomfort he finds himself in. However, his original will, prior to the commencement of his anxiety was to find himself, and this is exactly what he might achieve in the state of anxiety when he is brought into the presence of God. Nevertheless, the only way to be brought in front of God is through faith, that is, through that “inner certainty that anticipates infinity”. [13]

True faith, in Kierkegaard’s view, is an unshakable certainty which cannot be overwritten by anything, not even by our moral intuitions or the laws of society. If the man of true faith – the “knight of faith” – receives a divine command to sacrifice his one and only son, he will not hesitate and ponder what would be the right thing to do: he will unfalteringly fulfill God’s command. This is vividly illustrated in *Fear and Trembling* through the exemplary story of Abraham in the Old Testament. The reason why Abraham was not at a loss upon hearing God’s command, argues Kierkegaard, was not that he was some sort of religious fanatic who could kill his own son without remorse, but because *in spite of* every imaginable possibility he still unabatedly believed in God’s justice. As it was already formulated in the title of the final chapter of *Either/Or*: “The edifying [is] in the thought that against God we are always in the wrong.” Therein lies the ultimate paradox of human existence, i.e. as soon as his authentic selfhood turns into reality, and he becomes who he really is in front of God, from that moment on the individual accepts – through his unwavering and absolute faith – God’s orders whatever these orders may be. Without absolute faith in God’s infinite goodness and justice, the religious stage would immediately collapse. Therefore, we must *want* to have absolute faith in God. We must want to be able to blame our own limited knowledge whenever we find ourselves disapproving of God’s will. That is why one can say that the real either/or is not to be found in the ethical stage but rather in the religious: one either wins or loses everything – middle way does not exist.

There is, however, something else which makes it difficult for the subject to choose to enter into the religious stage, and it is just as unavoidable as anxiety is: it is called *despair*. Despair occupies an important role in Kierkegaard’s theory of our painful quest toward truth and authentic selfhood. Essentially, it describes the state in which man, having to choose between different alternatives, misses himself and finds himself forced to walk a false path. Despair is the disruption of the equilibrium of opposing forces within the subject, hence it is a form of disharmony, “the sickness of the spirit”, which – unlike anxiety – can bring about the complete downfall of the individual. Therefore, in a sense, it is a breeding ground for inauthenticity; when one is in despair, it seems a lot easier to lose than to find ourselves.

Despair – as its German original ‘Verzweiflung’ indicates – means duplication, the disintegration of the self as a synthetic unity, and it implies the insecurity of the individual. In one word: it is the “sickness unto death”; a deadly disease, but not because we have to die of it. “On the contrary, the torment of despair is precisely this inability to die”. [14] How is it possible that one is unable to die? Here we need to remember one of Kierkegaard’s earlier premises, namely, that human subjects have a divine element within their selves, and this divine element is immortal. Man in his desperation sets out to destroy his very self, to annihilate himself, but he is unable to do so, for the immortal element is a substantial part of his being which cannot be destroyed. Thus the meaning of despair lies in the realization of hopelessness regarding the impossibility of destroying one’s self.

Despair has three major variations. In the first one, the person is not aware of his own despair, since he doesn’t even know that he possesses a self, not to mention that this self is eternal. As in this state despair has not yet been realized by the subject, it is unaware, as it were, spirit-less, thus the other two forms of despair seem more significant to our discussion. Kierkegaard argues that “real despair” has two forms: first, when we desperately do not want to be ourselves, and second, when we desperately want to be ourselves. Between these two extremes the golden mean is the authentic existence “when despair is completely rooted out (...): in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it.” [15]

We can see that self-reflection, i.e. the awareness of the dynamic synthesis that constructs the self, is just as necessary as the personal will which chooses itself, and as the recognition of the subject of its origins and its basis in God. It is obvious now that without the affirmation of the transcendent primacy the subject would never be able to become his authentic self. That is to say, those who desperately want to become themselves simply by their own powers are to be reduced to become the victims of their own self-deception.

Thus the object of our despair is none other than our self, hence the desperate person despairs on account of his actual, current self, because that is precisely which he wants to get rid of, in order to establish his true, authentic being:

The self that he despairingly wants to be is a self that he is not (for to will to be the self that he is in truth is the very opposite of despair), that is, he wants to tear his self away from the power that established it. In spite of all his despair, however, he cannot manage to do it; in spite of all his despairing efforts, that power is the stronger and forces him to be the self he does not want to be. But this is his way of willing to get rid of himself, to rid himself of the self that he is in order to be the self that he has dreamed up. He would be in seventh heaven to be the self he wants to be (...), but to be forced to be the self he does not want to be, that is his torment—that he cannot get rid of himself. [16]

When man desperately doesn’t want to be himself, he is “in despair to will to be someone else, to wish for a new self”, [17] he is fleeing from himself; that is why the characteristic trait of this attitude is weakness. Conversely, if somebody desperately wants to be himself then he is revolting against the divine substance within him, and on the highest level of this desperation, which Kierkegaard calls “demonic despair”, “in hatred toward existence, it wills to be itself” [18] Increased awareness and rebellious defiance are the trademarks of the “demonic despair”, which intends to prove that the self can create himself without God. This, however, is not possible, according to Kierkegaard. Being authentic, that is, becoming *actually* a person, is, in fact, only achievable via the renunciation of total personal autonomy, along with laying man’s ultimate trust in the divine providence, having recognized the fundamentals of one’s own being in the transcendent realm.

TILLICH'S INSIGHTS ABOUT ANXIETY AND FAITH

The thinking of Paul Tillich is in many ways reminiscent of Kierkegaard's religious philosophy. Borrowing the existential categories and some of the interpretations enabled this influential Protestant theologian to formulate his own contribution to the analysis of the general confusion and anxiety of our age. However, not only did he analyze the context in which widely experienced meaninglessness and growing despair held sway, he attempted to offer new solutions and interpretations as well to the emerging problems. The central concept of his ontology and ethics is *courage*, which is elaborated in his seminal work, *The Courage to Be*. In this book, he warns against the objectification of man, defending the individual from the tendencies of modern natural sciences. As he writes:

There are realms of reality or – more exactly – of abstraction from reality in which the most complete detachment is the adequate cognitive approach. Everything which can be expressed in terms of quantitative measurement has this character. But it is most inadequate to apply the same approach to reality in its infinite concreteness. A self which has become a matter of calculation and management has ceased to be a self. It has become a thing. [19]

However, it is not only in the approach of modern natural sciences where Tillich sees dangers regarding the status of individual selfhood. He also cautions against the encroachments of Husserlian phenomenology:

The existence of man and his world is put into "brackets" – as Husserl, who derives his "phenomenological" method from Descartes, has formulated it. Man becomes pure consciousness, a naked epistemological subject; the world (including man's psychosomatic being) becomes an object of scientific inquiry and technical management. Man in his existential predicament disappears. [20]

He asserts that the existentialists have realized the seriousness of the gradual loss of individual personhood in the leading discourses of modernity, and their general reaction was a bold revolt against this growing trend. Joining hands with prominent representatives of the philosophy of life as well, such as Schopenhauer and Bergson, this revolt has become typically, although not exclusively, of anti-religious and atheist in nature, declaring the utter emptiness and hypocrisy of such formerly meaningful and well-functioning elements of the establishment as church religiosity. Tillich, although a deeply religious person himself, finds that the "deepest root of the Existentialist despair and the widespread anxiety of meaninglessness in our period" is in the intolerable image of God. [21] Just as man is unable to tolerate being turned into an object in the eyes of modern sciences, or to become the pure – that is, pure from all individual traits – consciousness of phenomenology, he is unwilling, likewise, to accept to yield before the authority of an omnipotent and omniscient eternal God, compared to whom he is nothing but a speck of objectified transitoriness.

For God as a subject makes me into an object which is nothing more than an object. He deprives me of my subjectivity because he is all-powerful and all-knowing. I revolt and try to make *him* into an object, but the revolt fails and becomes desperate. God appears as the invincible tyrant, the being in contrast with whom all other beings are without freedom and subjectivity. (...) This is the God Nietzsche said had to be killed because nobody can tolerate being made into a mere object of absolute knowledge and absolute control. [22]

In spite of his qualified understanding of modern man's aversion towards such an image of God, Tillich contends that humanity is "essentially religious". Borrowing from Jaspers' terminology, he argues that faith is an "ultimate concern" for man, and that the experience of the need for faith is universal. Man feels that he has been separated from his

own essence, and he is seeking for the reunion with this essence all throughout his life. He is desperately in need for redemption and the way to redemption leads through religious faith. Traditionally speaking, the separation of man from God has been usually conceived as a punishment of Adam and Eve's original sin of breaking God's law by eating from the tree of the knowledge good and evil. Strictly speaking, the sources of humanity's original sin were twofold: disobedience and curiosity. Separation from the divine essence is undoubtedly a severe punishment, since one is forced to experience the anxiety that it brings forth in one's life. It causes existential anxiety in man; first, because he feels that something is not quite right, something is always missing from his life (namely, God); second, because part of the punishment was that he couldn't eat from the tree of life, consequently he became mortal, so he experiences constant anxiety due to his fear from death. Tillich believes that this kind of existential anxiety is entirely normal part of being human, so to speak, an essential element of our human condition. It can be neither terminated nor should it be attempted to done away with, because, for one thing, it is ontologically hardwired, and, for another, it is a reminder that one has to courageously strive towards the understanding of his predicament.

Whereas existential anxiety is normal and is present in every human being, although perhaps routinely overshadowed by the daily concerns of life and is, thus, hidden from one's direct awareness, pathological anxiety is something different. Tillich reminds us that these two shouldn't be confused, and while pathological anxiety can and must be attended to medically, existential anxiety belongs to the realm of priestly and ministerial care. The "religious healing" mediates the "essential" for the believer, which enables him to find his true inner self, his subjective truth. Here Tillich thinks along the same line as Kierkegaard, arguing that every individual has a divine essence within his individual personhood which ontologically grounds his very being. Without acknowledging the divine rootedness of one's self, one can never become truly himself, and is destined to tread false paths in search for authenticity. Although man was punished by God partly for his curiosity, i.e. for his inclination of trying to understand the world around him, the only way back to God is by way of a correct understanding of man's ontological situation. However, this understanding is not at all a purely rational insight, but rather an emotional attunement which carries through man the deeply troubling experience of *despair*, which, in Tillich's theory, is the highest form of anxiety: a borderline situation beyond which there is no place to go. In despair, one desperately needs a proper emotional preparedness, namely *courage* in order to find faith and, with this faith, to find God. It is not any kind of courage though that is satisfactory here, but a very special sort of courage: the *courage to be*.

Having insufficient place in this brief summary to provide a profound analysis of Tillich's intricate concept of the "courage to be", it shall be suffice to say for our purposes now that this concept is intended to show the way out of the extremes of neurotic anxiety which manifest themselves in our transitional age in various but equally disastrous forms, such as religious fundamentalism, political totalitarianism, or the remarkable abundance of psychopathological diseases. In faith, "courage to be" unites two kinds of distinct courages: the "courage to be as oneself" and the "courage to be as a part". Only when these two unite, is one ready to transcend both in a courage that is based on God. Thus the ultimate meaning of "courage to be" is to attain the courage to be accepted "in spite of being unacceptable". Man must affirm himself in spite of all the guilt and the fear of condemnation he experiences in his soul. He must transcend his self in this courage, and lay his trust in God, because God is the only one that can "accept the unacceptable". Since the "essential" is not external to oneself, but is located in the divine depths of every existential being, this "essential" grounds

our courage to transcend ourselves. Had we decided to reject this essential self, we would experience guilt and regret for not fulfilling our individual potentials. On the other hand, if we gather the courage to recover our true divine self, we will find that this self is not a static substance but a vitalistic and dynamic essence in which all our individual potentials lie.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can assert that both Kierkegaard and Tillich placed great emphasis on the redemption of the subjective, personal sides of truth and understanding, and based their theories on the special and decisive functions that feelings and emotions have in epistemology. They believed that emotions and dispositions play a crucial role in forming our mental capacities for understanding the ontological structures of reality, and they claimed that only exceptional emotional experiences, such as facing anxiety and despair – along with a certain kind of emotional reaction to these unsettling experiences (passion or courage) – can enable us to redeem our lives. As they both stood on the ground of Christian tradition, they argued that man is in the state of sinfulness, and needs to be redeemed by the divine essence that is to be found within himself. However, this divine essence can only be accessed with the assistance of our feelings. Therefore, we can say that the expression, “redemption of the feeling”, has a double relevance here. First, the reputation of feelings and emotions are redeemed and restored from the dubiousness where modern scientific world view had put them. Second, the feelings themselves have a strong redeeming power in the sense that they can help to teach people how to save their souls from sinfulness and from the grip of anxiety and meaninglessness. In this second sense, feelings and emotions are probably the most useful tools one has at his disposal, arguably even more important than reason itself.

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The existence of the evil in the world: a challenge for Philosophy and Theology

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ABSTRACT

The existence of the evil in the world is maybe the most difficult problem man has tried to decipher all along his history. The fundamental question which has been asked during all this time has been WHY? And comprises either the search of an explanation (What for? What is its cause?), or the search of hat is it good for? Where can it take us?). It is clear that beyond any philosophical, moral, religious, social etc., category, which could lead us to deciphering this notion – the evil-, one thing is certain: the man experiences the evil in its different forms: physical, psychological, moral sufferings, cataclysms and earthquakes, totalitarianisms and fanaticisms. Philosophy, religion, morale –humanities, in general, have tried along the time to find an explanation and even a definition of the evil, but none has absolutely succeeded in finding a definitive explanation. And this acknowledgement makes us think that the evil has something beyond the whole created nature of man and universe and through this, it cannot be defined. Even if man and universe feel its consequences, it exists not as something given, but as possibility.

Keywords: the evil, well, original sin, origin, human nature

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of their evolution, philosophy and religion have never ideated evil as an opposed reality to good, but they have interpreted it as “not being”, as an absence of “to be”, as “non-existence” [1]. And this applies to both Western and Eastern civilisations. The evil does not exist as an ontological principle [2], but it appears as subjacent, it “steals” [3] its subsistence from the Good, it is the abandonment of the Good. Saint Gregory of Nyssa says that this abandonment of good led to the appearance of all forms of evil [4]. The structure of evil is antonymic. The Evil is a void of the nothing, but a void which exists, which swallows and devours beings. The Evil is devoid of power; it never creates anything, yet its power is enormous. The Evil has no substance, it is perceived as the absence of what should be present, it arises where no good is manifest. It is an accident, a parasite of the good, “a deformity”, “a disease” of the being, as it is characterized by Berdyaev [5]. This state produces suffering because the nature of the good is *to be*, and if the unity of *to be* is

broken, then a coil of the ontological nature is triggered; normalcy undergoes a mutation, which, in turn, can generate another mutation, leading to an endless pattern, which distorts the natural essence of things, that is good. Nevertheless, this alteration, this mutation that has brought the evil, has its origin in liberty, in the freewill which God gave to all his creatures: men and angels. The Evil does not spread into the world without liberty and is not maintained without its consent. That is why it may be said that evil doesn't rise from the being and it is not tied to it. That is why, the evil can be said not to spring from a being and it is not tied to it [6]. It is only this way that we can understand it to have a cause, i.e. the possibility to choose – the freewill [7]. The evil that has no subsistence in itself [8], is *parahypostasis* [9], comes into existence in the beings endowed with freewill, who give up the Good. According to the Holy Fathers, the evil has no cause, it has neither definition, nor it is in conformity with nature [10]. It does not pertain to any given nature, but to the changing nature [11]. Therefore, either natural or moral the evil is man-provoked. From the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the first proto-parents who were given their freewill, there come into this world all of the evils. The unique source of Sin, in the strict sense of the word, is the will [12] to oppose God and the tragic alienation from Him. To give up what is Supreme means to begin having a bad will [13]. The true will always chooses God, and abandoning Him implies the vanity of being autonomous, independent.

As a consequence of the sin of the first man, disorder establishes both among the beings of creation and in man [14] as well. The creation had been meant to be good [15], not in the sense that it was good by itself, but due to its participating at the life of the Good, it could thus become good. The more, as the human being and the world were not created by the nature of God himself, where there is no mutability, but out of nothing, the longer the creature was expected to stay in communion with the Creator, as a Source of the Good [16]. The meaning of Creation lies in its on-going active participation at the dynamic presence of God. And it is by this reason, situated at the opposite side, that the evil is seen as an illness of the human being who has lost the communion with God [17]. Disobedience - this great disease – that has affected mankind, has reached its forms of existence, men themselves living between God and everything that was created as a connection with God's whole creation [18]. The origin of the Evil lies in the freedom of existing creatures [19], it is a personal attitude [20]. The evil attacks all the structures of the created beings, and is the corruption of creation [21] and hence, the conception of the orthodox patristic regarding the origin of the Evil according to which it has no consistency in itself and the world and matter are not bad in themselves as the Manicheans would believe it, but they may be considered good through their own creation.

This illustration for the reason of the Evil in the world through the free will and the Original sin has its origin in the Christian tradition and finds itself good display not only with the Oriental begetters but also with those of western regions, especially through Saint Augustine [22]. Unlike the western regions where there prevails the opinion according to which the starting point of the sin, illness and death is the Original sin, as well as the starting point of the incarnation of the Son of God [23], the eastern regions consider the Original sin

to genuinely be a central event the history of humanity, but which cannot be accepted to be the centre of creation and of the salvation of man [24]. If Western scholasticism relates the process of Jesus' embodiment to the Original sin [25], Eastern patristic has always considered the salvation of men, the salvation from the sin to be independent from the Original sin [26]. In the view of the Eastern theology, the Original sin is seen as some form of illness, a weakness or an infirmity and there is no mention of hereditary guilt, but just of a special kind of heredity of moral corruption and death [27]. For the human nature, Adam's sin meant the getting of disease and harm. Through committing the sin the Man has lost that primordial condition of non-suffering since the moment of his genesis and he has got not the tendency towards angelic life, but contrary to this, the tendency to obey to the bodily part, to obey to the dust he was made of [28]. The result of the erroneous use of freedom given through creation, the sin has brought about the corruption of matter, the key elements that made it ephemeral and harmful.

Through sin, humanity undergoes a double estrangement: on the one hand from God, as it is seen from the attitude of the proto-parents who sought to hide from God, the Creator, and on the other hand from the environment in which they were laid upon, with which they had not felt intercommunion. The enmity between the natural world and the human nature displaced harmony since its earliest beginnings. Man started dominating and exploiting to fulfil his own needs, which he selfishly interpreted, wiping out the sense of ponderation in parallel with the growth of greed, which became a preoccupation of reference in the history of humankind. The rot and decay has taken its ultimate form in death and decay. The fear of death brought angst, anxiety, passion, greed, hatred and despair to man. The need to escape death has made him look even more insistently for material elements which could make him forget about it. Exploitation took forms which were peculiar to each historical era. The economic exploitation, racial oppression, social inequities, war, genocide are all consequences of the fear of death and a collective sign of death.

1. The primordial sin and its consequences upon the first family, Adam and Eve

The fulfilment of the proto-parents on the road to their accomplishment lay in their capacity to use the command in their favour and in the favour of the whole creation as bearers of God's image. Following God's command "thou shall not eat from the tree of well-being and evil knowledge" (Genesis 2, 17). Before their downfall, Adam and Eve being themselves one family who aspired to perfection, attended each other by obeying God's command, preventing the breaking of the bond with the Creator, and contributed to preserving the heavenly happiness. The life of Adam and Eve did not limit itself only to a beastly and biological expression, wherein fulfilment means only the strict satisfaction of their own needs, but was manifested through synergic work between man and God, between reasonable and Rational, manifested through progressive and gradual confession of the human being, since "God, our teacher, gave us this great command, that we achieve with the help of reason what the animals are doing by instinct, he commanded us that the ones

instinctively perpetrated by animals we should do with great care and continuous surveillance of thoughts” [29].

Both their soul and their body participate at our proto-parents’ divinization, since they are dichotomist human beings, and so the committing of the sin of disobedience was carried out at first at a rational level, with the thought and later on with the body. So, not just the body is guilty of their downfall because the body too was created by God and it was created like all the other ”genuinely good” (Genesis, 1, 31). In this way, to demonstrate that the body is not evil through its nature and is not a source of evil’s, the authorities of the church bequeathed a teaching saying that the body is not the source of the evil in man: *”the body is innocent towards those who tried to charge it of being the head of evil doing”* [30]. The body, part of the human being is not the centre of evil, but a means of manifestation of the soul in this material world, through which it can materialize its actions *”for the body has not received its natural instincts without a reason, but generally for the ones which are good and useful to each of us”* [31]. God did not create man as automatic machinery, but as a free subject able to master the processes of his own nature to which HE WAS TO PROGRESS towards the good [32]. The materiality of the body is not a source of evil inside man and neither is it responsible for the good or the evil made by the man carrying it, *”for if it is the soul that which controls the movements of the body, directing it towards the good and towards the evil. The soul can save or punish the body, if the soul uses rottenness; for if the soul uses properly the instincts of the body, it also saves the body and finds itself outside danger. But if it neglects the Creator’s work and is seized with the sleep of negligence, it will abandon the guidance of the body, and being deprived of rational thinking, it distances from the right road and it allures the soul towards the same evil, not out of its own wickedness but because of this indifference of the soul”* [33]. Therefore, the human body is guided by the rationality of its soul, rationality without which the body cannot exist. Man’s choice to tie himself to the earthly or to the heavenly belongs to the soul, becoming bodily or heavenly individual.

The moment when Adam and Eve decided to take the advice of the servant instead of the Godly command, trying to become god outside God [34], there began a process of diminution of their state of grace and communion, a communion with their own nature and with God which was lost *„because of the breaking the command, being deprived of the help from the almighty”* [35]. Nevertheless, they began to be predominantly attracted to materiality *”and they both had an epiphany and they both became aware of their nakedness”* (Gen. 3, 7). This new condition of existence of the first man was defined by the orthodox anthropology on the basis of the revelation from the Holy Scripture, as the living in *”clothes of skin”* [36]. The nakedness Adam and Eve felt was not related only by the fact that they had no clothes on, but more than this what matters is the fact that they stood deprived of the grace of God, by the almost unlimited access to the source of Wisdom *”in such a gap did the breaking of the Lord’s command brought them. They who sometime before had enjoyed such a high audacity, they who did not even know they were naked – for they were not naked, since the supreme greatness would cover them better than their coat – after they ate, that is*

after they had broken the command, they stooped so low that they looked for a cover for they couldn't bear the shame any longer" [37]. Man no longer has a life which is part of his own nature, he does not exist due to life, which naturally springs from the insight, but he exists for he cancels death [38].

Those who live in Christ a life which is superior to the bodily one – the new Adam, like the ones who have received the Godly grace and have chosen to follow the advice of the soul reason – are those who placed the concern for the body after soul making it a priority, e become spiritual persons *"for when the soul – as stimulated by its own intelligence which was naturally planted within himself by the Holy Trinity upon his creation – ponders to the pleasant and the necessary, then he immediately frees himself from the harmful influences of the body"* [39].

The man becomes spiritual by training the force of the soul through the body. The spiritual work of the spiritual climbing involves a physical effort from the one who wishes to follow this path of *„the one who wish to write their names in the book of life"* [40]. This effort begins gradually from the simplest of the tasks to the more and more complex as man advances in apprehending God and in the battle against enemies of our redemption *"for our fight is not against the body and the blood, but against beginnings, against domination, against masters of the darkness of this century, against the ghosts of evil which are in the sky"* (Ephes. 6, 12).

Since the very moment of its making by God, the body was a direct component of man as a whole being created in tight unity with the soul. Before the downfall the adamic body was immortal, indestructible, spiritual, being *"lord and emperor of the whole seen world"* [41]. Therefore the man was created without evil instincts and the tendency towards the good of the communion with God and his peers, but not strengthened in this purity and this good [42].

Through the sin of disobedience that was accomplished by our proto-parents, the body took a new form, becoming open to impurity *„doomed to live in ephemeral body and to die"* [43]. Deprived of God's praise, the human body took a new form, becoming thus prone to decays of all kind, *„was alighted from Eden due to disobedience towards rottenness"* [44]. This decay has deprived him from the wisdom with which he was endued with when he gave name to animals, but has not only become unskilled, but has also somehow acquired likeness between animals using the intellectual skilfulness that was left during the hunting for other enjoyments, being guided by the desire of senses in quest for matter [45]. But the satisfaction of the senses has the thick end of the stick, pain, a measure taken by God as a punitive counterbalance which accompanies the life of the human being after downfall.

The man, guided by the devil, seeks to enjoy as much pleasure as possible by trying to avoid pain. Although pain cannot be avoided, it leads to gradual deliberate degradability of the human body, which is tied to the Holy Ghost *"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?"* (1 Cor. 3: 16). Pain and degradation brought forth to the body due to excess is also felt by the soul, the latter not

being able any more to manifest itself because the body „when is weak and somnolent by the material pleasures, does not let the soul fulfil its mission spiritually” [46].

Human nature fallen into decay is inclined to self-love. Therefore, all the energy supposed to be leveraged towards the Creator, as a reply to His love „for He was the first to have loved us”, is aimed at satisfying our own animal instincts, which does nothing else but to fester the body, and „the tormented body is as paralyzed as a shipwreck” [47]. The body, wrecked by its own desires, wishes to become responsible by misuse of what has been gifted for good calculation. God speaks of this evil misuse, consciously and deliberately effected of the human body through the preaching of Saint Apostle Paul: „If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple” (1 Cor. 3, 17).

The soul, being part of the human being, has been, is and probably will be a matter of religious controversy. It is certain that in the Christian world, the soul is unanimously acknowledged as being part of the human race. If Christianity sees the existence of the spirit within the human body in almost all regards, then when it comes to its origins, opinions are different. The Origenism sustains the idea that the spirit might have existed long before conception of the body, The traducianism that it could originate from the parent’s soul and finally, the orthodox traditionalism states that, according to the truth revealed in the Holy Writ, human soul is created the moment conception takes place of the human body: „the body and the soul are part of the human being, [...], are form among those which have always and anywhere have come into existence together” [48]. When we refer to a human person, we refer both to his material side, the body, and to his immaterial side, the soul, for „it is not perchance all over creation to name or discover anybody or soul without their own relation” [49].

According to the pre-existentialist theory, if the soul had existed before the body, this means that man, as an individual or as a person, is made up of two entities, different from each other, that is the body would be only a recipient or a prison for the soul, and the latter would have a symbiotic existence together with the body, in the physical world. As it is an independent entity pre-existent to the body, the soul cannot form one unity with the body, because „that which pre-exists itself in extraordinary state can never be reduced to to the hypostasis of another species” [50]. Thus, if the soul pre-exists the body, as a distinct and complete being, then when one is added to the one created afterwards, it cannot form a unity with it, it cannot complement it, because „if everyone gets, against their own nature, the composing with the other to the replenishment of another species, they are certainly corrupt, breaking their own boundaries and becoming what they are not by their nature and falling in what they were not” [51].

God created Adam with body and soul. He made his body from dust „the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground” (Gen. 2, 7), and for his soul, „and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being”, (Gen. 2, 7), thus, Adam received the soul after his body had already been made, but this does not stand as an argument in favour pre-existentialism. In these verses from the Book of Genesis, we are

shown that the body and soul are not consubstantial and that they were not created in the same way, and their unification in the person of Adam "happened in a secret way" [52]. The fact that in the Book of Genesis, in the act of creating Adam, there is a word which says that at first his body was made and afterwards his soul, does not mean there was a time when Adam's soul did not exist in his body, but it is only a materialization of God's hidden work, so as "the reason of substance of each and everyone and the extraordinary way of the genesis should be acknowledged" [53]. Although, the way God created the first man remains a mystery to us.

The orthodox tradition speaks about the value of the soul in relation with the body, saying it is "a lot more superior and so different from it, as the bodily is to the spiritual" [54]. The value of the soul is the man's value itself, for "we belong to it entirely, it is everything to us, and we can neither live, nor die without it" [55]. Without the awareness of the value of the soul, man cannot die from the sin and then resurrect and live a real life. The true living is the acceptance of the fact that we do not belong to ourselves and that we are recipients for the holy grace, as Saint Paul the Apostle said: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own?" (1st Cor. 6,19). The conscientious, free and unconditional acceptance of the fact that we belong to our Creator and we therefore are the result of absolute love opens a path to eternal happiness for us.

Inevitably, after the natural end „each soul is defendant and witness, as much defendant of sin as is a witness of truth and he will stand in front of God without anything to say on his doomsday" [56].

The damnation or recompense of his soul in the afterlife is given depending upon the choices made during the earthly life. The man has the free will to choose either to transform his body into a prison of his soul, ignoring and letting him to starve for spiritual grace which is God's gift, and the consequences lie in the fact that "the one who seeds in his own body, evil will harvest from the body" (I Cor. 6: 19). If the man chooses to transform his body into "a temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 6, 19), he will benefit from His fruit for "he who seeds in the Holy Spirit, from the Holy Spirit will scythe eternal life" (Gal. 6: 8).

The consequences of this transformation, from the spiritual to the material, which Adam and Eve have undergone and which were transmitted through them to the whole humankind, were the feeling of the forces of nature as crowns of creation: "cursed will be the earth because of you!" (Genesis 2: 17). The evil takes contagious proportions, nature and everything which surrounds man is in opposition and division. Disease, destruction and disorder are produced at the same time, nay, they are also extended and multiplied, and from a master of creation man becomes its slave [57]. For God wants all people to be saved, he does not allow the powers of evil to sink His creation. Man and nature remain protected by his Holiness. Although he lost his resemblance with God, the man remains a bearer of God's countenance, even if the latter is deformed; the man is not totally devoid of grace, but he has enough spiritual power in his weakness, to come, if he wants back to God again [58].

2. The origin of evil

Taking into account what has been said in the foregoing, we legitimately return to the question: which is the origin of evil? Man or God?

We have seen that man is not the origin of evil unless viewed from the perspective of freedom; man is a victim [59] of the one that created the evil. Nobody chooses the evil as evil. Nevertheless, we must admit that each of us carries on the consequences of the corruption of evil and admits himself as the author of his own wrongdoing [60]. The orthodox theology does now view the original sin as heredity nor as punishment of man for his disobedience of the commandment of asceticism, but the evil as a disease, it is the corruption of the reality which was created good. Everything that is delicate and spiritual was created good, but because of the status of creature made from nothing, each is in danger of heading towards nothingness. This is what evil is exactly about: the alteration of reality which leads to the corruption of the one who was created good. However, this sin-ensued corruption is passed on to all the people, not in the sense that they are all inheritors of the original sin, of Adam's sin, but the corruption caused by the sin is biologically passed on from generation to generation, as it is stated by St Maxim the Confessor: *Man receiving life from God and coming into existence through the act of creation, was free from corruption and sin, for these were not created at the same time with him. But when he sinned by breaking the commandment, he was punished with pain in childbearing, which is continued by sin, the sin having its source in the passionate feature resulting from his own doing, as in a law of nature. Because of this law no man is without sin, being subject by nature to the law of birth, which was introduced after creation, because of the sin [62].* Commenting on this text in *Filocalia Română* volume 3, father D. Stăniloae speaks about the propensity to sin of the human nature after the original sin, almost as a law of nature [63]. Therefore, at birth every man inherits Adam's sin-corrupted human nature: sick, crippled, marked by the consequences of sin [64] and not by Adam's sin. Through the law of our descent from the first pair of humans, the "human condition" is passed on, but this is a decayed condition, which every man renews, starting with the act of his biological birth [65].

Neither is God the evil doer. The whole eastern tradition regarding the genesis of the world and man agrees to say that "God is the creator of all the seen and unseen", but not creator of the evil. In a famous homily [66], Saint Basil the Great says: "*God is not the creator of evils*" and that only a careless and unwise mind could come in conflict with the Lord's goodness and portray Him as the author of the evil, sin and death [67]. Saint Basil the Great says "*Do not take God to be the cause of the existence of all evils, and neither do you imagine the evil to have a life of its own. Because the evil has not got a subsistence like any other ordinary, independent and autogenic animal. For the evil is an absence of the good. The eyes were created, but blindness occurred later through the loss of the sight. Therefore, if the eye had not been constructed from a frail material, blindness could not have occurred. In a similar way, the evil has not got its own subsistence, but is an outcome of the pains of the soul wounds. Evil is uncreated, as the heretics sustain, giving the same value to the evil and the nature of the good, considering that both the good and the evil were without a*

beginning and eternal and prior to the genesis of the world; but not created either. If everything comes from God, then how is it possible for the evil to derive from the good? Neither the ugly derives from the beautiful and nor the vice from virtue” [68]. All of the eastern [69] and western [70] Holy Parents agree with Saint Basil’s words saying that God is God is not the creator of the evil [71], each bringing arguments to provide as plausible an explanation to this antinomy as possible: the existence of God and the existence of the evil. The Patristic theology has tried an explanation regarding the way evil appears through the created and changing character of the creatures as compared to the non-created existence of God [72]. That is through the understanding of the two existences: God and the world. St Basil the Great contradicting Eunomie through the existence of the uncreated energies which are present in this world, states that two are the things that remain behind: ”divinization and creation, dominance and bondage, the power which makes things holy and the power that is holy” [73]. This essential distinction underlies the alterity between God and the world. The world exists because of the communion with God, and it is continuously getting from Him the properties and the possibilities for its own development [74]. Grace to this participation to the holy life, the creation becomes reality [75]. Since God creates existence out of nothing (ex nihilo), the world stays in communion with God as long as they follow His lead, otherwise, because of his condition as a creature, he would go towards nothing. This thing gives the world the need of change, of evolution, which can be towards good choosing God, or towards nothing, while God always remains unchanged. Augustine [76] his eminence, explains why God, in his nature, is above all things and beings, because of the very creation of all things from nothing, all being good, but nevertheless, changing, otherwise, if all things were done from the nature of God, ”*not a thing would have been subject to sin*”[77]. Only God exists from Himself, through his own essence, all the other things are good through their participation to the goodness of the godly nature [78]. If all were created from the godly nature, then all would be good and it wouldn’t be any difference between any creature and the Creator, thing that would lead to mistaking the creature for God and we would fall into the deepest pantheism [79].

Although the Holy Scripture tells us that at the end of the genesis God looked at everything He had done and the all were *very good* (Genesis 1, 31), this does not mean that the world, the angels, the man were brought to existence in the state of perfection. In this regard, Saint Irenaeus says that “those newly born are necessarily inferior to those unborn. For they are not unborn, that is why they lack perfection” [80]. But neither the relative, changeable character of the being should be considered as an evil in itself, for it is only on the way of changing that the being can progress. It is only in this way that we can understand that the universe created by God is not perfect but through participation [81] which is not momentary and static but continuous and dynamic. According to the orthodox theology, each being comes into existence from the non-created, that is not from the divine nature [82], has two features: it is moving and perishable. It moves towards perfection through participation, or towards estrangement which can go as far as to disappear. Flexibility, mortality, and corruptibility are conditions of the created [83]. God only, for He is non-created, immutable,

eternal, immortal [84] cannot lose His being [85], while the being through his free will can lose it and change it [86]. The being, through its attribute of being created, through the fact that he has the possibility of changing does not mean that it is evil. That is, there is no metaphysical evil, or else we should attribute the cause of evil to the Creator, which contradicts God's Kindness and Almightyness [87]. As a consequence, any being coming from God's hands is good in its own way [88]. The evil cannot exist but in a created existence [89].

CONCLUSION

By way of consequence, the appearance of the evil and of its angels is accounted for through the fact that also the bad angels, who in the beginning were like all the angels – spiritual beings created by God before the man was created – were subject to the same conditions of the ex nihilo creation, namely the condition of a being: moving and relative in their perfection. Anything which is comparable with God, the only incomparable, bears within itself the gift of creation which is relativity. Whether we talk about the world of the angels, which, as it is defined by theology, is a spiritual world, as compared with God, it gains a material character [90], or we talk about the wholly created world, that is the bodily, and the material, they all distinguish from the Creator through the desire of change. Angels, in turn, have the same propensity towards progress in grace and virtue. They rarely show a bias to the evil, but they are not unbiased. *”Lucifer – says St. Basil the Great [91] had not fallen down and had not crushed against the earth if he had been incapable of bad out of his nature.”* Incapable of evil, unchangeable, unchangeable, unchangeable is only God the uncreated. Everything which is created can spoil [92]. Satan with his devils, submitted to any change, good or bad, revolted against God out of their envy to become like God, that is a source of existence [93], and they lost communion and grace becoming perverted and bad beings of the genesis. The same St Basil the Great wondering where the evil of the devil comes from, answers that from the same cause, namely because of the desire of change of will. And Satan, like all the angels, and like Archangel Gabriel, had a free life and through his liberty had the possibility to stay by God or to estrange from God. “This is the evil – says St. Basil – the estrangement from God”. And he immediately makes a comparison with the one who faces the sun and illuminates himself and who hardly needs anything else but a moment to turn back and enjoy the shadow and necessarily the dark [94]. The same thing happened with Satan, just one moment sufficed for him to wish for his independence and to fall like a lightning.

And in this regard, of the role played by the devil in the fall or the salvation of man, the orthodox theology is different from the western theology. If the western world beginning with Saint Augustine [95] disregards divine philanthropy considering the devil to be the instrument for the man's punishment, the orthodox theology considers man to be a victim and naturally, the death-tempting subject. And this leads to the necessity of practising asceticism on the part of the man on his way towards perfection, while the divine help shows itself in the wiping away of the devil's idolatry temptations. Man uses his free will for the very purpose of rejecting all the malignant attacks, in practising asceticism, and fundamentally to accept God's gift of help [96].

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- [6] D. Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, 2003, p. 474.
- [7] St. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Ecclesiasten, Homilia VII*, in J.P. Migne, PG, 44, col. 726C: "*Malum extra liberum arbitrium in se ipso non est situm*".
- [8] Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, în J.P. Migne, PG. 3, col. 586-997: very well debates this problem of the existence of the Good and the Evil, showing as far as we are concerned that the Evil "*has no existence in itself and is not a generator of existence*", the existence is attributed only accidentally; "*The Evil does not exist as evil*"; "*Ad haec autem vera ratio respondebit, malum qua malum nihil conferre ad essentiam aut rerum generationem,...*" (*De divinis nominibus*, IV, 20, PG. 3, col. 718C); "*Malo status tribuendus est per accidens ...*" (*De divinis nominibus*, IV, 32, PG. 3, col. 731D); "*Nusquam enim malum est, qua malum*"; (*De divinis nominibus*, IV, 34, PG. 3, col. 734D)
- [9] Nikos Matsoukas, *Teologia Dogmatica e Simbolica...*, p. 111.
- [10] Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, XXX, col. 731A: "*Malum autem si causae sit ac definitionis expres, non est secundum naturam*".
- [11] N. Berdiaev, *Esprite et liberte*, p. 182.
- [12] St. Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, în J.P. Migne, PL. 34, col. 188.
- [13] Constantin C. Pavel, *Introducere în gândirea Fericitului Augustin* (An Introduction to the thinking of Saint Augustine), București, Anastasia, 1998, p.140.
- [14] Jean-Claude Larchet, *Teologia bolii*, traducere din limba franceză de fr. prof. Vasile Mihoc, Sibiu, Edit. Oastea Domnului, 1997, p. 30.
- [15] St. Augustine, *De natura Boni. Contra Manichaeos*, cap. I, în J.P. Migne, PL. 42, col. 551: "But the whole nature which exists is good" (free translation);; (*"Omnis autem natura in quantum natura est, bonum est"*).
- [16] C. C. Pavel, *Introducere în gândirea Fericitului Augustin*, p.106.
- [17] Fr. prof. Vasile Răducă, *Antropologia Sfântului Grigore de Nyssa* (Anthropology of St. Gregory of Nyssa), București, 1996, p.176.
- [18] St. John Damascene, *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae*, II, 30, în J.P. Migne, PG. 94, col. 978D.
- [19] St. Basil the Great, *Homiliae: Quod Deus non est auctor malorum*, în J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 31. col. 330-354, aici cap. 5, col. 338D-339A: "*Malum igitur quod proprie dicitur, peccatum videlicet, quoque maxime mali nomine dignum est, pendet ex nostra voluntate*".
- [20] Vladimir Lossky, *Introducere în Teologia Ortodoxă*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1993, p. 110.
- [21] N. Matsoukas, *Teologia dogmatica e simbolica ortodossa*, 2, p. 113.
- [22] St. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, in J.P. Migne, PL. 32, col. 1221-1310.
- [23] Idem, *Sermones 174*, II, in J.P. Migne, PL. 38, col. 940: "*Si homo no perisset, Filius hominis non venisset. Ergo perierat homo, venit Deus homo, et inventus est homo. Perierat homo per liberam voluntatem: venit Deus homo per gratiam liberatricem*" (free translation: If man had not perished, the Son of man would not have come. Lost was the man through free will, God came embodied through the liberating grace)
- [24] N. Matsoukas, *Teologia dogmatica e simbolica ortodossa*, 2, p. 105-106.

- [25] St. Anselm of Canterbury is the one who develops this option in his treatise *Cur Deus homo*, în PL. vol. 158, col. 360-432.
- [26] St. Athanasius the Great, *De incarnationem Verbi*, în J.P. Migne, PG., vol. 25, col. 192B: ”*Ipsē siquidem homo factus est, ut nos dii efficeremur*”(He took his body for us to reach divinisation – free translation).
- [27] St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Explanatio in Epistolam ad Romanos*, în J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 74, col. 789AB.
- [28] St. Athanasius the Great, *De incarnationem Verbi*, PG, 25, col. 103.
- [29] St. Basil the Great, *Homilies and speeches, Homily III*, translation, introduction, notes and indices by D. Fecioru, in the collection ” Church Fathers and Writers” (RPW) in the collection ”Church Fathers and Writers”, vol. 17, București, Edit. I.B.M, 1986, p. 366.
- [30] Idem, *Constitutiones Asceticae (monasticae)*, cap. II, în J.P. Migne, PG. 31, col. 1343B : ”*Corpus ab iis qui ipsum velut pravitate auctorem criminari conantur, nequaquam culpari potest*”.
- [31] *Ibidem*, cap. II, col. 1342D: ”*Corpus enim naturales impetus sortitium ineptos, sed prorsus ad aliquid idoneos ac utiles*”.
- [32] D. Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, 2003, p. 430.
- [33] St. Basil the Great, *Constitutiones Asceticae*, cap. II, PG. 31, col. 1343A: ”*Ipsa enim si impetus corporis rite gubernarit, et ipsum servat, et ipsa caret periculo: sin jus negligat regendi. Et segnitiei somno victa, gubernationem corporis deseruerit, et ipsum veluti ratione destinatum, a recta via aberrat, et animam in eadem ruinam detrudit non ex sua ipsius pravitate, sed propter illud socordiam*”.
- [34] J-C. Larchet, *Teologia bolii*, p. 26.
- [35] St. John Chrysostom, *Omilii la Facere (Homilies on Genesis), I*, in PSB. 21, București, Edit. I.B.M, 1987, p. 183.
- [36] The Holy Parents have not dealt this conception in particular, but they remember it in their writings. Why this denomination: ”clothes of skin”? Through this term, the orthodox theology, not as much as a fall of man in sin as Adam’s „transmutation” as well as that of the following generations in a world considerably inferior to the paradise state, a world of degradation and automatism of material nature. According to the Greek theologian Pnyiotis Nellas, among the Holy fathers who have such an approach (*Omni animal indumnezeit*, Sibiu, Edit. Deisis, 1999), is St. Gregory of Nyssa, (*De hominis opificio*, în J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 44, col. 123-247; *In Cantica Canticorum*, PG. 44, col. 755-1118; *De Verginitatem*, PG, vol. 46, col. 317-416; *Oratio Catechetica*, în J.P. Migne PG. vol. 45, col. 11-107) St. John Chrysostom (*Homiliae XXX in Epistolam secundam ad Corinthios*, in J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 61, col. 381-610; *Homiliae in Genesim*, PG. vol. 53); St. Gregory Palamas (*Homiliae XXX*), în J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 151, col. 375-388)
- [37] St. John Chrysostom, *Omilii la Facere, I*, p. 183
- [38] Pnyiotis Nellas, *Omni animal indumnezeit* (The Man, the divinised animal), introductory study and translation from Greek by Ioan Ică jr., Sibiu, Edit. Deisis, 1999, p. 87.
- [39] St. Basil the Great, *Constitutiones Asceticae*, PG. 31, col. 1339A: ”*Et enim animus quando sua intelligendi vi commota, quae ei naturaliter a sancta Trinitate ipsius opifice insita est, de rebus, que et ad officium pertinent, et honestate sunt, deliberat, tunc corporis assultus effugit*”; (”For when the soul - as it is stimulates by its intelligence, which was planted in it naturally by the Holy Trinity when it was created – ponders on the much pleasant and the necessary, then, as soon as it is freed from the harmful influences of the body” – translation by Iorgu Ivan: St. Basil the Great, *Ascetic Constitutions*, Apologeticum, 2004, p. 10.
- [40] St. John Climacus, *Ladder of Divine Ascent, word I*, în Filocalia, vol. 9, translation, introduction and notes by Dumitru Stăniloae, București, Edit. I.B.M, 1980, p. 41.
- [41] [41] St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Cuvântări morale - întâia cuvântare morală* (Moral speeches – the first moral speech), in Filocalia, vol. 6, translation, introduction and notes by Dumitru Stăniloae, București, Edit. I.B.M, 1977, p. 121.
- [42] D. Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, 2003, p. 428.
- [43] St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Cuvântări morale*, p. 122.
- [44] *Ibidem*, p. 128.
- [45] St. John Chrysostom speaks about material lust which changes man into an animal and he gives the very example with the man who can become like a pig, in *Problemele vieții* (Life issues), translated by Cristian Spătăreanu și Daniela Filioreanu, Galați, Egumenița. p. 149.
- [46] *Ibidem*.
- [47] *Ibidem*, p. 150.
- [48] St. Maximus the Confessor, *Scrieri, partea I, Ambigua (Writings, part I, Ambigua)*, in P.S.B, vol. 80, translation, introduction and notes by Dumitru Stăniloae, București, Edit. I.B.M, 1983, p. 98.
- [49] *Ibidem*, p. 100.

- [50] *Ibidem*, p. 276.
- [51] *Ibidem*.
- [52] *Ibidem*, p. 277.
- [53] *Ibidem*.
- [54] St. John Chrysostom, *Omilii la Facere*, I, p. 139.
- [55] Tertullian, *On the Confession of the Soul (De testimonio animae;)*, în P.S.B, vol. 3, translated by Nicolae Chițescu, Eliodor Constantinescu, Paul Papadopol and David Popescu, introduction, notes and indices by Nicolae Chițescu, București, Edit. I.B.M, 1981, p. 124.
- [56] *Ibidem*, p. 125.
- [57] J-C. Larchet, *Teologia bolii*, p. 31.
- [58] *Ibidem*, p. 32.
- [59] N. Matsoukas, *Teologia dogmatica e simbolica ortodossa*, 2, p. 108.
- [60] St. Basil the Great, *Homiliae II in Hexaemeron*, în J.P. Migne, PG. 29, 40A
- [61] N. Matsoukas, *Teologia dogmatica e simbolica ortodossa*, 2, p. 111.
- [62] St. Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium de Scriptura sacra, Quaestione, XXI*, în J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 90, col. 244-785, aici col. 312C-313A: ”*Primus homo, accepto a Deo ut esset, ortuque editus ac reatus, ipso suo ortu et creatione, liber a corruptione et a peccato fuit. Non enim corruptio et peccatum, pari cum illo ortu creata sunt. Ubi autem mandati transgressione peccaverat, nativitati reus addicitur, quae passione ac peccato consistat; ita nimirum ut peccatum, in patibili eius causa inducto, iam velut in lege per naturam ortu habeat: vi cuius nemo a peccato immunis est, subjecta natura nascendi legi, quae a primo ortu ac creatione, peccati reatu supervenit*”.
- [63] D. Stăniloae, *Nota 132 (Note132)*, în ”*Filocalia Română*”, vol. 3, Digitally signed by Apologeticum, 2005, p. 87-88: ”*The passions are affected, once they have become part of the human nature after the sin. they are not sinful, but they facilitate the birth of the sin. For instance, appetite is a sinless effect. But extraction or its deviation is a sin. They have become a sort of law of human nature, that is they necessarily accompany our nature in earthly existence. They do not pertain to the eternal idea of nature and so they will not belong to him in his celestial existence.*”.
- [64] J-C. Larchet, *Teologia bolii*, p. 34.
- [65] Ioan C. Teșu, *Bolile-”Divina filozofie”. Suferința – ”Pedagogie divină” (Diseases-”Divina philosophy”. The Suffering – ”Divine Pedagogy”)*, in the review ”*Theology and Life*”, no. 1-4(2012), p. 8.
- [66] St. Basil the Great, *Homiliae: Quod Deus non est auctor malorum*, 2, PG. 31, col. 331B:” *Itaque qui dicit Deum non esse, insipiens est et stultus, cum vere mente privatus sit atque prudentia. Assimilis autem huic est, et nihilo stoliditate inferior, quisquis dicit Deum malorum esse auctorem*”.
- [67] *Ibidem*, col. 344A; 345A: ”*Nam si auctor est malorum, utique nec bonus est, ideoque utrinque negatur Deus*”.
- [68] *Ibidem*, 5, col. 341C: ”*Uno verbo, neque Deum substantiae mali auctorem esse putes: neque mali ullam esse propriam subsistentiam fingas. Non enim subsistit, velut animal quoda, privas: neque illius essentiam vere existentem ponere ob oculos possumus. Nam boni privatio malum est. Creatus oculus est, sed oculis amissis supervenit caecitas. Unde si oculi natura no fuisset corruptioni obnoxia, non patuisset aditus caecitati. Sic etiam malum non in propria substantia existit, sed ex animae laesionibus accedit. Neque enim ingenitum est, velut dicunt impii qui naturam malam bonae aequalem constituunt, si quidem utraque principio caret, anteceditque generationem; neque genitum est. Etenim si ex Deo sunt omnia, quomodo malum ex bono est? Neque enim turpe ex honesto est, neque vitium ex virtute*”.
- [69] St. Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium de Scriptura sacra, Quaestione, XXI*, în J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 90, col. 244-785; St. Gregory of Nyssa, (*De hominis opificio*, in J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 44, col. 123-247; *In Cantica Cantorum*, PG. 44, col. 755-1118; *De Verginitatem*, PG, vol. 46, col. 317-416; *Oratio Catechetica*, în J.P. Migne PG. vol. 45, col. 11-107) St. John Chrysostom (*Homiliae XXX in Epistolam secundam ad Corinthios*, in J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 61, col. 381-610; *Homiliae in Genesim*, PG. vol. 53); St. Gregory Palamas (*Homiliae XXX*, în J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 151, col. 375-388); St. Athanasius the Great, *De incarnationem Verbi*, în J.P. Migne, PG., vol. 25, col. 94-196; Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, în J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 3, col. 586-997;
- [70] St. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, în J.P. Migne, PL. vol. 32, col. 1221-1310; Idem, *Sermones 174*, II, în J.P. Migne, PL. vol. 38, col. 939-945; St. Anselm of Canterbury (Anselmus Cantuariensis), *Cur Deus homo*, în PL. vol. 158, col. 360-432; Tomasso d’Aquino, *Somma Teologica*, Fiesole-Firenze, Edizione Angelo Zelio Belloni, 2009.
- [71] St. Basil the Great, *Homiliae: Quod Deus non est auctor malorum*, 5, PG. 31, col. 338D: ”*Non autem ex Deo malum est*”.

- [72] Nikolaos Matsoukas, *Dogmatic Theology and Symbolics IV. Demonology*, (hence Demonology) translated by Constantin Coman and Cristian-Emil Chivu, București, Edit. Bizantină, 2002, p. 48.
- [73] St. Basil the Great, *Contra Eunomium*, în J.P. Migne, PG. vol. 29, col. 468-774, aici col. 659A: "Nam cum res duae dicantur, deitas et creatura, dominium et servitus, potentia sanctificans, et santificatur".
- [74] N. Matsoukas, *Teologia dogmatica e simbolica ortodossa*, 2, p. 22.
- [75] Sf. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Vita Moysis*, în J.P. Migne. vol. 44, col. 298-433, aici col. 334B: "Nothing of what falls under the senses and, from what is known, through understanding really subsists except the Supreme Being, who is the cause of everything and of whom everything else hangs. For although understanding sees also something else of what it is, in none of what exists reason cannot see a thing to need something else, or what could be without participating at what it is." (*Nihil earum rerum, quae aut sensu comprehenduntur, aut mente perspicuntur, praeter supremam essentiam, quae omnium causa est, et a qua omnia dependent, vere subsistere. In nullo enim caeterorum independentia perspicitur potest, ita ut absque participatione veri entis possit esse.*)
- [76] St. Augustine, *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia Liber II*, c. XXIX, 50, în J.P. Migne, PL. vol. 44, col. 465: "Non enim ortum est malum nisi in bono, nec tamen summo et immutabili, quad est natura Dei; sed facta de nihilo per sapientiam Dei."
- [77] Idem, *Contra Secundam Juliani responsionem imperfectum opus*, Liber V, în J.P. Migne, PL. vol. 45, col. 1470: "Peccare autem nulla res posset, si de natura Dei facta esset".
- [78] Idem, *Moribus Manichaeorum*, Liber II, în J.P. Migne, PL. vol. 32, col. 1347: "Quae aliud dicit bonum summe ac per se bonum est, et non participatione alicuius boni, sed propria natura et essentia: aliud quod participando bonum et habendo".
- [79] C. C. Pavel, *Introducere în gândirea Fericitului Augustin*, p. 105.
- [80] St. Irenaeus, *Contre les Heresies IV*, 38, în "Sources Chretiennes", nr. 100(2), sous la direction de Adelin Rousseau, Paris, Edition du Cerf, 1965, p.362-995, aici p. 945.
- [81] St. Augustine, *Moribus Manichaeorum*, PL. 32, col. 1347.
- [82] St. John Damascene, *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae*, I, 3, col.795: "Increratus cum sit ille conditor, omnino nec mutabilis est. Hoc autem quid aliud, nisi Deus fuerit?"; vezi și Fer. Augustin, *Contra Secundam Juliani responsionem imperfectum opus*, Liber V, col. 1475: "Omne quod peccare potest, ex nihilo factum esse, non autem omne quod ex nihilo factum est, posse peccare?"; Ibidem, cap. 44, col. 1481: "Cum itaque dicimus, non ideo potuisse oriri ex bono malam voluntatem, quia de nihilo factum est, non de Deo; non nihilo damus ullam naturam, sed naturam factoris a natura eorum quae sunt facta dicerimus".
- [83] N. Matsoukas, *Teologia dogmatica e simbolica ortodossa*, 2, p. 91.
- [84] Idem, *Demonologia*, p. 49; see also C. C. Pavel, *Introducere în gândirea Fericitului Augustin*, p. 106.
- [85] Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, VIII, 6, col. 894C: "If, by consequence, the truth is what exists, and his negation is the coming out of existence, God cannot get out of existence and is not non-existence; (*Si itaque veritas est id quod est, negatio autem veritatis, est ab essendi statu prolapsio, utique essendi statu frustrari Deus nequit, neque potest esse*)"
- [86] St. Augustine, *De natura Boni. Contra Manichaeos*, cap. I, în J.P. Migne, PL. 42, col. 551.
- [87] C. C. Pavel, *Introducere în gândirea Fericitului Augustin*, p. 106.
- [88] St. Augustine, *De natura Boni. Contra Manichaeos*, cap. I, PL. 42 col. 551.
- [89] Pr.dr. Ioan Chioar, *Binele și răul în viziunea creștină* (The Good and the Evil in the Christian View), București, Editura Universală Iași, 1996, p. 103.
- [90] St. John Damascene, *De imaginibus oratio*, III, 25, în J.P. Migne, PG. 94, col. 1346A: "Deus siquidem suapte natura, modisque omnibus incorporeus est: angelus vero, et anima, et daemon, si cum Deo, qui solus incomparabilis est, componantur, corporibus accenseri possunt: sin autem cum corporibus, res sunt incorporeae" ("For God is out of his nature and totally non-bodily"); Idem, *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae*, II, 3, col. 867A: "Aliqui enim quidquid cum Deo confertur, qui solus nulli comparari potest, crassum et materiale invenitur. Sola quippe divina natura vere materia et corpore vacat" ("Everything that compares with the Lord God, who is incomparable, is bodily, « has thickness » and material, for only God is genuinely immaterial and non-bodily")
- [91] St. Basil the Great, *Contra Eunomium*, III, 2, col. 659C: "Non enim excidisset Lucifer, qui mane oritur, nec esset in terra contritus, si deterioris conditionis recipiendae non fuisset capax natura."
- [92] N. Matsoukas, *Demonologia*, p. 49.
- [93] D. Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, 2003, p. 477: vezi și C.C. Pavel, *Introducere în gândirea Fericitului Augustin*, p. 123: "The cause of evil is vanity, the pretention of considering himself the source of life".

[94] St. Basil the Great, *Homiliae: Quod Deus non est auctor malorum*, cap. 8, col. 346D-347A: ”Unde malus diabolus? Ex esadem causa, cum et ipse liberam vitam haberet, ac penes se esse vel Deo perseveranter adhaerere, vel a bobo secedere. Gabriel angelus est, et Deo jugiter astitit. Satana serat angelus quoque, sed ex suo ordine penitus excidit. Et illum retinuit in caelis liberum arbitrium, et hunc dejecit voluntatis libertas. Poterat namque et ille desciscere, et hic non labi. Sed illum servavit Dei dilectio insatiabilis, hunc vero reprobum fecit suus a Deo recessus. Hoc est malum, abalienatio a Deo. Parva oculi conversio facit, ut aut cum sole, aut cum corporis nostri umbra simus. Et illuc quidem si respicias, prompte ac cito illustraris: ad umbram vero si declines, necessario degis in tenebris.”

[95] St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, în J.P. Migne, PL, vol. 41, col. 700-712.

[96] N. Matsoukas, *Teologia dogmatica e simbolica ortodossa*, 2, p. 109.

A bioethical perspective on man's life and death

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an interdisciplinary approach of the problems of bioethics related to the human existence, namely life and death: abortion and euthanasia. The connection point between bioethics and Christian morals is generated by the meeting of the two cultures, the scientific technologized one based on the economic perspective on life and the humanistic-moral one, which needs to be founded on the protection of life. At the same time, bioethics must not be focused only on man, but ought to comprise the biosphere as a whole as well, namely any scientific intervention of man on life in general.

Keywords: bioethics, life, death, abortion, euthanasia

Introduction

The world is continually changing, and this change involves new situations of life. In this new context of technological evolution, bioethics emerged as a new science combining medical concepts and ethical norms to give an answer to the contemporary existential problems. According to Christian morals, man and morality are not notions adapting themselves according to the “histories” that mankind is going through. Morality is a stable, incorruptible, resonant concept, not subordinating itself to the times, but on the contrary, subordinating the times to itself. Morality cannot acquire nuances, because it is not a trifle, a fashion style, architectural style, or even a philosophic trend that individuals could model unconditionally.

1. New existential realities, new approaches - Bioethics and Theology

There have always been situations containing moral issues, the human society being continually changing, which means new problems. The newly-emerged situations oblige us to reflect and understand them, so that our actions may be just and especially moral, when referred to the divine revelation.

Because almost 30 years have passed since the term “bioethics” was introduced in the literature, with the contribution of the oncologist Van Rensselaer Potter, it is imperatively necessary to take a look at the history of this new science that stands out in the modern academic arena. Using the term *bioethics*, he underlined that it is meant to be “*a new discipline combining the knowledge of biology and of the human system of values*” [1].

The connection of bioethics with technical science and philosophy is realized in order to solve the ethical issues that man and the society are faced with. Bioethics, in essence, is a philosophy of life relying on survival, and based on the juridical and axiological aspects of life.

As time goes by, medical ethics develops. Even in the archaic societies of the Antiquity we find three elements standing out in particular: 1. The ethics that the doctor had to respect. 2. Moral aspects specific of the care given to the diseased person and 3. The decisions applied by the State for its citizens concerning public health.

Bioethics, understood as scientific research or as an academic discipline, appeared in the 1970s. In almost 50 years of existence, bioethics has developed extraordinarily. The great number of publications in the domain of bioethics has rapidly increased during the last decennia, which has made Bioethics appear as an interdisciplinary confrontation between the biomedical sciences and the human sciences; or as a harmonization of moral philosophy with legal medicine or human rights in the spirit of medical ethics [2].

Etymologically, the term *bioethics* comes from the Greek words *bios* (life) and *ethike* (ethics), and literally means ethics of life. Yet, practice highlights a domain largely concerned with the ethical analysis of normative issues in biomedical sciences, and with the management of health-care situations.

Certainly, bioethicists come from various professional environments: including the medical professions, philosophy, jurisprudence, sociology and theology. Bioethical debates have been since the beginning inter- and trans-disciplinary, contributing to a continual analysis of life in its universality.

From a religious perspective, we need to mention the fact that monotheistic religions are traditionally less open regarding the acceptance of the pluralist perspectives emerged in the lay societies. However, even in Christianity and Judaism, there is a various array of opinions coming from theologians in relation to bioethics. For instance, the Catholic bioethicists tend to strictly agree with the new ethical medical context. This is explained by the fact that the Roman-Catholic Church reinterprets the bioethical situation in the sense of pronouncing itself *ex cathedra*, namely not as an official dogma. Despite this fact, there is a Catholic unanimity of the scientists on active euthanasia and abortion, which are not ethically accepted. In many Islamic countries, medical associations have organized their own ethical conduct code.

2. Considerations on human life: abortion and euthanasia

When we speak about man we need to think about the way human life appeared, but mainly about its sense. The source of life is, definitely, God. The Holy Scripture, in its first pages, presents, from the second day to the sixth day of creation (Genesis 1:6-25), the way the Creator, God, brings into existence, by His Word, all the things that exist, appalled in the divine splendour mirrored in them, putting in each being his love and His goodness, the whole creation being *very [exceedingly] good*. The sense of this attribute reflects the fact that everything that was created had in it goodness and divine love, this meaning not that they were perfect, but that they were in a pure state of innocence. Out of all the creatures, only man is created by God in a unique way, he is not the effect of the divine commandment, because the earth was not able to produce a being endowed with reason, liberty, conscience and will, but only God, by His great power and love, creating Him in the image of His Glory, giving Him the likeness he is to reach by his endeavour. Certainly, scientifically, domains such as biology and ethnology may describe how life and the world appeared from the perspective of evolution, philosophy may ponder on its sense, namely its aim, yet in truth only theology shows what it consists in. The human existence, from a religious perspective, has a transcendental dimension, which gives it the feature of eternity. In most of the world's religions one can meet the conviction that man's existence is not just material, but also

spiritual, especially that life does not end the moment when death sets in. Consequently, the Christian philosopher Petre Țuțea wrote the following: “*The eternal religious man acquired the certainties lost by the historical man, who is moving asymptotically towards the ideal... the modern scientist, situated between hypothesis and experiment, finds it hard to accept the situation of the truth in religion and its redeeming function (...). Science, united to religion and art, means liberty and immortality*” [3].

The Book of Genesis, in its first chapters, shows that man was made at the same time body and soul: “*Then the Lord God took dust from the ground and formed a man from it. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nose and man became a living person.*” (Genesis 2:7). The body is made of matter, while the soul has a special kinship with God. “*Man is related to God*”, says Saint Gregory of Nyssa [4], and Saint Macarius the Egyptian declared: “*Between God and man there is the greatest kinship.*” [5]. Man, being created not only out of earth, but also through God’s breath, in the body made out of this earth, it results that he has a special position, not just in relation to the nature his body has been taken from, but also in relation to God. In this sense, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus says: “*As earth, I am bound to the earthly life, but being also a divine part, I carry in me the desire of the future life.*” [6].

Life is man’s greatest gift and good. For this reason, one of the primary problems is related to the defence of life. Abortion, which means interruption of a pregnancy by the (spontaneous or caused) elimination of the foetus from the uterine cavity, before the end of gestation, results in the death of the foetus.

The word “abortion” comes from the Latin “aborior” – a term opposed to “orior” (to give birth) – and means to die or to disappear prematurely. Therefore, this term refers to premature death. Yet, death can be a fact or an act. We can talk about a fact of abortion when an involuntary, uncaused and unforeseen abortion occurs. In such a situation, abortion is just an unhappy event. Moreover, seeing that this fact does not concern someone’s free will in its occurrence, it is clear that one cannot talk about responsibility. In exchange, when an abortion is premeditated and wanted, it no longer has the status of a fact, but that of an act. When perpetrated by the mother, regardless whether her intention is to “get rid of” the child or to save her own health, abortion is a voluntary and, consequently, a condemnable act.

Is the act of abortion a crime or not? The answer is hard to find from a medical scientific perspective, yet from a Christian perspective, it certainly is.

A new human life begins the moment when the genetic information is transmitted by fecundation. As soon as fertilization has been finalized, a new man begins his life. The unique genetic heritage of the newly-formed person, and, consequently, of man, is determined at that moment. “*Since fecundation until individualization, the embryo will be organic life, belonging to the human species, yet not an individual person; starting from the first beginning of the individualization, the embryo as such will be a potential person*” [7].

Abortion is the premature death of the embryo or foetus during his development. We are not talking about spontaneous abortion, which is not deliberately-caused death. Abortion is induced death because someone deliberately ends the foetus’ or embryo’s life. Masked under the expression *pregnancy interruption*, abortion appears in the mind and the study of the doctors and jurists as a medical act and not as a death-triggering reality. According to almost all the State laws, the practice of abortion is accepted, for example, the women in the United States are allowed to choose to abandon their foetuses up to about 24-28 weeks or during the first pregnancy trimester (namely, three months) of pregnancy. However, unfortunately this practice terminates a life [8].

Abortion is homicide with premeditation. At present, there is no reason to say that the soul is not present in the body since the moment of conception. People are not a simple repetition of some uniform individuals. The human being, as a unique being, obliges us to a double respect, from conception till death. The refusal to give or the idea of taking someone's life is the expression of a secularized mentality, which has lost the spiritual sense of the human existence, reducing man to a simple biological product, without taking into account God's image in man.

The attitude of the Orthodox Christian Church concerning abortion is of categorical rejection, because life is man's greatest good. In the creation act, God commanded man: "*Be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and master it!*" (Genesis 1:28). The Christianity revealed by God is the religion of love and of the service for man; this is why it concerns life, especially that of man, to which it shows special care, protecting it even since its first moment, since the status and the presence of the human embryos. The Scripture, by the voice of David the Psalmist, states: "*Lord, You created my inmost being, You knit me together in my mother's womb*" (Psalm 138:13), and Prophet Jeremiah says: "*I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you to be a prophet to the nations*" (Jeremiah 1:5). At the same time, the righteous Job mentions: "*Your hands formed and shaped me*" (Job 10:8-9). In the framework of the revelations received by Moses one can see a great care for the mother and her baby (Exodus 21, 23-24, 9, 6).

The Holy Apostle Paul shows that out of the sins preventing man from receiving the Kingdom of God, abortion represents a central point (1 Cor. 6:9-10, Gal. 5:20, Ephesians 5:5), known as *pharmakeia* practice. In the *Letter to Barnabas* (written towards the beginning of the second century) the following clarification is made in this sense: "*Love your fellow more than your own soul. Do not kill the child, the baby in his mother's womb; do not kill him after he has been born, either*" [9]. The same viewpoint shall be expressed in the *Didache (The Teaching of the 12 Apostles)* (2:2, 5:2). In the 3rd century, Tertullian shows that the body and the soul have a simultaneous connection. The apologists' period, starting with Saint Justin, Martyr and Philosopher (+165), presents the soul as a principle forming the human being, founded on man's reason and liberty. The Epistle to Diognetus highlights one of the notes differentiating between Christians and non-Christians, namely the fact that the first do not kill their children: "*They marry like all the people and give birth to children, yet they do not throw away their new-born babies.*" [10].

The canon discipline, following the Christian thinking, forbade and condemned abortion, considering it a crime against humanity. Canon 91 of the Trullan Synod, considered deliberate abortion to be homicide ("Those who give drugs for procuring abortion, and those who receive poison to kill the foetus, are subjected to the penalty of murder"). As a unanimous conclusion, abortion and all abortion practices are a great sin because:

1. by them, a human being is deliberately killed;
2. the woman's dignity is ruined;
3. abortion practices risk destroying the woman's body, and even killing her.
4. her conscience is burdened by the gravity of the act committed

In the post-modern society, abortion (and contraceptive) practices are perceived as the normality or as the normal reality of life. The Church cannot be indifferent to this worrying reality, nourished by the modern institutions, which focus on the freely chosen medical act, but which - instead of protecting life - limit and diminish it.

All the previous observations show that life is the most precious gift that God endowed man with and the premise of all the other goods. The right to life is a right inscribed in the natural moral law as a result of man's creation by God. Life is for man an asset overflowed out of the divine love and he has the duty to make it perfect for his own good and for the good of his fellows [11].

3. Euthanasia or death as a physician-assisted biological process

Looking carefully at the reality, we can easily notice the ephemeral character of life. The world's great mystery is more often than not obscured by sin, which spread its shade over all being (Romans 8:20-21). Nothing is unchanging in this world and the world itself is submitted to change. Death stays at its end as terminus of the earthly life. The wise Solomon, understanding the relative character of the world, affirmed that the impulse given by instinct is perverted: "*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*" (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Yet death does not mean man's annihilation or the total destruction of his being, but the beginning of a new life; similarly the world will not be ruined, but changed, turned into a new world.

According to the Christian faith, the teaching on death has the following coordinates[12]:

- death is the consequence of sin, the reward for sin is death (Rom. 6:23);
- it marks the end of the earthly life and the beginning of eternal life;
- death is unavoidable;
- by his soul, man is immortal.

Christianity appears in history and is actually known as a religion of love and of hope. It is precisely for this reason that the Christian eschatology is very well delineated in Christianity.

Death for the scientist and the contemporary man is not a mysterious divine act, but rather a technologized action based on scientific criteria, defined as physical-chemical decomposition: respiratory state, pupillary size, lack of certain reflexes, cardio- and electrogram etc.

As a re-animatological process, death has been divided into four stages:

1. agony
2. clinical death,
3. brain death, coinciding with the moment of irreversibility
4. biological death.

But all these moments present many ethical conflicts, because deciphering death at its physical-biological level is a unique and not general fact, which needs to be seen as an exception and not as a rule.

Agony represents the state of passage towards death, defined as a fight and a test both for the dying person and for the doctors surrounding him. This moment is a new objective medical reality because, now, the doctor is faced not just with the disease, but also with the process of death.

Clinical death is a special medical and existential reality. This state is not life, yet it is not death either, but an intermediate state, including the possibility of the return to life.

Medically and biologically, speaking about this state, one can affirm that clinical death comprises the fundamental elements of life: during it, multiple vital functions are limited almost to the maximum, yet not destroyed.

The problems related to death are treated as a right of every social individual to decide about his death. But, by this, medicine is forced to serve death instead of serving to defend and beautify life, namely it is forced to serve the existence of the human being instead of assuring the health and the beauty of the human life by the treatment and the therapy of certain diseases considered until recently as incurable [13].

Euthanasia is applied by certain countries of the world for different purposes, as is the case of social or eugenic euthanasia and the case of the death punishment for certain detainees. The issue of euthanasia is not new. During the Antiquity it was practiced under the form of the killing of children, of parents and of self-sacrifice. The extreme or non-Christian approaches supporting physician-assisted death can be briefly presented as follows: (a) adoring life (the gift) more than God (the giver), by an unnatural and illusory fight against ageing and death (*thanatophobia*) – including by a forced maintaining of the patient in a vegetative state with the help of apparatuses, as some bioethicists consider; (b) abandoning all battle for life because of the suffering – including by euthanasia on demand[14].

According to the means and methods used, euthanasia can be active and passive. Active euthanasia would define all the actions by which death is generated. This practice has been justly called “suicide by proxy”, being generated by the patient’s right to freely choose death and by the doctor’s obligation to submit to his desire. This notion sometimes includes the category of physician-assisted suicide. Passive euthanasia is actually the situation in which the doctor does not intervene or stops doing any action meant to lengthen the life of the diseased person [15].

Viewed as suffering mitigation, euthanasia has no logical argument and is not justified in any way. Today, modernized hospitals offer good care, and there is an increase of the palliative care. Today’s medicines cover all the pains that can be reduced. Accepting voluntary euthanasia could lead to non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia, by giving the doctors the power to decide when a patient’s life can be taken.

The Orthodox Church categorically rejects euthanasia, accentuating the spiritual value of the human being, showing that man is made up of body and soul, yet, compared to the body, man’s soul is both principle of life and noetical (rational) principle generating spirituality. The entire human person – body and soul – is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Man received from God the life-giving spirit, holding together and making alive the material body united to the rational soul: “Glorify God with your body (*soma*) in your spirit (*pnevma*).” (1 Cor. 6:20).

Conclusions

The postmodern world is confused from a spiritual and religious perspective, and as an alternative the living in and with Christ can reopen to today’s world the perspective of eternal life, a perspective that it seems to have lost, showing instead its preoccupation for the material and the biological side of life. In the arena of the debate regarding the ethical acceptability of euthanasic decisions, various arguments have been brought, but, instead of defending life, they promote death, leading to the inevitable conclusion that an interdisciplinary approach of this delicate subject related to human life is absolutely necessary. Man has managed to transplant organs, has tried and succeeded in cloning animals and is still trying to clone people, and little by little has begun to believe that he can replace God. In this context, the Christian Church is called to intervene. It has presented its perspective on issues such as those above, namely euthanasia, contraception, but also in

others, trying to avoid the occurrence of some biological catastrophes and the apogee of this world. The aim of the Christian Church in this world is to promote the values of the faith revealed by God, which values serve and defend man as a whole: body and soul.

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The concept of «persona» in Hinduism and Christianity. A theological approach

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„We will not really face the crisis of modernity [...], without starting from another anthropological concept: instead of the individual we place the relation, experience and the absolute priority of a personal relationship”.
(Christos Yannaras)

ABSTRACT

This paper aims at a comparing exposure between Christianity and classical Hinduism on the concept of person, analysed from theological point of view. In this plan, i.e. of the Divine and human understanding as a person, there is not only a distinction between these two great world religions, but also a level difference, qualitatively insurmountable, since Christianity rests on postulating and understanding of God as the Person par excellence, while in the current Asiatic religion, at the absolute level, divinity (Brahman) goes beyond the status of a person, that is endowed with only at a lower level (phenomenal). The postulation of a single ultimate Reality, in which souls return once they reached the state of liberation, can be understood but only through a monistic-pantheistic identification of the creaturely with the Absolute, Brahman. For despite the insistence on a personal relationship between man and divinity that we find at some classical thinkers, ultimately, what remains is the absolute and impersonal reality of Brahman. Man cannot be thought of in personal terms, rather than as a temporary manifestation, for once with the breakage of the causal chain: «avidya-karma-samsara», he gets dissolved in the impersonal Absolute of God. In Christianity, the problem of person and that of hypostasizing nature is expressed in such a way that excludes simultaneous emphasis on unity (One) or plurality (Multiple). Christian theology knows no abstract deity: God cannot be conceived outside the three Persons. If ousia and hypostasis are almost synonymous, that happens so just to defeat our reason, to prevent us from objecting the divine essence outside Persons and of “their eternal movement of love”.

Keywords: *persona, God, Brahman, ultimate reality, monism, pantheism, relationship, hypostasis, ousia.*

Introduction

If man is a “deep mystery”, leaving so little room to uncover himself, this is due to his ontological status of *persona*, created *apud imaginem Dei*, as revealed in the Judeo-Christian revelation, which postulates a direct lineage of man (come forth from the very hands of the Creator). Therefore, any honest attempt whatsoever, not only theological, but equally, scientific and anthropological, encounters an obstacle, namely the *mystery of persona*. For a person cannot be defined but only as an “indefinable being”. [1]

It is, we believe, more than relevant, to begin the current approach on the mystery of *persona* from the etymology of the term itself. Thus, it consists of $\pi\rho\omicron\varsigma$ preposition (“towards”) and the noun $\omega\psi$ (genitive $\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$), which means *eye, view*. So, person

(προσωπον) means: *I've got my face directed towards someone, I stand before someone.* Therefore, the primary content of the word *person* is defined as a relationship, as a reference. But, in turn, it defines a relationship, a reference as well. But the moment we speak of a relationship-reference, we do not understand an analogy or an abstract comparison, but a very specific event: “I - am - in - someone’s - face”. I - means that I have self-consciousness, am certain that I exist and that the one who exists is me; I am a being with identity, something that differentiates myself from any other being. And this distinction is an absolute alterity, a unique and unrepeatable character that defines my existence.[2]

In the classical Greek thinking, the idea of a personal existence, denoting the power of self-determination was foreign and even incompatible with the basic ideas of the way of thinking in this field. To make acceptable the concept of a Single-God-in-three-Persons, officially promulgated by the Church in course of the 4-th century, St. Athanasius of Alexandria and especially St. Basil the Great had recourse to the concept of “persona”, as implying an ontological relationship (σχέσις). Classical Greek didn't had an equivalent term with that of *person*, except, in the etymological sense, to that of προσωπον (Latin 'persona': someone “to be probed through”), which had meant only a mask worn by anyone, especially by the actors on stage, whereby they had “articulated” the roles of other people. For this reason, St. Basil – along with others – advocated the use of υποστασις, a term by then considered synonymous with ουσια.[3]

In the present paper we will proceed to an exposition, not as much diachronic, but one comparative, synchronic between Christianity and classical Hinduism, at the level of the concept of *person*, theologically analysed. *De plano*, act says that in this plan, understanding the Deity and man as a person, there is not only a distinction between these two great world religions, and a level difference, qualitative insurmountable, since Christianity rests on postulating and understanding of God as a person *par excellence*, while in that so much prized (by some) Oriental religion, at an absolute level, the Brahman- deity exceeds the status of person, which is provided with only at a lower level, i.e. phenomenal.

I. Concept of «persona» in Hinduism

In order to achieve “forging” of such key concepts that support the believer to its rescue, it needs a personal relationship through which he can reach the experience of God. Apart from this personal experience with the divine, true religion cannot arise.

It is stated that all religions owe their personal inspiration to the intuitions of their founding prophets. Hindu religion is characterized by an adherence to the facts. In its pure form, it was not supported at all on authority, as other religions have done. It is not a “founded” religion and does not revolve around any historical event, which gives it rather a *natural character*. Its distinctive feature was the insistence on an inner life of spirit.[4]

That explains why a religion which today counts over nine hundred million followers is so varied and does not claim from any particular founder, recording, over time, a variety of religious and philosophical trends. As regards the central idea – that of divinity –, one can identify three major patterns. The first is *henotheism*, the ancient Vedic religion, and that of Śaiva and Vaishnava theistic currents, which provides the worship of a main deity, as it be alone, without rejecting other deities (Max Müller). The second is *pantheism*, the perspective offered by the Upanishads and, later, by Vedanta, which considers the Ultimate Reality as a transcendent, impersonal being (Brahman). The third configuration pattern of the deity is that offered by Sāṅkhya and Yoga of Patañjali, who allow for two ultimate realities: Purusha

(the soul) and prakṛti (matter), although, ultimately, it is reducible to a monistic perspective of reality through Puruṣa's postulation as state of isolation (*kaivalya*) or detachment from prakṛti, the state yogi turns to.[5]

Hindu tradition proposes three ways (*mārga*) to achieve final release: *jñāna-mārga* (that of gnosis), *karma-mārga* (of the facts) and *bhakti-mārga* (of devotion to the deity). These are not mutually exclusive, but represent rather different accents that are appropriated by different types of personality or even by the same person in different moments of life. Among them, *jñāna-mārga*, the path of knowledge or spiritual discernment is a translation into practice of pantheistic Vedānta philosophy, because according to this teaching man, in his deepest nature, is already one with the Universal Being or the Supreme Self. Human existence as a separate ego is an illusion (*māyā*), although an illusion entirely true, as long as it lasts.

As such, through *jñāna-mārga* man strives to achieve, not just intellectually, but with his whole being, the truth supremely declared: *tat tvam asi*: “Thou art that” (Chāndogya Up. VI.12.3), the deepest inner self identity with that of eternal and universal Self. True knowledge is to understand that empirical domain has no real status. Hence, the ideal is detaching from sensory forms, simply because they belong to the artificially maintained world of *māyā*. Given the upanishadic premise, the authentic state of knowledge lies in the realization of the fact that the individual self is Brahman-ātman and nothing more.[6]

Genuine knowledge constitutes a genuine negative method, peculiar to the mystical currents, but which Hindu mystic applies in a personal manner.[7] Being aware that any noetic action takes place in space of *māyā*, the adept of *jñāna* must de-conceptualize the structures that he really considers to be true. For him, the aim is to achieve totality by a gradual entry in one of the multiplicity of the unit. Therefore, before any object, *jñānas* must say: this art that; this also is Brahman, seeking at the same time, to see in every object, that which is him in his own essence and reach progressively at the awareness that the truth is *saccidānanda* (a compound of three vectors: being, consciousness or intelligence and happiness).[8]

As noted by Indian professor Y. Masih, Hinduism is not predominantly theist, but pantheist, however Indian pantheism does not grant personality to the embracing reality. According to him, pantheism is not necessarily impersonal, as some Western thinkers have put it. From historical perspective, pantheism was *impersonal* (e.g. Spinozism, Wordsworth's naturalism, Vedāntism of Śankara), *over-personal* (F.H. Bradley, S. Radhakrishnan, etc.) and also *personal* (as in some forms of Sufism and in Christian mysticism, especially in Western one).[9]

The perspective of Brahman-phenomenality in the light of the upanishadic thinking is very important for understanding Hindu pantheism. The relationship between Brahman and its development as a pluralistic world is one of identity. (Cf. Śvetāśvatara Up. VI.10). However, it remains a great difference between the-one-Brahman and the plurality of its manifestations. In this point – explains Paul Deussen –, had to make a greater concession to the awareness about space, time and causality, Brahman being considered as the previous cause in time, and the world, the effect produced by it. This world inner dependence of Brahman and the identity of essence with him appeared as a creation of the world out of Brahman and through Brahman, thus leading to the point where theories of creation, not accepted by the idealism of the Upanishads are understood by unconscious accommodating to the forms of human cognitive capacity.[10]

The relationship between Brahman and creation might be defined, metaphorically, as analogous to the relationship between the individual and his self or between the individual and his most intimate consciousness. Breaking this “dialogue” would make impossible any basis for existence. Similarly, the lack of the dialogue between Brahman and the world would make the world simply without any basis. This view is one of the reports rather monologist: of Brahman with himself (Ātman), where the concept of otherness is missing, which is so important in Christian theology.

Hindu pantheism cannot be similar in structure with Western-style pantheism, according to which God turns to the world in order to completely identify with it. Such pantheism grants to nature an endless and real status and, therefore, for God is no longer any place outside the world, but only within it. Here both the world and God are synonyms. You might call such a philosophical and theological orientation with the name of classical pantheism, especially if one takes into account that its last consequences are seen in the development of system of German idealist philosophy, reflected in the philosophical orientation from western theological reflection that lays stress on speech about the world, a world incapable to understand God as both immanent and transcendent to the creation.[11]

Starting from the evidence of Upanishad texts, concluding that the universe is Brahman (Chāndogya III.14), a statement that will become the guiding idea of any further speculation regarding this topic, one will define *Hindu pantheism* (in contrast to the Western or classical one) as of the abstract nature. The logic of this formulation lies in the reasoning that, on the one hand, Brahman is not immanent in creation, once immanence involving stationing in something objective (which is not the case with creation, because it lacks the objective nature)[12] ; on the other hand, Hinduism speaks about the absolute transcendence of Brahman. Due to the fact that creation is Brahman, it can acquire the status of a “transcendent” to the extent that in any “element” of it is ātman incorporated.

The philosophical system developed by the most influential Vedāntic (and not only) thinker Śankara (9th century AD) is seen as the expression *par excellence* of an absolute monism, because one of the fundamental ideas is expressed as the equation: Brahman = Ātman. For according to Advaita Vedānta (non-dualistic Vedānta of Śankara), only the innermost man is conscious. No other part of it can feel, see or know something. In Sanskrit, the name of that conscience is “ātman. It is that part of a man who identifies him and which in Western philosophy and religion finds its counterpart in the concept of “soul”.[13]

According to the classical Upanishads *timeless* and *spaceless* can be declared as real attributes of Brahman. Starting from these premises, Śankara claims that Brahman has two fundamental features: the nirguna-Brahman, rendered through the classic triad "saccidānanda" (being-intelligence-happiness) and the saguna-Brahman, qualified by the admission of an infinity of attributes. In the second dimension (as saguna Brahman), he is Īśvara, the Lord, starting from the premise that saguna-Brahman is only one accident, not an end in itself. It was designed to facilitate the process of ontological identifying of personal jivas with Brahman, and of obtaining the pure knowledge: *parā vidya*. [14]

Being the ultimate essence of things, ātman acquired secondary meaning of “I”, regardless of the relating plan, which can be physical, mental or spiritual. That is why before the real Self of man, there is the "I" of which he speaks when he says "I" or "you" meaning this man or that man. In other words, there are two in each man – the outer man and the inner man, mental and physical individuality and genuine person. Therefore, the context is very important to know which kind of ātman one text or another refers to, if it refers to Himself, with a capital letter of himself. It is noteworthy that the distinction is to be found in Christian

theology as well, that between the "spirit" (pneuma-πνευμα) and "soul" (psihe-ψυχη), with the meaning of St. Paul the Apostle (I Thess. 5:23).[15]

Ontological unity of Brahman-Ātman, which Śankara takes on in his system, is an understanding of ternary premise of existence (he argued). Most of the times, misinterpretation of these three levels of existence has caused many not to be able to understand different texts *shruti* (revealed, authoritative), which sometimes are only apparently contradictory. These levels of existence are: 1) the transcendental; 2) the empirical and 3) the illusory one. When we say that all people are one, that statement cannot be true empirically; they are obviously different to one another as race, religion, country etc. is concerned. The statement about the unity of the people requires to be understood, having truth value at the transcendental level, because the same eternal Principle (Principium Aeternitatis) is inherent in each of them. Once understood the "levels of reality" in that way, the Absolute Brahman receives the quality of person not at the transcendental level, but at the lower one, i.e. empirical. Only in his manifested capacity (saguna-Brahman), Absolute is assigned personhood, as manifested especially in the famous triadic concept of divinity, Trimūrti, consisting of Brahmā ("the Creator"), Vishnu ("the Preserver") and Śiva ("the Destroyer").[16]

The controversy of similarity between Trimūrti and the Holy Trinity occurs when they are considered structurally identical and having common origin. This would suggest that both would only valorisation of how to be God's Trinitarian. Both Holy Trinity and Trimūrti (like other religious triads) are nothing but ways to underscore one and the same eternal truth: that of the divine trinity. The history of comparative religions is very significant on stressing out the ternary trait of divinity, observed in so many religions that structure threefold or triadic their pantheon (see, inter alia, the triads of ancient Egyptians, in the Assyrian-Babylonian religion or Trinitarian aspect of Chinese Tao etc.). The conclusion is that there is an equating between them and that Triad is equally true everywhere.[17]

As stated often, Hindu religious experience does not imply a strict separation between the sacred and the profane sphere of existence. The classical Western spirituality distinction, that of dialectic of the sacred and the profane, does not work here, because in the frame of monistic-pantheistic Hindu premise one can no longer speak of a knowledge polarity, everything being infused by the only and ultimate reality: impersonal Brahman. Religious experience alike cannot assume dualism, but its unifying overcome. The suggestive example is to be found in the classical Hindu grounds: Bhagavat-Gītā and Upanishads texts. Both theistic experience of Gītā and the Upanishads non-dualism are aimed at achieving either Brahman-Ātman ontological identity or identification with the Supreme Lord (Īśvara). In other words, any religious experience assumes obtaining non-duality consciousness.

Hindu thesis involved in Trimūrti admits that Brahman, the undifferentiated Principle is the Absolute, manifested modalistic, figuratively, without thereby the divine figures (gods) to hypostasize or to give personal character to the Absolute. Being is existence, but to declare it as existence is not made in virtue of an "internal life" of being. Such an approach is alien to Hinduism. Being is existence because it is "within itself", not because it is an existence discovered through mediation, be it as a mere image. In his manifestation Brahman manifests not his being because that remains isolated. Only in its manifestation as a "reality", the creaturely ontically identifies with it (ontic reflection on world "objects" is opposed to "ontological" reflection on world being itself), but does not mean that reality is something in itself. This something-in-itself is being, simple, without determinations. The gods of

traditional triad manifest only a certain dimension of the divine and not of the being, which always remains identical to itself.

II. Theological configuration of «persona» in Christianity

Structuring its premises based on personalistic categories, Christianity refuses the idea of an impersonal, abstract God. The God's quality *to be* God is not stating by identifying Him with an undifferentiated, neutral Absolute, as in the Brahman of the Upanishads, but through real act of the Incarnation, undeniable proof of divine omnipotence, in which humanity becomes the receptacle of whole Revelation, that *to be* God is *to be* Trinity. In other words, the Incarnation settle in the centre of Christian theology the mystery of the Trinity, for He Who gets embodied is none other than the Logos, the second person of the Holy Trinity.[18] This does not mean, of course, that God is Trinity only via Incarnation, but that through Incarnation is revealed – in the relative space-time plan of the world – that God is eternal Trinity of Persons.

Unlike striking classical configuration of Brahman or of the Hindu triad, in the case of Holy Trinity would be a fallacy to speak of a "beginning" of Her, because each Person is eternally equal in dignity to the other two, participating mysteriously together in the act of iconomy or of the outpouring to the world. *On the one hand*, by virtue of «consubstantiality», the three Persons are equal and never opposable, not even *in potentia*. *On the other hand*, by virtue of *appropriation*, each Person is assigned, eminently, a certain work: creation to the Father, salvation to the Son and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. That concerns the life "ad extra" of Trinity or the act of iconomy, but here it must be stressed out there is not a single divine work to which all three Persons cannot participate, for as St. Athanasius the Great teaches, "God the Father, makes everything *through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit".

But the big problem and challenge of the fourth century was to express the simultaneity of divine unity and diversity, in other words, to harmonize at the level of the existence of God *coincidentia oppositorum*, that is monad with triad. This is an immeasurable effort of the Fathers of the Church, for what they have done is tantamount to a revolution or transmutation of language. Using concepts of Greek philosophy – sometimes even words of current language – they resignified the terms, broadening their semantic sphere, so that they become apt to grasp completely new reality appeared in Christianity, that of the *persona*, identifiable both in God and in man, the latter as *imago Dei*.

Church Fathers were used mostly the terms "ουσια" (*ousia*) and "υποστασις" (*hypostasis*) in order to guide the minds to the mystery of the Trinity. The term "ουσια" is often used by Aristotle, who defines it in his famous *Categories* "We call «ουσια» (*ousia*) primarily, especially in their own way what is not said about any topic and that is not found in any subject; for example, this man or this horse. We call "secondary ousia-s" the species in which "first ousia-s" exist, along with corresponding genera; thus "this man" is specifically *human* and, generally speaking, *animal*. Thus, we call «secondary ousia-s» man and animal." [19] In other words, "first ousia-s" mean individual subsistences, the subsisting individual and "secondary ousia-s" we call the "essences" within the realistic meaning of the term. *Hypostasis*, without the value of a philosophical term, shows in everyday speech what actually subsists, so subsistence. [20]

In developing the Trinitarian terminology process and in an era tributary of ancient philosophy, which had interpreted the individual in atomistic grid, Greek theology preferred

– to indicate divine persons – the term *πρόσωπον* (*prosopon*) instead of the *ὑπόστασις*, even if later both will gain same meaning. The thinking that distinguishes *ousia* from the hypostasis of God uses metaphysical vocabulary and expresses itself into an ontology framework, in which the terms are worthy in terms of conventional signs rather than concepts, to signal the absolute identity and absolute difference. This introduction of a distinction between two synonyms was a new terminology to express irreducibility of hypostasis to *ousia*, of the person to essence, but at the same time, without opposing them as two different realities. This irreducibility cannot be understood or expressed but only in relation of the three *hypostasis*, which in fact are not "three", but "Tri-unity".[21]

While *hypostasis* and *prosopon* would later acquire the same meaning in Greek theology, this happened only because the latter was assimilated to the strong sense of the former (cf. St. John Damascene, *Orthodoxy*, 59). *Hypostasis* has enjoyed a long and interesting philosophical and theological development, but has always retained something of the original force.[22]

Summarizing the entire argumentative unfolding of the Fathers against the charge of *tritheism*, St. Gregory of Nyssa offers a fourfold answer: 1. The Three are One, because first of all share one will and one divine work; 2. because they have a single origin or cause, i.e. the Person of Father; 3. for the number and division applies only to created existence scope, to the things that we are able to count. However God "is not a thing", but is transcendent of everything that we call being; 4. Links to what was later called "interpenetration" (*perichoresis*), i.e. to the presence of each of the three Persons in the others.[23]

Just like Hinduism, owner of an ontological monism, Greek philosophy was unable to found ontology of the person. Greek ontology professes a unity of "being", even if there are multiple beings. However, the creatures are reducing their "being" through their necessary relationship with the unique being. The result is that everything does not participate – by belonging to this unit of "being" –, must be classified as "non-being". Nevertheless, the person does not work according to harmonic laws that exist in the ontological unity involving necessarily divinity and the world, the consequence being the depriving of its ontic content. Coming out of predetermined harmony interspace, *persona* (*prosopon*) is not ontically structured, but remains something external to the individual.[24] However, such a role confirms to the person an identity status, something that makes it unique and unrepeatable.

In Christianity, the problem of person and nature hypostasizing is expressed in such a manner that excludes simultaneously emphasizing on unity (One) or plurality (Multiple). The notion of "person" is that which distinguishes Trinitarian Persons from one another, and the unity of "nature" makes impossible their separation. This is "the cornerstone" for religions and philosophical thinking outside the space of Revelation, where not maintaining the unity of nature led naturally to the plurality of figures.[25]

On the other hand, the "tri-functional" aspect of the Hindu impersonal absolute (Brahman / Ātman) can hardly be compared to the Christian Divine Tri-unity, because it represents rather an aspect of mythological thinking. Mythological thinking will always use the categories of "necessary", which are incompatible with the thinking that is based upon a personal God, someone may enter a relationship with. In Christianity, the appeal is to apophasis: since divinity is "das ganz Andere" (R. Otto), "in the divine Trinity there is an inner life which eludes the concepts." [26] In turn, the gods of triad always obey to necessity, once they are nothing but aspects or "modes" of impersonal absolute, being destined to

absorb themselves in the unique monad, the very moment person is an absolute impossibility.

In the Holy Trinity, however, is revealed the infinite aspect of Persons since the Father is consubstantial with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Here we cannot talk about the necessity or psychological or moral conditioning, for divine nature is not beyond Persons. Trinity is God, and every Person has the fullness of the divine nature, without possessing it exclusively. This fullness of the divine nature is equal to the communion of divine persons and man – person creational intended to freedom ("spirit and freedom" – Nikolai Berdyaev) tends to God, establishing a relationship with the preservation of his identity, with no annihilation into Him.[27]

On the other hand, for Holy Fathers, the mystery of man and his destiny is regarded from the perspective of Trinitarian love. Getting permanently attracted by an infinite model, man feels like entrapped in this world. Therefore, only the similarity between human person and living God is the basis of human freedom. But man is called to getting imparted by the glory of God, by the divine "uncreated energies", through updating the divine image in him, that is of hypostatical character of God, the Persona *par excellence*. For St. Peter the Apostle, men are called to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pt. 1.4), syncopated formula, showing that in a personal meeting (only to a person is possible to communicate, not with nature!) we become partakers (for one participate to the nature!) in the divine life itself; thus the image is reaching the likeness.

This name, these "energies" appear in the Bible and in the writings of the Church Fathers as attributes of the Holy Spirit, Giver of grace, of life that conquers death. The man in the image of God is man-in-Christ, the Father's image, in the infinite breath of the Spirit, that is the image of the Son.[28] And when, for example, St. John the Apostle writes that "God is love" (I John 4:8), this are not to be understood an expression of impersonal primordial energy, but as form to express "supreme unity of tripersonal communion." While in Hindu concept of Trimūrti, Vishnu is a deity who possesses the attribute of compassion towards humanity, to which comes closer by his descents (avatāra), however this compassion cannot be identified with His being, for it lacks the attribute of aseity.

In Christianity, love is precisely what describes best God, for in John's meaning, He is the same with love, but a love manifested fully in freedom and being not under the kingdom of necessity, as in the Hindu triad. Moreover, it is said rightfully, that the only exercise ontologically possible of freedom is love.[29] For the statement "God is love" translates in that God "exists" as Trinity, and then as "Person" and not as substance. Love is not a consequence or a "property" of the divine nature, but what constitutes His substance, allowing Him to be what exactly is: the one God. Thus, love ceases to be a qualifying property, and consequently secondary of "being", in order to become ontological category *par excellence*. [30]

Conclusion

Christian theology knows no abstract deity: God cannot be conceived outside the three Persons. If *ousia* and *hypostasis* are almost synonymous, that so happens to defeat our reason to prevent us from objecting the divine essence outside personas and "their eternal movements of love" (St. Maximus the Confessor). God of Christian theology is a concrete God, as the unique deity is, at the same time, common to the three hypostases and proper to

each of them: to the Father as fountainhead, to the Son as born One, to the Spirit as proceeded from the Father.[31]

In Hinduism, it can be said that the whole effort of conceptualizing the divine, unlike Greek philosophy – related to religion dialectically and developed in contrast with the former, under the shape of another religion, i.e. of thought, purified by reason and composed as a concept – never separated from the ground of religion. It was fed continuously and directly out of this ground's forces, of which there was never uprooted. However, speculation was reformed from its side and it developed religion structure from inside. And once the process was introduced, led from polytheism and henotheism, by favoring a single god, to *pantheism*, the religious attitude so peculiar to Hindus, meaning the unity of God and the world.”[32]

Postulating a single ultimate Reality in which souls return once they have attained liberation cannot be understood except by a monistic-pantheistic identification of creaturely with the Absolute, Brahman. For despite the insistence on a personal relationship between man and divinity, that we find at some classical thinkers (Rāmānuja etc.), ultimately, what remains is the absolute and impersonal reality of Brahman. Man cannot be thought of in personal terms, but rather as a temporary manifestation, for once breaking the causal chain *avidya-karma-samsara* (ignore-deeds-rebirths), it gets dissolved in the impersonal Absolute of God.

If for the Hindus, Trimūrți was never an object of religious devotion, the three deities being worshiped more separately – Brahmā being even deprived of such a cult due to its strong intellectual character –, the Holy Trinity is for the Christian an act of faith around which revolves their whole existence. In this way, Christianity is uniquely set as a religion that, though occurring in history, transcends this history into a *Metahistory*, because it is based on the sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God. This condition, fully divine and human at the same time, of its founder, is absolutely specific to Christianity, thereby distinguishing radically not only from Hindu religion, but also from any extra-Christian religious experience.

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- [2] Ierom. Varnava Lambropol, „Valoarea persoanei umane în lumina Ortodoxiei” (The value of the human person in the light of Orthodoxy), in *Rațiunea mistică. Revistă de spiritualitate ortodoxă* (*Mystical rationality. Orthodox Spirituality Review*), Year III, no. 1-2, 1996, p. 25.
- [3] Lucian Turcescu, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons*, American Academy of Religion, Academy Series, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. X. Such a neologism was not easily accepted. There was a long debate in which St. Gregory of Nyssa has not only continued the work of his brother Basil and his predecessors, but also significantly elucidated a whole spectrum of ideas closely related to this innovative concept.
- [4] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *An idealist view of life*, Harper Collins Publishers India, 3-rd edition, New Delhi, 1998, p. 80.
- [5] That is why despite the rejection – sometimes vehemently, by theologians and philosophers – of the Hindu term "pantheism" as their religion globalizing trend, yet this is the main tendency, outlined once with the era of the Upanishads. For details: Dr. Corneliu-Alexandru ARION, *Hindu pantheism and the Christian teaching on God*, Enciclopedică Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 323-324.

- [6] Given the upanishadic premise, the real state of knowledge lies in the realization of the fact that the individual self is Brahman-Atman and nothing more. Cf. Dr. Remus RUS, *Conceptia despre om în marile religii (The concept of man in the great religions)*, in: *Glasul Bisericii*, no. 7-8, 1978, p. 823.
- [7] The method has as its starting point the actual positioning of man to himself. Noetic dialectic process begins with the question: "Who am I?" Typically, responses aimed externality and therefore jñānas (one who undertakes the path of knowledge) assimilates, wrongly, himself to his physical body, saying, I am cold, I am warm, etc. The first necessary step is the detachment from this false assimilation. The next step centred perfectly on identical consciousness of self and Brahman coincides with eliminating any considerations to preach the presence of an ego, excluding such type of statement: I see, I understand ... because they cannot be equated with the sentient Brahman. (Cf. I. Mundaka Upanishad 1. 6). The road continues until the jñānas no longer is tempting to confuse himself with anything belonging space phenomenality, reaching his real origins awareness and understanding that Brahman-Atman alone has all forms. (Śvetāśvatara Upan. I, 9). See: Dr. Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, *op.cit.*, pp. 325 sq.
- [8] Jean HERBERT, *Spiritualité hindoue*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1988, pp. 457-460 passim.
- [9] Y. Masih, *Introduction to Religious Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass Publisher, Delhi, 1998, pp. 46 sq. The author notes that although putting so much emphasis on gnosis and is supported by an abstract logic; however, Sankara's system is not philosophical but wholly religious. Sankara's arguments were, in fact, aimed to create an attitude of total detachment to man. With such attitude man will not consider of great value even paradisiacal state of happiness. The target is to achieve a perfect life, than which no greater can be conceived or thought.
- [10] Paul Deussen, *Filosofia Upanișadelor (The philosophy of the Upanishads)*, transl. by Cornel Sterian, Tehnică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1994, p. 124. The myth of Brhadāranyaka Upanishad (I. 4) is significant for the understanding of this report, because it presents the world of Atman and conduct the natural consequence of that conduct. The idea explicit in verse 10 is that "he who recognizes this:" I am Brahman "(Aham Brahma asmi), becomes that All (this universe) and not even gods have power to prevent him, for he is the Self (soul, Atman) himself."
- [11] For details: Dumitru POPESCU, *Ortodoxie și Contemporaneitate (Orthodoxy and contemporaneity)*, Diogenes Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996.
- [12] Because one cannot speak of real presence of Brahman in creation and assumption of pantheism is ruled out by divine immanence.
- [13] The word itself derives from the root "at", which means "going continuously" or "breathe", and from "ap", which translates with to "penetrate" or "wrap". Ātman is called, variously, Jiva Ātman, that individual self or soul or antarātman, i.e. the empirical self. Cf. Corneliu Alexandru-ARION, *op.cit.*, p. 230.
- [14] Once secured this knowledge, the individual soul (jīva ātman) appears as multiple and limited in accordance with the principle of creative illusion, *māyā*, resulting in individualisation, and what remains to the knower is only Brahman as nirguna, the unqualified, the Supreme ego or supreme unmanifested Being. Cf. Dr. Remus RUS, *op.cit.*, p. 737.
- [15] It is true that this "ultimate Self" this "immortal Self of self" is identical to "the soul of the soul" (ψυχή ψυχης) of Philo of Alexandria, and to the "immortal soul" of Plato, understood as distinct from the "mortal soul" and several translators render ātman as "soul". But although there are contexts in which "soul" is set as "spirit" is dangerously misleading - due to current notions of psychology - to speak of ultimate and universal Self as a "soul". It would be, for instance, a serious confusion to suppose that when a philosopher like C. G. Jung speaks of "the man in search of a soul", it could have anything to do with Hindu search of the Self, or what is it in the urging Γνώθι σεαυτόν. Cf. Ananda K. COOMARASWAMY, *Hinduism și Buddhism (Hinduism and Buddhism)*, transl. by George Popa, Timpul Publishing House, Iași, 1997, pp. 123-124.
- [16] For details: Lect. Dr. Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, „Conceptia hinduistă de Trimūrți și triadologia creștină” (The Hindu concept of Trimūrți and Christian triadology), in: *Dionysiana*, year II, no. 1 (2008): *The monotheist Religions and their role in the society of ours days*, Ovidius University Press, Constanta, 2008, pp. 290-315.
- [17] For details: Frithjof SCHUON, *Despre unitatea transcendențială a religiilor (On transcendental unity of religions)*, transl. Anca Manolescu, foreword by André Scrima, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 120-129.

- [18] Vladimir LOSSKY, *Introducere în Teologia Ortodoxă (An Introduction to Orthodox Theology)*, foreword by Rev. Prof. Dumitru Gh. Popescu, transl. by Lidia and Remus Rus, Enciclopedică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1993, p. 43. Incarnation and the Trinity are thus inseparable.
- [19] ARISTOTEL, *Organon*, vol. I, Translation, foreword, introduction and notes by Mircea Florian, Categories, ch. V, I, 2, 11-19, IRI Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 110 ff.
- [20] Vladimir LOSSKY, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de răsărit (Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church)*, foreword by Dumitru Stăniloae, transl. by Rev. Vasile Răducă, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, p. 50.
- [21] Vladimir LOSSKY, *După chipul și după asemănarea lui Dumnezeu (In the image and likeness of God)*, transl. by Anca Manolache, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1998, p. 106.
- [22] A force that can be summed up noting that it is more or less exactly the equivalent of the Latin *substantia*. Alexander GOLITZIN, *Simeon Noul Teolog: viața, epoca, gândirea (Symeon the New Theologian: life, the age, thinking)*, in: St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Discursuri teologice și etice, Scrieri I (Theological and ethical discourses, Writings I)*, *Introductory study and translation* Deacon. John I. Ică jr., Publisher Deisis, Sibiu, 1998, p. 498.
- [23] Alexander GOLITZIN, *loc.cit.*, p. 501.
- [24] In the platonic thinking, concept of "persona" is an ontological impossibility, because the soul that provides lasting, human "being", is not always linked to concrete man, «individual»: he lives eternally, but he can get attached to another concrete body; he may be another "individuality", as if a revival. For Aristotle, things are exactly the opposite: the concept of person is an ontological impossibility by virtue of the fact that soul is inextricably linked to concrete, to the "individual": man is a concrete individuality, but persists only during his psychosomatic composition, for death definitively abolishes this given individuality. Ioannis ZIZIOLAS, *Ființa eclezială (Being as communion)*, transl. by Aurel Nae, Bizantină Publisher, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 22-23.
- [25] Cf. Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, *op.cit.*, p. 373.
- [26] Nikolai BERDIAEV, *Spirit și libertate. Încercare de filosofie creștină (Spirit and freedom. An attempt of Christian Philosophy)*, transl. by Stelian Lăcătușu, afterword by Gh. Vlăduțescu, Paideia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 102.
- [27] Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, *op.cit.*, p. 376.
- [28] Olivier CLÉMENT, „Realitatea biologică a trupului și transcendența Persoanei” (Biological reality of the body and transcendence of Person), in: *Bioetica și Taina Persoanei. Perspective ortodoxe (Bioethics and the Mystery of Person. Orthodox perspective)*, transl. by Nicoleta Petuhov, edit. by Tatiana Petrache, Byzantine Publishing, Bucharest, 2006, pp. 43-44. As early as the second century, St. Irenaeus wrote that the divine image and likeness of man are nothing but the Holy Spirit.
- [29] Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, *op.cit.*, pp. 377-378.
- [30] Cf. Ioannis ZIZIOLAS, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- [31] Vladimir LOSSKY, *Introducere în Teologia Ortodoxă*, p. 21.
- [32] Erich FRAUWALLNER, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, transl. by V.M. Bedekar, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984, p. xiii.

Ethnocentrism - the danger of cultures' collision

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the globalization, the contact between different cultures and religions has reopened a number of problems. Thus, one of the current challenges is the ethnocentrism. This anthropological and ethnological concept involves an overestimation of national, religious, racial, geographic group to which we belong, and an understatement of other groups, that because of prejudice about other people. The ethnocentrism may lead us to chauvinism, xenophobia and racism! The globalization facilitates the rapid encounter between different cultures and, thus, it is developing the tendency that one to consider being superior to another. Thus are being born the ethnocentric tendencies. We can say that ethnocentrism is a 'prodrug' of globalization, providing support and arguments for perpetuating this process.

Keywords: ethnocentrism, globalization, culture, religion, multiculturalism.

INTRODUCTION

The globalization, phenomenon with multiple implications for human society, has opened many effects, both positive and negative. Migration, encouraged today by the access to better jobs and living conditions superior to other generations, by the opening of state borders, by rapid transmission of information, etc., facilitated the contact between different cultures and religions, reopening a number of problems. In this context, the emigration of an increasing number of people, a thing noticeable worldwide, and to a lower level, if we refer to Europe, and especially to the structure of economic policy that today is called "the European Union", it is suitable approaching the issue related to ethnocentrism and globalization, especially because globalization has facilitated the manifestation of the ethnocentric phenomenon.

1. The ethnocentrism

Ethnological and anthropological concept, which was introduced in 1907 by William Graham Sumner in his book *Folkways*, the „ethnocentrism is the technical name for this view of things by which one's own group is the centre of everything, and all the others are scaled and rated with reference to it.”[1]

The ethnocentrism reveals the tendency to privilege the norms and traditions of our own society to the detriment of other societies, in other words their own culture is considered to be superior to all other cultures.[2] This implies an overestimation of national, religious, racial, geographic group, to which we belongs, and an underestimation of other groups, that because of prejudice regarding other people. In its aggravated form, the ethnocentrism can be fully found in the racist thinking. The opposite of the ethnocentrism is the xenocentrism. The xenocentrism is also based on certain prejudices such as that to appreciate everything

foreign as good automatically. The xenocentrism consists in underestimating of the specific cultural values of their own nation and the overestimation of the cultural values of others.

The ethnocentrism makes its presence felt when you judge others according to your own cultural references. Therefore, the ethnocentrism may lead us to chauvinism, xenophobia and racism. Also, it can easily get to colonialism when consider we have the mission to civilize other peoples, and even to imperialism, when we think we have the right to subjugate them. Let us not forget that such things have happened in the past with the discovery of Africa and America. The Spanish, Portuguese, English, French etc. explorers / the conquistadores, have shown towards local population ethnocentric behavior taken to extremes, therefore to imperialism.

The most famous example of what can entail ethnocentrism, as a movement that overestimates their cultural and ethnic values, is the Nazi doctrine. The Nazis developed the idea that the Aryan race is superior to all existing breeds on earth, that's why the Jews and the Gypsies were considered inferior in terms of race. What resulted was reached due to this Nazi ethnocentrism, it is well known. It seems that Hitler has built the doctrine of Aryan superiority on the philosophy of Nietzsche, but was based on the scientific theory of evolution proposed by Charles Darwin. To understand the way in which Darwin judge things, here's an excerpt from one of his books, in which characterized the Fuegians, inhabitants of the Land of Fire: "These poor creatures wore all the signs of degeneration, their cheeks were hideous, smeared with white, dirty and greasy skin, hair tangled, broken voice and gesticulating violently. Seeing such people, hardly somebody thinks that they are our fellows, inhabitants of the same planet (...) they need the imagination to evoke, rationality to compare and judgment to discriminate? To detach Patelle [3] off the cliff does not require not even slyness, the lower faculty of mind. Their skill in some aspects can be compared to animal instinct (...) (Ch. Darwin, Travel around the world aboard the ship Beagle)" [4].

Of course, the characteristics of the people described by Darwin not made them "less people" than his fellow countrymen who had different clothing and food habits that distinguished them from other cultures, and these particularities did not mean at all that there are "signs of degeneration".

All to understand better what generated this non-acceptance of differences in culture and race, taken to the extreme, so to the point that those who are different were not considered human beings, I will quote a note from the diary of the scientist Emil Racoviță, dated December 10, 1897: "The Indians tell that whites are cannibals, they eat their babies. Apparently did not lie. The priest says that some British gold miners killed and ate an Indian out of curiosity. (Emil Racoviță, Jurnal, edited by Al. Marinescu, Anca Bănărașcu and Al. Iftime, Ed. Compania, 1999, p. 74)" [5].

Here's how sometimes science support, and other times the lack of knowledge has led to the suppression of countless lives. That is why we should carefully review every concept that can influence human life at the micro or macro level, as does that of the ethnocentrism concept, to determine the positives and negatives aspects.

2. The ethnocentrism versus the globalization

The globalization, phenomenon of a great complexity, create links, spaces, integration and transnational interdependence in the economic, social, cultural, political, technological and environmental spheres.

The problems that the globalization creates, come from the fact that what is looming as a result of them is a certain world domination which does not account for the diversity of the nations, disregards the countries, the companies and the individuals only insofar as they serve the purposes outlined, so only if they enhance the benefits of an economy which is controlled systematically to be useful only to those who draws his guidelines. Therefore, fears about the consequences that will bring this phenomenon is that a possible predominance of them "could lead to the destruction of the human person and the end of history and the various forms of culture and civilization"[6].

In this case, what interests us about the globalization is the cultural sphere that she possesses. It can be seen, easily, the fact that there has been a development of cultural communication in the world, everything urging to a new consciousness and cultural identity, which is easily achievable thanks to access to new cultural ideas and products, but also to the increased consumption thereof. These things are facilitated by adoption of the new technical means and the various practices.

Globalization has opened its doors to multiculturalism and those of the individual access in everything related to cultural diversity.

It may refer in a reduction in global diversity or even because of the cultural hybridization, or due to assimilation. Creating a global culture would be possible only when the particular cultures would lose importance, and at the same time, the ethnic identity of various peoples would no longer count. Therefore, for the establishment of a global culture of major importance is the ethnic aspect of the globalization phenomenon, he assuming a different form of migration of particular cultural values worldwide. We can talk about a "transnationalization" of the culture. This is facilitated by its outstanding technological progress, but also by the easy migration of the peoples, each carrying with them the cultural specificity. This is also evidenced by the symbols used by people in cyberspace. In fact, what we now call global culture is nothing more than a type of culture adapted to the problems which the globalization generated. Such culture is characterized by: universalism, eclecticism, timelessness and technicism. National cultures differ from global culture through temporality, expressiveness and particularism, characteristics that led to the continuity of the various human communities.[7]

Culture, the nucleus and the origin of ethnic, and to a certain extent also of the ethnocentrism, is in open conflict with globalization changes manifested to the economic, social and political level. As globalization facilitates rapid encounter between different cultures, there is a tendency to believe that one is superior to another. This creates ethnocentric tendencies. We can say that the ethnocentrism is a 'pro drug' of globalization, providing support and arguments for perpetuating this process. This has been possible because of the desire to dominate, to be the first, which manifests the person or group when they consider that it has a higher military force, economic and cultural level. Moreover, it is demonstrated that the most effective domination it is achieved through culture.[8]

„The migrations and the commerce were able to impose some groups on others by conquering territories, populations, markets or economic sectors, countries or regions, through tactical and strategic arguments. But these are not anything other than cultural and civilization results. Military, political and, of course, cultural expansions preceding the World War II are placed under the umbrella of globalization ("emblematic examples of globalization"), glancing at the origin that were are all manifestations of ethnocentrism. And, implicitly, of a particular type of manifestation of the cultural, even if we were forced to associate such negative connotations to that concept (culture).”[9]

The ethnocentrism and the globalization have similarities, but also some points that differentiate them. The ethnocentrism is individualized to globalization by the fact that it preserves ethnic and cultural specificity and, at the same time, is trying to impose, through various methods (persuasion, aggression etc.), those in contact with, be it countries, regions, ethnic groups etc. Instead, globalization is unable to increase the coverage area of social, cultural, economic, political, than by integration.[10]

Compared to the ethnocentrism, which brings into question just the cultural supremacy, the globalization include it, but adds (in competition which aims conquest of territories for possession and exploitation of raw materials and cheap labor force), the economic progress. Moreover, new forms of movement of capital have made the economic courts to "dig deep" in order to subvert the ones of the State, giving rise to so-called "multinational corporations". Thus, nation-states have no longer the control over the investment decisions, requiring a review of the role which they once had.

3. Ethnocentrism and religion

I mentioned at the beginning of this article about the ethnocentrism taken to an extreme, i.e. about the imperialism, and I said that this is not a strange history of human society. It was the case of meeting different cultures and religions during the great expeditions of exploration and conquest initiated from the European continent. Most often under the pretext of possession the truth of faith, of a higher culture and civilization, local populations were decimated. To understand the error into which the conquistadors fell, and where we can fall today, the German sociologist Ulrich Beck writes: "A caricature shows us how the Spanish Conquistadors have stepped into the new world in the glow of their weapons. "We come to you", it is written in the bulla "to talk to you about God, civilization and truth". A group of locals amazed responds: "Of course, what you want to know?" How has happened and is happening the blood baths which followed, it has been frequently described without any consequences. What is the comical of the scene? Ridiculousness of the scene result from the mutual misunderstanding of the meaning of this "meeting": ultra-armed Western imperialism conceals its missionary zeal behind empty talk about "intercultural dialogue". While locals understand the situation wrongly and naive as an offer of dialogue, desiring to communicate, although they will be stuffed with foreign certainties, then be butchered like Christmas geese."[11]

Exposing this caricature, Beck highlights the tragedy that followed the failed intercultural dialogue. The ethnic identity of a people cannot be part of any ranking, cannot be considered inferior or superior to another. Of course, the conquistadors intended to preach the Gospel among those who had not had still any contact with Christianity, but the way they have done for the purpose can be achieved has caused countless bloodshed and destruction. This was due to "blind potting perception of what is foreign in their own certainties"[12].

The Orthodoxy has avoided, mostly, Westerners mistakes, always relying on dialogue, which facilitated inculturation, namely the transmission of evangelical principles within the particular cultures, always taking into account to their specific features. The ethnic specific of peoples who had received "The Good News" was always kept; this was part of the specific mission of the Orthodox Church. It arose in the Orthodox world the so-called 'unity in diversity' encountered in the local Churches that have preserved the specific cultural traditions, but at the same time, they have preserved also the unity of faith. For example, the identity of Orthodox peoples (such as the Greek, Russian, Romanian, and Bulgarian) was preserved; however, the unity of faith was not impaired.

Instead of conclusions, I want to bring attention to what asserted, not too long ago, the famous anthropologist and the ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009): "Cultures are creative when they are not isolated greatly, but it requires some insulation. In every civilization there is an optimum of openness and closure, between isolation and communication, which corresponds to the most fertile periods of their history. If the cultures are not communicating, they get sick, but they should not communicate too quickly to have time to assimilate what they borrow from abroad. Today I feel that Japan is the only country that has achieved this optimal: it absorbs more from the outside and refuses more" [13].

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The human will debate between Western and Yoruba philosophical traditions

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ABSTRACT

Discourse on human will has a long history in Western philosophical tradition; and this discourse remains evergreen with changing subject-matter from one period to another. As a matter of fact, the discourse has significant implications for other intellectual disciplines that advance the course of the human species. In this connection, this paper examines the most recurring debate in the history of the discourse on human will; this paper particularly examines the various controversies that have been generated by the question whether the human will is free or not. The question has serious implications on the way we construe existence in all ramifications. The paper considers the debate within the bounds of two distinct thought systems of Western and Yoruba philosophical traditions. Within the context of Western thought, the paper focuses on doctrines that have evolved in the attempt to address or respond to the question whether the human will is free or not. Within the Yoruba thought system, the paper examines the works of some scholars that have contributed to the discourse on the fundamental question. This paper argues that the question of whether the human will is free or not does not arise in the Yoruba philosophical system. The analytic and phenomenological approaches are adopted in this paper. The analytic approach is important to achieve the twin goal of explanation and clarity of concepts and issues; that is, the approach affords us the opportunity to engage and subject written literatures to critical exposition. The phenomenological approach is significant as an interpretative tool to interrogate oral texts that account for the notion and conception of human will in Yoruba thought system.

Keywords: Human Will, Determinism, Non-Determinism, Quasi-Determinism

INTRODUCTION

In Western intellectual tradition, the dominant discourse on the human will is whether it is free or not to perform its attributed function of initiating deliberate choice and action. In other words, discourse on the human will in Western philosophy has been a debate among thinkers in all fields that constitute body of knowledge since antiquity, and this debate is whether the will is free or not in carrying out its attributed duties.

As a result of the dominance of this discourse on the human will in Western thought, it is important to interrogate the Yoruba thought system on this issue in order to establish the dominant orientation within the culture. Thus, to achieve this aim, it is pertinent to revisit this question as it occurs in Western philosophy in order to rekindle our

knowledge of it, particularly the nitty-gritty of the discourse. However, a consideration of all the thinkers that have contributed to the discourse in one way or the other is not possible because they are too numerous to be accommodated in this paper; therefore, rather than be concern with individual philosopher's contribution to the discourse, we are concern with the fundamentals that categorized them into various doctrines on the question.

In Yoruba thought system, the question of whether the human will is free or not do not arise, however, this does not mean to say that this important question eludes the people. In fact, from our study and as we hope to demonstrate in contrast with the discourse on the question in Western philosophy, the human will in Yoruba thought is paradoxically ascribe with both free and unfree attributes. That is, response to the question in Yoruba thought takes the form that the paper identified as quasi-indeterminism. By quasi-indeterminism, it means that the human will is as free as it is unfree, as well as possessing the additional attribute of not exhibiting these traits in some circumstances while initiating decisions and actions.

THE QUESTION ON THE HUMAN WILL IN WESTERN THOUGHT

The doctrines of pre-determinism, determinism, indeterminism, and non-determinism are popular in Western intellectual discourse on the human will question. Principally, the question that each one attempts to address is whether the human will (as a constituent part of human ontology) is free or not to engage in the act of initiating deliberate choice and action. As a matter of necessity, it is important to re-invigorate this human will question in Western philosophy in order to demonstrate the claim of each doctrine.

Pre-determinism (or fatalism) – this doctrine holds that “human choice and action have no influence on future events, which will be as they will be regardless of whatever we think or do” [1]. This view of pre-determinism suggests one of two things: either that the human will as well as the decision and action to be initiated in the course of existence have been fixed from the beginning of time, or that the human will as ontologically conceived (to be a constituent immaterial make-up of human nature) is totally a misconception.

Determinism (or hard determinism) – this doctrine is of the view that “human actions and choices, without exception, are totally determined” [2]. This is a suggestion that the process of making decisions and taking actions is predictable; that is, a decision does not occur as a first cause, rather it occurs as a result of the pre-existent criteria for a specific decision to be made having been met. Concisely, this doctrine denies that we are either in control or capable of exercising our will freely.

Indeterminism (or soft-determinism) – this doctrine holds that as humans, some of our actions and decisions are functions of human free will, while some others are causally constraint. Cogently stated,

It is only in the human realm that the indeterminist wishes to press his case. Reflex actions are 100% caused, since with regard to them we are not active but passive; the only area in which universal causality does not hold is in the realm of actions, the things we do. With regard to these actions – or at any rate some of them – no one will ever be able to predict them, no matter how such physiological and psychological knowledge we get about their antecedent conditions, because the causal principle does not apply to them [3].

In this submission, it is clear that indeterminism does not argue against determinism completely, but only partially. In fact, indeterminism as shown above delineates the boundary of human actions and decisions that constitute those that can be determined apart from those that are of free will.

Non-Determinism (or freewill-ism) – this doctrine is the “belief in freewill, which amounts to the conviction that...human beings are endowed with the capacity for choice of action, for decision among alternatives, and specifically that, given an innate moral sense, man can freely discern good and evil” [4]. As it appears, the doctrine favours absolute freedom of the human will, wherein the will is not restrain in any form or capacity from initiating decision and action.

In other words, supporters of non-determinism (or the freewill-ists) affirmed the position that human decisions and actions are autonomous choices among a number of possibilities. Against this background, a fundamental tenet of this doctrine requires humans to be more aware that each and every decisions and actions taking by them are free and deliberate initiatives of their wills, rather than the results of some previous events, decisions or actions.

THE QUESTION AND SOME SCHOLARS ON YORUBA THOUGH

Articulatedly, the accounts of most scholars on Yoruba thought with regard to the question whether the human will is free or not clearly show that they are all cases of *misplaced articulations*; in other words, inherent in these accounts are many wrongs that characterized them, part of which include misapplication of terms, mis-utilization of doctrines, failure to properly appropriate conceptual equivalences in different cultures (in this case the Yoruba and Western cultures), flagrant imposition of categories of one culture unto another, and so on. Each of these wrongs or combinations of any leads any intellectual account to be categorized as a case of misplaced articulation.

A consideration of the works of some of these scholars will vindicate our claim. For a start, the article “The Yoruba Conception of Destiny: A Critical Analysis” by Ali is an important one. In the article, the primary aim of this reputable scholar was to establish that “*Ori* ... is a quasi-metaphysical entity which authenticates the uniqueness of a person in Yoruba thought” [5]; whether or not he succeeds in this set objective is not an issue for us here, but of paramount concern to us is the incorporation of Western doctrine(s) by this scholar in his analysis.

According to this scholar, he argues that, *Ori* and the idea of predestination or human destiny as one of the important tripartite elements constituting the nature of a person in Yoruba... implies the idea of causal explanatory paradigm in relation to human personality in Yoruba thought *and this* give rise to several conceptual problems such as the paradox of the alterable and unalterable destiny [6].

In the submission above, one will discover that there is a clear problem of conceptualization; first is that Ali takes *ori* in Yoruba thought to be identical with the idea of destiny as it appears in Western thought. Contrary to this view, *ori* is not identical with destiny rather it is only a bearer of destiny [7]. The second problem, which is most important in this paper, is that the scholar seems to assume one of two things: (1) that the concept of the human will eludes the Yoruba people, therefore, there is no need to demonstrate whether there is a will or not in Yoruba thought or (2) that the idea of human will is implicit in the idea of *Ori* in Yoruba thought.

As a result of conceptual problem that arise as shown above,
Ali therefore posits that,

However, I maintained that the idea of causal determinism suggested by the Yoruba notion of destiny... is not a rigid one that makes human destiny autobiographically or naturally unalterable. Rather, it is an explanatory paradigm which coheres with the reality of responsibility, freewill and the use of reasoning faculty” [8].

In line with this position, Ali clearly posits that,

I propose and defend the claim that the Yoruba are better seen as soft-determinists rather than determinists or fatalists as some scholars on African studies would want us to believe [9].

In another article titled “African Conception of Man and the Paradox of Alterable and Unalterable Destiny in Yoruba Metaphysics”, Ali posits that,

In the final analysis, it is argued that the Yoruba people, given their paradoxical notion of human destiny, are freewill-ists. They are because their conception of human destiny regards freedom as well as reason as two features which are not only immanent in the nature of man but are also basic to the survival of man and the actualization of human destiny [10].

In placing the two articles by the same author side-by-side, one obvious problem that catches any one’s attention is the claims that the Yoruba system of thought favours soft determinism (indeterminism as explicated at the beginning of this paper) in the first and freewill-ism (non-determinism) in the second. This inconsistency as regard where the Yoruba stands in respect to the question as treated in Western philosophy must have been largely due to what the scholar himself identified as the “Paradox” in Yoruba thought.

On the part of this scholar, his inconsistency started with his failure to properly identify the Yoruba equivalent of the human will. In addition to this, the scholar employs Western concepts and terms unmitigated to interrogate the Yoruba worldview that is originally characterized by paradoxes.

In particular, the scholar thought that *ori* is or embodies the human will. In fact, the scholar holds this idea and thinks that it is not necessary to actually investigate whether the Yoruba have any conception of human will separate from *ori* or as a constituent attribute of *ori* itself. Without any iota of ambiguity, we can see clearly why the contribution of this scholar, operating from a Yoruba perspective, cannot but be regarded as misplaced articulation having contributed to the question on whether the will is free or not.

The articles of Balogun are also of utmost interest to our present exercise. The first is titled “The Concept of *Ori* and Human Destiny in Traditional Yoruba Thought: A Soft Deterministic Interpretation” and the second is titled “*Ori* as the Sole Determinant of Human Personality in Traditional Yoruba African Thought”.

In the first article, the author’s principal concern and aim was “to establish and strengthen the argument that the Yoruba are soft-determinists in their understanding of and belief in, the concept of *ori* and human destiny” [11]. How far he achieved this aim may not be as important as the arsenal of Western categories he deploys to interrogate the Yoruba thought on issues of *ori* rather than the human will.

At the outset, the scholar appears he was going to demarcate the boundary between discourse on the human will and that of *ori* in Yoruba thought when he supposes that “*ori* which is of immediate concern to us in this paper, represents the individuality element in a person” [12]. This sounds very much like an attempt to delineate between *ori* and the human

will in Yoruba thought, and this continue to be the case that he even got to a point that he asserts that “*ori* has nothing to do with moral character, and as such it does not affect all of human actions and/or inactions, in fact, nowhere in any of the ancient Yoruba scriptures is there the claim that moral character can be pre-determined by *ori*” [13]. Without any further articulation, this goes to show that the author is at the point of separating issues of *ori* from that of the human will in order to appropriately employ the Western categories of fatalism, determinism, hard-determinism, soft-determinism, and freewill.

However, it is not the case that he actually did what was expected in subsequent paragraphs and pages of the paper, instead he fashions the rest of the article in a manner to also fall into the pit of the evil that we have called misplaced articulation. This misplacement begins to rear its head when the author submits that “the Yoruba posit the concept of *afowofa*...as explanation for some of the problems that befall a person” [14].

Whatever he meant to say here, we must acknowledge that it is true of the Yoruba people to talk about *afowofa* (self-caused); but the author himself fails to realize that *afowofa* do not just happen and more so it is a descriptive word to capture the consequence(s) (particularly negative) of one’s deliberate decision and action initiated by one’s human will. That is, without the human will which initiates action and decision in a person, any discourse on *afowofa* among the Yoruba people will not arise, this is because the concept of *afowofa* is an indication that a person’s will must have led the person to a situation or condition that is described as *afowofa* by the Yoruba people.

Furthermore and most importantly, the author posits that,

The Yoruba traces the course of some events to the individual person who performs the action and not any supernatural force outside of man. Such actions are located in the realm of natural and are empirically observable. It is for this reason that people are punished for wrongdoing because they are believed to be responsible for their actions. This then suggests that in the analysis of the concepts of *ori* or destiny, the Yoruba falls within the gamut of what is called ‘soft-determinism’ in metaphysical terms. The nature of *ori* and human destiny in Yoruba belief is neither fatalism in the strict sense of it, nor hard determinism. The Yoruba conception of human destiny is indeed soft-deterministic in nature [15].

Glaringly, this submission shows that the author himself qualifies the entire contents of his article as misplaced articulation. The first thing we should observe from the above is that in the thinking of this scholar, just like in the thinking of the scholar we considered first, the Yoruba concept of *ori* is synonymous with the Yoruba conception of the human will. Here, we think this is what is largely responsible for the misuse and misappropriation of Western notions (or metaphysical terms as he calls them) of determinism, fatalism, soft-determinism and so on.

Although, outside this glaring fact of misconception about *ori* and the human will, one would have expected this scholar to be conscious of how these Western categories should apply; in other words, the way the scholar sets out to achieve his aim, not minding the title of the paper, one should have expected that he should be aware that discourse on any of the Western terms of determinism, indeterminism, soft-determinism, hard-determinism, and fatalism in relation to human species is a discourse on the human will.

We now turn to the second article by Balogun, because it “is a follow up” [16] to the first. And in this article, his thesis is to defend the position that “it is the combinations of the functions of “*ori*”, “*okan*” and “*ese*” that jointly determine and constitute human personality in Yoruba thought” [17].

In the course of the article and in spite of stumbling on Kola Abimbola’s submission that “discussing ‘*ori*’ (Inner head) in relation to moral responsibility and autonomy as some scholars have done is misplaced” [18]. Having stumbled on this assertion, Balogun would have retraced his steps from further misplaced articulations. That is, the assertion by Abimbola quoted by Balogun as stated above is a clear and enough pointer to demonstrate that discourse on determinism, indeterminism and the likes in relation to *ori* instead of the human will in Yoruba cultural belief is misplaced.

In sum, it is important to be emphatic that the works of the two scholars that have been considered here (and others not considered) on the issue of whether the human will is free or not in Yoruba thought, vis-à-vis the Western categories of determinism, indeterminism and so on, are so classified to be misplaced on the following grounds:

1. None of them demonstrate to have a clear understanding of the Yoruba conception of the human will.
2. No one among them thinks of dichotomizing, or that there is a dichotomy, between *ori* and the human will in Yoruba thought system.
3. By extension, all of them confuse the ontological nature, status, and function of *ori* and the human will as synonymous.
4. Each one mis-utilized Western terminologies to interrogate an important concept in Yoruba thought; they also imposed these terminologies in their exploration of Yoruba thought on the human will question.

On this note, the totality of their explorations take the direction that is worthy of the label *mis-placed articulations*. We shall move to the next business where we do an investigative and interpretative articulation of the Yoruba traditional worldview concerning the question whether the human will is free or not in the proper performance of its function of initiating deliberate decisions and actions in the human person.

YORUBA INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AND THE QUESTION

Somewhere above, we have shown that the word *afowofa* (self-caused) is descriptive in the sense that it is employed in Yoruba estimation to convey the negative consequences of choices arising from any individual’s human will. This simply indicates that Yoruba thought system favours the position that the human will is absolutely free, which is non-determinism in Western philosophy. This is evident among the Yoruba with proverbs like:

Boti wu oloju ni i se oju e, translates as One handles one’s eyes as one so desires and

A kii pe ki omode ma d’ete, b’oba ti le da igbo gbe translates as No one should stop a child from having leprosy, such child only need to be ready to reside in the forest

These proverbs clearly advocates the Yoruba belief in non-determinism because each reveals the exercise of freewill by individuals; in fact, the second proverb clearly enjoins one to exercise one’s freewill with readiness to take responsibility for the consequence(s) of one’s actions and decisions. If the consequence(s) of one’s actions/decisions turn out to have negative effect on one, this is where the idea of *afowofa* is used to describe such effect on one.

Further supporting the view that the Yoruba belief on the human will question is non-determinism, the *odu ifa Obara ofun* [19] gives credence to this in its rendition that,

Ahere oko a b'idi jeere jeere
Agbalagba ejo ni i fi idobale ara re wo'le
D'ifa fun Babalawo meta
A bu fun Olumoran mefa
Nje ta ni agba
Imoran ni a nko da, ki a to da Ifa

Translate in English as

The hut in the farm with a big buttock
Old snake debases itself crawling
Divined for three Babalawos
Divined for six clairvoyants
The day they staged a superiority contest in Ile Ife
Who is superior?
Ifa is superior
Decision must be made first before one consults Ifa

The above *odu* is a clear demonstration that the Yoruba thought system on the question is better classified as non-determinism, especially considering the last line of the *odu* which states that *decision must be made first* before one consults ifa.

However, there are evidences that suggest that the thought system of Yoruba tradition also favours any one of pre-determinism, determinism, and indeterminism, that is, evidences abound in Yoruba worldview that present the people's thought on the freedom/unfreedom of the human will as favouring any of the other doctrines in the discourse on the human will question in Western philosophy.

As pre-determinism, Yoruba thought supports this doctrine whenever the human will is regarded as a constituent make up of a person which initiates decisions and actions that have been fixed in the pre-existent life of a person. In this connection, a person's will acts the scripts that have been written for an individual in the pre-existent world, in this sense, whatever decision and action initiated by the human will, the outcome will always be what has been written. As evidence, it is common among the people to hear proverbs like:

Riro ni ti eniyan, Sise ni t'olorun translates as A person ponders and thinks,
but the almighty acts accordingly

And

Bi a gun ata l'odo, Bi a gun ata l'olo, Iwa ata ko pada translates as If pepper is
grinded in the mortar or on the grinding stone, none changes the nature of the
pepper.

In these proverbs, we can see that the message convey in each postulates that what will be will be, no matter how hard we endeavour to change the situation. In clear terms, the first proverb strongly admonishes that one's existence is designed to be lived according to the dictates of the designer – the Supreme Being.

In addition to the above, the *odu ifa Ika oturupon* [20] reveals support for pre-determinism in Yoruba belief in its rendition that

Ka sangbo sansan bi aladaa
D'ifa fun ajinife omo Olofin
Ka rin hoocho bi eledun
D'ifa fun Sadoyanyan omobinrin Ode Owu

Tori ki won ma ba a ji mi fe
Mo fi ide werewere se eke ile
Tori ki won ma ba a ji mi fe
Mo fi ide gbaragada se ase ilekun
Won tun wa ji mi fe bee be...

Translate in English as

To clear the land fast
Divined for Ajinife who was Olofin's son
To walk about naked like an axe
Divined for Sadoyanyan, a female citizen of Owu town
To prevent being made love to without my consent
I bolted my doors with studded brass
To prevent being made love to without my consent
I bolted my doors with large studded brass
In spite of those precautions, I was still made love to

In this *odu*, we can see that all efforts to prevent a situation from happening do not change anything, what is design to happen actually happened.

As indeterminism – the doctrine that the human will initiates some decisions and actions freely while some of its decisions and actions are caused. Yoruba belief also gives support to this doctrine. For instance, the following proverbs articulate indeterminism in Yoruba thought:

Ti a ba wo didun ifon, a o wo r'a d'egun, translates as If we are to consider the sweetness of scratching the skin, we shall have to scratch to the bone.

And

Lehin oku la a je akara itufo, translates as we consume burial's bean-cake only after the death of someone

Clearly indicative in the proverbs above is that individuals are free to act as desired, but that there are factors that limit the exercise of individuals' freedom to act. As a point of clarification, the first proverb indicates that there is a limit to our freedom while the second additionally conveys the message that it is not in our purview to take decisions or actions in some situations.

Furthermore, the *odu ifa Ofun Nogbe* [21] clearly reveals that the Yoruba thought supports indeterminism. This is so because the *odu* shows that at some points in time in this material world, individual will initiates decisions and actions that are caused and at some other points it explores the freedom associated with it. According to this *odu*,

Ti a ba wi fun ni
Ti a ba gbo
Aye a ma a ye ni
Ti a ba wi fun n
Ti a ba gba
Aye a ma a ye ni
Awi igbo
Afo igba
Babalawo ode lo se ifa fun ode
Ode nre gbo ije, eluju ije
Won ni k'oru bo
Ki o le r'ere mu bo

Ki o ma mu oti
Keke-l'ọju omo ode Egba
Alabaja l'orun omo ode Esa
Porogun matuyeri omo odo oluweri
Oni jaye nre le ijaye
Orogun ile f'awo mi lo mi

Translate in English as

When one is warned
And one listens and accepts the warning
Life will be easy and comfortable for one
When one is warned
And one respects and obeys the warning
Life will be easy and comfortable for one
Refusal to listen
Refusal to heed warning
Ode's *Babalawo* gave him a fixed *ifa* medicine
When ode was going to the forest for his usual seven days hunting expedition
He was advised to make sacrifice
So that he would be blessed from the expedition
He was forbidden liquor
Tribal-marks-on-the-face, citizen of Egba
Tribal-marks-on-the-neck, citizen of Ijesa
Porogun matuyeri child of river goddess
Ijaye citizen is going back to Ijaye
Senior wife revealed the secret of my true identity

In support of determinism – the view that all our actions and decisions are the results of previous knowable causes, Yoruba belief also demonstrates support for this with proverbs like,

Aiku ekiri, a o ko le fi awo re se gbedu, translates as Without the death of Ekiri (a kind of animal), no one uses its' skin to construct the gbedu (a kind of drum)

And

Adaniloru f'agbara ko ni, translates as The wickedness suffered by someone make one a stronger person

These proverbs advance the message that individuals' conducts and decisions derive from determinable causes. This is especially so in the case of the second proverb because it is impregnated with the idea that the effect of been strong results from the cause of the wickedness that one suffers in the hands of others. Also in support of this view, the *odu ifa Ogunda irete* [22] speaks thus,

Kukunduku a b'ewe gerugeru
Opo oogun a gun' mo galegale
Bi o ba l'opo oogun, bi o ba l'eke
Eke o ni je o je
Inuire je ju ewe lo
D'ifa fun Ooni Alanak'esuu
Eyi ti ko gbudo ko ohun ifa sile

Translate in English as

Sweet potato with fresh leaves
Possession and knowledge of too many charms and spells intoxicate
If you have potent charms and spells and you are dishonest
Your dishonesty will render the charms and spells impotent
Honesty and goodwill work better than charms and spells
Divined for the king Ooni Alanak'esuu
Who must follow ifa's advice and injunctions.

We can see that the Yoruba thought is so rich that it also gives support to determinism as a metaphysical doctrine in the human will question. On this note, we may go on and on providing evidences in Yoruba thought that support any of these doctrines in Western philosophy on the question whether the human will is free or not; and this may lead any onlooker to conclude that the cultural thought of the people on the issue is inconsistent.

We must point out that it is not a crime if a cultural intellectual tradition is embedded with evidences and supports for multiple doctrines to an issue. The idea of personhood (see Makinde [23], Akintola [24], Oladipo [25], Awolalu & Dopamu [26], Abimbola [27], Idowu [28], and others) in Yoruba thought has a useful purpose to serve in this sense: the conception as well as freeness/unfreeness of the human will in Yoruba thought remains salient and paradoxical in this worldview.

The above observation notwithstanding, there are evidences in Yoruba thought that give credence to all the known doctrines in Western philosophy and; in spite of the fact that initiation of decisions and actions in individuals remains a paradox both in the pre-existent and physical existence of a person, the Yoruba position to the question can best be describe as quasi-indeterminism.

By quasi-indeterminism, this paper is saying that the Yoruba belief argues neither for nor against the (im)possibility of a free/unfree human will, in other words, the Yoruba belief is particularly devoid of this question. This contention is explicitly established by the Yoruba expression that *Aditu laiye* meaning life is paradoxical (or is a paradox).

The paradoxes of life, as held in Yoruba thought, explains the intermittent shifts of the Yoruba position on the question on whether the human will is free or not or neither. These alternatives on the question of the human will in the material world (even in the pre-existent life of man) cannot be found combinable in any of the available doctrines in Western philosophy. Therefore, by quasi-indeterminism, it means that the elements of freeness and unfreeness as well as neither characterized the human will question in Yoruba thought.

CONCLUSION

We have examined the human will question as it exists in Western philosophy by demonstrating the various metaphysical doctrines that characterized the discourse. We specifically articulated that the human will question in Western intellectual tradition constitutes four main doctrines of pre-determinism (or fatalism), determinism (or hard determinism), indeterminism (or soft determinism), and non-determinism (or freewill-ism).

In the paper, we demonstrated that some of the known contributions to the discourse on the question from the Yoruba perspective are misleading. These contributions are misleading because the scholars that attempted to render the Yoruba belief on the question carry out the exercise by mis-equating the human will with *ori* in Yoruba thought.

In this connection, we are able to show that the idea of the human will is not elusive in Yoruba thought, therefore, *ori* is not in any way the Yoruba equivalent of the human will

(see Shitta-Bey [29] for the Yoruba equivalent and conception of the human will). In sum, the paper showed that the Yoruba belief on the human will question cannot be pinned down to any of the known metaphysical doctrines in Western philosophy, rather the Yoruba belief on the question is best categorized as quasi-indeterminism.

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