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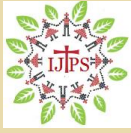
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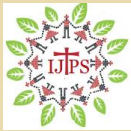
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## Preface

The 4-th issue of *International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science* (May 2019) presents scientific and theoretical articles on various aspects, all of them centred on the area of Philosophy, Theology, and Science.

Thus, first paper: *THE PREMISES OF A PUBLIC DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION* by Prof. Ph.D. Florea ȘTEFAN explore the dialogue between science and religion. From the very beginning, the man was fascinated by everything that surrounds him, asking questions, looking for answers and explanations. The next work is *AN UNIVERSAL BASIS FOR RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY* and it belongs to Prof. Ph.D. Michael E. BYRNE. The article discusses a new theory — that the dimensions of space and time are accompanied by a non-dimensional expanse, primordial void or zero-dimension. After that, the paper entitled: *THE FREE WILL DEFENSE REVISITED: THE INSTRUMENTAL VALUE OF SIGNIFICANT FREE WILL*, written by Frederick CHOO, Esther GOH presents the logical problem of evil by appealing to the intrinsic value of significant free will, formulated of Alvin Plantinga. A second study, by Alexander KOKOBILL, presented the issue: *AN APPROACH TO JOHN WITTE ON THE REFORMATION OF RIGHTS AND RELIGION*. This study focuses on the insight of Professor John Witte Jr., (b. 1959) in relation to human rights and religion. The paper of Helena FISHER, intitules *IS IT COHERENT TO CONCEIVE OF GOD AS A FREE, PERSONAL AGENT THAT HUMANITY CAN FREELY INTERACT WITH?* explores if the relationship between God and humanity is one of free inter-personal relations. The concept of person implies freedom of nature; the person is free from any determination.

Marin BUGIULESCU signs the subsequent article: *ONTOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS. BEING AND PERSON - GOD AND MAN*. In this paper, the central idea of Christian thinking has always been the man seen as a religious, rational, free and conscious being. Man representing openness to Being (*Dasein*), to Absolute. The following academic pursue is that of Ramona Nicoleta ARIEȘAN, entitled: *BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND REALITY*. In this actual article, the author purpose to show the general importance of the fundamental knowledge about humanity, about what makes us human beings, about how reality interconnects with our dreams and desires. *PUBLIC SPHERE AS 'ULTIMUM REFUGIUM' THE PHILOSOPHICAL, POLITICAL AND ETHICAL THEORY OF HANNAH ARENDT* is the article presented by Spiros MAKRIS. Authors explore and analyze the vision of Hannah Arendt's ontological, political and ethical theory about refugee as a conscious pariah. Hannah Arendt's philosophical thought on homeless and stateless people is by definition the "locus classicus" of contemporary 'Refugee Studies'. *MYSTICAL UNION IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM* is the final article of issue presented by Alexandru-Corneliu ARION. The author presents the so-often discussed problem of the core of religions, of what seems to link them rather than to separate them.

The nowadays and scientific content presented in the issue No. 4 of *International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science* distinguishes the opportunity to examine the altogether truth-claims found in Theology, Philosophy, and Science, as well as the methods laid out by every discipline and the meanings derived from them. This is both the aim and the scientific mission of our International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science.

May 2019

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## THE PREMISES OF A PUBLIC DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

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### ABSTRACT

*The dialogue between science and religion has always existed. Since it existed, the man was fascinated by everything surrounding him, asking questions, looking for answers, explanations. He wondered why it is what he sees, what he feels, but also what meaning he has to be, which is the purpose for which those are seen. As he understood something, the number of his questions grew, they deepened. There are peoples where the history of knowledge, material and spiritual, has a long tradition. The history of knowledge is part of the heritage of universal history. There are peoples in whom this knowledge has experienced an upward or just sinuous evolution. But with the progress of understanding the world, along with the evolution of science itself, there has also been a breakthrough in human quest for the search for meaning. And it is natural that the scientific explosion of the last decades of the millennium, which has just ended, leads to the intensification of the dialogue between science and religion.*

**Keywords:** dialog; religion; science; human; faith; Revelation; knowledge; technique;

### INTRODUCTION

From a Christian perspective, faith is the trust given to a divine person, starting from a set of testimonies, forming the Revelation. It is a grace that is required to be received in all liberty. It introduces itself to a reality that goes beyond our purely empirical or rational investigative possibilities. The content of this Revelation, to which it is trusted, makes place for faith<sup>1</sup>. The role of theology is to make this faith clear and coherent. By its method, it uses all the resources of human sciences. His effort of conceptualization hits boundaries, due to the nature of his essential object: the divine reality. This will never be left behind in concepts, which will have no analogical meaning. Divine reality is mystery.

The mystery is not an enigma, that is, something temporarily unknown, waiting for eventual progress in knowledge. In the Christian sense, the mystery is not a misunderstanding, but it will never be constrained by reason. It can only lead us to the threshold of mystery, which remains inexhaustible. “*Mystery is the object upon which we will ever end to reflect, in front of him, we are not condemned to silence, but our words are nothing but stammering*”<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Pr. prof. dr. Ion BRIA, *Credința pe care o mărturisim*, IBMBOR, București, 1987, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Max PLANCK, *Despre relațiile dintre știință și religie*, în *Știință și credință, XXI Eonul Dogmatic*, București, 2002, p. 113.



Conditional by a scientific mentality, many of our contemporaries will not be tempted to admit even the notion of mystery. This refusal, one of the characteristics of modernity, meets the refusal of our limits. But there is also a philosophical or metaphysical belief that allows us to come to terms with a certain idea of God, "understood as the principle and cause of all that exists" (Thomas de Aquino). What are the relationships between this "God of the Philosophers" and "Christian God"? *Who does not recall the famous Pascal thought, which opposes the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who is also Jesus Christ, the God of "philosophers and scholars"? Heidegger ironizes him, in turn, on this God of philosophers, in front of whom you cannot "fall on your knees, sing either instruments or voice or dance."*<sup>3</sup> The God built by metaphysics has too often been described as a little restless, impassioned God, patronizing the world's misfortune in an olympic serenity. Origen, since the third century, has dared to question this impasse: *"The Father himself is not impassable ... he suffers a passionate love"*<sup>4</sup>, In the fourth century, St. Gregory of Nyssa denounced the danger of a concept of God "who, claiming to attain the divine nature, merely shapes an idol," God can only be known to the extent that he leaves himself known by the Revelation. It is precisely the reason why the Christian God cannot simply be identified with the God of metaphysics. And here we have to make distinction, without separating and uniting without confusion.

The science itself is based on beliefs, which are the subject of a consensus of the scientific community. The truths it reaches are only partial truths, within a field of well-defined reality. It produces models that never identify with the empirical reality in question. When science reflects on its practice, it can only establish its limits.

Especially aimed at action, it has nevertheless revealed the extraordinary internal dynamism, an energy that gives rise to increasingly complex structures and culminates in the brain and the human spirit. Science, at least in part, describes this evolution, but Science is incapable of giving meaning to the essential questions that humanity always puts on: what are we? Where do we come from? Where do we go?

Similarly, science proves incapable of establishing an ethics.<sup>5</sup> Man, in search for landmarks and balance, is called upon to make in himself the synthesis between different beliefs: scientific, philosophical, ethical and religious. This synthesis is a true multidimensional culture. Its scientific component will enable it to escape scientism as well as irrationalism of poor quality (astrology, esoterism, etc.). It is also certain that a good scientific culture will force him to purify some faithful representations. The philosophical component will make it put to its great existential problems. A true religious culture will direct it to the essence of Christian Revelation, which presents a personal God who does not love humanity in general, but every man in particular, reserving for each one an extraordinary destiny.<sup>6</sup>

It is not time to remove the walls of misunderstanding and mistrust that have arisen between our various cultures, each preserving its specificity. But accepting the dialogue with all the others? True dialogue is not an overlap of monologues; it is inseparably linked to extraordinary attention to the views and intuitions of the other.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 115

<sup>4</sup> ORIGEN apud Ioan G. COMAN, *Patrologia*, Edit. *România creștină*, București, 1999, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Nicolae MLADIN. *Manual de Teologie Morală*, Sibiu, 1944, p. 121

<sup>6</sup> Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru POPESCU, *Hristos, Biserică, Societate*, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., București, 1998, p. 120



## 1. RELATIONS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION - THE PREMISES OF A RESPONSIBLE DIALOGUE

When we hear the words science and religion, we immediately think of the tumultuous history of the relationship between them. But the chronicle of meeting religion with science is not just a conflict. There are at least four distinct types of relationships between science and religion:

- 1) Conflict - the belief that science and religion are fundamentally irreconcilable;
- 2) Contrast - the view that there is no real conflict between the two, religion and science answering each question totally different;
- 3) Contact - an approach that seeks dialogue, interaction and possible consonance between science and religion, and especially the ways in which science can shape religious and theological understanding;
- 4) Confirmation - a slightly more peaceful but extremely important perspective, which clarifies the ways in which religion fully supports and feeds the entire scientific activity.

The delimitation we have made between the four distinct positions of science and religion is of value only if we serve as a starting point for a true dialogue. The process I'm talking about begins with the combination, the undifferentiated mixing of aspects of religion with some scientific ideas, superficially understood. Unless there was such an original confusion of religion with themes that eventually became the exclusive field of science, it is possible that the red flag of the conflict has never been raised. Thus, even if we regard the approach of the conflict as badly guided, we can still appreciate it as an important, perhaps even inevitable, step in the long journey towards a richer understanding. However, as the process continues to take place, the conflict approach, which firmly opposes the science of religion, seems too extreme, and therefore often claims the more temperate response of the contrast.<sup>7</sup> The contrast allows us to separate the science of religion without being compelled to regard them as adversaries. It drives them into "so many" games so that combinations and conflicts are no longer possible. We must be particularly grateful for clarification, indeed, for some of us, the way of combining, through conflict, to conversation, must go through the logically precise compartments that are set by contrast. But many are not content to stay attached to the safety of the contrast. The original dream of a unity of knowledge, our irresistible desire for consistency is not easily lost. Schemed for the first time in naive combination, the passion for synthesis reappears in the third approach (contact), and calling us back from the edge of dualism. After going through conflict and contrast, the path to true conversation must not return to unity without differences. So, contact seeks the relationship, but only on the other side of conflict-induced distinctions and enhanced by contrast.

The fundamental unity of science and religion is anticipated in the most explicit way in the approach we have called a confirmation. This fourth way suggests that science and religion, although different, have a common origin, located in the distant and mysterious source of the human desire for knowledge. Both science and religion ultimately derive from the same "radical" love for truth, which is at the heart of our existence.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, because of their common origin, consisting of this fundamental concern for the truth, we can

<sup>7</sup> Pr. Dr. Constantin COMAN, *Ortodoxia sub presiunea istoriei*, Edit. Bizantină, București, 1995, p. 33

<sup>8</sup> John F. HAUGHT., *Știință și religie - de la conflict la dialog*, trad. de Doina Ionescu, Edit. XXI Eonul Dogmatic, București, 2002, p. 71.



not afford to walk in separate ways.<sup>9</sup> The presence of the Faculty of Theology in the State Universities and the Theological Seminaries in the State Educational Network of Romania is an obvious opportunity and necessity for the dialogue between science and religion in Romania where, for over 40 years, until 1990 the official education The state was based on the conflict between science and religion, while the population of the country remained, despite the state's atheist official ideology, an eminently religious population.

How does the Romanian teacher, student, or pupil reconcile his faith in the world with scientific theories about the world if they are based on conflict or science-religion exclusivity? By a silent resignation to insurmountable contradiction? Through an attitude of agnosticism or spiritual nihilism? By replacing the passion for truth with an apathy of the thirst for knowledge? Souls and living consciences are not content with these solutions, but they make the search the proof of their own growth. That is why both the passion for scientific research and the passion for deepening religious spiritual life are necessary for a fruitful and mutually enriching dialogue, from which the joy of complementarity and the sense of co-responsibility can give birth.

The ecclesial Orthodox tradition, based on the patristic theological synthesis, is a solid support for a contemporary dialogue between science and religion, because the holy Fathers of the Church have used expressions and knowledge in the sciences of their time to interpret the revealed truths for the benefit of life and salvation, as the truths of the communion of life and love of God the Creator with His creation. An eloquent example in this regard is St. Basil the Great, through his Commentary on Hexaimeron. *"The Truth is God Himself. In this sense, revelation-based theology analyzes God and His works outside of His Being, but also all His works and beings created by Him as they stand in relation to God the Creator, the Provident and the Savior. So in this aspect as in philosophy, any natural or human phenomenon in this world can be analyzed from the theological perspective. Anything or phenomenon can become the subject of Christian theology: the world, nature, the environment, science, man himself, creation etc."*<sup>10</sup>

Of course, today's theologians need not only to repeat the Holy Fathers, but in spiritual communion with them, to do for our time what they have done for their time: to have an attitude of respect and to receive discernment of the results of knowledge human-based research.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the Holy Fathers did not confuse science with faith, nor did they substitute the ancient philosophy or human sciences of their time for divine biblical Revelation, teaching that the excessive rationalization of the mystery of existence leads to the reductionism that hinders true knowledge.

Their logical and systematic thinking is always combined with an antinomic and apophatic thought, open to mystery, as an inexhaustible fullness of knowledge. The quantum mechanics of non-determinism and the theory of space and time relativity make the scientific description of the universe today a probabilistic description in which it is possible to act God without prejudice to scientific legality<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> † Anastasios YANNOULATOS, Arhiepiscop al Tiranei și Primat al întregii Albanii, *Ortodoxia și problemele lumii contemporane*, Edit. Bizantină, București, 2003, p. 211

<sup>10</sup> Prof. Marin BUGIULESCU, *Philosophy and Theology. Science and Knowledge, Truth and Life*, International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science Number 1, Year I, May-November 2017, p. 6

<sup>11</sup> Pr. Prof. Dumitru POPESCU, *Teologie și cultură*, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., București, 1993, p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> I.P.S. Daniel CIOBOTEA, *Necesitatea dialogului între știință și religie astăzi*, în *Știință și religie – antagonism sau complementaritate, XXI Eonul Dogmatic*, București, 2002, p. 24.





## 2. THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Science, based on research and analysis, reveals the structure of the universe, while faith, based on the Divine Revelation, reveals the ultimate meaning and purpose of the universe. When science discovers the structure of the universe, it is possible to establish a relationship between the human intelligence and the intelligibility of the structure of the universe and the laws governing it, which can lead to the understanding that the structure of the universe is the result of an Intelligence that made the universe, while faith is the spiritual capacity to see the Unseen One (Hebrews 11: 27) beyond the physical world's visibility.<sup>13</sup>

The structure of the universe that science discovers can be interpreted by the way of repetition and the combination of its basic elements as multiple languages. Faith is the view of this language imprinted in the universe by the Creator: "The heavens say the glory of God, and the making of His hands proclaims the strength (firmament)" (Psalm 18: 1).

The structure of the universe as a non-verbal and complex information language, which science can observe, can strengthen faith as a view of the unseen and understanding of the existence of transcendent creative Intelligence: "God's invisible things are seen from the world, understanding of the beings, that is, his eternal power and godliness "(Romans 1:20).

Dialogue between Science and Faith as an effort to discern in the universe the value of the communion between uncreated intelligence and intelligence created.

The active human rationality in scientific research, which discovers the rationality of the universe in its structure and the laws governing it, maintaining its dynamic identity in expansion, can be interpreted in dialogue with faith as the reflex and gift of divine Reason and as a way to , in order for a communion of multiple and inexhaustible love in its novelty, which does not abolish reason, but trans-sciences that, from the power of search and encompassment, it becomes a capacity of sharing from the reciprocal interior between Creator and creation.

Science discovers the age and aging of the universe, but it does not rule out the probability of its new future, while faith anticipates the gift promised by the Creator: "Heaven and the new earth" (Revelation 21: 1), which may confirm that the relativity of space and time is preparing the passage and transfiguration of the current mode of existence into a new one, in which full science will be identified with holiness!<sup>14</sup> In this sense, in the near future, only a mystical and sacramental theology can carry a profound and fertile dialogue with a science that becomes more and more open to the relationship between perhaps and mystery.<sup>15</sup>

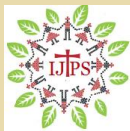
Thus, the mystery, approached suddenly by science and faith, could be perceived, antinomically and fascinatingly, as the inevitable basis of true knowledge, precisely because this knowledge is not confused with the certainty of self-sufficiency, since the seeker / researcher himself belongs of mystery, it is its interior, not its exterior.

The dialogue between Science and Faith will strengthen co-responsibility and love for creation. If the dialogue will facilitate a deeper understanding of the world as the cognitive language of communion, to be deciphered by science and holiness, and as a gift-sacrament or meeting place between uncreated love and loving beings created, it will be better understood what is deforming the surrounding nature and man, and what transfigures and gives full life to nature and man. In other words, the dialogue will facilitate a deeper understanding of the relationship between the current ecological crisis, the environment and

<sup>13</sup> † Anastasios YANNOULATOS, *op.cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>14</sup> Ilarion FELEA, *Religia culturii*, Edit. *Episcopiei ortodoxe române a Aradului*, București, 1994, p. 175.

<sup>15</sup> † Antonie PLĂMĂDEALĂ, *Biserica în mers*, vol 2, Edit. Mitropoliei, Sibiu, 1999, p. 33.



the spiritual crisis of human interiority, because the spiritual inner person's inspiration inspires its external behavior. An authentic dialogue between Science and Religion can be a chance to love God the Creator, the man created in the image of the Creator and the whole nature – as a multiplier of the Creator for the intelligent and loving beings capable of Multiple and New Dialogue with Him.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. RELIGION - AND SCIENCE: DISTINCT, BUT COMPLEMENT

Religion is the direct and cultivated relationship of man with God-the Creator of the world, and culture is the way man (people and peoples) understands and uses the world created by God; culture is the whole of man-made relationships in his contact with the surrounding existence: from the way man cultivates the earth and studies the stars, to the way he cultivates friendship and poetry.

Through science, man expresses both his way of life in this world and his belief and understanding of life and his role in the world. In its normal state, as the Creator wants, the whole existence or activity of man is somewhat cultic, religious, as it takes place in the presence and creation of God. Man was created in the image of God (cf. Genesis 1: 26) to represent and glorify the God-Creator on earth by what he does in this world. But sin as the weakening or breaking of man's living bond with God-Creator makes man no longer perceive the spiritual presence of the Creator in the world. As such, the world of people is no longer for the man and the world of God, and science loses in its consciousness its dimension to cultivate the recognition and exalting of the creative gifts the Creator has planted in men that through them can be cultivated communion life and love with God and the whole.

A theological analysis of the history of humanity shows that when weak people's faith in God-Creator, their culture is filled with idols or false gods.<sup>17</sup> Religion as the relationship of man with God-Creator, distinct from the world but not absent from it, helps man to maintain both his consciousness of free and superior being in relation to the other creatures, and consciousness of being responsible to the Creator, of God.

Because through Religion man cultivates the relationship with God-Creator, religious cult is the essential form of soul culture. That is why "the soul of culture is the culture of the soul".<sup>18</sup> In the last analysis, cult, as an expression of faith in God, is a state and a work of acknowledgment and gratitude of man to God-his Creator and to the whole world, and culture is, in its most authentic form, the celebration of existence active of man in the world created by God and in dialogue with it. And because God cannot be understood without the world and the world without God, faith needs culture and culture needs faith. So, Religion and Culture are not two parallel entities, but they, though distinct, intertwine and contain each other. Culture gives fertile soil to faith, and faith creates the perenniality of culture as a liturgy of the history of a people, committed in becoming and persevering in the glory of God - the Lord of History and the Lover of Men.

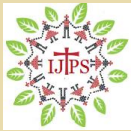
### 4. DIFFERENT ATTITUDES TO SCIENCE

Modern science has become a social reality of the first magnitude, both through civilization, whose production has an important contribution, and by the mentalities it

<sup>16</sup> Pr. Lect. Univ. Dr. Mihai HINCINSCHI, *Misiune și Dialog: ontologia misionară a Bisericii din perspectiva dialogului religios*, Edit. Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2004, p. 89

<sup>17</sup> Daniel CIOBOTEA, *Dăruire și dănuire*, Trinitas, Iași, 2005, p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 39



shapes. Scientific research has a twofold aspect: science, pure and pure, which teaches the laws and constructs the theories, and applied science, which deals with technological achievements. The public tends to confuse the two aspects. It is true that science and technology live in symbiosis and support each other. We plan to examine the attitudes of our contemporaries to this great phenomenon of society, which became science. These attitudes go from infinite enthusiasm to explicit hostility.<sup>19</sup>

Science has become the dominant knowledge. Contrary to a widespread view, scientism, which characterized the 19th century, has not disappeared. The scientific ideology is maintained, but in a somewhat subtle form. Pierre Thuillier summed up this ideology in three postulates or "articles of faith"<sup>20</sup>:

- science is the only authentic knowledge, so the best of knowledge;
- science is capable of answering all theoretical problems, is capable of solving all practical problems, provided that they are formulated in rational terms;
- it is legitimate and desirable to be entrusted to scientific experts to care for all human problems, whether politics, economy, morality etc.<sup>21</sup>

These postulates are rarely explicitly stated, everything happens as if they were by themselves. It is preferable only to mention the slogans, such as "science in the service of man, progress and freedom", which flourish in official speeches. Scientism circulates an image of science that we might qualify as mythical. It would appear as a kingdom of certainties, pure rationality; her successes plead for her infallibility; it has freed us from our old religious and moral prejudices and strikes in a divine innocence. It is surprising that scientist ideology finds its defense, not just those who ignore everything from the proper functioning of scientific research, but even among eminent scientists. Jacques Monod, the Nobel Prize for Biology, has become the promoter of a knowledge ethic in search of scientific milestones capable of allowing us to decide what is right and what is bad.

## CONCLUSION

Science does not only inspire enthusiasm or fear, but also a strange fascination for many. This gave rise to the theory of concordance, which states that there should be a perfect agreement between the Bible's and the science's statements. In a broader sense, concordism is an attempt to want to confirm religious truths based on scientific truths. This kind of concordism is very old; the blessed Augustine did not hesitate to support his thoughts on the soul through "demonstrations" taken from geometry. Other authors assimilated the six "days" of biblical creation with subsequent geological periods. The big bang theory has been interpreted by some as a decisive confirmation of the idea of creation. Historian Pierre Chaunu has stated in several papers the concordance between Big Bang and Fiat Lux in the Bible. Astrophysicist Trinh Xuan Thuan notes that "*the idea of the birth ex nihilo, which still belonged to religion yesterday, seems to have found today a scientific support in cosmology*".<sup>22</sup> It can only be a false resemblance, because the quantum vision has nothing to do with the biblical «nihil». In a recent work, Jean Guittou states: "There is no evidence now - God is not in the order of demonstration - but a scientific support point for the conception of religion." In the preface of his book, we read: "Is not God now, sensible, observable, and

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 51

<sup>20</sup> Pierre THUILLIER, in: Jacques Paul, *Biserica și cultura în Occident*, 2 volume, Edit. Meridiane, București, 1996, p. 110

<sup>21</sup> Olivier CLEMENT, *Bazele spirituale ale viitorului*, Edit. Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu Lăpuș, 2004, p. 82

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 62



almost visible, on the ultimate background of the reality described by nature?" This defective mix of genres is the very definition that P. Ricoeur word "compromise".<sup>23</sup>

We can associate the concordism with the tendency to want to artificially unify different fields, such as the theologies and natural sciences. The theologian who went the furthest way in this respect is Jürgen Moltmann in his work "God in Creation". In what terms does he formulate the project: "*We deliberately give up delimitation, from a fearful concern for our own identity, between the theological doctrine of creation and the natural sciences and their scientific theories*".<sup>24</sup>

John Paul II seems to have realized the danger of "criticizing, uncritically and too hurriedly, for apologetic purposes, recent theories, like that of the big bang in cosmology." The theme to which he is well-known is, to say true, the rather ambiguous of unity of knowledge. "Reality is one, and truth is one, and we affirm that there is an intrinsic call to the unity of knowledge that comes from experimental science or theology." "Unity is one of the predicates of truth." "Science is the quest for unity."<sup>25</sup> But the fecundity of the scientific method does not come precisely from the fact that it operates a decoupling of reality in delimited areas, within which it can reach a certain truth? When it is stated that "faith and science are intrinsically ordered in the same object, the ultimate truth which is God", would it be worthwhile to specify what science is: experimental science or theological science?

Addressing a responsible and authentic dialogue between religion and science requires first of all a common ground. It is said that science teaches how the heavens are going, and religion how to go to heaven, how to get to God. But the two can only be complementary. The fundamental unity of science and religion is anticipated in the most explicit way in the approach we have called a confirmation. This path suggests that science and religion, though different, have a common origin, located in the distant and mysterious source of the human desire for knowledge. Both science and religion ultimately derive from the same "radical" love for truth, which is at the heart of our existence. Consequently, because of their common origin, consisting of this fundamental concern for the truth, we cannot afford to walk in separate ways.

The ecclesial Orthodox tradition, based on the patristic theological synthesis, is a solid support for a contemporary dialogue between science and religion, because the holy Fathers of the Church have used expressions and knowledge in the sciences of their time to interpret the revealed truths for the benefit of life and salvation, as the truths of the communion of life and love of God the Creator with His creation. An eloquent example in this regard is St. Basil the Great, through his Commentary on Hexaemeron. Of course, today's theologians need not only to repeat the Holy Fathers, but in spiritual communion with them, to do for our time what they have done for their time: to have an attitude of respect and to receive discernment of the results of knowledge human-based research.

An authentic dialogue between the Church's people and scientific scholars can only take place from the knowledge and acceptance of their own limits. Without this fundamental principle, *Religion* becomes exclusive and absolutist and *Science* will claim to have absolute truth. But the truth is not possessed, once it shares a committed and responsible dialogue that will eventually lead to communion.

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<sup>23</sup> Jacques PAUL, *Biserica și cultura în Occident* vol 2, Edit. Meridiane, București, 1996, p. 317

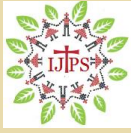
<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 322

<sup>25</sup> SCRIPCARU Gh., CIUCA A., ASTARASTOAE V., *Bioetica, stiintele vietii si drepturile omului*, Edit. Polirom, Iași, 1998, p. 25



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## A UNIVERSAL BASIS FOR RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

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### ABSTRACT

*The article discusses a new theory — that the dimensions of space and time are accompanied by a non dimensional expanse, primordial void, or zero dimension. This zero dimension would have existed 'before' and would have remained after the big bang. And just as the expanse of space-time dimensions results in separation between all things — so would an expanse lacking dimensions result in a lack of separation between all things. A zero dimension would therefore have a unifying nature, causing all thing to become at-one with each other within such a realm. A zero-dimensional realm that lacks dimensions would also be infinite and eternal. This and other attributes developed in the article, show that an underlying/invisible expanse of zero dimensions would be synonymous with an infinite-eternal realm of heaven — providing an eternal home for consciousness or soul — and providing a universal and scientific basis for at least 42 tenets of religion and principles of spirituality.*

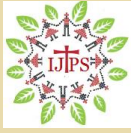
**Keywords:** Primordial Void; Zero Dimensions; Heaven; Oneness; Eastern Philosophy; enlightenment;

### INTRODUCTION

There are many ideas about spirituality and religion. So it can be hard to know what the underlying truths may be. Some base their beliefs on faith and religious writings, or a personal experience with the divine. Some say that the beliefs of religion are nothing more than superstition and myth. And others say that religion is merely a ‘god of the gaps’ — where religion is simply anything not currently explained by science. According to this school of thought, religion should recede and even disappear when science findings of the future fill up the gaps in our present body of knowledge.

In addition, the scientific community is divided about experiences of a spiritual and religious nature. There is a question whether such experiences can be real in an objective way, or are simply the result of internal neurological workings of the human brain. As discussed by Andrew and Alexander Fingelkurts, there is an on-going debate about whether our brain is hardwired to produce God, or whether it is hardwired to perceive God” [1]. Of course any experience is real for the person experiencing it. But the question is whether such experiences are real only in the mind of the observer — or whether they are interactions with something external to us in the natural world. Most in the scientific community would probably say that spiritual kinds of experiences happen only to the person having the experience, and are therefore not related to any objective reality.

This article discusses a new theory about the dimensional structure of the universe, which can supply a scientific basis for many tenets of religions and principles of spirituality. It turns out that the idea of dimensionality can fill in many of the gaps in our knowledge. But as will be shown, when the theory's dimensional point of view fills in the gaps in our knowledge, it does not end up replacing religion. Instead, science and religion can be seen as overlapping each other. And the various kinds of spiritual experiences are shown to have a real basis in nature — a basis that would be the same for all observers. But while the basis



for such spiritual experiences would be the same for everyone — each person would perceive such experiences in their own way, due to our differing cultural, religious, and philosophical histories. All of us could perceive the same universal light of truth — but each of us would understand it through a filter of our expectations, cultures, and life experiences.

The theory discussed in this article provides a new perspective and understanding of spiritual experiences — where science and religion share a strictly definable area of common interest. And since this new understanding is based on the dimensional structure of the universe, our discussion will begin with dimensions and how they came into being. It will first explore the properties of dimensions, and then explain why these dimensional properties are important to the understanding of religion and spirituality. (See note about the following four sections in the End Note section.)

### **1. THE BEGINNING OF DIMENSIONS**

It is generally agreed in the scientific community, that the present universe began in a highly dense state, followed by a rapid expansion known as the ‘big bang.’ At this initial starting point, everything in the universe suddenly came in to being — including dimensions. Stephen Hawking has shown that based on the properties of light, the dimensions must have come into existence about at the beginning of the present universe [2], which is estimated to have begun about 13.8 billions years ago [3]. And ever since then, the universe has proceeded to expand into the world we perceive around us today.

When we look around us, we see a universe apparently composed of three dimensions of space and one dimension of time. And these four dimensions then provide the basic ordering principle or structure of the universe. So whatever may occur in the physical world — it happens within this four dimensional expanse of physical reality.

In the creation stories of many religions and mythologies, there is said to have been a time before time — or rather, a timelessness before time. This would have been a primordial void of nothingness that existed ‘before’ the physical universe came into being. Such a preexisting timeless void of nothingness would have lacked dimensions. So it would have been a non-dimensional expanse — having no space and no time. However — a potential for the physical universe to exist must have been present, so that the universe was able to come into being. So the model developed in this article, begins with a preexisting expanse of primordial void or zero-dimension that has within it some kind of potential to generate the current physical universe.

In this scenario, the material world would have emerged from a non-material world. As Vlatko Vedral has argued, “We must explain space and time as somehow emerging from fundamentally spaceless and timeless physics [4].” After all, the physical universe had to have come from something — even if its origin was from a spaceless and timeless ‘nothingness’ of a primordial void. So in the scenario under consideration, there was an original primordial void or state of zero-dimensions. But this zero-dimension would not have been composed of absolutely nothing. There would necessarily have been some sort of potential within it for the universe to form. And this primordial potential would have been realized when the universe came into existence at the big bang about 13.8 billion years ago. However — just because dimensions came into being does not mean that the original state of the primordial void or zero-dimensions went away.

When we look at the world, we perceive that it is composed of four dimensions in addition to all of the material entities in the world. But the dimensions — with their material entities, and their multitudinous activities — could easily overshadow the presence of a zero-dimension, which contains nothing that is material. So even though we may not have



perceived the presence of such an underlying state of non-dimensionality, a zero-dimension could still be present. It would simply be that it has been overlooked until now. So the purpose of this article is to develop a model for this zero-dimension that we may have overlooked. And the first step in developing this model is to explore the properties of dimensions.

## 2. PROPERTIES OF DIMENSIONS

There are eight properties of dimensions that pertain to this discussion. The first of these properties is that dimensions are a fundamental property of the universe. The dimensions affect the behaviors of all things that reside within them. So the particular number and type of dimensions that are present will determine how the basic laws of nature will be carried out — and how the entities that reside within them will behave. A universe that has a zero-dimension could therefore operate differently than a universe that has only four dimensions.

A second property is that dimensions supply an ordering principle for the universe. Wherever the physical dimensions are present, they result in separation of all things within them (with a few minor exceptions). So in general, the presence of space results in the separation of distance — and the presence of time results in the separation of duration. However, a zero-dimension that is lacking in space and time would not have the properties of distance or duration. So anything in a zero-dimension would therefore exist non separately. All things in a zero-dimension would simply exist in a unified state.

A world of space-time that has a beginning could also have an end. And if the physical universe does come to an end some day, reality would return to a state of non-dimensionality. The non-dimensional expanse or zero-dimension would still remain. A zero-dimension could therefore exist independently before and after the physical universe. And even when space-time is present, a zero-dimension would necessarily retain its independence of space-time — because it would still remain if space-time ceased to exist. So a third property of dimensions is that a zero-dimension can only be infinite and eternal — while the physical universe could be finite and temporary. And as a result, a fourth and fifth property is that a zero-dimension would be fundamental and independent, while space-time would be emergent and dependent.

A sixth property is that all dimensions exist at all points in the physical universe. So the three dimensions of space and the one dimension of time would exist at all points in the physical universe. And if there is a zero-dimension present in the world today, the zero-dimension would also exist at all points in the physical universe. But if space-time is finite, then a zero-dimension could also exist where space-time does not. But in any case — space-time and a zero-dimension would co-exist with and interpenetrate each other wherever space-time exists.

Positions in space-time have conventionally been designated by coordinates — for the three coordinates of space  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$ , and the one coordinate of time  $t$ . So together these coordinates  $\{x,y,z,t\}$  can indicate a location in space-time. A zero-dimension on the other hand, has no space or time to provide coordinates. So anything that exists in a zero-dimension could not exist in a particular position. It would necessarily be spread throughout the entire zero-dimensional expanse. And this kind of expanse lacking dimensions can be indicated by the symbol of the empty set,  $\emptyset$ . So anything that exists in the space-time expanse can be expressed as a set of coordinates  $\{x,y,z,t\}$ . While anything that exists in a zero-dimensional expanse can be expressed as the empty set  $\{\emptyset\}$ . And a zero-dimensional set co-existing with a space-time set can be expressed as the union of these two sets,  $U$ .





Formula 1, below, shows the union of a non-coordinate bearing zero-dimensional set with a coordinate-bearing space-time set. Within the space-time set, all things would exist separately — with minor exceptions. But all things in the zero-dimensional set would be unified as well as being spread throughout its expanse.

$$\{\emptyset\} \cup \{x,y,z,t\} \quad (1)$$

A seventh property of dimensions is that every thing will occupy every available dimension. Any thing that exists in the spatial dimensions will exist in the time dimension. And in a universe with a zero-dimension, any thing that exists in space and time will also exist in the zero-dimension. However, an eighth property of dimensions is that only non-physical things can exist in a non-physical zero-dimension. So physical objects would exist in all of the dimensions of space-time. But only non-physical things could exist in the non-physical environment of a zero-dimension — such as information about an object or event.

There just so happens to be a perfect candidate for the non-physical information about objects that could exist in non space-time. And that is an object's quantum wave function. Wave functions are mathematical entities that contain the essential information of physical objects or events — such as their spin, position, and momentum, etc., or quantum state — and the related probabilities of how and where they will be manifested over time. Wave functions and their associated probabilities embody all knowable characteristics for everything in the universe. And wave functions are non physical, so they could exist in a zero-dimension.

It has been debated whether wave functions are a real entity or mere information about reality. But it has been shown by Pusey, Barrett, and Rudolf, that “any model in which a quantum state (wave function) represents mere information — must make predictions that contradict those of quantum theory” [5]. And this means that wave functions are not just a mathematical convenience. They must be real entities for the world to work the way that it does. So as real but non-physical entities — wave functions could exist in a zero-dimension. And so in the model under consideration, an object such as an electron would exist in physical space-time — while the non-physical basis of the electron, its wave function, would exist in the non-physical zero-dimension.

A wave function is considered to be the fundamental part of an object or event, embodying everything that can be known about it. So a wave function which would be the fundamental basis for an electron would then manifest the electron in space-time. Since the wave function for an electron also embodies the probabilities for its expression, the wave function would also determine the probabilities of where and how the electron would be expressed in space over time. And these probabilities would be expressed in an on-going fashion. So material entities may be expressed in space-time — but wave functions existing in a zero-dimension would provide the basis for all of these material entities — being expressed as they are — being expressed where they are — and being a basis for their changing over time. As a result, wave functions would be the basis of all material things coming into existence, as well as their propagation through time. And in a similar manner — if the universe can be considered a quantum 'particle' as Stephen Hawking has suggested — a wave function for the universe would have likewise existed before the universe came into being [2]. So a wave function of the universe would have been the potential that existed in the primordial void or zero-dimension that supplied the basis for the universe to come into being as it did. And so, wave functions reside in a zero-dimension. Would be the fundamental basis for all things in the material world coming into being, as well as being the basis for the material world itself.



### 3. WHERE CONSCIOUSNESS MAY RESIDE

We usually experience consciousness as if it exists within our heads or brains. This may be because the major sensory inputs of sight, sound, taste, and smell happen in our heads. But at any rate, no one really knows how our non-material consciousness can arise — whether it is from a side-effect of our brains or otherwise.

If consciousness is an ‘epiphenomenon’ or side-effect of the brain, then it must be tied to the body. For example, consciousness could exist as the result of electromagnetic waves in the brain. And in this case, it would be associated with the wave functions of these electromagnetic waves of the brain. On the other hand, if consciousness can exist separately from the body, it would similarly exist at the same place as our brains — but it could also then exist outside of our brains. Either way however, consciousness would be non-physical — existing as wave-functions of brain processes that give rise to consciousness — or existing as a consciousness that is not tied to the body, or is not only tied to the body.

So non-physical consciousness — or the wave-functions that give rise to consciousness — would exist at the point in space-time where our brains exist. And per the fifth property of dimensions — anything that exists in one dimension will exist in all dimensions. So in a world that contains non-dimensionality, our non-physical consciousness would also exist in the zero-dimensions. Within a zero-dimension, consciousness would exist in a unifying environment, but would not exist at any specific location. So this would cause consciousness to be present throughout the expanse of the zero-dimension. And since the zero-dimension would co-exist with and interpenetrate every point of space-time, consciousness would end up being present at all points in space-time as well.

Consciousness may begin at a single point in space-time. And it may be dependent or independent. But in a universe with a zero-dimension, its presence would expand throughout a zero-dimension — to ultimately become present at all points of space-time. So all consciousness and all wave-functions would then co-exist non separately in the unifying environment of the zero-dimension. And since they would be co-existing non separately, this would place consciousness in a position where it could affect wave-functions and change their probabilities. These changed probabilities in a zero-dimension would then ultimately be expressed as a change of the associated material system in space-time. So consciousness and wave-functions existing non separately in a zero-dimension could be the basis of mental processes affecting material systems.

In quantum physics, quantum objects can exist in several positions and several states simultaneously for each attribute. And these attributes are embodied in the various probabilities of an object's wave-function, where any of these possible states and possible positions might be expressed. However — when a quantum entity like an electron is observed or measured, it is of course only seen at one specific position and in one particular state. This is known as the collapse of the wave-function, since the wave-function collapses from multiple states and locations to a single state and location. So in the scenario of a zero-dimension being present in the world — consciousness would be in a position where it could interact with and collapse the wave-function of a material object in the zero-dimension, and the object would then be manifested at some specific state and some specific position in space-time where it is observed by consciousness.

Henry Stapp has consistently argued that consciousness does indeed interact with wave-functions, resulting in the collapse of the wave-function [6]. Such an effect would allow consciousness to affect the wave-functions' associated physical systems — thus establishing a way for consciousness to affect material systems. This situation has been



criticized however — by Danko Georgiev, among others — contending that consciousness would not have its own wave-functions to allow such an interaction with (other) wave-functions to occur — and that anyway, such an interaction would also violate the principle of locality [7]. However — in a zero-dimension, consciousness would exist non separately with wave-functions. So consciousness and wave-functions would not be separate things interacting with each other. They would exist as a unified part of each other. And the omnipresence of a zero-dimension would also allow consciousness and wave-functions to interact locally anywhere. So these arguments against the interaction of consciousness and wave-functions may apply when it occurs in the separating environment of space-time. But they would not apply when it is occurring in a fundamentally unifying environment like a zero-dimension. The presence of a zero-dimension therefore has the potential to resolve the problem of how a non-material consciousness could interact with material entities such as the body, thus also resolving the problem of 'mind-body duality.'

#### 4. DEVELOPING A SPACELESS AND TIMELESS MODEL

As Vlatko Vedral has said, the space-time world must somehow be based on a fundamentally spaceless and timeless universe [4]. And a scenario for such a fundamental zero space-time reality has been presented in this article. A starting point for this scenario was expressed earlier as formula 1.

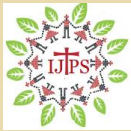
$$\{\emptyset\} \cup \{x,y,z,t\} \quad (1)$$

Formula 1 shows the present universe being composed of two sets — one being a set of zero-dimension, and the other being a set of space-time dimensions. And this formula can be further developed, as follows.

1. As Albert Einstein showed with his special relativity, space and time should be viewed as being the one entity of space-time, because they interact with each other — although this is readily apparent only under relativistic conditions, such as high velocity or gravity [8]. So the set of coordinates for space-time can be represented as a unified space-time{st} — as shown in formula 2, below.
2. Also, wave-functions are often represented by the Greek letter psi  $\Psi$ . And in this scenario, wave-functions exist within the zero-dimension. So in formula 2, wave-functions are represented in the zero-dimensional set as the letter psi  $\Psi$ .
3. In addition, the sum of everything currently known by physics about the material space-time world is called the standard model — which includes all energy and matter objects, etc. So in formula 2, the standard model of the material world is represented as m in the space-time set.
4. And finally, our individual consciousness is apparently associated with — and dependent upon — the brain in the physical world. But in a world with a zero-dimension, consciousness would necessarily be spread throughout a zero-dimension that interpenetrates all points in space-time as well. And since a zero-dimension would be independent from the material world of space-time — consciousness in a zero-dimension would therefore exist independently from any material entity, such as the body. So in formula 2, independent or universal consciousness is represented as C in the zero-dimensional set — while dependent or individual consciousness is represented as c in the space-time set.

$$\{\emptyset \Psi C\} \cup \{st m c\} \quad (2)$$

So in each of these sets, there are three similar things: 1) dimensionality, 2) materiality, or the basis of materiality, and 3) consciousness. On the left side, the potential of



all material things which is wave-functions  $\Psi$ , resides with extended or universal consciousness  $C$ , in the zero-dimensional set  $\emptyset$ . While on the right side, the expression of all material things,  $m$ , resides with separate or individual consciousness  $c$ , in the space-time set  $st$ . And the union of the two sets  $U$  constitutes the non-material world of zero-dimensions co-existing with and interpenetrating the material world of space-time. And so, because of the mutual interpenetration of the two sets, the members of the two sets can interact with each other.

Here, the material things of space-time can come and go — including the material realm itself. So our individual consciousness like our material bodies, would have a temporary existence in the material world. However, the zero-dimension would remain independent — even being able to exist without space-time being present. So a zero-dimension that is infinite, eternal, and independent would therefore cause consciousness residing there to be infinite, eternal, and independent.

In this scenario, a zero-dimension would have existed by itself, without the space-time realm being present. And the big bang would have given rise to a universe composed of a zero-dimensional set and a space-time set. But since space-time had a beginning, it could also have an end. So the universe with dual sets being present, could potentially revert back to a universe with only a zero-dimension. This situation is represented in formula 3.

$$\{\emptyset \Psi(u) C\} \leftrightarrow \{\emptyset \Psi C\} \cup \{st m c\}^n \quad (3)$$

As seen this formula, a zero-dimensional set would give rise to a space-time set — resulting in a universe with two sets of dimensions. And this state of non-dimensional set existing by itself, or a non-dimensional set existing along with a dimensional set could then alternate back and forth ( $\leftrightarrow$ ) any number of  $n$  times. So an immaterial set or expanse would always be present — while a material set could be present or absent. But no matter how many times material universes may come and go — the fundamental being-ness of consciousness and the fundamental manifesting potential of wave-functions would remain in the zero-dimension — as an infinite-eternal realm that exists beyond space and time containing the potential for all things.

Without space and time, a wave-function for the universe  $\Psi(u)$  would exist in the zero-dimension as a potential for the material universe to form. But this potential could result in the big bang — as it did at the beginning of our universe. The presence of space-time would then allow the potential of wave-functions to be expressed in a material world that would then change with the passing of time. And this would take place in an environment where quantum probabilities — along with the personal choices of sentient beings — would provide two kinds of 'free will' or on-going variability into the future. So with this ever-changing expression of wave-function potentiality in the universe, the events within the universe — as well as the very form of universe itself — could not be predicted before-hand.

Formula 3 above shows a 'primordial void' or non-dimensional realm containing a potential for the material world to form  $\Psi(u)$ , existing along with an expanded or universal consciousness  $C$ . It shows a realm of space-time containing our individual or personal consciousness  $c$ , existing along with all things of a material nature  $m$ . And it shows the material space-time realm itself — along with all material things within it — to be emergent from a fundamentally spaceless and timeless origin. But the spaceless and timeless realm would exist independently — whether or not the material world is present. So the fundamental state of the universe would therefore be an all-pervading consciousness — and



the potential of wave-functions for all materiality — existing in an infinite-eternal realm, beyond space and time.

Without space and time, a zero-dimensional realm would exist infinitely and eternally, without any matter, fields or energy, etc. being present. So this independent non-material realm would exist as the 'least energy' ground state of the universe — a ground state of dimensions — a ground state of materiality — and a ground state of consciousness. In short, a zero-dimension containing all wave-functions and an all-pervading universal consciousness would be the ground state for all things, and would be the basis for all things.

## 5. DERIVED PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

As discussed earlier in section 3, infinity is about space — or the lack of space. And eternity is about time — or the lack of time. So infinity and eternity are about dimensions or the lack of dimensions. Religion and spirituality — which are about the infinite-eternal — can therefore be considered to be about dimensions or the lack of dimensions.

In this scenario of dimensions, a primordial void existed as an infinite non-dimensional expanse. And from this non-dimensional basis, the big bang occurred, which ushered the material world into existence. But the realm of zero-dimensions — being independent and eternal — would have persisted after the big bang occurred. And this zero-dimension containing neither the separation of distance nor duration would provide a unifying environment where all consciousness would be unified with all things — or consciousness would be unified with the information and basis of all things which is wave-functions. So in a zero-dimension, our consciousness would be at-one with all things and all other consciousness — beyond space and time — in an infinite-eternal realm. And this could be seen as our consciousness or 'souls' existing eternally as a unified Consciousness, in an infinite and eternal realm of heaven that exists beyond space and time.

In the Christian Bible, Jesus said that “The Kingdom of God is among you” (Luke 17:20), which has also been translated as heaven being within us or in our midst. If this is true — that heaven exists currently among us, in our midst, and/or within us — then heaven exists right now, wherever we are, and whenever we are. And a zero-dimension would fit this description perfectly — existing everywhere, wherever and whenever we are. It would also be an infinite-eternal realm beyond space and time — a place of eternal consciousness or the eternal life of our souls — where all things would be unified, or would be at-one with each other. And this is how religions often describe paradise, heaven, or nirvana, etc. — which will hereafter simply be called heaven. So a zero-dimension that is infinite and eternal and exists everywhere can be seen as heaven, where our consciousness would have an infinite and eternal existence — whether or not our physical bodies are present. But because a physical existence is not possible in a non-physical realm, this would not be a physical eternal life. It would be a non-physical eternal life of our non-material consciousness or soul.

A zero-dimension would be a realm containing non-material things such as wave-functions and consciousness — and it would have given rise to all things in the material world, as well as the material world itself. So it would be the source of all material and non-material things. But upon the advent of the material world, the zero-dimension would then have remained as a co-existing non-material realm that is infinite and eternal. So a zero-dimension would be a non-material realm. It would be infinite and eternal. It would exist everywhere. It would be the source of all things. It would be the cause of our being at-one with all things, within the source of all things. It would always be with us, wherever and



whenever we are. Being eternal, it would never go away. And it would always be ‘in our midst.’ So we would always be within it. And it would always be within us.

So, this infinite and eternal home of universal consciousness could provide a medium for the eternal life of our soul after we die. But it would also co-exist with and interpenetrate all points in space-time. So it could also provide a medium for reincarnation — where the individual consciousness of a dying person could transition from one life to another — from the material to the non-material, and back to a material existence again. And the inherent unifying nature of such a zero-dimension or heaven, would provide a basis for consciousness — whether in life, or after death — to be in a state of being at-one with all things. However, if this happens in life — becoming aware of being at-one with all things during our lives — this is how the state of enlightenment has often been described.

In Eastern religions and philosophies, there is an infinite and eternal basis for everything called Brahman. It is the creative principle that is the cause of all things. Within this ultimate reality, we have an essential self or soul called Atman that is eternal and exists beyond space and time. So Brahman and Atman can be realized in a zero-dimension — Brahman as the basis of all potentiality — and Atman as our expanded consciousness — both being realized in the same infinite-eternal zero-dimension, beyond space and time. When we die, this essence of ourselves could be reincarnated into a new life and body through the interaction and interpenetration of space-time and a zero-dimension. And this cycle of reincarnation would keep repeating until a state of enlightenment is reached — which is the realization of oneness. In this oneness, we are aware of ourselves as an expanded consciousness that is at-one with all things. Then upon reaching enlightenment, the cycle of Samsara with its continually repeated lives would then be broken. And this could all be realized in the medium of an infinite, eternal, and omnipresent zero-dimensions. So a zero-dimension can be seen as providing a basis for Brahman, Atman, Samsara, and reincarnation. And a zero-dimension would also be the basis of enlightenment, which would simply be the awareness of what is true — whether we are aware of it or not — that we exist in fundamental unity, and eternal oneness.

Here in the space-time realm, our awareness of the physical world occurs through our bodily senses — of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch, etc. Each of these senses involves a set of cells that sends signals through the various nerve pathways to our brains. Our brains interpret these signals — deduce what their meaning may be — and then present to us a coherent picture of the outside world. So in essence, this creates several layers of separation between our conscious awareness and what we experience of the outside world. And in addition to this, the dimensions of space-time result in a physical separation between ourselves and all other things. Yet — in spite of these myriad layers of separation, we manage to convince ourselves that we have first-hand knowledge about the physical world. So this is a persistent illusion we have about reality — that we can have a truly first-hand awareness of things outside of ourselves — where in reality, our materially based consciousness has no direct contact with the outside world.

Formula 2 above shows a world that contains a dual set of space-time dimensions and non-dimensions. In the physical medium of space-time that has an ordering principle of separateness, all individual consciousness and all material things exist separately from each other. While in the non-physical medium that lacks an ordering principle of separateness, expanded consciousness and the wave-function basis of material things exist together non separately with each other. And as discussed, the non-dimensional set must be considered the fundamental set or realm — because it can exist before and after the space-time realm, as



well as giving rise to the space-time realm. So the physical realm may appear to exist by itself as a stand-alone realm that consists of separate material entities. But the non-physical realm would actually exist as the basis for the material world and all of the material entities it contains. And in this fundamental non-material realm, consciousness would exist non separately with the basis of all things, which is wave-functions. It is only in this unified realm that our consciousness can know any thing as a truly first-hand experience — by existing non separately with them — by being at-one with them.

So it is, that the three main illusions about reality are revealed in the presence of a zero-dimensional realm. 1) That we think that our materially based minds can have first-hand knowledge. But we can only have first-hand knowledge through our expanded consciousness being unified with the information of all things in a zero-dimension. 2) That our temporary individual consciousness and thoughts appear to provide our existence in a material world — but our fundamental basis exists as an eternal unified consciousness in a non-material world. And 3) that while all things may appear to be independent and separate in the material world, they are actually dependent and emergent from a more fundamental unity-of-all-things in the non-material world. So the fundamental basis of reality is that things in the material world do not have a separate existence in and of themselves. They are dependent on preceding conditions and emergent from a deeper part of reality — that is an infinite and eternal realm synonymous with heaven. And in addition, this fundamental non-dimensional reality would be the basis for the eternal life of our souls, and would also be the basis for enlightenment.

The unity within non-dimensionality would provide a true knowing of non-separate oneness between the knower and the known. And when this true knowing is fully realized, it is called enlightenment — in which there is no knower or known, only the unity of all things. Enlightenment may be profoundly different than our normal state, but it is simply the final stage of personal growth and awareness. However, this is not an all-or-nothing proposition. There are various stages of personal growth that we can experience in our lives— as enumerated by various people including Hawkins [9]. And when we progress through these stages, we can experience increasing levels of true knowing. So we can have increasing levels of awareness or 'mini enlightenment' experiences in our personal journeys of growth and development, along the way to full enlightenment and the unity of oneness.

Another part of Eastern philosophy — which is perhaps less well known in the West — is the idea of Akasha and the Akashic record. Akasha is seen as an all-pervading eternal void that is a partner of the material world — that is invisible, so it cannot be perceived directly — and that is the basis of all things. In this philosophy, the universe is seen as being composed of two parts — one is the material world, and the other is the immaterial world of Akasha. These two halves are seen as alternating in a cycle of the Akashic void and a progression of physical worlds. And the information from these cycles is believed to be retained and stored as an eternal Akashic record of all things.

As can be seen from the discussion so far, a zero-dimension is comparable to the ideals of Akasha. A zero-dimension would be infinite and invisible, and would provide a potentiality of wave functions to manifest a physical world, as well as all things within a material world. So a zero-dimension — like Akasha — can be the basis of all things. It would provide an all-pervading void as a partner to the material world — that could cycle between a series of physical universes. And it would provide a place where an Akashic record could be retained eternally, as a collection of wave functions that would encode the information of all things.



This non-physical history of all things could then also provide a basis for karma — by storing the wave-functions of all of our personal actions and intentions. And because consciousness and wave-functions would co-exist non separately, this 'karmic library' of wave-functions could then affect our lives and our future lives. As an individual in the material world, we would be unaware of this stored information from past lives that could be affecting our current life. But upon reaching total awareness of this reality in enlightenment, we would be aware of these 'karmic' interactions — which would then no longer subconsciously affect us. So this state of total awareness or personal enlightenment would place us beyond the influence of our karma or past wave-functions stored in a zero-dimension — because we would exist as-one with them.

So, a non-dimensional realm would provide a basis for Akasha, with its eternal record of all things, and its cycling between dual states of dimensionality and non-dimensionality. It would provide a basis for Brahman, Atman, Samsara, karma, reincarnation, and enlightenment. It would provide a basis for the illusion of separateness, and the illusion of having first-hand knowledge in the physical world. It would provide a fundamental / non-material basis for personal consciousness. And it would be a spiritual realm of heaven — which could provide a place for the eternal life of our consciousness or souls to be at-one with all things — and our being aware of this either after death or upon attaining enlightenment.

In addition, consciousness in a zero-dimension would be in a position to interact with wave-functions, and affect their associated material systems. And this could occur either accidentally or with purposeful intent. Consciousness of an enlightened person would be in intimate contact with wave-functions in a zero-dimension — while at the same time being consciously aware of this basis of materiality. Since wave functions embody the probability of events, such a non-separate enlightened consciousness could interact with — and therefore change the probability of — a given event at will. And this could change the probability of an event from being probable or improbable — to having a desired outcome. In short, an enlightened person being at-one with the wave-functions of all things, could enable 'miracles' to happen. But if a zero-dimension is present in the world, these would not really be miracles. They would be scientifically explainable events based in the fundamental characteristics of consciousness, wave-functions, and dimensions.

In quantum mechanics, 'collapse of the wave function' happens when a physical object or event is observed or measured. This means that when an event is observed or measured in the physical world, it goes from having various probabilities of happening in various ways at various places — to having a 100 percent certainty that it will happen in one particular way, at one particular place. Its wave function 'collapses' from having several possible outcomes, to having one particular outcome. In coexisting with and collapsing the wave-function, an enlightened consciousness could thus change the probability of something happening several different ways — to a 100 percent certainty of a desired outcome — which could then be seen as being a 'miracle.' And this same process could be the basis of every-day / non miracle events — through the non-purposeful or inadvertent effects of consciousness residing non separately and interacting with wave-functions in a zero-dimension. Most of the time, this would be called the 'measurement problem' or 'observer effect' in quantum mechanics — where measurement or knowledge about an object or event collapses the wave-function of that object or event. And the basis of this 'observer effect' would also be the same kind of thing that happens with the process of 'karma' — that consciousness and wave-functions coexist non separately in a zero-dimension — with the





ability to influence each other — but having the effects of wave-functions being manifested upon personal consciousness in the material world.

## **6. NON DERIVED PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY**

Although many ideas or principles of religion can be derived from a zero-dimension as discussed above, the ideas of morality and ethical guidelines — such as the ten commandments of the Judaic tradition — cannot be derived directly from a zero-dimension. These kinds of rules of conduct may be seen as decrees of moral authority — or as guidelines for a society to function smoothly. And although they may not be derived from a first principle of science, they can be derived from a 'first principle of spirituality' — that our attitude and behaviors directly affect our ability to maintain a spiritual outlook in life. And rather than being guidelines that result in a peaceful state of society — they can be seen as guidelines that result in relieving feelings of guilt, and promoting a peaceful state of mind. And this can help us to develop a personal connection with the divine or spiritual realm.

Further non derived principles of religion are the practices of meditation and prayer. We as humans do not usually perceive a spiritual or non-material realm existing here with us in the material world. Even though it may be present everywhere within us and around us — we are not usually conscious that it even exists. So we must go out of our way to consciously interact with this non-material spiritual realm. And this is usually accomplished through prayer or meditation. The acts of prayer and meditation can therefore be seen as a conscious effort to establish a connection with the source of spirituality — which can then enable us to have a spiritual experience of the divine realm, or the experience of God.

In the divine or spiritual realm that is a zero-dimension — there would be no preferred 'direction' of religion' — just as there would be no preferred direction of time. There would not even be a preferred concept about an experience with the spiritual realm — such as our 'being enlightened,' 'being in heaven,' or 'being in the presence of God.' In the spiritual realm, all such human concepts would be left behind. In a spiritual realm like the zero-dimension, consciousness would exist in a non-conceptual state of being — that of oneness or being united with all things.

## **7. PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION SUMMARIZED**

A non-dimensional realm could exist before, during, and after the physical part of the universe — because it would be independent, infinite, and eternal. And since it has no dimensions and no physical matter or energies, etc., it would be the 'least energy' or ground state of the universe. In addition, a zero-dimension would provide a place where consciousness and the basis for the information of all things which is wave-functions could reside together non-separately. So all consciousness could then interact with the information of all things beyond space and time. And this would provide the potential for us to have an experience of oneness or enlightenment — which is an experience of the divine, or an experience of God — in an infinite and eternal paradise of heaven.

In this way, a zero-dimensional realm as the ground state of existence, would cause the world to be a fundamentally spiritual place. Religion can then be seen as a natural human reaction to this 'built-in' characteristic of the natural world. And although they are not derived directly from a zero-dimension, prayer and meditation can be seen as methods we use to connect with the spiritual realm of a zero-dimension — while ethics and morals or religious guidelines, can be seen as an attempt to maintain a spiritual attitude and behavior that can enhance our connection with such a spiritual realm.

So the presence of a zero-dimension — directly or indirectly — can provide a basis for the following principles of spirituality and religion.

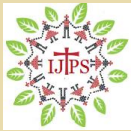


- 1) A ground state for the universe, which is a spiritual realm
- 2) A ground state for all potentiality, as well as all material things
- 3) A ground state for consciousness, which is universal being-ness
- 4) A source of miracles, as a purposeful interaction between consciousness, wave-functions, and dimensions
- 5–6) A realm that is infinite and eternal, which is synonymous with heaven, nirvana, and paradise
- 7-8) A source of non-conceptual unity or oneness, which is synonymous with enlightenment
- 9–13) The Eastern concepts of Brahman, Atman, Samsara, karma, and reincarnation
- 14-15) A fundamental void that is synonymous with Akasha
- 16) An Akashic cycle, where a void of emptiness alternates with the physical world, allowing an eternal Akashic record of all things
- 17) All things existing non separately, thus resolving the illusion of separateness
- 18) The source of first-hand knowledge and true knowing
- 19) Universal consciousness or being-ness as the basis of personal consciousness
- 20) A 'first principle' of spiritual attitude and behavior, as the basis for morals and ethics
- 21) A way for our individual consciousness to connect with the spiritual realm through prayer and meditation
- 22) An eternal life of soul or consciousness
- 23) An experience of the divine, or the experience of God

As listed above, a zero-dimension present in the world today, provides a spiritual realm that is infinite and eternal, beyond space and time, which is synonymous with heaven. And enlightened beings such as Jesus, Mohamed, the Buddha, Confucius, and Lao Tse, etc., have endeavored to communicate with the rest of us — the experience they have had, of being inter-connected within such a spiritual or divine realm of ultimate being-ness. Religious organizations have built on the experience and teachings of their enlightened founders. And the specifics of the various religions have depended on the previous beliefs and cultures of the people who lived where a particular religions originated and spread — the interpretation of their founder's experiences — and their emphasis on different aspects of spirituality, such as the 23 principles of religion listed above (and 20 additional attributes of the divine addressed later in the article). But whatever the practices of particular religions may be, they can ultimately lead us to discover for ourselves — the same fundamental truths that the founders of the religions had discovered. Because no matter what the various religions may espouse — and no matter what it may be called — there can only be one thing that is infinite and eternal, that exists beyond space and time, and that embodies the oneness or unity of all things. And that one thing is a realm of the divine that exists within us and among us, causing this to be a fundamentally spiritual world.

#### **8. DERIVING ATTRIBUTES OF THE DIVINE**

There are many theories about how the cosmos began. One of these theories was developed by Ervin Laszlo, which proposes that there have been a succession of universes leading up to the one we live in today [10]. This could be a succession of physical universes, with each one existing right after the other. Or, in agreement with the Eastern philosophy of Akasha — it could be an alternating cycle between a void and physical dimensions. But no matter what kind of succession may occur, each universe by its very existence would affect the next universe that formed. Laszlo's theory is that information generated during one



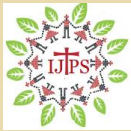
universe is stored as wave functions in 'pre-space' — or a non-dimensional void. And this wave function information would be carried forward between universes — which would then affect the formation of the next universe.

Another similar theory of cosmogenesis was developed by Stephen Hawking, which proposes that time itself is cyclical [2]. So the universe would proceed — from a condition lacking space and time at the big bang — through an expanding and then a contracting space-time universe — and then back to a condition lacking space and time again. And this could be repeated indefinitely in recurring cycles. Both theories of Laszlo and Hawking, are similar to the philosophy of Akasha, and all three can be seen as having a basis in zero-dimensions.

The scenario of a zero-dimension being present in the world would supply a basis for the philosophy of Akasha — where the presence of wave functions existing within the dimensionless part of a universe could store basic information about the universe. The information originating in a previous universe could then be carried forward as wave functions between universes within the zero-dimensions. And this information would therefore be in position to manifest the next universe in a somewhat different way. So the information of everything that has happened would never be lost. And the presence of this stored information from previous universes could define the attributes of the next universe. This could then explain why our current universe has characteristics that support life — because a series of universes have evolved into a universe that supports life.

Wave-functions are packets of information that give rise to material objects or events. And there would likewise be a wave-function for the universe itself [2]. But in a zero-dimension that has no time, wave-functions could exist only as the potential to act. So the presence of this wave-function potential existing in a zero-dimension — particularly the wave-function for the universe,  $\Psi(u)$  — could provide the potential within the primordial void or zero-dimension that could have given rise to the next universe. And in the usual manner of wave-functions, such a wave-function for the universe would contain the potentials for all possible universes. So it could manifest various universes based on the quantum probabilities that a particular universe would form.

So a zero-dimensional realm — with its inherent potential — could have caused our universe to be formed. The information from previous universes residing in the zero-dimension could have caused our universe to be formed with the particular attributes that it has. And once formed, the current universe has provided the conditions under which life has flourish — here on Earth, and possibly elsewhere. The quantum wave functions we have been discussing always contain an inherent uncertainty about the behaviors that they manifest. So the manifestation of material behaviors is not a sure thing. And this would provide a basic amount of 'quantum free will' — starting with the formation of the universe itself, and proceeding to the events within the universe. In addition, consciousness residing non-separately with wave-functions would place consciousness in a position to influence the inherent probabilities of wave functions. This could happen inadvertently, as it would most of the time — or purposefully by enlightened persons, as it would happen with 'miracles.' So this would basically create a three-tier system of free will. All entities — including the universe itself — would have a first degree of 'free will' based on quantum uncertainty and probabilities. Conscious entities would have the usual free will, that of personal choice. And a third degree of 'free will,' would exist as the ability to influence quantum probabilities — either inadvertently or intentionally.



So to summarize the attributes discussed in this section — a zero-dimension would have the following characteristics.

- 1) Causing the formation of the universe — because the physical world came into being from its inherent potentiality
- 2) Causing the world to have the attributes that it does — based on the probabilities of wave-functions for the universe
- 3) Causing the manifestation of all things in the material world through the probabilities of wave-functions for material objects or events
- 4) Causing the formation of all life — as a result of the evolution of universes in combination with the evolution of life within a universe
- 5) Being the ground state of the universe — which does not need the physical world in order to exist — it would be self-sufficient or aseitic
- 6–7) Being non-physical— it would be both invisible and incorporate
- 8) Lacking space — it would be infinite
- 9) Lacking time — it would be eternal
- 10) Lacking time in which it could change — it would be immutable
- 11) Being present everywhere — even beyond space-time — it would be omnipresent
- 12) Being the source of the world and all things in the world — and being the basis of change — it would be omnipotent
- 13) Containing wave-functions with their inherent quantum probabilities, etc. — it would provide a varying degree of free will to sentient beings and non sentient things
- 14) Containing all consciousness and the information of all wave-functions —it could be called all-knowing or omniscient
- 15) Existing and interacting with the entire physical world — and therefore being of the world — it would be immanent
- 16) Existing beyond space and time in an independent realm — and therefore being of the non-physicalworld — it would be transcendent
- 17) Being the domain of wave functions whose potential manifests everything in the physical world, and the physical world itself — it would be the source of all potentiality
- 18) Being a spiritual realm that is omnipresent and contains a unified consciousness that exists everywhere — it would act as an all-pervading spiritual presence that exists among and within all sentient and non-sentient things
- 19) Being a realm beyond space and time which causes unification or oneness — it would cause all consciousness to be at-one with all things
- 20) Being a realm with the unified characteristics listed above — it would be the source of the experience of the divine, or the experience of God

In short, a zero-dimension can be said to contain many of the characteristics we have attributed to the divine. The above list of characteristics — plus the previously listed principles of religion — show that a presence of non-dimensional ity can cause the universe to exhibit the basic principles of spirituality, religion, and the divine. But there is a further divine characteristic which cannot be derived from a first principle — and that is love.

We normally think of love as something we feel for others — like the love we feel for our spouse, our family, and our friends. But there is another unconditional and universal kind of love. The author had an experience with this kind of love, which happened one day while driving home from work. All of a sudden, an all-pervading love existed everywhere — in the



soil and trees — in the air and the sky — shining like a light from within all things. Such love is calm and still. It is not aligned with desire. It simply is. And it is probably not a coincidence that the author had been meditating for several years before this experience occurred.

Studies of experienced meditators using electroencephalograms (EEGs) have shown that during meditation there is a reduction in EEG bands of brain wave activity. Depending on the type of meditation, various levels of brain activity have been found to be reduced. But especially with the type of meditation that seeks to engender 'thoughtless emptiness,' a general down-regulation of such electro-physiological brain activities has been found. "Hinterberger, Schmidt, Kamei, and Walach have shown that "(such a) state of emptiness correlates with a decrease of brain activity in all channels and all bands (of EEGs), and across all (meditation) traditions [11]."

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans show similar results, with a marked decrease in activity in the parietal lobe of the brain during peak experiences such as enlightenment, as shown by Newberg and Waldman [12]. The parietal lobe regulates sensory input to the brain, so a decrease in its activity would lower our sense of self vs. 'other.' This reduction of activity in the parietal lobe is accompanied by an increase in activity in the frontal lobe, which is involved with judgment and purposeful attention [12]. So in peak or enlightenment experiences, we would identify less with ourselves and therefore tend toward experiencing a unity with other things. Through the practice of, meditation, we can attain a lower level of mental activity in key areas of the brain, while maintaining a high level of attention. And it makes sense that such a state of thoughtless emptiness and mental stillness could enable us to experience the empty stillness of a timeless non-dimensional realm. In this scenario — by removing conceptual thoughts from our minds — we can become more aware of the non-conceptual realm of non-dimensionality. During the experience of meditation and other kinds of peak experiences, as explained by Larsen and Buss, among others, people have reported that their sense of time slows down or disappears — that they have an experience of universal love — and that they have experienced a kind of spiritual connection with all things [13]. And all of these experiences — would have a common basis if they occur within a spiritual realm lacking in dimensions that is beyond space and time.

If we connect with a realm where there is no passage of time, it would be expected that we would experience a stillness of timelessness. If we connect with a realm that has no space, and therefore lacking the separation of distance and duration — it would be expected that we would have a feeling of being at-one with all things. And if God is love — an unconditional love residing in an infinite and eternal realm — then if we connect with such a realm, it would be expected that we would experience a universal love existing all around us, and within all things.

## 9. THE INTEGRATION OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

The relationship between science and religion has varied greatly over the history of humanity. In general, this has involved the degree to which science and religion have been thought to overlap each other. And in this respect, there is a varying range over time, where science and religion have been seen as being a part of each other. The philosophy of NOMA or 'non-overlapping magisteria' exists at one end of this spectrum, contending that there is no overlap — with neither science nor religion having legitimacy in the other's domain, as espoused by Stephen J. Gould [14]. The model developed in this article falls at the other end of the spectrum, contending that science can actually provide a basis for many religious principles — thus revealing a significant and specified overlap between the two disciplines.



The two lists of religious principles and attributes of the divine, above, have enumerated 42 characteristics derived from a zero-dimension (that is, 43 minus 'the experience of God' which was included in both lists). These items could be used by a person of science to describe 42 attributes of nature — or by a person of religion to describe 42 principles of religion and attributes of God. So there are at least 42 attributes of the universe where the two traditions can overlap. And it is the presence of a zero-dimension which provides this common ground. By incorporating a zero-dimension as a partner with space-time, the model under discussion has the ability to unite the spiritual and secular worlds — creating 'intersecting magisteria' with a common area of interest. And by revealing where science and religion may intersect or overlap, it becomes readily apparent where the realm of religion does not overlap with science — namely, in the areas of ethics and morals, prayer and meditation, a universal consciousness and divine love, that exists within all things. Although ethics and morals, and prayer and meditation, can be the subject of scientific studies — such as their societal ramifications, and their effects on bodily functions.

### CONCLUSIONS

Many principles of spirituality and religion have been taken on faith by believers — or have been taken as false by disbelievers. And those adhering to a 'god of the gaps' philosophy expect that by filling the gaps of our knowledge, the belief in religion should recede or even disappear. But if there is an infinite-eternal zero-dimension present in the world today, the principles of religion need not be taken as false, and they need not be taken on faith. And for the same reason, spirituality and religion need not disappear when we 'fill in the gaps' of our knowledge. Instead, they can take on a scientific understanding, while retaining a fundamental depth and meaning beyond the material realm.

If this scenario of zero-dimensions is true, it shows that many characteristics we have attributed to religion and the divine are simply a part of the natural world. And at the same time, it would show that many principles of religion are actually fundamental parts of nature. It could be that science is basically the study and understanding of the material realm — and religion is basically the study and experience of the non-material realm. In this way, there would be two disciplines studying two different realms. But these realms would be integrated with and overlap each other — thus integrating science and religion.

The presence of a zero-dimension allows us to derive the basic tenets of spirituality and religion from a 'first principle' of science that is the underlying structure of the universe. And these tenets — that had previously been the sole concern of religion — can now be seen as an overlapping area of concern for both science and religion. While some parts of religion still remain separate — as the mindset, philosophies, and behaviors of spiritual living, and the unconditional love of the divine. Religious and spiritual experiences can therefore be considered as being real, in the sense that they can have an enduring basis in the natural world that is the same for every observer — even though each person may interact with and experience this realm in a different way, due to cultural and personal differences.

A zero-dimension that co-exists with the physical dimensions can provide a non-physical realm that is the ground state of all things — the being-ness of all consciousness, and the potential for all materiality. It can provide a realm that is infinite and eternal, existing beyond space and time. A realm that is filled with an unconditional love of the divine — where our consciousness can exist forever — in a spiritual realm synonymous with a heaven — that exists everywhere among us and within us. Making this the spiritual world that it is. And making us the spiritual beings that we are.

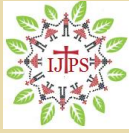
### END NOTES



The theory discussed in this article has been presented in two previously published articles by the author [15, 16]. Much about the basis of this theory — as discussed in Sections 2 through 5 — is therefore substantially the same as these earlier articles.

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## THE FREE WILL DEFENSE REVISITED: THE INSTRUMENTAL VALUE OF SIGNIFICANT FREE WILL

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### ABSTRACT

*Alvin Plantinga has famously responded to the logical problem of evil by appealing to the intrinsic value of significant free will. A problem, however, arises because traditional theists believe that both God and the redeemed who go to heaven cannot do wrong acts. This entails that both God and the redeemed in heaven lack significant freedom. If significant freedom is indeed valuable, then God and the redeemed in heaven would lack something intrinsically valuable. However, if significant freedom is not intrinsically valuable, then Plantinga's reply to the logical problem of evil fails. In this paper, we assess three contemporary solutions to the dilemma above. The first is the love solution, which proposes that significant freedom is necessary for agents to love, and loving others is intrinsically good. The second is the soul-making solution, which argues that significant freedom is necessary for self-developing one's moral character, and having a self-developed moral character is intrinsically good. The third is the derivative free will solution, which argues that significant freedom is necessary for derivative free will in heaven, and derivative free will is intrinsically good. We raise problems against all three solutions and instead defend a fourth solution – the ultimate responsibility solution. That is, SF is instrumentally valuable as it gives agents ultimate responsibility with regards to morally significant acts. Finally, we defend the ultimate responsibility solution against two major objections.*

**Keywords:** Free Will Defense; Problem of Evil; Heavenly Freedom; God's Freedom; Soul-Making

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Alvin Plantinga has famously responded to the logical problem of evil with his Free Will Defense (FWD). He argues that worlds with significantly free agents, who freely perform more good than evil, are more valuable than worlds without such agents.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, God would have a morally justifiable reason to create a world with significantly free agents, which would allow the possibility of evil. Therefore, there is no logical inconsistency between God's existence and the existence of evil.

A problem, however, arises because traditional theists believe that both God and the redeemed who go to heaven cannot do wrong acts. This entails that both God and the redeemed in heaven lack significant freedom, which undermines the value of having

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<sup>1</sup> Plantinga 1974, p. 359.





significant freedom which is essential for the FWD.<sup>2</sup> After all, if significant freedom is so great to justify evils, why is significant freedom both absent in God and the redeemed in heaven?

In this paper, we assess three contemporary solutions to the problem and argue that all are unsuccessful. We then defend a fourth solution which appeals to the idea of ultimate responsibility.

## 2. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE FREE WILL DEFENSE

In *Evil and Omnipotence*,<sup>3</sup> J. L. Mackie argues that belief in the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God is logically incompatible with the belief in the existence of evil. This means that there is no possible world where both can exist.<sup>4</sup> Mackie adds two other premises to show the contradiction: “A good thing eliminates evil as far as it can” and “There are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do.”<sup>5</sup> One can modify the latter premise to “An omnipotent thing can do anything that is metaphysically possible including prevent evil.”<sup>6</sup> If both propositions are true, it follows that an omnibenevolent and omnipotent being would prevent all evils (since it could and would want to). Thus, it would be impossible that both evil and such a being exists.<sup>7</sup> This is known as the logical problem of evil.

In response, Plantinga offers his FWD to show that a good thing does not always eliminate evil because there may be overriding goods.<sup>8</sup> Here, instead of offering a theodicy to say “what God’s reason for permitting evil really is,” Plantinga offers a defense which merely says “what God’s reason might possibly be.”<sup>9</sup> This, however, is sufficient because he would have shown a possible world where both God and evil exists, and hence shown that there is no logical contradiction. We will first modify some of Plantinga’s definitions for clarity:

Libertarian Freewill (LF): An agent has LF with respect to a given action iff (if and only if) “no antecedent conditions and/or casual laws determine that” one performs or refrains from the action.<sup>10</sup>

Morally Significant Act: An action is morally significant for an agent “if it would be wrong for him to perform the action but right to refrain or vice versa.”<sup>11</sup>

Significant Freewill (SF): An agent has SF with respect to a given action iff the agent has LF for that action and the action is a morally significant act.<sup>12</sup>

Notice how SF is a certain kind of freedom. A person can never have SF and yet still have LF with respect to only non-moral choices. For example, suppose I cannot choose to freely

<sup>2</sup> By ‘heaven,’ we mean to refer to the ultimate destiny of those who are saved by God.

<sup>3</sup> Mackie 1955.

<sup>4</sup> A possible world can be thought of as what the actual world possibly could have been.

<sup>5</sup> Mackie 1955, p. 343.

<sup>6</sup> This modification comes because there are some things that it seems God cannot do such as sinning, or ceasing to exist. Only few philosophers hold that God can do what is metaphysically and logically impossible such as making  $2+2=5$ .

<sup>7</sup> One may further add omniscience and say that “an omniscient being would be aware of all possible and actual evils” (Rea and Murray 2008, p. 160).

<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere Plantinga has offered a theodicy. (Plantinga 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Plantinga 1974, p. 358.

<sup>10</sup> Plantinga 1974, p. 359.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



do any wrong acts but I can freely choose whether to listen to Beethoven or Mozart later. Here, all that I require is LF with respect to non-moral choices. A person can also never have SF and yet still have LF with respect to only morally good choices. For example, it might be that a person is so compassionate that she cannot be unkind. She can only freely choose how she wants to show kindness to another person. She can choose to treat a person to a meal, or cook home cooked food for the person. She can choose to donate her money to the poor man across the street or to the old lady next door. So as long as nothing determines which morally good choice she makes, she is making a free choice between morally good choices. Thus, she has LF with respect to morally good choices. For Plantinga, it is SF which is valuable enough to justify the existence of evils – it is not LF with respect to non-moral choices or LF with respect to only morally good choices.

Plantinga argues that a world with agents possessing SF, who “freely perform more good than evil actions, is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no [agents] at all.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, God has justification for giving agents SF as long as these agents freely perform more good than evil actions. Now, if God creates agents with SF, then God cannot at the same time also, as a matter of logical possibility, “cause or determine them to do only what is right.”<sup>14</sup> If God gives agents SF, then there must be the possibility that agents choose to do wrong acts which results in evil. Hence, there is a possible world where both God and evil exists.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. SIGNIFICANT FREEDOM, GOD AND THE REDEEMED IN HEAVEN

The FWD has been celebrated by many as a successful reply against the logical problem of evil.<sup>16</sup> At the core of the FWD is the idea that SF is valuable; so valuable that it can justify the existence of evils.

Two theistic beliefs, however, threaten the idea that SF is valuable. The first belief traditional theists often have is that they take God to be essentially morally perfect. On this view, it is both true that God *would* not do evil acts; and God *could* not do evil acts. For example, it is often thought that it is impossible for God to lie. God is thought to have a perfect moral character (PMC) which precludes Him from doing any evil.<sup>17</sup> Here, we can say that an agent has a PMC iff for all actions where it would be wrong to perform (or wrong to refrain from an action), the agent’s moral character entails that he cannot choose the wrong action. Therefore, since God has a perfect moral character (henceforth, PMC), God cannot do evil, and hence God lacks SF.<sup>18</sup> As Wes Morriston says, “God’s nature is such that it is logically impossible for Him to perform a wrong action. He is determined—in the strongest possible sense of ‘determined’—not to perform any wrong actions.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. To note, Swinburne (2010) offers various reasons for thinking that SF is valuable for us.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> The following defense thus far only addresses moral evils committed by agents. One could of course propose that it is possible natural evil was introduced as part of punishment for sin, or that all natural evils are possibly moral evils committed by demons.

<sup>16</sup> There are some philosophers who have raised problems for accepting TWD (Howard-Snyder 2013, Pruss 2012, Manis 2006), while others raise problems for CCFs (Cowan 2003). In reply, some modified versions of the FWD do not use CCFs and TWD. See for example Bernstein and Helms 2015 and Pruss 2003.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Bergmann and Cover 2006, Mawson 2005 and Timpe 2015. For a non-traditional view of God’s freedom see for example Guleserian 2000 and Manis 2011.

<sup>18</sup> See for example Bergmann and Cover 2006, p. 383-391, Morriston 1985, Wielenberg 2016, p. 5-6.

<sup>19</sup> Morriston 1985, p. 258.



From this, Morrision raises the following objection, “If [SF] is such a great good in human beings, why is it not a grave defect in God that he lacks it? And if the lack of [SF] does not detract in any way from God’s greatness, would it not have been better for us not to have it?”<sup>20</sup> So, theists who think that God lacks SF are stuck in a dilemma. Either SF is valuable, or it is not. If theists hold that SF is valuable, then God lacks something valuable. So, he is not so great after all. Even worse, agents who possess SF would have something valuable which God lacks. On the other hand, if theists hold that SF is not valuable, SF cannot be used to justify the existence of evils; hence the FWD fails.

Now, a theist may try to escape the problem by suggesting that it is valuable for us to have SF but not valuable for God to have SF. After all, God is a different kind of being from humans. This strategy however faces difficulties. First, while it may be true that humans are in some ways different from God, it is also true that humans are in many ways similar to God. After all, traditional theists hold that humans are created in God’s image. Humans are not entirely different from God. So the theist is pressed to give an account of the differences between humans and God that would show that SF is valuable for humans but not for God. It is however unclear what difference (or differences) the theist could possibly use to explain why it is good for humans to have SF but not for God to have it. Second, even if we grant the claim that SF is valuable for humans but not for God, a further problem arises - if it is valuable for humans to have SF, then humans should also have SF in heaven. As we will see in the next paragraph, however, traditional theists think that humans in heaven will lack SF.

The second belief traditional theists often have is that the redeemed who go to heaven will have a PMC, and hence they would lack SF. If so, it is possible for created agents to be like God who has a PMC and lacks SF. From this, some have objected to the FWD.<sup>21</sup> If SF is so valuable, why do the redeemed in heaven lack it? After all, Heaven is supposed to be a better place than earth. So, theists are stuck in a similar dilemma as above. Theists must either hold that SF is valuable or hold that SF is not valuable. If SF is valuable, then the redeemed in heaven lacks this valuable thing. Heaven is not so great after all. If theists instead hold that SF is not valuable, then once again, SF cannot be used to justify the existence of evils; hence the FWD fails.

Some theists might try to escape this dilemma by giving up the traditional view regarding the redeemed in heaven. Some theists may want to hold that SF is valuable and the redeemed in heaven have SF. For example, John Donnelly holds that those redeemed who do choose wrong will be evicted from heaven.<sup>22</sup> This view, however, faces many Scriptural difficulties and we suspect few theists would accept this. Other theists propose that the redeemed have SF and *could* choose wrong, but *would* not for all eternity. A Molinist, for example, may say that God looks at the agent’s counterfactuals of creaturely freedom and only actualises circumstances in heaven where one would freely choose right acts.<sup>23</sup> So while agents *could* choose wrong acts, they *would* not, since God never actualises the circumstances in which one *would* freely choose wrong acts.<sup>24</sup> This view, however, does no better at escaping the problem. If God can actualise the right circumstances to ensure agents with SF would never choose wrong acts in heaven, then God can do the same on earth. God

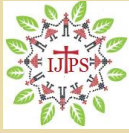
<sup>20</sup> Morrision 2000, p. 344.

<sup>21</sup> See for example Nagasawa, Oppy and Trakakis 2004, and Martin 2015, p. 436.

<sup>22</sup> See Donnelly 1985 and Donnelly 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Note that the circumstances do not casually determine how the agent would choose.

<sup>24</sup> Pawl and Timpe 2009, p. 402-403. Note that Zachary Manis proposes the same solution for God as well (Manis 2011).



can simply create agents with SF who would never do wrong by actualizing the right set of circumstances. So, God can eliminate all evil while preserving the value of SF. This undermines the FWD.

In sum then, the two traditional beliefs of theists seem to show that SF is not valuable. After all, if God - the greatest being - lacks SF, and if the redeemed in heaven will lack SF, then it seems that SF cannot be valuable. If this is right, SF is not valuable and cannot be used to justify any evils. Therefore, theists must either concede that the FWD defense fails, or give up both traditional beliefs, or somehow explain why God and the redeemed in heaven lack SF even though it is valuable.

#### 4. SOME CONTEMPORARY SOLUTIONS

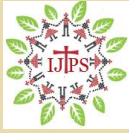
Rather than giving up the FWD or the two traditional beliefs above, theists might try to explain why God and the redeemed in heaven lack SF even though it is valuable. Philosophers often make a distinction between *intrinsic* value and *instrumental* value. Some things are *instrumentally* valuable in the sense that they do not have value in and of themselves. They are only valuable in that they help you to obtain something else of value. For example, if I pass you a ten dollar note but you are prohibited from using it, then it seems that the ten dollar note has no value. It would just be a piece of paper with printing on it. If you can use the ten dollar note, then the note would have value since it can get you something else. In this way, the ten dollar note is *instrumentally* valuable. Its value is derived from it being able to get you something else of value. In other words, the ten dollar note is just a means to something else. In contrast, things which are *intrinsically* valuable are valuable in and of itself. They are ends in and of themselves. They should be desired for their own sake. Using this distinction, theists can say that although SF is not intrinsically valuable, SF might be instrumentally valuable. This can explain why God and the redeemed in heaven lack SF, but God has good reason to give human agents SF initially. It is because it is necessary to give agents SF initially to achieve something else of value in heaven. Before defending our view, we will assess three other contemporary solutions in this section.

##### 4.1 The Love Solution

One might think that SF is necessary in order to love God, and loving God is a great good.<sup>25</sup> One motivation provided by Richard Tamburro is this: “un-free agents cannot really love God.”<sup>26</sup> We think this view fails. Here are two cases where theists are committed to the existence of un-free agents who can really love. First, theists hold that the different members of the trinity love each other essentially. That is, each member of the trinity does not have the freedom to choose between loving one another and not loving one another. So, each member of the trinity lacks LF regarding loving one another but is able to love one another. Next, God also loves humans essentially. He does not have the freedom to choose between loving humans and not loving humans. So, God lacks LF regarding loving humans but is able to love humans. Therefore, theists should think that un-free agents can really love. Now, even if we grant that each member of the trinity has the freedom to choose to love one another; and similarly that God has the freedom to choose to love us, recall that God does not have SF, and yet each member loves one another and God still loves us. Therefore, it is not necessary for an agent to have SF in order to love another agent.

<sup>25</sup> See for example Tamburro 2014, p. 142-145.

<sup>26</sup> Tamburro 2014, p. 142.



There is, however, a better defense along similar lines. Call this the love defense. Josh Rasmussen argues that SF is good because SF “may be required for the obtaining of certain good situations— namely, situations in which people love God without God making them do so.”<sup>27</sup> Consider two situations:<sup>28</sup>

*Forced-Love:* Jane wants Tom to lovingly propose to her. She gets a neuroscientist to hardwire his brain to cause Tom to have a sufficiently strong desire that determines Tom proposes to her.

*Unforced-Love:* Jane wants Tom to lovingly propose to her. Tom knows this and one day freely decides to propose to her.

Rasmussen suggests that situations like *Unforced-Love* are better than *Forced-Love* because “a value arises from the fact that someone gets to be loved without that *very person* having to resort to determining the very loving act directed toward him.”<sup>29</sup> A situation where someone makes a loving commitment to you without you causally determining that she does so is better than having that person make a loving commitment to you because you causally determined that she does so.<sup>30</sup> In other words, it is better that people show love and make commitments on their own accord rather than being causally determined by the receiver. Rasmussen thinks that this shows that a world in which God causally determines that humans express love to him would not be as good as a world in which people freely choose to express love to God. He concludes, “Thus, to permit the desired love from His creatures, God must not *make* His creatures love Him, which in turn implies that God cannot simply make his creatures essentially morally perfect; they must be morally free if God and his creatures are to enjoy unforced love.”<sup>31</sup>

While Rasmussen is right to point out that unforced love is better than forced love, his account seems incomplete. It is not clear why agents must have SF in order for there to be a world in which people freely choose to express love to God.<sup>32</sup> It seems that only LF with respect to expressing love is sufficient for people to freely choose to express love to God. Furthermore, there is a question of whether Rasmussen is thinking of freedom regarding the emotions of love or acts of love. Suppose first that Rasmussen has the emotion of love in mind. This is problematic because it seems that humans never choose to have emotions of love at will. So any kind of free will would be unnecessary to have emotions of love. Suppose instead that Rasmussen has acts of love in mind. This is problematic because God can still determine that humans have emotions of love towards him necessarily, but give humans LF in regards to choosing which acts of love to perform and also when to perform them. Therefore, SF is not necessary for acts of love either.

<sup>27</sup> Rasmussen 2013, p. 427.

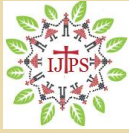
<sup>28</sup> I have modified Rasmussen’s (2013, p. 424-425) example.

<sup>29</sup> Rasmussen 2013, p. 425.

<sup>30</sup> One may object that in *Unforced-Love*, although Jane takes no action to determine Tom proposes, Jane’s existence and properties causally determines that Tom proposes. Two things can be said in reply. First, while Jane’s existence and properties may play a role in making Tom propose, Jane’s existence and properties are insufficient to casually determine Tom’s action. Second, even if I grant that Jane’s existence and properties are sufficient to casually determine Tom’s action, what is important is that Jane does not *consciously choose* to take some action to causally determine so.

<sup>31</sup> Rasmussen 2013, p. 426.

<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the following argument can supplement his view. Theists hold that we ought to love God and failing to commit to love God is morally wrong. Therefore if God creates us without SF, he has to causally determine that we love him. Only by giving agents SF to develop their own moral characters will agents ultimately be able to express love to God without being causally determined by God to do so.



#### 4.2 Soul-Making Solution

Another strategy a theist might take is to appeal to the good of soul-making. Since both God and the redeemed in heaven have a PMC, theists can hold that having a PMC is intrinsically valuable. A world with agents who have a PMC would be better than a world without. There are three ways in which created agents can have a PMC:

*Determined-PMC*: A created agent's PMC is ultimately solely determined by God.

*Self-Developed-PMC*: A created agent's PMC is ultimately solely determined by the agent.

*Partially-Self-Developed-PMC*: A created agent's PMC is ultimately due to both God and the agent.

In *Self-Developed-PMC* and *Partially-Self-Developed-PMC*, God cannot fully determine the agent's PMC; the agent freely plays a role in developing her moral character. This is why the agent's PMC is ultimately due to her. So in *Self-Developed-PMC* and *Partially-Self-Developed-PMC*, the agent must have SF *initially* in order for the agent's PMC to be (at least partially) self-developed.

The theist can now argue that *Self-Developed-PMC* and *Partially-Self-Developed-PMC* is better than *Determined-PMC*. This is because it is valuable for people to freely decide what kinds of persons they are going to be and to develop their own moral characters through actions. This 'soul-making' is intrinsically valuable. To see this, imagine two worlds. In determined-world, parents program their children to be morally perfect. The ultimate reason why children cannot do wrong acts is because of their parents free choices. In self-developed-world, children have the freedom to develop their own moral characters and end up becoming morally perfect. Parents at most assist their children with moral teaching and additional motivation. Intuitively, it seems that self-developed world is better than determined-world. So soul-making seems to be a good. But to allow *Self-Developed-PMC* or *Self-Developed-PMC*, it is necessary that the created agent has SF initially. Therefore, God would have good reason to give humans SF now while humans are on earth. SF is instrumentally valuable for there to be *Self-Developed-PMC* or *Self-Developed-PMC*.

It seems to us however that the soul-making strategy merely pushes the problem back one step. Traditional theists hold that God is essentially good and this entails that God never self-develops his own PMC. God never had an imperfect moral character and had to go through a process to develop a PMC. He never chooses his character or nature.<sup>33</sup> This is why God never has SF. Therefore, God lacks the good of soul-making. The dilemma that was raised for the value of SF can be applied to soul-making. If the theist holds that soul-making is intrinsically good, then God lacks this good and is not so great after all. If the theist holds that soul-making isn't intrinsically good, then soul-making cannot be used to justify giving agents SF initially which would result in evils.

#### 4.3 Derivative Free Will Solution

Another strategy is to argue that God and the redeemed in heaven have freedom. Let's start with the redeemed in heaven. James Sennett argues that the redeemed in heaven have the proximate conception of freedom.<sup>34</sup> On his view, humans have SF on earth. By making certain significantly free choices, people freely develop their own moral character.

<sup>33</sup> For an assessment of a view that God is responsible for his nature, see Bergmann and Cover 2006, p. 392-394.

<sup>34</sup> Sennett 1999.



When the redeemed go to heaven, they would have a freely *Self-Developed-PMC*. Now, although the redeemed in heaven are determined not to do wrong acts, they are still free (in the proximate conception sense) because the reason why they cannot do wrong is heaven is traced back to their free choices on earth. Sennett is not alone in this view. Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe echo Sennett's solution, calling such freedom as 'derivative free will.'<sup>35</sup> The actions of the redeemed in heaven are derivatively free because it is determined by the agent's PMC which was freely self-developed earlier on earth. If having derivative free will is intrinsically valuable, and having SF is a necessary condition for derivative free will, then God would have good reason to give humans SF now while humans are on earth.

The idea of derivative free will, however, seems odd to me. With respect to which kinds of acts are the redeemed in heaven derivatively free? It seems that proponents of the derivative free will strategy have to say that the redeemed in heaven are derivatively free *with respect to morally significant acts committed in heaven*. Can we, however, say that the redeemed in heaven have a certain kind of freedom with respect to those morally significant acts? It seems not. Benjamin Matheson says, "It seems that any free will worthy of the name is one that promises the agent control over her actions –i.e. the ability [to perform acts] other than she actually does."<sup>36</sup> Given that the redeemed in heaven do not have control over whether to act wrongly in heaven, it would seem strange to say that they have any kind of free will with respect to morally significant actions committed in heaven. Here's an example that illustrates my point. Suppose Tom freely chooses to take a pill that will causally determine that he always hates his mother and wants her to get out of his sight. Perhaps, he believes that this is for his own good because he keeps allowing his mother to abuse him out of love. Suppose it is now Tom's 30th birthday. Tom's mother shows up at his party. Tom sees her and feels a rush of hatred and cannot help but scream at her to go away. In this example, proponents of derivative freedom would have to say that thirty year old Tom is in some sense free (i.e. derivatively free) with respect to doing hateful actions to his mother. It seems to us, however, that thirty year old Tom is not in any way free with respect to doing hateful actions to his mother. It is deeply unintuitive to say that at thirty years old, Tom has some sort of freedom over his hateful acts even though he has no control over those acts and could not have done otherwise *then*. Therefore, the idea of derivative free will is problematic.

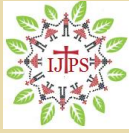
## 5. THE ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY SOLUTION

Now, we want to turn to a view which we think is the best solution.<sup>37</sup> We will defend this view against a few objections in the next section. What we think is intrinsically valuable is that God creates agents who have ultimate responsibility when it comes to morally significant actions. To be ultimately responsible for an act or outcome, an agent needs to be the ultimate causal source of the act or the outcome. For example, suppose Tom pushes Sally, causing her to fall and injure herself. Suppose also that Tom only pushes Sally because Robert chose to go behind Tom and pushed Tom towards Sally. While Tom is in some sense responsible for Sally's injury, it does not seem that he is *ultimately* responsible for her injury because he is not the ultimate causal source; Robert pushed him. It is thus Robert who is *ultimately* responsible for Sally's injury.

<sup>35</sup> Pawl and Timpe 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Matheson 2018, p. 62.

<sup>37</sup> Morrision (2000, p. 347-358) considers this view but argues it fails.



It seems to us that a world in which God creates agents who have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant actions is better than a world in which God creates agents who never have such responsibility. One might not think that agents who possess ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant actions are intrinsically valuable. Perhaps one might think that having ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant acts is instrumentally valuable because it allows agents to share in the glory of eliminating evil in heaven; or because it makes agents' lives more significant since they are the source of valuable contributions. We remain open to such views. As long as one affirms that it is valuable (whether intrinsically or instrumentally) for agents to have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant acts is valuable, that would be sufficient to mounting a defense.

If having such responsibility is valuable, then God has good reason to give created agents SF. If God causes created agents to have a PMC, the created agents will not have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant acts. Instead, God would be ultimately responsible over the created agents' morally significant acts. SF ensures that created agents are the ultimate causal source of morally significant acts. Even the redeemed in heaven have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant actions committed in heaven. Suppose it is asked why the redeemed in heaven does not do hateful actions towards another person. The answer is because the redeemed in heaven have a PMC, which was self-developed while on earth. This self-development was based on the agents exercising their SF. So, the agents themselves are the ultimate causal source and hence they are ultimately responsible for not doing hateful actions in heaven. If this account is right, then SF has instrumental value. SF is necessary for agents to have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant actions.

## 6. OBJECTIONS

### 6.1 *If God Lacks SF, Then God Lacks Ultimate Responsibility*

Here is one objection. If SF is necessary in order to have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant acts, and God lacks SF, then wouldn't God also lack ultimate responsibility? And if God lacks ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant acts, then there will be the problem of God lacking something intrinsically valuable again.

This objection is easy to deal with. It is only necessary for *created* agents to have SF in order to have ultimate responsibility. If God creates an agent with PMC, then something external and prior determines the *created* agent's PMC and in turns determines how the *created* agent would act with respect to morally significant acts. Hence, the reason why the agent never chooses wrong is ultimately because of "the active role that God played in necessitating that the agent has the nature, beliefs, and powers that she has."<sup>38</sup> The *created* agent would not be ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts. God however is an *uncreated* agent. Although God lacks SF, he is ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts. This is because when tracing the causal chain backwards, it terminates in God. God cannot choose wrong as God has PMC essentially, yet nothing external or prior to Him determines that He has a PMC. Therefore, the ultimate reason why God cannot do wrong is based in God Himself. This makes God ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts even though he never had SF. As Timpe writes, "being determined to act in a certain way by one's moral character is not being determined to act as

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<sup>38</sup> Franks 2015, p. 116.





you do by anything causally prior to yourself, provided that one's moral character is not itself causally determined by something outside of the agent in question."<sup>39</sup> This is why "[God] is able to be the source of His action given that His action is the result of His essential nature."<sup>40</sup>

The objector can however press a deeper problem along similar lines. The first objection is by Morrision.<sup>41</sup> He writes,

"If I simply chanced to exist, and if my nature determined me always to choose the good, then I would be no more responsible for my 'good' behaviour than I would be if someone had made me with that same nature. In either case, I would be doing only what my nature determined me to do. Something other than myself, viz., my nature, would be determining me to choose the good."<sup>42</sup>

Morrision's idea is that God has no control over his PMC (or his own nature). God is determined by his nature with respect to morally significant acts. If God created agents with a PMC, these created agents would also be determined by their nature with respect to morally significant acts. Since these created agents are not ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts due to them being determined by their nature, God cannot be said to be ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts because he is also determined by his nature. Erik Wielenberg raises a similar problem.<sup>43</sup> Consider the proposition <God exists>. This proposition is true and is entirely outside of God's control. This proposition entails that God has a certain nature and would never do wrong acts. Therefore, Wielenberg concludes that "if God exists then there is a true proposition outside of God's control that *entails* that He always does the right thing."<sup>44</sup> Therefore, "there are factors outside of God's control that causally determine that He always does the right thing."<sup>45</sup> God is not ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts.

Here, we can advance two replies. The first denies Morrision and Rasmussen's intuitions. Consider the following scenario.<sup>46</sup> Suppose Mother-Teresa-1 is programmed by Quine to have such a great moral character. Her great moral character causally determines that she does morally great acts. Mother-Teresa-2 has the exact same great moral character as Mother-Teresa-1. Mother-Teresa-2 however is not causally determined by any other person (or thing) to have such a character. Instead, Mother-Teresa-2 just popped into existence with such a character. Similarly, Mother-Teresa-2's great moral character causally determines that she does the same morally great acts as Mother-Teresa-1. Morrision and Rasmussen would think that both Mother-Teresa-1 and Mother-Teresa-2 would be equally responsible for their morally great acts.<sup>47</sup> Here, we readily admit that we do not share the same intuitions as Morrision and Rasmussen. When we consider the case of Mother-Teresa-1, it seems to us that it is Quine, her programmer, who is ultimately responsible for her morally great acts. Quine is the one who is praiseworthy. When we consider the case of Mother-Teresa-2, it seems to us that it is Mother-Teresa-2 who is ultimately responsible for

<sup>39</sup> Timpe 2012, p. 97.

<sup>40</sup> Timpe 2012, p. 98.

<sup>41</sup> Morrision 2000, p. 350-358. See also Rasmussen 2013, p. 419-421.

<sup>42</sup> Morrision 2000, p. 352.

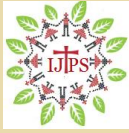
<sup>43</sup> Wielenberg 2016, p. 4-6.

<sup>44</sup> Wielenberg 2016, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Wielenberg 2016, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> See Morrision 2000, p. 350-352 and Rasmussen 2013, p. 419-420 for a similar case.

<sup>47</sup> See Morrision 2000, p. 350-352 and Rasmussen 2013, p. 419-420.



her morally great acts. Mother-Teresa-2 is the one who is praiseworthy. True, she does not have control over her moral character. Still, the ultimate source of her actions comes from her. Even though it does not come from her choice, it comes from her character.

If one shares Morrision and Rasmussen's intuitions, here is our second reply. We think that the theist can deny that God's PMC *causes* him to be unable to do wrong acts.<sup>48</sup> Instead, the relationship between God's PMC and God being unable to do wrong acts is a *non-causal* relationship. Theists might think that God's PMC *entails* he is unable to do wrong acts, or that God is unable to do wrong acts *in virtue of* God having a PMC. Here is an example. Suppose that on Monday, Alice wants to kill Bob and stabs him. Bob is rushed to the hospital. Whether or not the act is a murder depends on whether or not Bob dies later on. Suppose that Bob dies on Friday. Does Bob's death on Friday cause Alice's act on Monday to be murder? No. That would amount to backward causation. Instead, we hold a non-causal relationship. It seems better to say that Bob's death entails that Alice's act is an act of murder, or that Alice's act is an act of murder in virtue of Bob's death. Another example is from Wielenberg's argument above. Wieleneberg says that the proposition <God exists> *entails* that God is unable to do wrong acts. This seems right to us since neither propositions nor their truth values have causal powers. To complete the reply, we propose the following two plausible principles in tracing ultimate responsibility.

(a) If nothing causes Y, and Y entails Z, then Z is not causally determined by anything.

(b) If X causally determines Y, and Y entails Z, then Z is causally determined by X.

Given (a), since nothing causally determines that God has a PMC (or that God exists), and having a PMC entails that God cannot do wrong acts, nothing causally determines that God cannot do wrong acts. Therefore, God is still ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts. Given (b), if God causally determines that an agent has PMC, and if having a PMC entails that the agent cannot do wrong acts, then God causally determines that the agent cannot do wrong acts. Therefore, the agent would not be ultimately responsible if God gave them a PMC.

### **6.2 No One Self-develops a PMC in this Earthly Life**

Here is a second objection. If the redeemed in heaven have a PMC and our account holds that the redeemed self-develop a PMC, then our account entails that they must have self-developed a PMC in this earthly life. However, it seems that all (or at least most) of the redeemed do not manage to self-develop PMCs in this earthly life before they die. For some of the redeemed, they would have barely made any contribution to perfecting their own moral characters. For example, one might become a believer on their deathbed and so never had a chance to freely develop their moral character. So no one (or almost no one) goes to heaven with a self-developed PMC. Therefore, any account that says that agents self-develop a PMC is problematic.

There are two replies we offer. The first is to say that after our earthly life, humans will still be working on self-developing our own PMC. An advocate of one such view is Gary Black Jr. who draws from the ideas of Dallas Wallard. Black argues that heaven is a place where humans will still be working on our characters.<sup>49</sup> God does not suddenly change humans instantly. There is no 'cosmic car wash' where God suddenly gives humans a PMC.

<sup>48</sup> See Bergmann and Cover (2006, p. 394-397) for an argument along such lines.

<sup>49</sup> See Black 2015.



So, each of the redeemed will keep working on their moral characters until they develop a PMC. Eventually, everyone in heaven will end up with a self-developed PMC. Another advocate of such a view is Jerry Walls.<sup>50</sup> Walls proposes that upon finishing our earthly life, the redeemed go to purgatory where they can keep developing their moral characters until they have a PMC and are ready for heaven. If any of these theological accounts are right, then there is no problem. Our account would not entail that the redeemed must have self-developed a PMC in this earthly life.

A second reply is suggested by Sennett. Sennett suggests that God will complete the work for humans when they die. He says that by constantly acting in ways to develop one's own PMC, the person is giving consent to God completing the process for him or her.<sup>51</sup> One might worry here that this would make God ultimately responsible. On this view however, we can say that both God and the redeemed play a causal role ultimately and so both are ultimately responsible. This is like how a group of people can be jointly responsible for their collective efforts to save the environment by recycling. Another worry with this account is by Luke Henderson who says,

“what seems unnecessary here is the claim that the [redeemed] needed to develop their characters at all prior to heaven in order to hold some responsibility for the state of their perfected characters in heaven. I see no reason why [the redeemed] could not have made one decision that would have allowed God to perfect her character for her, whether prior to heaven or subsequent.”<sup>52</sup>

Henderson thinks that if the redeemed simply made one decision to allow God to do the rest of the work, then the redeemed would still be ultimately responsible. There is no need for an earthly life in which agents exercise their SF over time to develop a PMC. In reply to Henderson, we think that giving agents SF over time to develop their moral characters is valuable as it gives them a greater degree of responsibility. Within an agent's earth life, the agent might be able to fully develop certain virtues or set his character such that he would not be able to do certain wrong actions. For example, due to the agent exercising SF, he can fully develop the virtue of patience, or he may develop his moral character in a way that would preclude him from being able to say hate speech. Therefore, he would have ultimate responsibility when it comes to not being impatient and not being able to say hate speech. The more an agent develops his moral character, the more the agent is responsible for having a PMC as God has to do lesser work in order for the agent to have a PMC. Hence, God would have good reason to not just give the redeemed a PMC just based on one single decision.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Let us take stock. Recall that Plantinga responded to the logical problem of evil using his FWD which required SF to be valuable. Traditional theists however believe that both God and the redeemed in heaven lack SF. So either SF is intrinsically valuable which entails that both God and heaven lacks something intrinsically valuable; or SF is not intrinsically valuable and there is difficulty explaining why SF can still justify evils in the world.

We have assessed and rejected three solutions to the problem: The love solution, the soul-making solution, and the derivative free will solution. Instead, we defend a fourth

<sup>50</sup> See Walls 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Sennett 1999, p. 77-78.

<sup>52</sup> Henderson 2014, p. 325.

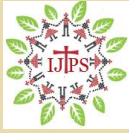


solution, the ultimate responsibility solution. We have argued that SF is instrumentally valuable as it gives agents ultimate responsibility with regards to morally significant acts. Finally, we have defended the ultimate responsibility solution against two major objections.

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## AN APPROACH TO JOHN WITTE ON THE REFORMATION OF RIGHTS AND RELIGION

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### ABSTRACT

*This article focuses on the insight of Professor John Witte Jr., (b. 1959) in relation to human rights and religion. Witte has a distinctive theological path with vast scholarly works in connection to ethics, law and human rights at the Emory University in Atlanta. Although the origin of human rights has been interpreted differently by many authors in the past. However, Witte's exposure to the emergence of modern human rights gives attention to its religious roots and the establishment of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The concept of religious freedom and individual rights was paramount in Calvinism, while the Papacy also tried in the reformation of its Canon Law. The 1948 United Nations Human Rights Charter came at a time when the project of human rights became inevitable after the mass atrocities caused by World War II. This article will, therefore, give a unique understanding of the emergence of modern human rights through a religious dialogue.*

**Keywords:** Calvinism; Human Rights; Witte, Religious Freedom; Canon Law;

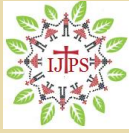
### INTRODUCTION

The emergence of modern human rights has been linked to numerous historical events such as the 1789 French Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen, eighteenth-nineteenth century philosophical Enlightenment Era, the Great Awakening; and other political or socio-cultural happenings across various societies. Also, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights was established to take-up the responsibility of the world's human rights umpire in 1948. For Witte, human rights narratives are best approached from their religious roots due to its composition of norms such as liberty, equality, shared values of life, respect, liberty, and property.<sup>1</sup> To separate religion from the people is to separate them from belief and moral conscience because of its effects their way of life in the community.

Religion is not just about belief in a supreme being, but also what that belief means to the people. For example, the Bible has a lot of covenants and laws which guided the way of life of the Israelites and these early moral creeds such as the Ten Commandment were a guide on the rights and freedom of the people. Other religions such as Islam, Hindu, and Buddhism have their various moral elements ethical in their books such as Koran, Vedas, and Tripitaka, on religious expressions and other aspects of life. Christianity, unlike these

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<sup>1</sup> John Witte, *A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights* 2001, Pp 713.



religions, has been at the forefront of religious revolutions in past centuries and most especially the sixteenth Calvinist Protestant Reformation.

## 1. CALVINISM AND THE REFORMATION OF RIGHTS

For Witte, the sixteenth-century era of the Calvinist Reformation on religious rights implanted a foundation for the expression of freedom and respect of the law for centuries in Europe. He explained, "The Calvinist Reformation congregationalized the faith by introducing the notion of rule by a democratically elected consistory of pastors, elders, and deacons. In John Calvin's days, the Geneva consistory was still appointed and held broad personal and subject matter jurisdiction over all members of the city. By the seventeenth century, however, most Calvinist communities in Europe and North America reduced the consistory to an elected, representative system of government within each church. These consistories featured separation of the offices of preaching, discipline, and charity, as well as a fluid, dialogical form of religious polity and policing centered around collective worship and the congregational meeting. The Protestant Reformation also broke the primacy of corporate Christianity and placed a new emphasis on the role of the individual believer in the economy of salvation. The Protestant Reformation did not invent the individual, as too many exuberant commentators still maintain. Rather, the sixteenth-century Protestant reformers, more than their Catholic contemporaries, gave new emphasis to the (religious) rights and liberties of individuals at both religious law and civil law".<sup>2</sup> Calvin's Protestant approach focused on religious rights relating to moral law and also aspects of positive law in recognition to the civil government. This concept meant that the people must be free to make decisions as guided by God's moral law and likewise exercise their liberty before the civil authority. Many of early Protestant theologians such as Theodore Beza (1519-1605), John Hooper (1495-1555), John Knox (1513-1572), etc., all of whom elaborated on Calvin's ideas of religious and specific rights on individuals across Europe.

Early Calvinism portrayed the doctrine of God as the originator of the law and humans are governed by Godly ordinances such as the Ten Commandments which was given for man's moral consciences. This did not dispute the role of magistrates and rulers who were also considered as given their rights as rulers over the subjects by God. Witte explained, "These Protestant teachings helped to inspire many of the early modern revolutions fought in the name of human rights and democracy. They were the driving ideological forces behind the revolts of the French Huguenots, Dutch pietists, and Scottish Presbyterians against their monarchical oppressors in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They were critical weapons in the arsenal of the revolutionaries in England, America, and France. They were important sources of the great age of democratic construction in the later eighteenth and nineteenth-century America and Western Europe. In this century, Protestant ideas of human rights and democracy helped to drive the constitutional reformation of Europe in the post-War period, as well as many of the human rights and democratic movements against colonial autocracy in Africa and fascist revival in Latin America".<sup>3</sup> This means, religious beliefs are part of what makes up communal values and structure, upon which the community is governed by sets of formulated creeds. To deny the people of their religious the orientation means to restrict their ability to express their moral conscience and thoughts.

<sup>2</sup> John Witte, *A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights*, 2001, Pp 734.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, Pp. 737.



Religion is not the law, but it guides the actions of people in the concept of the law; giving moral guidance of what is right or wrong. Witte explained, "Religions inevitably help to define the meanings and measures of shame and regret, restraint and respect, responsibility and restitution that a human rights regime presupposes. Religions must thus be seen as indispensable allies in the struggle for modern human rights. To exclude them from the struggle is impossible, indeed catastrophic. To include them, by enlisting their unique resources and protecting their unique rights, is vital to enhancing the regime of human rights and to ease some of the worst paradoxes that currently exist".<sup>4</sup> Thus, the era of modern human rights promoted the rights to freedom of religion and other forms of association which have proven resilient in the struggle against all form of injustice in society. This resulted in the formation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Rights movements in Euro-American history, the formation of Christian Democratic Parties in Europe, new congregations of Evangelical and Free Churches across the world, and numerous cultural, scientific or educational organizations, etc.

## 2. CALVINISM AND NEW ENGLAND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

The impact of Calvinism was not just about religious freedom, but on constitutional documents in early America such as the 1647 Laws and Liberties of Massachusetts, the 1658 Puritan Laws, and Liberties, 1780 Massachusetts Constitution amongst others. Also, with the introduction of democracy in America in 1776, there has been a huge encouragement on the right to commerce and property in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe and America. The Puritans in early America didn't completely shift their focus from the moral aspects of the society but also craved for a society where people can access to constitutional documents consisting of all forms of rights such as commerce, property, gender equality, and women emancipation, etc. For instance, Max Weber's thesis of 1905 "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" acknowledged Protestant-Puritan idea as haven spearheaded the course of modern capitalism. It affirmed, "taken together, these represent a mixture of necessary and precipitating conditions which, in conjunction with the moral energy of the Puritans, brought about the rise of modern western capitalism. But if Puritanism provided that vital spark igniting the sequence of change creating industrial capitalism, the latter order, once established, eradicates the specifically religious elements in the ethic which helped to produce it".<sup>5</sup> The rights to commerce or property mean people encourage wealth creation and enabled the government to generate revenue from taxes used for the welfare of the state.

## 3. THE PAPAL REVOLUTION

For Witte, apart from the influence of the Calvinism on the reformation of rights, it is important to mention that the Roman Catholic Church had attempted to reform its concept of rights and Canon Law, in past centuries. The First Papal Revolution of Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) sought to restore the rights of the church and the separation of the piety from the civil rule in line with western values.<sup>6</sup> The actualization of this Papal Revolution failed due to policies of the papacy and rigid structure of the Canon Law. The Council of Trent 1545-1563 didn't also prove successful due to its focus to challenge the revolution of Protestantism on its doctrine rather than the reformation of rights. Also, the Catholic Canon

<sup>4</sup> John Witte, A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights, 2001, Pp. 713.

<sup>5</sup> Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism 1905, translated to English by Talcott Persons 1930. Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, (Introduction) Pp. XVII.

<sup>6</sup> John Witte, A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights, 2001, Pp. 727.





Law in the medieval era focused more on rights of clergies, exemptions of the church from taxes and levies, church symbols and icons, the Eucharist, and all forms of privileges associated with nobility, etc.<sup>7</sup> The focus of the Canon Law did not give much attention to the individual rights of the people in the relating to personal religious interpretation as it was considered as a rebellion against the Vatican in the Case of Martin Luther, John Calvin.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), unlike the previous councils, focused on the theological attitude of the church in respect to the democratic rights of members of the church.<sup>8</sup> Witte believed that the Second Vatican Council endorsement of human rights was to allow the church and people to have the understanding that all human were created with intelligence to make choices and rights.<sup>9</sup> Witte explained, "such rights include the right to life and adequate standards of living, to moral and cultural values, to religious activities, to assembly and association, to marriage and family life, and to various social, political, and economic benefits and opportunities. The Church emphasized the religious rights of conscience, worship, assembly, and education, calling them the "first rights" of any civic order. The Church also stressed the need to balance individual and associational rights, particularly those involving the church, family, and school. Governments everywhere were encouraged to create conditions conducive to the realization and protection of these "inviolable rights" and encouraged to root out every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social distinction, language, or religion".<sup>10</sup>

I believe the focus of these reforms was a great improvement from previous attempts of the Vatican with a focus on so many aspects of rights. It also admonished the government to protect the unhindered rights of persons but, did not purely distance the Church from the State based on the political might of the Vatican. Also, the council also gave rights to the people to gather for worship or express their conscience but did not go in-depth on Biblical moral law or the duties of the priest within the church which were more controlled by the Papacy. The Roman Catholic Reformation of rights in Witte's approach can be commended for its human rights efforts due to the spread of its influence in the 1970s in countries such as Ukraine, Poland, Brazil, the Philippines, Hungary, Chile, Central America, and the Czech Republic, and it helped redefined the focus on rights and freedom by the Vatican.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Catholic human rights reforms by its structure were to preserve the unity of the Church with the alliance to the Vatican. Also, the testimony of Jan Karski a Polish Roman Catholic to President Franklin Roosevelt in 1943 on the killings of Jews during the Holocaust, encouraged western countries to focus more on restoring human dignity after the gross violation of human rights during World War II.

#### 4. THE 1948 UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The establishment of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration was signed in Paris after the atrocities of the First and Second World Wars. This brought a new era to embrace the project of restoring human dignity after the death of millions of people in the wars. The Second World War was characterized by the biggest holocaust in human history with the killings of Jews and great atrocities committed against humanity by the Nazi army. The project of human rights now needs a collaborative effort by both the religious and other

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, Pp. 727.

<sup>8</sup> John Witte, A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights, 2001, Pp. 729.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, Pp. 729.

<sup>10</sup> John Witte, A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights 2001, Pp. 730-731.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, Pp. 731.



social institutions such as; the civil parliament and the 1948 United Nations Human Rights Charter to prevent a repeat of the calamities the World Wars. For instance, the role of Eleanor Roosevelt (the wife of President Franklin Roosevelt) a Protestant who chaired the 1948 United Nations (UN) was significant; because she was a woman who worked with numerous people of various religions and thoughts on the Project. The UN Human Rights Charter embraced absolute freedom of all persons in Article I of the Declaration, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".<sup>12</sup> The purpose of this acknowledgment of basic freedom for all is aimed at preventing a repeat of gross violations of human rights of the World War II and also to promote equal access to rights, thoughts and reason, religious freedom of all citizens of the world.

The 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights influenced other conventions on human rights which sprung up at different times in the twentieth century. Some of which includes: the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political, the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, and the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on human rights. For instance, Witte pointed out that the 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also supported freedom of religion, thoughts and moral education for children in the same repeat text as Article 18 of the 1948 Human Rights Charter, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions".<sup>13</sup>

Freedom of religion, in this case, can be expressed as a personal right of a person or group of persons without compulsion by another. Parents could guide their children in religious beliefs or convictions as long as there are children and this means the children could make independent decisions in their adulthood. The idea of religion, in this case, is opened to all forms of religions in the community which could be expressed at will. It is important to note that the United Nations Charter does not give special consideration for countries with a national religion to disrespect the religious freedom of other people. For instance, countries where a majority of its populace are Christians, Muslims, Buddhist, Hindu, etc., are expected to show consideration to people of other religions in their country. This which means a nation should be able to accommodate people of diverse religions as a way of showing respect to individuals of different religious rights beliefs.

Also, the 1981 Human Rights Declaration recognizes freedom in every sphere of human life in its Article I, which includes non-discrimination of people based on gender or

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<sup>12</sup> The 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1.

<sup>13</sup> John Witte, *A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights* 2001, Pp. 747.

See also, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 19 December 1966 Article 18, The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Article 18.



socio-economic status in the society. Similarly, the 1993 Convention focused to eliminate racism, xenophobia and all forms of intolerance against people. The Convention's Adoption 17 also gives rights to religious expression in any language of choice and the Adoption 22 kicked against violence on those expressing their religious views. Similarly, other conventions which were drafted to adopt the articles of 1948 Human Rights Charter on religious freedom and other rights includes: the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950), the American Convention on Human Rights (1969), and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) etc.<sup>14</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The importance of human rights in this democratic dispensation in most societies today have become a huge revolving task despite the historical influence of religion over the years. This is because religion itself may have tried in its reformation agenda, but still faces challenges especially in cases that concern human rights violations. For instance, Witte believed that socio-religious proselytizing trends should focus on tolerance of people of other beliefs or religions, rather than aggressive faith conversion.<sup>15</sup> I believe this will enable people to decide their religious beliefs and promote the freedom of conscience in accordance with the articles of the 1948 Human Rights Charter. The Golden Rule in the Bible also admonishes all Christians to be tolerant with others as to themselves; "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Mathew 7:12). The respect of religious beliefs is not limited to the same religion, but to all people of diverse religions in other for it to be reciprocal. When tolerance and respect fail to exist in the community, abuse or infringement of the rights and freedom of others are inevitable. Also, some forms of religious intolerance have also been linked by ugly events of human history, apart from the usual violations of human rights which are common to tyrannical governments. For instance, the past centuries have recorded some major conflicts linked to religion such as The French Religious War 1562-1598, Bosnian War 1992-1995, Israeli-Palestine conflict 1948-date, The Northern Ireland Conflicts 1968-1998 and other conflicts in Sudan, Republic of South Sudan, Central African Republic, Neymar, Nigeria, etc. To this, Witte explained, "In some communities, such as the former Yugoslavia, local religious and ethnic rivals, previously kept at bay by a common oppressor, have converted their new liberties into licenses to renew ancient hostilities, with catastrophic results. In other communities, such as Sudan and Rwanda, ethnic nationalism and religious extremism have conspired to bring violent dislocation or death to hundreds of rival religious believers each year, and persecution, false imprisonment, forced starvation, and savage abuses to thousands of others. In other communities, most notably in North America and Western Europe, political secularism and nationalism have combined to threaten a sort of civil denial and death to a number of believers, particularly "sects" and "cults" of high religious temperature or of low cultural conformity. In still other communities, from Asia to the Middle East, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, when in minority contexts, have faced sharply increased restrictions, repression, and, sometimes, martyrdom".<sup>16</sup> This does not contradict the role of religion on human rights project on fairness, equality and the respect of human dignity, but shows that there is still a lot of work to be done on protecting the project of human rights.

<sup>14</sup> John Witte, *A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights* 2001, Pp. 753.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, Pp.765.

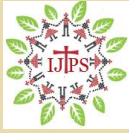
<sup>16</sup> John Witte, *A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights* 2001, Pp.710.



Religious freedom should be considered as the foundation for all other forms of freedom due to its role in society and the attachment of humans to some form of belief. For instance, the notion of love as a moral law in the Decalogue (Holy Bible, Leviticus 19:18), "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I Am the Lord", has propelled Christianity to respect the rights of others relating to religious freedom and other forms of rights which were also a sticking point in early Calvinism. On the other hand, the rise of Islamic religious extremist groups such as the Islamic States, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and other Jihadist groups may also have placed Islam in a high spotlight of intolerance when compared to other religions of the world. Despite these ups and downs, religious freedom could mean religious harmony and tolerance as a way of respecting all other rights persons regardless of their religion. It is also important to mention the role of the Parliament of the World's Religions cannot be ignored since the inception in 1893 in Chicago, due to its positive attitude on religious freedom and tolerance till date. For instance, Gaston Bonet-Maury was a notable Protestant and pastor who was part of the founding members of the Congress. He represented the whole of Christianity; while other religions such as Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, amongst others, were all represented separately.

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## IS IT COHERENT TO CONCEIVE OF GOD AS A FREE, PERSONAL AGENT THAT HUMANITY CAN FREELY INTERACT WITH?

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### ABSTRACT

*How do we conceive of God? How can we understand God's agency? How do we interact with God? Can we say the relationship between God and humanity is one of free inter-personal relations? I argue that the way we conceptualise God demands that we cannot describe God as a free, personal agent or that our relationship with him is free in itself. I analyse what cognitive linguistics has to say about how we understand and assign characteristics to God, all the while measuring these implications with the notion of human and divine free will. I then discuss whether established key characteristics of God are philosophically consistent with cognitive linguistics' suggestions about the method of our conceiving of God. I argue that there are inconsistencies regarding the classical theistic understanding of divine causality and divine qualities which render this understanding of God incoherent. I measure the implications that these suggestions have on the notion of God's free agency. I will not argue for or against the existence of God, but rather comment on the philosophical implications of theological statements about the nature of God and humanity's interaction with God as an abstract concept. I base my understanding of God on a classical theistic foundation. On this understanding God is simple, personal, omni-benevolent, omniscient and omnipotent and can entertain an active relationship with all of His creation. I conclude that this understanding of God is not only internally incoherent, but furthermore literally impossible to accredit to God, since we cannot separate our talk of him from talk of ourselves. This means that we cannot know God, let alone coherently conceive of a 'free' relationship with him.*

**Keywords:** Agency; Classical Theism; Cognitive Linguistics; Free Will; Perfection; Simplesness; Eternity;

### INTRODUCTION

The paper is split into six parts:

How do we conceive of God?

How do we distinguish God from Humanity?

Is it coherent to understand God as an agent based on these cognitive linguistic methods?

If God were an agent, and we can have a relationship with God, are we free?

If God were an agent, is He free? Is it coherent to ascribe classical theistic characteristics to God?

Conclusion: It is problematic to think of god as a classical theistic agent that interacts with us



## 1) HOW DO WE CONCEIVE OF GOD?

Cognitive linguistics provides an invaluable contribution to philosophical theology in demonstrating the impact that language and our embodiment has on conceptualising ourselves, our surroundings, and the idea of the divine and our relationship with the divine.

The core thesis of cognitive linguistics is the idea of embodied cognition, that “human thinking is dependent upon the sensorimotor capacities available to humans....the same neuro-anatomical capacities that allow us to see, hear, move around, and grasp objects also shape our conceptual structures”.<sup>1</sup> A key idea in cognitive linguistics is the conceptual metaphor theory, which states that “we understand a target topic such as love in terms of a source domain such as nutrients and magnetism (her love sustains him, he is attracted to her)”.<sup>2</sup> From that source domain we then understand meaning through conceptual metaphors which shape the conclusion we try to reach. When it comes to conceptualising the nature of the divine, it is necessary to identify what kind of relationship is possible between God and humanity. How do we understand a super-human concept like God? On a cognitive linguistic basis, this relationship is codified in either literal or metaphorical ‘mapping’ from human experience to thinking of the divine. Since “meaning depends upon people’s embodied cognitive capacities, cultural interaction and hence meaning is... [anthropogenic]”.<sup>3</sup> The question arises whether a metaphorical basis for understanding God is problematic for a classical theistic conception of God as an inter-relational personal agent.<sup>4</sup>

## 2) HOW DO WE DISTINGUISH GOD FROM HUMANITY?

The problem of conceiving of God is a problem not of what the language we use is, but rather how a concept such as agency is applied to God: “the real issue is what we consider dignified or fitting for God to be like”.<sup>5</sup> The question here is one concerning what kind of cognitive linguistic terms (mapping) we use in referring to God, and what the implications of these categories have on the understanding and coherence of the God of classical theism’s character. God-talk may be ‘anthropogenic’ but that does not see the end of the debate about how we conceptualise the divine, and what limitations that the nature of this conceptualisation demand from God. ‘Metaphorical’ and ‘literal’ mapping enable us to differentiate between what kind of agents are involved. If God talk had a literal foundation, then agency is necessarily existent for Humanity and for God. However, with metaphorical mapping it is not the case that agency is necessary for both humanity and God. If our conceiving of God is purely based on metaphorical mapping, then God’s literal agency is not confirmed or necessary. In order to avoid disregarding God’s agency, the theologian should find a way to reveal God-talk is somewhat literal rather than a purely metaphorical mapping of anthropogenic principles.

In, *Theology in the flesh* Sanders claims that there is not a significant limitation in conceptualising God’s agency based on metaphorical mapping from humanity onto God. He writes that we can have a literal base for our understanding to be pinned upon. For example,

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders, John ‘Introduction to the topical issue “cognitive linguistics and theology” Open theology 2018, 4: 541-544 pp 541

<sup>2</sup> Sanders, John ‘Introduction to the topical issue “cognitive linguistics and theology” Open theology 2018, 4: 541-544 pp 543

<sup>3</sup> Masson, Robert ‘Conceiving God, literal and figurative prompt for a more tectonic distinction’, Open Theology, 2018 4:136-157 pp 136

<sup>4</sup> Sanders, John ‘Introduction to the topical issue “cognitive linguistics and theology” Open theology 2018, 4: 541-544 pp 541

<sup>5</sup> Sanders, John, “*Theology in the flesh*” Fortress press, USA, 2016 pp 250



there is no metaphorical mapping in the statement that God is love. However, Sanders' argument in support of this conclusion is circular, presupposing God's agency. Sanders states that even though the statement 'God cares' is anthropogenic; it is not purely metaphorical. He compares a statement like 'God cares' to the phrase that the sky is blue. Both are literal and non figurative, though they are anthropogenic in regard to how we access colour. He reinforces this by referring to how colour is not a property of any object but rather a product of relating factors between humanity and the 'colourful' object such as: lighting conditions, the colour cones in the retina, the reflective quality of an object, and the response by the brain from the neural connection between the retina and the brain. He writes that when we say the "colour of the sky is blue", we attribute to the sky what our visual processes allow us to see. That is, from a human perspective, the sky is blue, but it is not a metaphorical concept since it is based on literal human neuro-anatomical functions. "Similarly, we can say that from a human perspective God is an agent and God is love, but these are not conceptual metaphors for most theists because they believe that God is actually an agent".<sup>6</sup> However, to understand God on a classical theistic understanding requires a knowledge of God's personal and literal agency. The analogy of the sky is limited since the sky is not deemed as an agent, so this analogy cannot demonstrate how we can conceive of God's agency. God-talk inherently presupposes metaphorical mapping that construes 'space and time as a container in which all creatures exists and God is outside or beyond the container'. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, God-talk always will use the metaphorical since all 'categories are containers'. Even using the idea of 'being' itself is part of this container.<sup>7</sup>

### 3) IS IT COHERENT TO UNDERSTAND GOD AS AN AGENT BASED ON THESE COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC METHODS?

Sanders does not successfully demonstrate how God's literal agency is accessible to humanity separately from our experience of literal physical human agency. It is clearly necessary that such a contrast can be made between supernatural agency and physical human agency (in order to permit that God has a literal agency that is different from literal human agency). On cognitive linguistic terms, 'mapping' the qualities of supernatural agency to the qualities of a physical human agency is undeniably metaphorical mapping. Sanders' argument does not successfully demonstrate how God-talk is thought of and conceptualised through literal not metaphorical mapping. Literal meaning may be defined as "a meaning which is not dependent on a figurative extension from another meaning".<sup>8</sup> We may have a figurative core in a term such as "I love you" which is an "expression that entails a lover, a beloved and a relationship. The words do not depend upon other domains or meanings for its own meaning. The literal idea of love however, is skeletal in meaning and it is figurative language which puts meat on the bones".<sup>9</sup> Without a way to understand God's literal agency that doesn't involve metaphorical mapping, we cannot have a non-figurative base for our understanding of God's agency. This inability to conceive of God's literal agency starts an avalanche of problems for classical theism. Without literal agency, we cannot apply figurative language to "put meat on the bones" of "skeletal" non-figurative language; we cannot convincingly apply characteristics to God if we cannot ascertain his literal agency.

<sup>6</sup> John Sanders, "*Theology in the flesh*" Fortress press, USA, 2016 pp 265

<sup>7</sup> John Sanders, "*Theology in the flesh*" Fortress press, USA, 2016 pp 256

<sup>8</sup> Dancygrier and Sweetser, cited in John Sanders, "*Theology in the flesh*" Fortress press, USA, 2016 pp 264

<sup>9</sup> John Sanders, "*Theology in the flesh*" Fortress press, USA, 2016 pp 264



Furthermore, does that mean His identity is forever changing and subjective? This seems to undermine any definite dogma and theological teaching about the nature of God, making God an anti-realist concept, clearly at odds with our established classical theism.

Given these cognitive linguistic methods and implications for our understanding of God, Sanders implies that the best we can do is assuming agency, and that this isn't necessarily problematic. He writes that in the same way we talk of "Fr. Peter being a good shepherd", even though he is literally a priest and not a literal shepherd, we can similarly conceive of a literal divine agency. This is metaphorical understanding with a literal basis in Fr Peter's agency. Similarly, a phrase like "God is father" is not literal in the sense that God "Impregnates a Goddess in order to have a child", but is metaphorical with a literal base with the assumption of agency. Yet this still does not explain how divine agency is accessible to us in any way that does not totally depend on a metaphorical mapping from human agency to be able to conceive of Godly agency. The only way that the language of God can be literal is to assume an existent yet circular belief in God's agency. However, Sanders' point here is not only circular but fatally reductive in that even this assumption has no literal accessible content so it is not clear what we are even assuming.<sup>10</sup>

Sanders also states that cognitive linguistics demonstrates how it is a default position for humans to think of God as a personal agent, so we should assume literal divine agency, which is a common idea in classical theistic literature: "Whereas theologians work to place ontological distance between Gods and finite beings our minds cannot avoid the use of natural ontological categories".<sup>11</sup> From this, Sanders and others do not consider that comparing human agency to divine agency is problematic for our understanding of God. Rather, he just creates another circular argument that we should conceive of God as a personal agent, because that is what we already are physically programmed to do. Sanders draws on an evolutionary phenomenon called 'agency detection device' ( ADD ) to support this idea. It is suggested that this is a psychological process through which the human brain instinctively, yet falsely, detects agency in an object that has none. For example, our ancestors may have seen a flickering shadow and erroneously prescribed that shadow with anthropomorphic agency. Since ADD gave an evolutionary advantage to our ancestors, the phenomenon has stuck with us today.<sup>12</sup> However, this point, contrary to Sanders' intentions, all the more demonstrates that there is no literal reference for conceptualising the phrase 'God'. ADD supports the field of metaphorical rather than literal mapping of the concept of God, so Sanders still doesn't appreciate how cognitive linguistics provides dangerous ramifications for God's personal agency.

Must a contrast between human and divine agency be necessary? Perhaps understanding God as a projection of amalgamated human characteristics provides the key that there is some similarity and relationship between God and humanity? Some may argue that God-talk is literal since we refer from literal human source domains, but this denies God transcendence and an individual agency. We may map literal domains onto God to aid an understanding, but without a literal understanding of what the agency of God is, these predicates are unhinged. Nevertheless, we still cannot convincingly or coherently conceive of God's agency.

Some may claim that perhaps this very notion of the unavailability of access into the idea of divine agency may actually help understand and perhaps even confirm that nature of

<sup>10</sup> John Sanders, *Theology in the flesh* Fortress press, USA, 2016 pp 264

<sup>11</sup> Tremplin, cited in John Sanders, *Theology in the flesh* Fortress press, USA, 2016 pp 262

<sup>12</sup> John Sanders, *Theology in the flesh* Fortress press, USA, 2016 pp 264





God's personal agency as separate and transcendent in comparison to human agency. However, this is still a major problem for coherence within classical theism. To describe the literal unavailability of God's agency enables the idea of God to literally have transcendence, however this kind of agency requires that God be a sort of Pantheistic, a-personal, non-relational force, not a personal and inter-relational agent. I am inclined to agree with this conclusion. However, certainly this latter type of personal, inter-relational agent is the type of God described by classical theism.

The idea of Jesus perhaps helps to provide a literal basis for God, in that Jesus is a tool used to make God relatable and knowable to humanity. Jesus was a literal person and also was believed to literally be God. However, this still does not answer the question of how we understand divine agency, as the only agency we can conceive of Jesus' is his human agency. We cannot jump the epistemic distance between humanity and the God of classical theism. The consequence of this epistemic distance is that we cannot rely on our very own understanding to confirm that God has agency. This lack of assurance does not necessitate whether the classical theistic God exists or not (that debate is not explicitly related to this discussion). Rather, this 'lack' directs attention to the claim that it is not coherent or us to conceive of divine agency. It furthermore raises the question as to what attributes, if any, that we may be able to we can coherently attribute to the God of classical theism.

#### **4) IF GOD WERE AN AGENT, AND WE CAN HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, ARE WE FREE?**

The figure of Jesus is also an expression of a core idea widely upheld within Classical theism: intersubjectivity and a personal relationship between God and humanity. Jesus suffered for humanity and by the hands of humans. This represents how God suffers and sacrificed himself for his beloved creation, humanity. A core premise to classical theism is that God freely chose that it is our free choice to believe in God; our choices matter and have a personal effect on God and affect our own eschatological result. To have any type of inter-personal relationship as described by classical theism, there must be free will on both sides.

However, if we assert that God is the primary cause of everything in existence, that necessitates humanity's secondary causality. This idea is key to the God of classical theism, as expressed in Aquinas' metaphysics that humanity "exercise[s] secondary causality only in response to the antecedent divine gift of existence and activity".<sup>13</sup> However, this causal relation creates a rather unsettling problem concerning the nature of the relationship between God and his creation (on classical theistic terms). If we accept divine causal primacy and humanly secondary causality (as a classical theism usually has to), this intersubjectivity between God and his creation is sacrificed. This sacrifice leads us to some disgruntling theological conclusions that are incoherent with a classical theistic God. Intersubjectivity implies a "freely chosen reciprocal relation between two subjects of experience".<sup>14</sup> For an intersubjective "relation there can be no distinction between primary or secondary causality in their relation to one another in order to set up a...relationship".<sup>15</sup> This clearly presents a

<sup>13</sup> Joseph A. Bracken, *'Divine-Human intersubjectivity and the problem of evil'* Open Theology 2018 4: 60-70 pp 60

<sup>14</sup> Joseph A. Bracken, *'Divine-Human intersubjectivity and the problem of evil'* Open Theology 2018 4: 60-70 pp 60

<sup>15</sup> Joseph A. Bracken, *'Divine-Human intersubjectivity and the problem of evil'* Open Theology 2018 4: 60-70 pp 61



deeply-cutting ontological problem for theology. Intersubjectivity denotes a causal co-responsibility of God and Humanity towards the happenings of the world. If we deny this intersubjectivity, then how do humans freely exercise causal power in their own life? Furthermore, this would make God totally responsible for all evil, suffering and damnation.<sup>16</sup> If God were to allow humanity unlimited freedom of choice (and not intervene so that they follow their divinely predestined final cause) then God would not be all powerful, since there is a part of God's character which is powerless over those creatures.

Yet, for humanity to have a totally free choice requires that God is not free to choose for himself or able to have causal primacy, which compromises the classical theistic understanding of God and his relationship with creation. Evil is acceptable by classical theism through humanity's original sin, stemming from their God-given free will and choice to reject God. However, we cannot coherently suggest both human freedom and divine freedom can harmoniously exist as suggested by a classical theistic understanding. The concept of Freedom is an absolute. It is vital that freedom is absolute when referring to the freedom of a 'perfect' divine being and our relationship with Him.

##### **5) IF GOD WERE AN AGENT, IS HE FREE? IS IT COHERENT TO ASCRIBE CLASSICAL THEISTIC CHARACTERISTIC TO GOD AND CALL HIM FREE?**

Problems referring to the legitimacy of divine personal agency and the impact of our causal relationship with God on freedom aside, it is pertinent to discuss whether the classical theistic traits of God are internally consistent. What impact might they have on ideas such as Godly and creaturely freedom?

Arguably the two most important characteristics of God are divine simplicity and divine eternity (as described by Aquinas). Aquinas writes that divine simpleness is God's core nature: "what gives divinity the necessity peculiar to it is the formal fact that God's nature is nothing other than its own existence, not composed or a substance of anything else". For classical theism, the understanding of God's necessary existence is non-negotiable. Hand in hand with divine simpleness is the idea of God's eternal nature: "[simple] essence cannot be limited by quantity nor by genus or species, since its essence -to be- overflows both genus and species. So what is simple is also unlimited, or...infinite". It is these two core concepts that give the God of classical theism his proposed distinction over humanity: "formal features [of eternity and simplicity] secure the proper distinction of God from the world, thus determining the kind of being said to be just and merciful."<sup>17</sup>

However, delving deeper into the concept of divine eternity reveals problems with regarding God as eternal, simple and free. Aquinas writes that God's eternity is evident since "what is, is now, the one who makes things to be will be primarily and essentially present". Furthermore, "to be finite is bound up with the possibility for change which is in turn bound up with temporality and spatiality". God must have eternity, since he necessarily must (actually and not potentially) exist at every moment: "to have any potentiality at all is, for Aquinas, an imperfection...God is pure actuality"<sup>18</sup> However, this denial of potentiality (necessary for God's simplicity and eternity) also requires that He has no choice in any matter that He may or may not be creating. If God doesn't create something, then He had the potential to create but chose not to. However, God must have all actualities at all moments

<sup>16</sup> Joseph A. Bracken, 'Divine-Human intersubjectivity and the problem of evil' Open Theology 2018 4: 60-70

<sup>17</sup> David B. Burrell, *Distinguishing God from the World* cited in Language, meaning and God, edited by Brian Davies OP, Wipf & Stock, USA, 2010 pp 78

<sup>18</sup> Peter Vardy, 'The puzzle of God' HarperCollins, London, 1999 pp 33



and no potentialities, so He could not choose to create or not to create lest He have any 'lack' or imperfection. If God has no choice but create, then God is not a free agent, nor can He be praise-worthy for his creation. On this analysis, we cannot say that God is eternal and omniscient or omnipotent. He cannot be perfect and be free, since freedom implies potentiality which denies eternal divine actuality and simpleness.

Moreover, delving into the notion of God's simpleness and perfection brings us to the widely agreed idea of God's omni-benevolence. Yet this also has severe implications on the notion of a free divine agency: God cannot be omni-benevolent and free. If God is omni-benevolent, He must always do the most good and most loving thing at all times (He must not even have the potential to do otherwise). This characteristic leaves no room for eternal divine freedom or simpleness. On a classical theistic understanding, His own nature (for e.g. omni-benevolence) denies Him the actuality of freedom to not be omni-benevolent, so He cannot be wholly simple. He is limited. Yet if He is not simple, then He is not the God of classical theistic understanding. Furthermore, if God is unsurpassably free then He cannot be omni-benevolent, since this would require the ability to have the actual choice to not do the 'most good' thing, which would not be an option for a being that could only have the omni-benevolent reality as its actualities.

Drawing from this point, maintaining the idea of God's simpleness and eternity require Him to be wholly good whilst also being wholly evil (since he must be a perfect being and entertain all characteristics in actuality at every moment so that he cannot have any potentialities or imperfections). However, actually having all these contrary traits, such as absolute evil and absolute goodness, creates a logical impossibility of how a being can exist over time and still be numerically identical throughout time whilst having the total actuality of every single possibility of character. How can one being wholly be quality 'A' and also necessarily wholly be quality 'B', if their existing at the same time and place are contradictions of each other? How can we conceive of such a being?

## **6) CONCLUSION: IT IS PROBLEMATIC TO THINK OF A GOD AS A CLASSICAL THEISTIC AGENT THAT INTERACTS WITH US**

To conclude, I have argued that cognitive linguistics demonstrates how it is incoherent to conceive of divine agency on classical theistic terms. From this point, I argued how we cannot conceive of a relationship with such a being. Similarly, I highlight limitations in our understanding of the God of classical theism's character, referring to incoherences regarding free will and intersubjectivity, causality, divine simpleness, perfection and eternity.

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## ONTOLOGY AND METAPHISICS: BEING AND PERSON - GOD, AND MAN

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### ABSTRACT

*This article presents the philosophical and Christian representation of man understood as a rational, conscious and free being in continuous dialogue with the peers and with God, his Creator. The central idea of Christian thinking has always been the man seen as a religious, rational, free and conscious being. Man as an open representation of openness to Being (Dasein), to Absolute. Therefore, for him (as existence) being is both the basis of self-appreciation, acquired through transcendence from his world into a world (supposed to be) beyond, and a primary axiological reality; he appears to belong to his world - being a centric value in its value system. The key concepts specific to the Christian religion are: God the Holy Trinity, the creator of the world and man out of nothing (ex nihilo), man bears the image of God and is destined for holiness. The concepts: BEING AND THE PERSON – GOD, AND MAN are part of a research the philosophers have sought to deepen it continually. They have always associated the appearance of their existence with religious, mythical, metaphysical life.*

**Keywords:** ontology; existence; person; philosophical; metaphysics;

### INTRODUCTION

In ontology, the term of existence is related to the term of being. To the extent that we define the being, as something added to and over man and over the world in which he directly exists and acts (as agent and creative subject), man is- as Heidegger suggested – existence itself. Respectively, that ontic entity that comes into relationship with the being through creation and value encompassment.

Man represents openness to Being (*Dasein*), to Absolute. Therefore, for him (as existence) being is both the basis of self-appreciation, acquired through transcendence from his world into a world (supposed to be) beyond, and a primary axiological reality; he appears to belong to his world - being a centric value in its value system.

The notions of ancient Greek philosophy in the development of Christian theology have been designed to increase the level of understanding of Divine Revelation, or God's revelation. If Christian ontology had been conceived in the terms of the created and uncreated Bible, Christian ontology needed the distinction between being in the eternal space or in the cosmological one, distinction without which the doctrine of the Holy Trinity could not have been defined.

The Platonic doctrine, and also some of the philosophical doctrines of Hellenism, although rationally articulated as a structure, lacks a foundation, such as revelation is for the believer. In the case of these doctrines, from the beginning it's been noticed either their mythical foundations or their completion through a metaphysics that engages in mysticism.



Plato conceives, for the first time in the history of human thinking, the idea of an existence other than the physical-mathematical one, namely an ideal existence, that exists itself by being thought at. At the beginning of the 7th Dialogue of the Republic, considered his masterpiece, Plato presents a myth, entered into the consciousness of humanity as the myth of the cave, which can be considered a transfigured synthesis of his entire philosophy. It is a kind of theoretical map that allows us to identify the fundamental coordinates on which we will explore the varied and complex view. For Plato *the Idea* is an essence, a real existence, which remains in eternity identical to itself. Speaking of Ideas, Plato calls them sometimes divine essences and sometimes representations.

It was impossible to think the whole, in the absence of a founding term, as well as the development in the absence of a goal of deployment. The ways to reach these limiting terms will have been specific to the various schools, but what remains to this day is man's temptation to bring the world closer to understanding by bringing it as close as possible to his explanatory capacities, even at the level at which questions can be formulated at a given time. In such a context, doctrines will have been developed, such as that of Heraclitus, which aspires as one of the first metaphysics, or of Plato, which articulate a first metaphysics of philosophy, even if only Aristotle school will call it as such.

The core of Platonic philosophy, especially the metaphysical problem, is beneficial in Christian doctrine precisely through the possibility of providing a first level of knowledge: the world can be known because it is rational and it is as such because it was built by a rational Creator. Thus, the man's possibility of knowing is real. In the absence of this possibility the discovery of God would be meaningless, but the supreme validation of this possibility is not offered by Platonism.

The question: THE BEING AND THE PERSON - GOD AND MAN, is part of a research the philosophers have sought to deepen continually. They have always associated the appearance of their existence with religious, mythical, metaphysical life. From a scientific point of view, there have been cosmological attempts since the first scientific approaches (for example: Greek philosophers). To a large extent Thales' philosophy in Miletus is a systematic cosmology. In general, philosophy is concerned with the problem of the beginning of the universe because it seeks the meaning of life. Whether it is the metaphysical tryings or not, attention is directed to the beginning, which makes possible the reconstruction of the present.

Metaphysical thinking operates with a univalent logic, according to the classical principles of logic: the principle of identity (a certain object is itself and nothing else), the principle of non-contradiction (an object cannot be in contradiction with itself), but in spite of all these, the problem of defining infinity or absolute remains open.

## 1. THE RELATIONSHIP BEING - EXISTENCE IN PHILOSOPHICAL ONTOLOGY

The question of being and its existence is one of the foundations of ontology, and the need to approach it comes first of all from the need to explain to the human condition the relationship between Being as such and its being. Philosophy is a way of thinking, a way to put and solve those problems that arise from the various variations of the interrogation on the being of the world in which we live or (Being as being).

Heidegger, claims that in relation to being (Being as being) there are three prejudices that have become normative in philosophy<sup>1</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, *Ființă și timp (Being and Time)*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2003



1. Something must first be, exist, and then we can talk about it. Strange, but also non-existence is a being, because we cannot conceive it as not existing. No matter what we think and talk, no matter what we are talking about and what we mean, the being is permanently involved.

2. Being is not definable; being a category, it cannot be defined by the usual procedure of the proximal genus and the specific difference. On the contrary, it defines all other things.

3. Being is something understandable in itself. The existence of things cannot be disputed.

Being a being does not exist in the absence of its positioning in the mind and in the subsequent intellectual activity. When we talk about being, we talk about the identity between it and thinking. Explicitly, thinking is what establishes the being as the being is the one that gives consistency to thought.

The interpretation of man as a fact of the exclusive possibility to reason, departs from the essential content of the ontological problem, directs the problem to the space of axiological judgments and becomes the starting point of the axiocratic metaphysics. The identification of existence with the fact of thinking is the foundation of an axiomatic, so conventional, metaphysics, because the causal connection of beings with Being always appears logically more pronounced consecutive; that is because by asking the ontological question in the classical manner: *what is what makes beings exist*, we are already a priori in a field of causality which presupposes that Being is the cause of beings. „*The phenomenology of religions aims to study what religious phenomena, despite their diversity, have in common. Their common denomination is the "inner meaning" that can only be accessed by associating the historical knowledge of facts with "infusion sympathy", "empathy", "sensitivity" to religious facts*”<sup>2</sup>.

The Aristotelian scholastic interpretation of this question has operated in the field of analogy and superiority, the difference being interpreted on a scale of dimensions within the absolute- relative, unlimited- limited antithesis. “*The Being summarizes the eternal causes or reason, the beings' logos - the existence of beings is identified with the correspondence between objects and their eternal reasoning, and their absolute notions, and their truth is defined as the coincidence between the notion and the meaningful object (adequatio rei et intellectus). This coincidence is realized and manifested in the logical judgment, that is, within the possibility of reasoning, therefore the definition of existence is identified with the fact of thinking.*”<sup>3</sup> To this the Aristotelian manner is also added, in the sense of determining an anteriority relationship of Being to beings and of conceiving the possible relation between the whole and the part, in the sense of attributing the absolute anteriority to the whole in the detriment of what is considered to be part.

From the beginning, the ontological approach was under the sign of the negative imposed by the conceptual boundaries. Among the traits of being, the conveniences of eternity: atemporality, impassing, immutability are apophatic features, those traits which, in the sense of logical coherence, attest to the existence of a being which can exist only under these signs of boundlessness. The convenient features of the unit: continuous, full, indivisible, homogeneous, complete, perfect, round, combined with the negative traits of

<sup>2</sup> Ion Cordoneanu, *Mircea Eliade și semnificația antropologică a simbolismului religios (Mircea Eliada and the anthropological significance of religious symbolism)*, în *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, No. 15, 2006, p.25

<sup>3</sup> Christos Yannaras, *Persoană și Eros (Person and Eros)*, Anastasia, Bucharest, 2000, p 25



eternity, can enjoy positive comprehensible representations in a geometric spirit. Their negativity applies to that sensory evidence that give the positive notions of the current language. *“In order to be metaphysical, therefore, in order to be thought of as a being, the being must be admitted as unborn and imperishable, unique and in perfect identity with itself, and in all of this as limited. But not limited to staying in a space that is more than she, not to be, in order to be able to think of something that, besides being, would limit it.”*<sup>4</sup> The being of metaphysics is one, and besides, it cannot stand next to it (besides, it is meaningless words on this horizon), but also because one is, as such, bounded in its thinking. This explains why thinking is one thing to be. We already have two terms that constitute ontology. *„The Greek philosophy was conscious of the human impossibility to overcome the limits of one's own existence. Thus, for Plato, "we do not enjoy anything in the knowledge of the divine through the intercession of our knowledge" (Parmenide, 134e). The idea that human existence is determined within certain limits and that these limits are of knowledge and, implicitly, of language, we will find it in contemporary philosophy as a subject of meditation and for postmodern thinkers”*<sup>5</sup>.

Ontology could not and still cannot be conceived but through the perspective of being-existence. But depending on two terms, ontology was in a problematic situation, but it was this very problematic state that provided the concept: *it could only be constituted but in a relationship*, but it had to be such that its terms did not restrict each other. To maintain the relationship, overcoming the difficulty contained in it, Anaximander had appealed to the negative appointment of being, which, once again, both in historical and systematic order, had a groundbreaking role: But the gesture only created the space of ontology, not the ontology itself.<sup>6</sup>

Ontology, the science of being, or the discourse of being, can only be constituted in the open space by the a-peiron apophatism, the name set to sit at the opening, rather pointing than merely explaining, and yet in a suggestion of the whole alterity, negatively determining the being. This is where the ontological approach started, as we know it today. It is the first step, the creation of the universe of discourse about being, and, the former, is already negative. But its negativity, as in the Heraclitic game mentioned, far from enhancing the comprehension of being, is necessary because by this first denial contained in *apeiron* we find out the existence of being. Being is susceptible to bearing infinity of attributes, but they fail to exhaust their meaning. Or, each predicate thus becomes infinite, coextensive as the subject being<sup>7</sup>.

The attribute, which in the natural space of origin was a finite one, now reaches an infinite category, precisely in this, denying its sense of origin. We see that in every way construction apophatic denial occurs, its purpose being to overcome the level of significance possessed terms in their area of birth, generation. In the first way, the apophatic construction leads to intelligibility based on the interdependence relationship - the contradiction that exists between the formal and the material ontology. In the second one the apophatic intelligibility is accomplished by breaking the finite texture of the space in which the term (used here in a positive sense) had been generated. Both apophatic modes pertains to

<sup>4</sup> Gh. Vlăduțescu, *Deschideri către o posibilă ontologie (Openings to a possible ontology)*, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1987, p 90

<sup>5</sup> Ion Cordoneanu, *Creație și întrupare. Teoria Logosului de la Ioan Teologul la Atanasie cel Mare (Creation and incarnation. The Logos Theory from John the Theologian to Athanasius the Great)*, Lumen 2006, p. 37

<sup>6</sup> Gh. Vlăduțescu, *Deschideri către o posibilă ontologie (Openings to a possible ontology)*, p 93-94

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p 133



ontological construction, so the way they are made surprise by being undefinable mental categories established in the year of existence, of being determined. The philosophical apophatic relates to the very possibility of being ontology, thus not describing how absolute is itself.

If Anaximander will pave the way, two thinkers will mark space ontology: on the one hand will be Parmenides, who will postulate that being equivalent to being thought, who will describe first being using possibilities dual of apophatics: denial forever and the positivity for uniqueness, and on the other would be Heraclitus, the one who, in a first sense, opposed to Parmenidenism, precisely through the play of his fire will more closely determine the relationship between the immutable being and existence in the continuous game of change, but the change that bears the name of becoming, because its measure is generated by the being.

## 2. THE RELATIONSHIP BEING - EXISTENCE IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

The truth about God, which we discover in the pages of the Holy Scriptures, shows that everything that exists is the work of his love, and that in every part of the universe is present his "life - the uncreated energies" through which all are led and is heading for the ultimate goal. Modern physics claims that matter is condensed energy.

God in relation to the world is transcendent and immanent, principle and purpose of himself and of the world: "The first and the last ..." (Isaiah 44: 6, 41, 4); Creator and Redeemer, in whom all are ordained and in which all are known through the power and work of the HOLY SPIRIT.

The name of Yahweh given to God in the sense of being is a very precise reference to this undefined dimension of the sacred; and this because being itself does not allow the association of any attribute to a particular subject. The apophatic fact is that the essential name for God was eternal, yet bringing to metaphysics, which also supports the act of "legitimizing our power to encompass it without knowing it."<sup>8</sup>

In Christian theology, every being characterized by reason, will and freedom, through the responsibility of his deeds, is a person. With its creation, man acquires personality, in person is embodied the ontology of nature, nature, of the species to which it belongs because: "the common and universal are attributed to the particular ones that are under them. Common is the being, as a species, and a particular HYPOSTASIS. It is special not because it has a part of nature, because it has no part of it, but it is private in number, for example: the individual. The hypostases are different in number and not by nature. The being is asserted by the hypostasis, because the being is perfect in each of the hypostases of the same species. That is why the hypostases do not differ from one another in terms of being, but in terms of accidents, which are characteristic traits. Characteristic traits, however, belong to the hypostasis and not to the flesh. The hypostasis defines: Being with accidents. That is why the hypostasis possesses the common with the individual and the existence itself. The being, however, does not exist in itself, but is considered to be hypostasis"<sup>9</sup>.

God is the "being" because he is a Person, that is, His existence does not depend on anything, not even His Being or Nature, because His Being or Nature does not make His existence obligatory. His absolute will and liberty is realized as love and tremendous

<sup>8</sup> Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, *Deschideri către o posibilă ontologie (Openings to a possible ontology)*, p 79

<sup>9</sup> Sfântul Ioan Damaschin, *Dogmatica (Dogmatics)*, Bucharest, 2001, p. 124-125





communion: "God is love" (1 John 4:16), so the divine meaning of Divine Existence is "BE LOVE": "what is constituted in His personal existence, in the Trinity of Personal Hypostasis, which makes the Divine Being, Divine Nature or Divine Being, is a life of love, that is, free of any necessity ..."<sup>10</sup>.

In order to correctly understand God's "be", for God is, "... the Trinity in unity and unity in the Trinity ..."<sup>11</sup>, the notions must be clearly explained: SUBSTANCE, ESSENCE, NATURE, OUSIA, HYPOSTAS, PROSOPON, PERSON.

The concept of person (gr. *prosopon*) in Platonic thinking is not ontological, because the soul, which ensures the existence of the human being, is not permanently connected to the concrete person, even if he lives eternally through another body, reincarnating at the opposite is the Aristotelian thinking as regards the soul and the eternity of man, but here too the person is not ontological, even if the soul is indissolubly tied to the concrete, the individual persists only during the duration of his psychosomatic formation, his existence ending in tragically with death. Thus, in ancient Greek thinking the ontology of the human person is inaccessible: "... *in spite of the multiplicity of beings, being is a unity; concrete creatures ultimately reduce their being to the necessary relationship, their affinity with the one being; therefore, we must clarify as "non-being" any otherness or non-continuity, since they are not necessarily related to the one being ... nor can God evade this ontological unity ... He is bound to the world, ... whether as the Stoics' logos or as an emanation ...*"<sup>12</sup>, the world - the cosmos -, mirroring and being full of divine splendor, so no relationship between hypostas (hypostasis) and person (prosopon) is possible.

The etymological person comes from the Greek (prosopon) – front, exterior, mask, role played in theater, expressed in Latin by the word "persona". Its very original content was understood as a direct reporting or determination of a relationship.<sup>13</sup>

Explaining the terminology of God highlights the ontological foundation of the person, so the terms: ousia, essence, being, indicate the background to the common nature of several individuals, of the same species, which makes it a thing and not something else, or reality with existence itself, because there is no abstract essence or being, but existent in certain individuals of the same species.

At Aristotle the essence is thoughtful and abstract. He uses the term "being" (ousia) both in the sense of a being that subsists as an individual and in the sense of a common being that is observed in many individuals; (prooti ousia) or concrete being, for the first meaning (first being), and the term second being (deutera ousia) for the second meaning. But this conception gives the possibility of confusing being with hypostasis, or with its individual subsistence when it is not clear which meaning is used.

The Greeks designate, by themselves, what exists in general and not something that is animated, just. The Being was assimilated with a series of distinctive terms: One, Good, God, Absolute. Being determines existence, and existence is the mode of manifestation of the being, they are only for theology at a starting point because we will see later what will be the mutation that the Christian thinking of the fourth century will produce in the conceptualization of this relationship.

<sup>10</sup> Christos Yannaras - *Abecedar al credinței (Albceder of faith)*, transl. by Rev. Dr. C-tin Coman, Bizantină, Bucharest, 1996, p.78

<sup>11</sup> Sfântul Ioan Scărarul, *Scara Raiului (The ladder of heaven)*, XXV 14, în Romanian Philocaly. Vol. IX, Bucharest, 1980, p. 302

<sup>12</sup> Ioanis Zizoulaslas - *Ființa Ecclesială (The Ecclesial Being)*, Bizantină-Bucharest 2000, p. 23- 24

<sup>13</sup> Christos Yannaras, *Persoană și Eros (Persona and Eros)*, Anastasia, Bucharest 2000, p. 21



The relationships analyzed in this ontological scheme are valid only in the sphere of divinity. It is as if what was called ontology in Greek philosophy becomes transcendence in theology. The names can only signify outward manifestations of the divine being, in the same apophatic sense in which, although positive as determinants, they confess their conception to a space of intelligible creation, thus subjected to perishability, and, applied to the divine being, become apophatic by reference to infinite. *"We say that godliness is neither soul nor mind ... neither order, nor size, nor smallness ... neither power nor light, neither life nor life. There is no being, no age, no time, no spiritual touch. There is no one, no unity, no divinity, no goodness, no other of ours of known existence ... nor do I know her existence as existence. There is no word for her, neither name nor knowledge. It is neither an affirmation nor a denial of it. For it is above all affirmation, as what is the sole cause of all; and above all negation, as the one that overcomes all that is simply unleashed by everything and beyond."*<sup>14</sup>

*"When I say God, I understand the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"* writes St. Gregory of Nazianzus<sup>15</sup>, laying the foundation of theological thinking on the personal-community aspect. The definition of the relationship between being and people (hypostases) has led to polemic alliances among the Fathers of the fourth century. The problem arose from the absence of terms that would be able to designate the two aspects of being. The Aristotelian terms were taken over, but the mode of retrieval determined a change in the primary meanings by transfiguring them.

In the "Categories", Aristotle defines the terms as follows: *"Substance, principally, first and foremost, is one that does not say about any subject, nor is it in a subject, such as a certain man or a certain horse. Instead, the second species is called the species in which the first and second substances are subsumed, as well as the genus of these species, such as a man of a species of man species, the kind of species being the animal: that is, they are called second substances, namely man and the beast."*<sup>16</sup>

**In today's theological terminology we identify the raw substances with individuals and second substances with the being.**

Regarding the divine being and how to be it, we defined the raw substances, the most concretely loaded from the perspective of the theological experience, as hypostasis, as individualizations, because that fathers were aware that *"we cannot know what God is, but He exists because He revealed Himself - in the history of salvation - as Father, Son and Spirit."*<sup>17</sup> In this endeavor, the Fathers have sought to emphasize what can be experienced, and this is just the person because no one is related to essence, being or *ousia*, but the relationship can only exist between two compatible terms of relationship, thus between two hypostasis. *"Latin philosophy takes nature first into consideration and then moves to the agent; Greek philosophy first takes note of the agent and then passes through him to find nature. Latins think the person as a way (of existence) of nature; Greeks think of nature as the content of the person."*<sup>18</sup> The specific approach of the Byzantines is the thinking of the divine from the concrete way of existence, and in the plan of the human concrete what is perceptible is the person.

<sup>14</sup> Dionisie Areopagitul, *Despre Teologia Mistică (About Mystical Theology)*, Paideia, Bucharest, 1996, p. 250

<sup>15</sup> J. Meyendorff, *Teologia Bizantină (Byzantine Theology)*, 1996, p. 241

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *Categorii (Categories)*, Iri, București, 1997, p 8-9

<sup>17</sup> J. Meyendorff, *Teologia Bizantină (Byzantine Theology)*, p. 243

<sup>18</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit (The mystical theology of the Eastern Church)*, Anastasia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1993, p 82



God is understood as a person, just as man can justify himself as a person. What is said, the person as a way of subsistence of nature, cannot justify the affirmation of precedence than in a dimension of logic. It's just a rational separation to ensure a coherent approach to the subject. God has only one Being or essence in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Every Person is conceived of having the full being of the Godhead, but each manifesting according to His own individuality: "*The Son is not the Father, for there is but one Father, but He is what the Father is. The Holy Spirit, though it proceeds from God (the Father), is not the Son, for there is only one Son, but He is the Son. One is the Three in Divinity, and One is in Three Personalities.*"<sup>19</sup>

The person is hypostasizing, and by hypostasizing we understand the character of universality. It is one of the most difficult aspects of the constitution of the person this universality: on the one hand the person is the uniqueness, and on the other is the embrace of the universality. This comprehension, this hypostasis reveals the subjective character of the person, because the same universality is included in any personal subject, but each of them hypothesizes it in an absolutely personal manner. The person, as we say above, calls her confession outside, requires by her personalization a term of relationship. Metropolitan Zizioulas<sup>20</sup>, conceives three types of possible terms:

1. Divine persons, as persons of excellence,
2. Human persons, as persons through the subjective exercise of the restoration brought by the Divine-human Person Christ, and
3. The cosmos, but only by personalizing it by man by bringing it to the human level.

Divine existence (ontology) is grounded on the person of the Father, cause and principle, proves that its existence cannot be weakened forever, either from the inside or from outside, being forever and ever, a continuous self-giving in love, being absolute ontological freedom, free of any ontological data, it (existence) identifies itself with love.

The concept of person through the ontological teaching that Christian thinking highlights by identifying it with the hypostasis goes beyond the ancient philosophy that only anonymous individuals knew, as follows: "*Its profound meaning consists in a double affirmation:*

*a. The person is no longer a superimposed element, a category that we add to a concrete being, after we have previously confirmed his ontological hypostasis. The person is the very hypostasis of being.*

*b. The beings do not report their being to the being in itself - being is not therefore an absolute category in itself - but to the person who constitutes the being, which makes the beings to be beings, in other words, the person is no longer the element added to the entity (a kind of mask), but it becomes simultaneously the entity itself and what is capital - the constituent element of the beings "principle" or their cause ... "*<sup>21</sup>

His personal existence has been imprinted with God and human nature, man being created in the image of God, being thus framed within the boundaries of love as a personal subject of life, while being free from the boundaries imposed by His nature.

The person in the first place is a dynamic ensemble, not an automatic mechanism, it is the mark of authenticity and uniqueness; it hypothesizes the being with existence itself, concretized in a conscious and free being, realized in communion and relationship. The self, the mark of personality, the fact that I am, and not another, and that I am aware of this, that I

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p 83

<sup>20</sup> Ioannis Zizioulas, *Creația ca Euharistie (Creation as Eucharist)*, Bizantină, Bucharest, 1999, p. 27

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33



have a name before God and men, a name that summarizes our entire history from birth to death, is a wonderful secret highlights the dignity and human value: "... *the ego is not a mere hypostasis, endowed with the necessary force to constitute a human organism and with that lantern in the light of which it sees itself and its contents*"<sup>22</sup>, ", it carries certain characteristics that urge the work and transfiguration. The dual person, made up of body and soul, is in a constant quest, in constant kneading and tension, by relationship and communion.

Based on the patristic teaching, theologian Christos Yannaras says that:

*"Man is a person, the image of God because there is a possibility to respond to the call of love of God. Through his psychosomatic functions, man administers this possibility, responds positively or negatively to the call of God, leads his life to life, which is a relationship, or to death that is separation from God ... "*<sup>23</sup>. Through man the soul tends to the spiritual, to the knowledge of God, through the flesh man can know the whole world: *"in the fact that man knows the universe and overcomes his knowledge, in his quality of unity, spirit and body, keeping in the soul and putting on it the spiritual seal, it is shown that the body participates in the quality of subject or person of man. The body is thus human and object given and participant in its quality of subject ... "*<sup>24</sup>. Thus the whole human being participates in the quality of God's image, while showing his way of being, of being. Philo of Alexandria, known in the history of philosophy and under the name of Philo the Jew (c. 20 b. Chr.), made the conversion between biblical revelation and Greek philosophy by discovering hidden similarities between Greek thought and the Jewish belief. Thus, the philosophical philosophy of philosophy is considered by Philo to be synonymous with the Jewish belief in the Bible, the Messiah and the "Son of God," "the firstborn." Philo uses the logos to name the first creation of God. The divine being creates the world not through direct intervention but through the power of the Word of Lógos through self-emanation.

Of course, in the plan of Christian theology, the Logos, or the Son of God, is not an emanation but a true God, understood as the logical and ontological basis of the world and of man. In God, the uncreated is an outdated alternative: or the unity of the being without the Trinity of Persons, or the division of being between persons or hypostases. In the divine plan, superior to the divisions, but also to the unity of life, there is also a perfect unity, not divisible to the being, but also an interpersonal life, God being simple and uncompromised, as the dogma of the First Ecumenical Council (Nicaea, 325) The Son with the Father does not share the unity of being, and the hypostasis is linked to the personal properties of the Trinity. The divine being exists forever in the way of its giving by a hypostasis or by a hypostatic person, to another hypostasis; through birth to the Son and progress to the Holy Spirit. God's supreme paradox lies in the fact that He is all-good, all-simple, at the same time all-encompassing, and the divine being is simple, par excellence not divided by hypostasis, and the more perfect, they are more united, so that none holds nothing for themselves, but everything they want to have in common with the others; from which it follows that the ultimate reality can only have an ontological personal character, consisting of a perfect personal communion, in a loving union in everything they have, love that shares it to other people, to humans, through the uncreated divine energies that make it possible the transition from metaphysical to physical and vice versa.

<sup>22</sup> Pr. Prof. D. Stăniloae, *Ortodoxie si Romanism (Orthodoxy and Romanism)*, p. 5

<sup>23</sup> Christos Yannaras *Abecedar al credinței (Abeceder of faith)*, p. 85

<sup>24</sup>Pr. Prof. D. Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu, (The Immortal Icons of God)*, Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 1987, p. 34



## CONCLUSION

To know a person means to love it. It is only by loving that one may know Christ, the Son of God, within the true life lies, within man walks and lives for ever the endless love of the Trinity, because Christ is the Archetype man has been made after, and He is the one who lifted the human nature, which entered through death in non-existence: "*The Holy Trinity has saved the human kind through a singular love for people; yet it is no less true that each of the people have played a special role; While the Father receives reconciliation, it is the Son who reconciles, and the Holy Spirit is the very satisfaction of the blessings given by God ... it is the freedom itself ...*"<sup>25</sup>

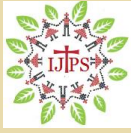
As for the personal existence of God and man, we can state that God is a Nature and three Persons in one, and man is a nature and many people who share the same being not suddenly but discursively or successively. The human person is not a part of the human being, as the Persons of the Holy Trinity are not parts of God; the created nature of man through the quality of person shares the divine existence through Christ that comes and restores the face altered by sin, giving it His glory.

The concept of person implies freedom towards nature; the person is free from any determination. The human hypostasis can only be accomplished by its own will in renouncing and giving himself to the others.

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<sup>25</sup> Nicolae Cabasila, *Despre viața in Hristos*, II, Arhiepiscopiei Bucuresti, 1989 p. 157



## BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND REALITY

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### ABSTRACT

*The main purpose of this scientific paper is to show the general importance of the fundamental knowledges about humanity, about what makes us human beings, about how reality interconnects with our dreams and desires. It might be hard living in a world where you feel suffocated by everything that is happening around you. It might be difficult to try and represent your own values and visions in a space where you are not allowed to stand out but you still feel the need to express who you really are. Immersing into your own world, becoming one with your mind and your body could help but at the same time it is not a real way of living because it cuts to the core every single connection that you, as a person, might have with this reality that you are living in. Not to mention the fact that it might not give you a real change to try and see just how everything that surrounds you responds to your thoughts and your actions and what you can learn from all those things that you are going through. I will try and expose some of these things, in an attempt to show how I have come to understand different perceptions, visions, morals and values and how my soul sees this reality. Also, I will try to explain different perspectives and why they are like that.*

**Keywords:** Vision of life; reality between philosophy; perception; human being; paradox;

### INTRODUCTION. IMMERSING INTO THIS TRANSCENDING WORLD

It all starts from various questions, perceptions and answers. The world, as we see it is filled with all sort of different things. But what are those exactly? How did they get to where they are right now? How was that process possible? Or maybe why wasn't it impossible? It is quite a difficult task trying to answer all these questions and many more regarding just these aspects. Some answers might be positive and others negative but in the end it all comes down to what we want to accept and how we can receive different information coming from different point of views and experiences. Not to mention the fact that there are far more questions to be asked and answers to be received.

*“After thinking about what the world was made of, the ancient Greek philosophers questioned why there was a world at all. Why was there something, rather than nothing? Is it possible that something has always existed? We are so used to thinking of beginnings and endings that it is hard to imagine that something has always been there. On the other hand, could something such as the universe have been created from nothing?”<sup>1</sup>*

It might seem as an overwhelming amount of information. But knowing that we have to start somewhere, first and foremost, we will try to work with the assumption that indeed

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Tomley, Marcus Weeks, *Children's Book Of Philosophy. An introduction to the world's great thinkers and their big ideas*, New York, DK Publishing, 2015, p.14



there was something, that we had a foundation to build on and help us later down the road. Just like our life. We must exist in order to become someone. Even just the simplest person that has ever walked on this earth. But just our existence sometimes might not be enough. There will be times when we are going to need to prove something and in order to do so we must have at least a clear mind about who we started out as. Because as far as I am concerned, we cannot be sure of who we are going to be or where we will end up. Life, as we know it, is a motion filled with relative things. The abstract concepts are far away, maybe unreachable or maybe they are just waiting to be discovered.

You never know for a fact what is going to happen or how you are going to receive certain things. We can imagine different situations, we can picture ourselves in everything and everywhere, we can try and draw the reality that surrounds us but is all just a concept, just a vision or maybe just a dream. Reaching a point of no return might seem the most fitting destination. And I say this because being always between one general vision and your own personal one, a person might lose track of what is really going on in this dimension and he or she might get lost on this path of frenetically searching for the right way or maybe let's say the moral one. But this is a fight that is not suitable for a single person because life will eventually become overwhelming and things will hit rock bottom.

*"If someone asked you "What exists?" you would probably point to the things around you and say "Everything!" If asked how you knew, you might answer that you can see, hear, touch, smell, or taste it all. But some philosophers think that it's not that simple. Our senses can be tricked and they might not tell the truth. Can we ever really know what's real?"<sup>2</sup>*

Sometimes our imagination can influence us in such a way that we no longer have the ability to distinguish between what is real and what is not. And it is all connected with that point of no return. But in other cases, our imagination might be just what we need, that little push that will help us move forward and stand our ground in the face of this world. The vision that some philosophers present to the world, the fact that things might not be as real as we believe they are, the fact that our sense can indeed be tricked will shift our visions, for the better, if we are willing to let that happen, to let our thoughts run alongside of our lives. I really believe the fact that we should bring a little color into this world in order to get a chance to see it as real and as naturally as possible as it unveils in front of us. Embrace it and live it to the fullest. Just let yourself lose all the rigors that have been induced since you first started your life in this world and in this culture and which gradually developed roots.

*"We see the world in color—sky, trees, houses, animals, clothes, flowers, and everything else. But philosophers are not sure what color is or where it comes from, and some doubt that it is there at all. Is color part of the objects we see, or something that happens entirely in our minds? Is a lemon really yellow, or does it just seem yellow to us?"<sup>3</sup>*

And these perceptions are generated exactly by the culture that we are born in and the visions and beliefs that we must embrace. Yes, colors might not exist. But if that is the case, then how can we tell apart things that have the same shape or the same smell or which are composed of the exact same materials? Everyone is entitled to an opinion. Just like you are and just like I am. And as far as I concerned colors do exist and are defined in a certain way, in such a manner that is a fact accepted on a general level and we are talking here about a worldwide phenomenon. Everywhere we go people are aware about the fact that there are

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p.24

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p.28



indeed different colors in this world and that although we call them by different names they are still the same.

And maybe the strongest argument which can be considered a pure fundament for this color existence debate is us, the human beings. We come in so many different color tones and shades that it would be almost impossible to affirm that is all just a vision of our minds. We have colors. But what we do not have as something guaranteed or as a general aspect is the way we perceive them. Some people are drawn towards a specific pallet of colors and others to different ones. We are not the same and this transcends to our perceptions.

Of course, we come from different parts of the world so the argument according to which we are not the same might seem a little bit of or a little bit weird. But our differences can also be applied to people that are coming from the same culture and have been raised in the same way. We inherit our national culture and maybe a small percentage of it will stay with us forever but we also take a lot of morals and values and ideas from the people surrounding us in particular but also from what we see that is not a part of our general cluster. Not only do we take everything in but we also start to analyze everything to compare ideas, visions, perceptions and to eventually come up with our own.

*“Philosophers have always argued about what is real. Some believe that only ideas are real—these philosophers are known as Idealists. Realists say that only the objects around us are real. Another group of philosophers, the Pragmatists, believe that what matters is not the answer to “What is real?”—instead, what matters is what we believe to be real. They argue that what is true is what works.”<sup>4</sup>*

It is often thought that creative minds are the one that can make the biggest difference. But is it always the case? I believe that it is indeed a very important aspect but I do not believe that is the most important one. Because, after all, this ability is not something that we can touch, at least not in the process. So, we might just say that it is not real. But at the same time, we cannot say that it is not real because we see the end result, we notice it and we can measure it (at least in most of the cases). Regardless, we prevail by saying that it is not necessary for a creative mind to always put out majestic ideas nor to deliver measurable results.<sup>5</sup> Not all ideas become reality but this does not mean that they are not creative ideas. It just means that they were not made for this world or maybe for this period of time. Who knows? Maybe we had those ideas in another life, in another dimension or maybe in another world and they transcended time and space to reach this universe in which we exist. This could be seen as an out of body experience, but on a mind over matter perspective.

*“Do you sometimes wonder which part of you is “you”? When you say or think “I,” do you mean your body? Or, like the philosopher René Descartes, do you mean your mind, the “thinking” part of you? Maybe you agree with Descartes that mind and body are two separate things. On the other hand, you might feel like a mixture of both. Could there be a correct answer?”<sup>6</sup>*

Sometimes we might feel a strange sensation or go through a weird phase. And because it is something new to us, we do not really know how to treat it or how to respond to it. Also, we are often obliged to explain who we are or who we want to be, even though we have absolutely no idea how to put out an answer like that. It is not something difficult but

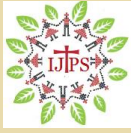
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<sup>4</sup>Ibidem, p.30

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger M., *Ființă și timp*, Humanitas, București, 2003, p. 209

<sup>6</sup> Sarah Tomley, Marcus Weeks, *Children’s Book Of Philosophy. An introduction to the world’s great thinkers and their big ideas*, New York, DK Publishing, 2015, p.42





something extremely difficult because it requires us to immerse into our own world and our own soul and figure out who we are. But with that we might just give a certain answer which might lose its ground as time passes by because it is on rare occasions that we died the same person as the one people thought of us to be when we were born. We change. We become one, body and mind, or maybe we refuse to accept our bodies and we dream about having another one and we try everything in order for us to accomplish that dream. We cannot pinpoint the exact location as to where we are going to end up. But we can at least try to give everything that we have, to analyze every situation through different perspectives, just like philosophers do.

### 1. WHAT MAKES PHILOSOPHY AN INTERESTING FIELD?

*“The modern era in philosophy, begun by Descartes, Bacon, and others in the seventeenth century, was based on a premise which has now become obsolete. The premise was that the very existence of knowledge was in question and that therefore the main task of the philosopher was to cope with the problem of skepticism.”<sup>7</sup>*

In our day to day life we seem to hit a wall whenever we try to start a talk about certain aspects that are not so ongoing, to say the least. And it is quite an interesting experience because we are faced with all kind of people all with their own personal mind-set, perspectives, morals and values. And although we are filled with confidence and we are eager to hear what people have to say, we also encounter those who are completely against anyone who tries to start a movement on that specific topic or even just a small talk. So why is it just a strong feeling? Why is skepticism turning people into such small-minded individuals? Because it is, in some cases, the opinion sustained by the majority of the population and unfortunately it is very difficult to try and go against the majority.

*“Why is philosophy always a double movement of destruction and recovery? Because, Heidegger contends, philosophy, as ontology, is fundamentally historical. The genuine pursuit of the question of being, the task of philosophy, is the same as the pursuit of the historical meaning of being.”<sup>8</sup>*

And while trying to present our perceptions and trying to start a conversation on different topics we sometimes manage to understand where the people that are against us are coming from. And understanding their roots and their moral values we are able to form our speech in such a way that the message can be send across and over the wall that they have built. Basically, we get to know them as pure human beings and we get to know their core visions and thoughts. We go above and beyond the topic and reach a metamorphosis state in which everyone is able to comprehend the other’s thoughts.

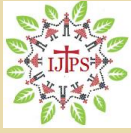
*“If philosophy today has veered away from a fascination with the transcendent invisible toward critical examinations of social reality and linguistic practices, or toward searching dialogues with its own history, it has nonetheless left the historical articulations of the divide between the visible and invisible largely unexamined.”<sup>9</sup>*

And that is the difference between what is real, what transcends our thoughts and what is just an idea, a vision, or maybe even a memory. We know the two parts of the matter

<sup>7</sup> John R. Searle, *Philosophy In A New Century. Selected Essays*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.4

<sup>8</sup> Walter A. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle. The Twofoldness of Being*, Albany, State University of New York, 2005, p.7

<sup>9</sup> Véronique M.Fóti , *Vision’s Invisibles. Philosophical Explorations*, Albany, State University of New York, 2003, p.2



but we have a hard time understanding the differences between them. We cannot define something that we cannot see or touch, something that is unreachable to our senses so we often run away from it. Maybe if we could run towards it, have a little more patience and understanding, allowing us to open up our minds we could reach new dimensions and we could make a lot more things become reality rather than just letting them pass us by.

It might seem as we are going against ourselves in this matter but we are really just trying to obtain a higher level of understanding and seeing life. It is not enough to just picture something. We cannot enjoy it to the fullest if it remains just a vision when we could have made it a reality but we are too caught up in this day to day life to just let us become something more than what we are in the present moment. We need to learn that we have both a real and an imaginary part. We are not just made out of flash and bones. We have feeling, emotions, thoughts we have a lot of things that cannot be turned into something that we can touch. And that is alright. Actually, it is more than just alright. Because at the end of the day is this combination that makes us who we are. And at a certain level, our intangible part differentiates us amongst the others.

Yes, we are different, we have our own personalities, our own cultures, our own core values but as far as the tangible part is concerned we are still quite similar. Indeed, we can change who we are and we can become something else or someone else. But one thing is for sure: we will not be able to completely erase everything that ties us to our roots, to our cultures because those are the things that hold our essence. We have been completely immersed into our culture since the first moment that we had a life in this world. It is what we know for a fact and what we saw as real life examples.

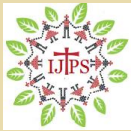
*“If one turns to Heraclitus as a thinker of vision, one finds that, far from understanding vision as a power of disclosing entities or qualities in their supposed self-identity, he treats it as a power of originary differentiation. It reveals, in a privileged way, the pervasive incursion of alterity or disfiguration into customary identifications, as well as the counterplay of the granting and withdrawal of configurations of presencing.”<sup>10</sup>*

It is quite amazing how we can change so many things with just a word or just a look. Yes, it has to happen at the right time, in the right moment with the right person but still, we are the one making the move, speaking up. We are the ones who are being different and proud of it because through this we are able to reach others in ways they could have not imagined. Not because they cannot, or because there is something wrong with them, but because they see the world like the majority, they see it as general aspect. And when we try to see it in a different color, when we start to analyze it, when we start asking ourselves why are we behaving in a certain way or how could we improve everything that is surrounding us, that is the moment when things actually start to gain motion and people shift their attention towards us, the nonconformists, rather than keeping it in the same place. It might be hard to understand but we really need to focus more on what makes someone unique, on what vision they have, what are their dream and desires, and how they were able to reach the current perceptions and morals.

*“The ontological structure of flesh is one of chiasmatic interconnections that cannot be collapsed into in-different unity. As already noted, one important way—stressed by Derrida, though ignored by Merleau-Ponty—in which vision attests to the elemental character of flesh is its proneness to be occluded by tears.”<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p.3

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, p.7



The ways in which this life functions are quite an interesting aspect. You never really know what might happen nor how to respond to it. You never know what people might say or think. We could say that every aspect is like gambling with emotions. The future and what it holds will probably remain an enigma and a mystery for people in general. But if we look at this aspect from a certain point of view we might say that it is not such a bad thing after all. Because where there are mysteries there will always be people who will try to solve them and with this the circle of life will prevail.

*"We are not observers who look at history from a distance; rather, insofar as we are historical creatures, we are always on the inside of the history that we are striving to comprehend."*<sup>12</sup> But at the same time, not knowing how to handle what is going to happen can be quite a consuming activity. And maybe this is the reason behind all those scandals that are happening in the world: the fact that we are constantly thinking about what the future is going to bring and the fact that we forget live in the present, in moment and take everything as it comes. The expression "we'll jump that bridge when we get there" holds a special part in everything that is going on but should be included a lot more because it should just become an anthem for our day to day lives.

Yet, neglecting all of the above we still have one more thing that could change the way we imagine and picture this life. Our feelings. Although we cannot define them as something reachable, they are there, present at any time given. And it is quite an interesting thing the way that they function. We feel more than we are able to express and we can share those emotions and form ties around them even without trying to do so. Life has a strange way of arranging everything and maybe that is the reason behind one of our most used expressions "everything happens for a reason". Maybe life is just a huge amount of feelings, tied together by people, by events, or by other emotions. And maybe this is the core to the human kind existence: we know how to share emotions together, we know how to use them in our advantage and when we do not know how to do that we can learn, either from others or from different parts of our existence and from what we have been through.

Trying to define how philosophy marks us and our lives is quite the time-consuming process because basically we are being surrounded by philosophy everywhere we look. It is indeed present in every aspect, in every time period, whether it is recognized or not, and we cannot always define it as we would want to.

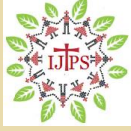
It might be hard to exist in a world where trying to find answers to all sorts of questions might be something that is not allowed so easily but at the end of the day life is much more interesting when you have to overcome a challenge, when you have to put your mind to work, when you have to step out of your comfort zone and become who you really are or at least who you think you really are. At least for the time being.

## CONCLUSION

Living in today's era might seem just like a paradox. You never know what is going on. You never know if what seems real is really like that or if it is just a mechanism that our mind uses in an attempt to cope with the cruel situation that we are face with. We cannot explain life just by using words. Many have tried and failed. Starting with the Greeks and the Romans, continuing with the entire history and not knowing when it will end. We can comprehend what we live in that moment and analyze it later. But it will not be the same. Just like all the differences that exist between what reality is and what we think it is, what I

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<sup>12</sup> Hans-G. Gadamer, *The Beginning Of Philosophy*, New York, Continuum Publishing Company, 2001, p.29



believe and someone else might and how all the factors influence the existing course of history.

There are always negative and positive parts. And it has always been like this and it will always be. Even Plato's ideas had supporters and haters. And not only did they pursue this scenario until our day to day life and it has made it possible for us to comprehend all the parts of this equation but they will continue to pursue this for a long time in the future. And we are talking here about the bond between people who participate in the same situation or at the same time or feel almost the same things. It is a bond that no one could ever break because it is based on feelings and perceptions. Everyone is situated in the same reality.

But that does not mean that we all feel the same or that philosophy marks us in the same way. It just means that we have a common space, we have something to share and to connect over. We are human beings and without communication, without feelings, without colors in our lives we would become machines. And that is the reality that we are running from. Yes, we have contradictions, yes, no one believes in exactly the same things but this is a crucial aspect because it enables us to become stronger together but also stronger as an individual.

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## PUBLIC SPHERE AS 'ULTIMUM REFUGIUM' THE PHILOSOPHICAL, POLITICAL AND ETHICAL THEORY OF HANNAH ARENDT

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### ABSTRACT

*In this article we thoroughly explore and analyze Hannah Arendt's ontological, political and ethical theory about refugee as a conscious pariah. Hannah Arendt's philosophical thought on homeless and stateless people is by definition the locus classicus of contemporary 'Refugee Studies'. Building a typology on conscious pariahs, Hannah Arendt literally formulates a phenomenological and existential political and ethical theory of public sphere in which the figure of modern refugee dominates. Actually, Arendt founds a public sphere as an ultimum refugium for the sake of the world. Arendtian refugee is just the identification and personification of amor mundi. In this vein, Aristotle-like Arendtian republican approach of public space is a political and ethical theory of friendship and humanitas. For Arendt, the only chance we have, as unique human beings, to protect the world from the sandstorms of Totalitarianism is to protect first and foremost the refugees and the homeless people from world alienation. According to Hannah Arendt, stateless people are just the sensitive indicators of our lost thoughtfulness. Loving the refugees is like loving the world itself.*

**Keywords:** public sphere; refugium; polis; conscious pariah; amor mundi;

### POLIS AS ULTIMUM REMEDIUM OF CONSCIOUS PARIAS: THE CASE OF AMOR MUNDI

Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) could be strongly regarded as the ideal political and ethical philosopher of refugees. It is needless to say that she was a refugee herself almost twenty years of her adventurous life<sup>1</sup>. Richard H. King, in his significant book on Hannah Arendt's life in America, dedicates to her homeless and stateless human condition a special section titled 'Arendt as Refugee'<sup>2</sup>. However, Hannah Arendt's viewpoint about refugees is not an ordinary ontological, political and ethical approach. Most of all, it is a quite philosophical and mainly a phenomenological and republican theory about the modern refugee as a conscious pariah<sup>3</sup>. By elaborating further Bernard Lazare's brilliant concept of conscious pariah, Hannah Arendt formulated a totally new model of *vita activa*, which is articulated around the figure of a Marx-like cosmopolitan intellectual. So, it is no coincidence that Hannah Arendt's relevant article is titled 'The Jew as Pariah'<sup>4</sup>. Her doctoral

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World (Second Edition), Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2004, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Richard H. King, Arendt and America, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2015, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt, The Jewish Writings, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 275.

<sup>4</sup> Hannah Arendt, The Jewish Writings, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 275.



student and biographer Elisabeth Young-Bruehl points out concerning this sui generis human condition of refugee as a conscious pariah in the following manner: “The distinction between politically conscious pariahs and socially ambitious parvenus came to Hannah Arendt from Kurt Blumenfeld. But it had originated with the French Jewish publicist and Dreyfusard Bernard Lazare”<sup>5</sup>.

Historically speaking, Hannah Arendt was introduced to the ontological view of refugee as a conscious pariah during her Paris years (1933-1940). In the French capital, at the second decade of interwar period, Arendt met, inter alia, the absolute prototype of conscious pariah in the face of literary critic Walter Benjamin<sup>6</sup>. As far as Arendt is concerned, Walter Benjamin represents the ideal flâneur<sup>7</sup>. Without doubt, Walter Benjamin could be seen as the perfect model of this sui generis Arendtian, high-sophisticated, intellectual and above of all bohemian, conscious pariah. Hannah Arendt closely experienced the conscious pariah human condition when she met Benjamin in Paris. In fact, both of them were refugees, stateless people, conscious pariahs and truly intellectuals with a very strong cosmopolitan perspective. Undoubtedly, Hannah Arendt has been taught from Walter Benjamin not only the way of thinking (*vita contemplativa*) but first and foremost the way of life (*vita activa*). This Benjaminian way of life is likened to a ‘pearl diver’ of the ideal polis<sup>8</sup>. Refugee as a conscious pariah constitutes a very specific way of life where the critical stake is the city of refuge itself<sup>9</sup>. In a sense, Walter Benjamin helped Hannah Arendt to politicize herself in the proper way. By seeking the city of refuge, Hannah Arendt finally found out the ancient Greek polis. Following in closely Benjamin footsteps, she highlights: “The Greek polis will continue to exist at the bottom of our political existence—that is, at the bottom of the sea—for as long as we use the word ‘politics’”<sup>10</sup>. Here, unquestionably, it is easily traced Arendt’s well-known, ontological, political and ethical, phenomenology. Refugee as a conscious pariah is by definition the ideal model of modern citizen. Or, to put it another way, ideal pariahdom is the ideal citizenship.

It is also noteworthy to remember that both of them, Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin, are two of the most representative, political, ethical and cultural, thinkers of the so-called Weimar Culture<sup>11</sup>. In addition, we should always consider that the excellent phenomenon of Jewish Renaissance dominates within the Weimar Culture<sup>12</sup>. Although

<sup>5</sup> Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World (Second Edition), Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2004, pp. 121-122.

<sup>6</sup> Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World (Second Edition), Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2004, p. 116.

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, Men in Dark Times, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1995, p. 164.

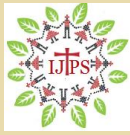
<sup>8</sup> Hannah Arendt, Men in Dark Times, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1995, p. 205.

<sup>9</sup> Spiros Makris, “Jacques Derrida and the Case of Cosmopolitanism: ‘Cities of Refuge’ in the Twenty-First Century”, In: Darren O’Byrne and Sybille De La Rosa (eds), The Cosmopolitan Ideal. Challenges and Opportunities, Rowman&Littlefield International, Ltd., London, 2015, pp.177-194 and Spiros Makris, “Politics, Ethics and Strangers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Fifteen critical reflections on Jacques Derrida’s concept of hos(ti)pitality”, In: Theoria & Praxis. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Thought, No. 1, Vol. 5 (2017), pp. 1-21.

<sup>10</sup> Hannah Arendt, Men in Dark Times, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1995, p. 204.

<sup>11</sup> Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick (eds), Weimar Thought. A Contested Legacy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Löwy, Redemption & Utopia. Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe. A study in elective affinity, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1992.



Benjamin never crossed the Atlantic Ocean towards the 'Brave New World', since, as it is known, he committed suicide at the Franco-Spanish borders, in order not to be arrested by Gestapo<sup>13</sup>, he had a catalytic effect on Arendt's, ontological, political and ethical, thought especially via his small treatise on philosophy of History<sup>14</sup>. It is no exaggeration to say that Walter Benjamin's messianic and eschatological philosophy of history is gradually transformed into Hannah Arendt's political phenomenology, i.e. a critical republican-like theory of citizenship, where the main protagonists (with the literal and metaphorical meaning of the word 'actor') are in most of the cases homeless and stateless, and so cosmopolitan, intellectuals, who live and behave as ideal conscious pariahs<sup>15</sup>. As it has been argued above, Walter Benjamin constitutes the ideal personification of the so-called cosmopolitan stranger<sup>16</sup>. In this kind of cosmopolitan and almost artistic way of life, the Socrates-like pariah becomes a 'gadfly' of the city in order to radically awaken the social consciousness. Inspired by Walter Benjamin's life and thought in the arcades of Paris<sup>17</sup>, Arendt's Socrates, as the ideal stranger within city walls (Derrida writes: "the foreigner is Socrates himself")<sup>18</sup>, urges us to think and act in concert<sup>19</sup>. From this perspective, both pariahdom and citizenship could be seen as the ideal combination for the foundation of an inclusive public sphere. In other words, it could be supported that, according to Arendt's ontological, political and ethical view, public sphere is regarded as a refugium or as an *ultimum remedium*<sup>20</sup>.

Contrary to the famous Gramscian figure of organic intellectual<sup>21</sup>, who, ideologically and culturally speaking, justifies the political power elites or the establishment as a whole, conscious pariah, as a synecdoche of the ideal figure of refugee, radically and even more heretically sometimes transforms the traditional exclusive political space into a real inclusive public sphere<sup>22</sup>; i.e. an *ultimum remedium* for the homeless and stateless people. So, Hannah Arendt via Walter Benjamin's tragic life and death brings to the fore a totally new model of ontological, political and ethical republicanism or even political humanism<sup>23</sup>, which without doubt seems like a Heidegger-inspired fundamental political ontology that is constructed on the strong foundations of an Augustine-like and Aristotle-inspired *amor mundi*<sup>24</sup>. Thus, according to Hannah Arendt, love for the refugees, the strangers and the foreigners, occasionally in a Biblical sense<sup>25</sup>, means first and foremost love for the world itself. Insofar as refugee, particularly in the special case of conscious pariah, signifies in late modernity the *ultimum remedium* of *vita activa*, Arendtian public sphere could be perceived as a human

<sup>13</sup> Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, Walter Benjamin. A Critical Life, Belknap Press, an Imprint of Harvard University Press, USA, 2014, p. 647.

<sup>14</sup> Walter Benjamin, On the Concept of History, Classic Books America, New York, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 341-384.

<sup>16</sup> Chris Rumford, The Globalization of Strangeness, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2016, p. 101.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project, Belknap Press, an Imprint of Harvard University Press, USA, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Derrida, Of Hospitality. Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2000, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Hannah Arendt, The Promise of Politics, Schocken Books, New York, 2005, pp. 5-39.

<sup>20</sup> Hannah Arendt, The Jewish Writings, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 264.

<sup>21</sup> Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, ElecBook, London, 1999, pp. 134-161.

<sup>22</sup> Jürgen Habermas, The Lure of Technocracy, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2015, p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> Michael H. McCarthy, The Political Humanism of Hannah Arendt, Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2014, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Hannah Arendt, Men in Dark Times, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1995 and Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998, p. 238.



refugium in a world which, in her own phenomenological and ontological terms, is always in a state of a boundless risk due to the powerful sandstorms of Totalitarianism. “In the last analysis”, Hannah Arendt underlines with a pure Augustinian emphasis on her writing style, “the human world is always the product of man’s *amor mundi*”<sup>26</sup>.

No doubt, by steadily combining in her thought European phenomenology, existential Heidegger-inspired philosophy and Jeffersonian treasure of American republicanism<sup>27</sup>, Hannah Arendt both as a refugee and a conscious pariah herself has formulated a theoretical approach about the modern and contemporary public space where, from the very beginning, the heroic and tragic figure of cosmopolitan stranger dominates. Refugee as a conscious pariah and vice versa decisively contributes to the re-foundation of the destructed city from the strong sandstorms of Totalitarianism. So, refugee becomes, in a prima facie paradoxical way, the refugium of the polis itself against the desert winds, which constantly blow from either the side of Totalitarianism or post-Totalitarianism or conformism and the risks of mass society<sup>28</sup>. This paradox of the inclusive and democratic public sphere, in the meaning of an ultimum remedium both for the city and the citizens, constitutes the metonymy of the modern human condition<sup>29</sup>. Human being as a mortal being (Totalitarianism) is regenerated through natality (democracy). In accordance with Hannah Arendt, democratic and inclusive public sphere is a kind of political natality per se<sup>30</sup>. Through natality, Arendt regenerates the world (*amor mundi*). In this respect, we could say that whenever a foreigner or a refugee enters the city, as an Aristotelian-like *μέτοικος* (metic), the world is reborn. Arendt refers to a political miracle that saves the world<sup>31</sup>. Taking advantage of the messianic experience of Jesus of Nazareth, Arendt essentially constructs a decisionist form of political theology<sup>32</sup>, where the stranger, like Socrates, is a political Jesus. The stranger is the ultimum refugium of the city itself. In the final analysis, the refugee is the last hope of the salvation of polis. By deconstructing the conventional meanings of words, in a Derridean sense, Arendt constructs anew the world on the strong bases of pariahdom.

From the mid-1940s onwards, Arendt started gradually to formulate a special theory on homeless and stateless conscious pariahs, particularly in close relation to the humiliated and persecuted Jews, which over the course of her life and thought turned to a specific typology of pariahdom as a typology of the ideal citizenship in the post-Totalitarian era: Heinrich Heine, Bernard Lazare, Charlie Chaplin and Franz Kafka are the main figures<sup>33</sup>. In a sense, it could be argued that through Hannah Arendt’s life (*vita activa*) and thought (*vita contemplativa*) the so-called Continental Philosophy fled to the New World having been

<sup>26</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, Schocken Books, New York, 2005, pp. 201-203.

<sup>27</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 1985, p. 215 and Spiros Makris, “American constitutional history through St. George Tucker’s *Selected Writings: A case of Jeffersonian republicanism*”, In: *Annuaire International Des Droits De L’ Homme*, IV, 2009, Bruxelles: Bruylant, 2009, pp. 685-686.

<sup>28</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, Harcourt Brace & Company, Orlando, Florida, 1972.

<sup>29</sup> Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 9 and Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, Verso, London & New York, 2009, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998, pp. 8-9.

<sup>31</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998, p. 247.

<sup>32</sup> John Kiess, *Hannah Arendt and Theology*, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney, 2016, p. 212.

<sup>33</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 277-296.





haunted by the evilness of Nazism<sup>34</sup>. Over there, in the land of Tocquevillean republicanism, Arendt's ontological and phenomenological account about refugees and conscious pariahs step by step transformed into a theoretical typology about cosmopolitan citizens in a world that had been heavily injured from the modern barbarity of Totalitarianism<sup>35</sup>. Behind the tragic face of pariahdom hides the problem of evil itself<sup>36</sup>. Hannah Arendt, in a Homeric [courage, free polis, ἰσονομία (isonomia) and ἰσηγορία (isēgoria)] and Aristotelian (friendship, Other) way of thinking<sup>37</sup>, has shown to the entire humanity, going beyond races, genders ethnicities and religions, that the only possibility we have to efficiently deal with the enormous problem of evil is first and foremost to seriously and courageously face the critical question of homeless, stateless and deported people<sup>38</sup>. In short, we could say that Arendt, in a clear Marxian manner, uses the Jewish Question as a distinguished point of departure in order to lead us to the 'Holy Grail' of human emancipation<sup>39</sup>.

Arendt, by following in closely and thoughtfully the flows of refugees, stateless people and minorities footsteps throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a context that is overdetermined by inhumane state wars and social revolutions full of political criminality and terror, builds an ontological, political and ethical theory in which the notorious figure of conscious pariah dominates<sup>40</sup>. As far as Enzo Traverso is concerned, Hannah Arendt, via Walter Benjamin or even Rahel Varnhagen<sup>41</sup>, rediscovered the 'hidden tradition' of pariah Judaism<sup>42</sup>, which in turn led, through the phenomenon of Shoah, to the Heideggerian *Lichtung* of public sphere<sup>43</sup>. Truth, especially political truth, is no longer a cognitive result of *vita contemplativa*, but an experiential event of *vita activa* or, once more in Heideggerian terms<sup>44</sup>, that kind of human experience which the German philosopher defines as 'Erlebnis': i.e. ontological self-experience par excellence. Both Holocaust and worldlessness constitute the ontological field within which Arendt constructs the free polis of conscious pariahs<sup>45</sup>. By putting conscious pariah against parvenu, Arendt brings to light the ontological, political and ethical phenomenon of loneliness and worldlessness in modernity. From this point of view, Totalitarianism is seen just as the apex of mass society and human alienation. To put it in a different way, Totalitarianism could be perceived as a radical uprootedness of modern man from its human origins<sup>46</sup>. Simon Swift emphatically points out that the conscious pariah

<sup>34</sup> Simon Critchley, *Continental Philosophy. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1994, pp. 297-306.

<sup>36</sup> Nigel Warburton, *Philosophy. The Basics* (4th edition), Routledge, London and New York, 2004, p. 21.

<sup>37</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, Schocken Books, New York, 2005, p. 20 and pp. 122-124.

<sup>38</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 264.

<sup>39</sup> Artemy Magun, "Karl Marx and Hannah Arendt on the Jewish question: political theology as a critique", In: *Continental Philosophy Review*, Issue 4, Vol. 45 (2012), pp. 545-568.

<sup>40</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 344-368.

<sup>41</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewess*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1997.

<sup>42</sup> Enzo Traverso, *The End of Jewish Modernity*, Pluto Press, London, 2016, p. 65.

<sup>43</sup> George Steiner, *Martin Heidegger*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, p. 79.

<sup>44</sup> Günter Figal, "Aesthetics and Perception", In: Niall Keane and Chris Lawn (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics*, Wiley Blackwell, Oxford, 2016, p. 157.

<sup>45</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998, p. 118.

<sup>46</sup> Siobhan Kattago, "Hannah Arendt on the world", In: Patrick Hayden (ed.), *Hannah Arendt. Key Concepts, Acumen*, Durham, 2014, pp. 55-56.



became “a representative rebel, and blaze a trail for other oppressed and excluded people”<sup>47</sup>.

It is no coincidence that throughout the two decades in which Arendt explored the phenomenon of modern alienation in the sense of Totalitarianism, i.e. 1940s and 1950s, her thought was strongly influenced by Marx’s concept of alienation. All this reflective thinking on human alienation in modernity took place within a theoretical and research manner which is titled ‘The Marx Project’<sup>48</sup>. Therefore, refugee as a conscious pariah and vice versa signifies the personification of ontological, political and ethical resistance against total human alienation. Refugees, homeless, stateless and deported people have experienced from the very beginning the inhuman circumstances of exclusion, loneliness and abandonment. In other words, refugees and pariahs in general could be conceived as the realization of the absolute catastrophe of human relations. Paraphrasing Hannah Arendt’s terminology, I would say that refugee indicates the dissolution of free polis and furthermore the violent transformation of homo politicus into animal laborans<sup>49</sup>. Insofar as refugee is a conscious pariah, alienation, exclusion and loneliness constitute the point of departure of a new human condition. Obviously, Arendt inspired the concept of public sphere in the meaning of refugium on the one hand by living herself as a refugee on the other hand by studying in-depth the historical phenomenon of modern pariahdom<sup>50</sup>.

So, at the same time that free polis is destructed by the sandstorms of Totalitarianism, refugee’s appearance as a conscious pariah brings forth the ontological, political and ethical possibility of a real political community. As we shall see thoroughly just below, this phenomenological and existential political ontology is centered at the Arendtian notion of the ‘right to have rights’<sup>51</sup>. To put in another way, political community is the city where everyone, without exclusions, has the right to have rights. Above all, it is the city where every human being has the right to live free with respect and dignity<sup>52</sup>. Summarizing thus far, we could argue, as Ayten Gündoğdu writes, that “Arendt’s proposition of a ‘right to have rights’ highlights the significance of political action for cultivating new forms of political responsibility and solidarity in response to challenging problems of rightlessness and for augmenting the fragile institutional guarantees of equality and freedom”<sup>53</sup>.

## 1. THE ‘RIGHT TO HAVE RIGHTS’, FRIENDSHIP AND A POLITICAL ONTOLOGY OF REFUGIUM

Hannah Arendt, especially through her so-called ‘Jewish Writings’<sup>54</sup>, formulated an Aristotle-like republican theory of public sphere<sup>55</sup>, in which we can easily trace a strong

<sup>47</sup> Simon Swift, *Hannah Arendt*, Routledge, London and New York, 2009, p. 94.

<sup>48</sup> Weisman Tama, *Hannah Arendt and Karl Marx. On Totalitarianism and the Tradition of Western Political Thought*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2014, pp. 11-20.

<sup>49</sup> Weisman Tama, *Hannah Arendt and Karl Marx. On Totalitarianism and the Tradition of Western Political Thought*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2014, p. 25.

<sup>50</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 341-368.

<sup>51</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, p. 376.

<sup>52</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Scholasticism and Politics*, Liberty Fund, Inc., Indianapolis, 2011, p. 246.

<sup>53</sup> Ayten Gündoğdu, “Statelessness and the right to have rights”, in: Patrick Hayden (ed.), *Hannah Arendt. Key Concepts*, Acumen, Durham, 2014, p. 120.

<sup>54</sup> Jerome Kohn, “Preface. A Jewish Life: 1906-1975”, In: *Hannah Arendt, The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. ix-xxxi.

<sup>55</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1998, pp. 36-37.



flavour of a decisionist post-foundational political theology<sup>56</sup>, where the figure of refugee as a conscious pariah dominates. By advancing this sui generis ontological, political and ethical figure of refugee as a conscious pariah, Arendt tries to bring to the fore the problem of evil in late modernity as it has been incorporated in the case of Totalitarianism. Basically, as Jacques Derrida very well shows<sup>57</sup>, she seeks to demonstrate the unconditional possibilities of a truly new human condition where the-world-would-be-inhabited-as-an-ultimum-refugium. The right to have rights is first and foremost this unconditional possibility for a world without exclusions and demonization of the Others. In the last passage of her famous chapter on the ‘Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man’, actually from the ‘Origins of Totalitarianism’, Hannah Arendt describes the hypocritical way in which modernity and especially Totalitarianism itself produces the ontological category of refugees as superfluous people who are conceived from the powers of nationalism and statism as the personification of ‘barbarism’. ‘The danger’, Arendt stresses, ‘is that a global, universally interrelated civilization may produce barbarians from its own midst by forcing millions of people into conditions which, despite all appearances, are the conditions of savages’<sup>58</sup>.

Arendt formulated for the first time this political ontology of refugium in a very significant article which published in January of 1943 at the ‘The Menorah Journal’, an English-language Jewish intellectual and literary magazine in U.S., which was dedicated to the reflective and critical promotion of humanism<sup>59</sup>. By using Abi Doukhan’s terminology on Levinasian ontological ethics, I would dare to say that Hannah Arendt here constructs an explicitly phenomenological and existential political and/or republican philosophy of exile where the major figure of refugee constitutes the defining feature of a new human and/or political condition. ‘Both Arendt’s and Levinas’ political writings’, Doukhan points out and clarifies with emphasis, ‘are geared to address the problem of the stranger. In a society where rights are defined with connection to a given community, what of the stranger? It is this question of the stranger’s rights that constitute the locus of both Arendt’s and Levinas’ political thought’<sup>60</sup>. No doubt, this Arendtian polis is an innovative combination of a Biblical city of refuge and an ancient Greek demos<sup>61</sup>. By definition, as Arendt analyzes in the ‘Origins of Totalitarianism’, this city is a counter-Hobbesian city to the extent that what is at stake is not the power itself but the foundation of a political community by acting in concert<sup>62</sup>. In Kantian terms, Arendtian demos is the identification of *sensus communis*<sup>63</sup>. Human life is a life worthy of the name because every human being has the right to exist as a unique individual amongst others. As far as Arendt is concerned, political collectivity is rooted in ontological alterity of human beings. Everybody matters without exclusions and

<sup>56</sup> Bernd Wannenwetsch, ‘Liturgy’, In: Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2005, p. 78.

<sup>57</sup> Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p. 6 and Spiros Makris, ‘Jacques Derrida and the Case of Cosmopolitanism: ‘Cities of Refuge’ in the Twenty-First Century’, In: Darren O’Byrne and Sybille De La Rosa (eds), *The Cosmopolitan Ideal. Challenges and Opportunities*, Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd., London, 2015, pp. 177-194.

<sup>58</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, p. 384.

<sup>59</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 264-274.

<sup>60</sup> Abi Doukhan, *Emmanuel Levinas. The Philosophy of Exile*, Bloomsbury, London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney, 2014, p. 134.

<sup>61</sup> Spiros Makris, ‘European Demos, Citizenship and Migrants in a Globalized World. Some Critical Reflections from a Habermasian Perspective’, In: Marco Caselli and Guia Gilardoni (eds), *Globalization, Supranational Dynamics and Local Experiences*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2018, pp. 87-107.

<sup>62</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 181-196.

<sup>63</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, p. 27.



demonization. Nobody is superfluous. Refugee is just but the symbol of this new human and/or political condition<sup>64</sup>.

It is worth noting that Hannah Arendt elaborated further this kind of political humanism through the Hegel-inspired concept of reconciliation with the world (*amor mundi*). Daniel Maier-Katkin writes that “the principal benefit of reconciliation, as Arendt understood, is that it brings peace, understanding, and human warmth into a world too often hostile, confused, and cold. The promise of reconciliation, which is neither forgetfulness nor an averted glance, but a full-bodied recognition of the human condition, is that it preserves the possibility of love-in the case of Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, an easy commerce between friends-and friendship, as Hannah understood, is the foundation of all humanity”<sup>65</sup>. Thus, philosophically speaking, in Hannah Arendt’s phenomenological, ontological and existential perspective, homeless and stateless people and especially refugee as a conscious pariah are transformed into a crucial human ferment for the sake of friendship and humanity in dark times. In 1959, when Arendt was honored with the notorious ‘Lessing Prize of the Free City of Hamburg’, she analyzed in-depth the core meaning of *humanitas* as friendship. By adopting the Aristotelian concept of *philia*, she tried to highlight the clear ontological, political and ethical relevance of friendship. Actually, friendship does not mean only peace but, in a great degree, it consists in discourse. Friends who are talking to each other are the quintessence of *polis*. Friendship via speech and dialogue prepares the common world. According to ancient Greeks, *philanthropia* means first and foremost to share the world with other people. *Philanthropia* means *amor mundi*. In fact, refugee brings to light this human condition of friendship even when he or she is treated like a Schmittean enemy<sup>66</sup>.

Arendt identifies refugee with the conscious pariah in order to give to this new human condition the character of a Socrates-inspired constantly human self-reflection. At the epicenter of this Socratic self-reflection, Arendt puts the Aristotelian notion of friendship. Citizenship is a special kind of friendship. Citizens are free and equal friends. Undoubtedly, conscious pariah is the Aristotelian *metic* (refugee, homeless) *par excellence*. “The equalization in friendship”, Hannah Arendt clarifies, “does not of course mean that the friends become the same or equal to each other [alterity is the basis of Arendtian political ontology], but rather that they become equal partners in a common world-that they together constitute a community. Community is what friendship achieves (...) Aristotle concludes that it is friendship and not justice (as Plato maintained in the *Republic* (...)) that appears to be the bond of communities. For Aristotle, friendship is higher than justice, because justice is no longer necessary between friends. The political element in friendship is that in the truthful dialogue each of the friends can understand the truth inherent in other’s opinion. More than his friend as a person, one friend understands how and in what specific articulateness the common world appears to the other, who as a person is forever unequal or different [see ontological alterity or natality]. This kind of understanding-seeing the world (...) from the other fellow’s point of view-is the political kind of insight *par excellence* (...) Socrates seems to have believed that the political function of the philosopher was to help establish this kind of common world, built on the understanding of friendship, in which no

<sup>64</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, pp. 610-616.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel Meier-Katkin, *Stranger from Abroad. Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Friendship and Forgiveness*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 2010, p. 348.

<sup>66</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1983, pp. 23-25 and Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2007, pp. 19-79.



rulership is needed”<sup>67</sup>. City of refuge is a city of friends. So, public sphere is perceived first and foremost as the locus classicus of friendship. Arendt builds through political equalization an *ultimum remedium* for alterity, i.e. a common world for the refugees; for the alterities; for the foreigners; for the strangers. Public space is by definition a pariahdom. Socrates is the outstanding tragic and conscious pariah and therefore on his death Hannah Arendt founds the ideal free city of refugium<sup>68</sup>.

If Socrates is the ideal figure of refugee within free city walls, then Arendtian philosophy and political ontology of exile is a Socratic model of thinking, acting and judging *per se*<sup>69</sup>. In other words, it could be argued that if Socrates is the ideal conscious pariah then philosophy of exile is the rival awe of thoughtlessness<sup>70</sup>. Therefore, refugee as a conscious pariah is by definition, in Arendt’s viewpoint, the ‘holy grail’ of thoughtfulness. Paraphrasing Richard Kearney, it would be said that refugees as conscious pariahs are the prophets of alterity who bring to the fore a new kind of citizenship, i.e. the Derrida-like citizen ‘to come’<sup>71</sup>. This new kind of citizen promotes a collectivity through total difference or ontological otherness via pure collective acting. In Giorgio Agamben’s terms, this new citizenship of refugees in the land of refugium is bare life *par excellence* beyond nationalities, religions and sexes. Otherness is just the human flesh in the condition of natality<sup>72</sup>. Hence, the condition of refugee is a life that deserves to be lived<sup>73</sup>. In Hannah Arendt’s ontological, political and ethical philosophy of exile, refugee as a conscious pariah is no longer the realization of superfluity. On the contrary, refugee steadily symbolizes the representative newcomer (natality) of friendship, citizenship and public sphere. So, plurality presupposes natality. In this vein, it could be argued that common world presupposes refugee as a Socratic ‘gadfly’ which is coming at midnight to awaken our alienated consciousness. From this standpoint, it is no coincidence that during the last years an important academic and research project is taking place within which the bridging between plurality and alterity is attempted, especially under the aegis of a long overdue dialogue between Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas. Hospitality, reconciliation, friendship, responsibility, solidarity and the figures of exile and refugee constitute the common place of this ongoing reflexive and critical discussion<sup>74</sup>.

Edward Said, in his attempt to identify refugium’s specific ontological content in the meaning of this new public sphere of refugees, mainly against the state violence and Totalitarianism, which atavistic nationalism produced from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, writes in his famous essay ‘Reflections on Exile’ as follows: “And just beyond the frontier between ‘us’ and the ‘outsiders’ is the perilous territory of not-belonging: this is to where in a primitive time peoples were banished, and where in the modern era immense aggregates of

<sup>67</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, Schocken Books, New York, 2005, pp. 17-18.

<sup>68</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 2006, p. 114.

<sup>69</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1978, p. 173.

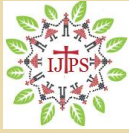
<sup>70</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 2006, p. 280.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters. Interpreting otherness*, Routledge, London and New York, 2003, pp. 63-82.

<sup>72</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 270.

<sup>73</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1998, p. 136.

<sup>74</sup> Anya Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and a Politics of Relationality*, Rowman & Littlefield International, London and New York, 2015, pp. 156-161.



humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons’’<sup>75</sup>. This concrete space of not-belonging; beyond the state borders; between past and the future; this dangerous political space par excellence; the public sphere as contingency, irreversibility and unpredictability<sup>76</sup>; is exactly what Hannah Arendt thoroughly investigates in her article ‘We Refugees’, just the historical time when the eugenic and racist experiments of the so-called ‘Nazi Medicine’ had begun to reveal the awful face of ‘Final Solution’ (Shoah). In Levinasian terms, the destruction of the space of not-belonging, i.e. the sui generis public space of refugium, obviously signifies the tragic end of humanity itself. In his prophetic minor treatise on Hitlerism, Emmanuel Levinas concludes in the following way: “racism is not just opposed to such and such a particular point in Christian and liberal culture. It is not a particular dogma concerning democracy, parliamentary government, dictatorial regime, or religious politics that is in question. It is the very humanity of man’’<sup>77</sup>. As we have seen above, Arendt defines this humanity of man as *humanitas*, by meaning with this the inherent capability of man to establish political communities on the strong bases of speech, action and judging. “This political background”, she points out emphatically, “distinguishes Roman *humanitas* from what moderns call humanity by which they commonly mean a mere effect of education’’<sup>78</sup>.

From this specific view, refugee either as a conscious pariah or as a Socratic ‘gadfly’ signifies the crisis of modernity per se<sup>79</sup>. By exploring in-depth the condition of modern refugee, Hannah Arendt actually explores the shortcomings and failures of the modern human condition. Against this crisis of modernity, Hannah Arendt puts the figure of refugee as a conscious pariah. At the end of her article, by summarizing, in a sense, the portrait of this sui generis (Jewish a fortiori) persona of modern times, she writes as follows: “All vaunted Jewish qualities-the ‘Jewish heart’, humanity, humor, disinterested intelligence-are pariah qualities (...) It is the tradition of a minority of Jews who have not wanted to become upstarts, who preferred the status of ‘conscious pariah’ (...) the tradition of Heine, Rahel Varnhagen, Sholom Aleichem, of Bernard Lazare, Franz Kafka, or even Charlie Chaplin’’<sup>80</sup>. Just next year, in 1944, Hannah Arendt published in ‘Jewish Social Studies’ her famous article on the hidden tradition of Jew as pariah where literally she outlines a specific typology of conscious pariahs. In all the cases she thoroughly explores, undoubtedly the conscious pariah is a Socratic stranger within the city walls who portends the catastrophic consequences of human evilness in modernity. For Arendt, refugee as a conscious pariah and vice versa constitutes a last chance to seriously reflect on the Aristotelian sociality of human beings. “For only within the framework of a people”, Arendt underlines, “can man live as a man among men, without exhausting himself. And only when a people lives and functions in concert with other peoples can it contribute to the establishment upon earth of a commonly conditioned and commonly controlled humanity’’<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 140.

<sup>76</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, pp. 175-247.

<sup>77</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, ‘Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism’, In: *Critical Inquiry*, No. 1, Vol. 17 (1990), pp. 62-71, p. 71.

<sup>78</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London, 1983, p. 25.

<sup>79</sup> Liisi Keedus, *The Crisis of German Historicism. The Early Political Thought of Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, pp. 1-11.

<sup>80</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 274.

<sup>81</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p. 297.



## 2. SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS OR THE QUESTION OF REFUGEES IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

It is noteworthy to point out here that Jacques Derrida in ‘On Cosmopolitanism’ refers especially to Arendt’s ontological, political and ethical theory concerning the thorny question of refugees in the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>82</sup>. Arendt’s high-quality thought on homeless, stateless and deported people is conceived today as the main point of reference at the relevant academic and research field of inquiry. Her magnum opus on the historical and cultural origins of Totalitarianism could be perceived as the ‘Bible’ both of ‘Refugee Studies’ and/or asylum seekers approaches<sup>83</sup>. Actually, Arendt in ‘The Origins of Totalitarianism’ investigates in-depth the problem of *Heimatlosen*, i.e. human beings without a home, a state or a place to live with peace and dignity. Especially, in ‘The Decline of the Nation-State and the end of the Rights of Man’, which is the fifth chapter of the second part of the book, Arendt explores the historical phenomenon of modern chauvinistic and aggressive nationalism at the epicenter of which she puts the critical concept of the ‘right to have rights’<sup>84</sup>. Arendt’s political and ethical theory about refugees is a pure philosophical and mostly ontological approach in the meaning of world as an earthly hospitable home. ‘‘The story of our struggle’’, she points out, by interpreting inter alia the Jewish Question, ‘‘has finally become known. We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life. We lost our occupation, which means the confidence that we are of some use in this world. We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings. We left our relatives in the (...) ghettos and our best friends have been killed in concentration camps, and that means the rupture of our private lives’’<sup>85</sup>. She is talking about the everyday life of human beings from a phenomenological and existential point of view. This is an amazing fact which is rooted in her Aristotelian Weltanschauung. According to Arendt, to be a man at home in the world means first and foremost to be amongst people without exclusions. It is necessary to take seriously into consideration the phenomenon of world alienation. Over the course of her life, Hannah Arendt strongly supported the restoration of the world (tikkun) by heralding the human power of amor mundi. Therefore, the critical question of belonging to the world had ‘‘important consequences for her subsequent reflections on metaphysics, ethics and politics’’<sup>86</sup>.

Insofar as modernity is characterized by world alienation, i.e. the ‘‘desire to escape from the limited, human world into the limitless sphere of the non-human’’<sup>87</sup>, Arendt’s philosophical account concerning refugee’s question entails a new science of politics where human rights constitute the hard core of the new human condition<sup>88</sup>. Throughout the 1940’s, writing simultaneously the ‘Origins of Totalitarianism’, Hannah Arendt published a range of important articles about homeless and stateless people. In doing so, she shed more light to the negative role of nationalism and imperialism in world alienation over the course of

<sup>82</sup> Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p. 25.

<sup>83</sup> Garrett Brown Wallace and David Held (eds), *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, Polity Press Cambridge, 2012, pp. 414-415.

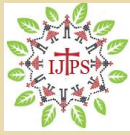
<sup>84</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 2004, p. 376.

<sup>85</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 264-265.

<sup>86</sup> Siobhan Kattago, ‘‘Hannah Arendt on the world’’, In: Patrick Hayden (ed.), *Hannah Arendt. Key Concepts*, Acumen, Durham, 2014, p. 52.

<sup>87</sup> Simon Swift, *Hannah Arendt*, Routledge, London and New York, 2009, p. 28.

<sup>88</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1994, p. 430.



modernity. Most of them are included in the volumes which were published by Jerome Kohn from 1990's onwards<sup>89</sup>. In an article she published at the 'Review of Politics' in 1946, she explored further the phenomena of nationalism and imperialism, particularly the specific way in which nation dominated the state. "Nationalism", she writes, "signifies essentially the conquest of the state through the nation. This is the sense of the national state. The result of the nineteenth-century identification of nation and state is twofold: while the state as a legal institution has declared that it must protect the rights of men, its identification with the nation implied the identification of the citizen as national and thereby resulted in the confusion of the rights of men with the rights of nationals or with national rights. Furthermore, insofar as the state is an 'enterprise of power', aggressive and inclining to expansion, the nation through its identification with the state acquires all these qualities and claims expansion now as a national right, as a necessity for the sake of the nation. 'The fact that the modern nationalism has frequently and almost automatically led to imperialism or to conquest, is due to the identification of state and nation'. The conquest of the state through the nation started with the declaration of the sovereignty of the nation. This was the first step transforming the state into the instrument of the nation, which finally has ended in those totalitarian forms of nationalism in which all laws and the legal institutions of the state as such are interpreted as a means for the welfare of the nation. It is therefore quite erroneous to see the evil of our times in a deification of the state. It is the nation which has usurped the traditional place of God and religion"<sup>90</sup>.

Refugees are the main product of modern nationalism. However, it is needless to say that chauvinistic nationalism led to the rise of Totalitarianism and as a main result to the creation of the so-called superfluous people. Especially, the phenomenon of pan-national movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led the whole world to the paradoxical situation of mob rule, where some peoples faced other peoples as pariahs or mortal enemies à la Schmitt<sup>91</sup>. Arendt mightily argues that collective responsibility, as a legal, political and ethical mask of aggressive nationalism, was the perfect cover for the crimes against humanity during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To the extent that everyone is guilty, actually nobody is guilty in the final analysis<sup>92</sup>. As she clearly shows in the case of Adolf Eichmann<sup>93</sup>, human superfluity is the metonymy of human thoughtlessness. In fact, the deification of the nation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century transformed the state from a legal protector of human and citizen rights to a violent and aggressive guarantor of the rights of nationals<sup>94</sup>. In accordance with Hannah Arendt, this is the realization of the banality of evil. This means, that thoughtlessness does not concern the human stupidity but the reluctance of men to imagine what the other persons are experiencing<sup>95</sup>. For Young-Bruehl, Eichmann is just the personification of "the imperialist techniques of ghettoization and massacre"<sup>96</sup>. Patrick Hayden points out with emphasis that

<sup>89</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1994 and Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1994, pp. 208-209.

<sup>91</sup> Karin A. Fry, Arendt. A Guide for the Perplexed, Continuum, London, 2009, pp. 14-16.

<sup>92</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, Schocken Books, New York, 2003, pp. 149-151.

<sup>93</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 2006.

<sup>94</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1994, p. 210.

<sup>95</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Last Interview and Other Conversations*, Melville House, London, 2013, p. 48.

<sup>96</sup> Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2006, p. 76.





“superfluity, or what Arendt regards as the process of endangering human plurality itself” is the quintessence of nationalism-inspired Totalitarianism. “What Arendt calls ‘superfluosity’”, he summarizes, “is the major problem of dehumanization” (...) Superfluous people are not only oppressed or treated unjustly; they are made expendable from a properly human world, which proves fatal to their human status. Making ‘human beings as human beings superfluous’” constitutes “a central element of the totalitarian project (...) In their systematic attempt to eliminate human spontaneity, individuality and plurality, totalitarian regimes were not simply liquidating individuals but rather annihilating the very idea of humanity itself”<sup>97</sup>.

It is worth noting here that the ontological, political and ethical problem of superfluity does not concern only the refugees or the homeless and stateless people in the era of nationalism and Totalitarianism, but, as Arendt has plainly shown in her late works, it entirely connects with the post-Totalitarian phenomenon of mass society and especially with the relevant questions of conformism, mass culture and kitsch which all of them could be considered as the contemporary form of thoughtlessness<sup>98</sup>. It is no exaggeration to argue that the ontological, political and ethical crisis of modernity, in the face of refugees, especially in the case of the Arendtian conscious pariahs, indicates in parallel a deep crisis in modern and also in contemporary culture<sup>99</sup>. The case of Franz Kafka is too characteristic. The story of Stefan Zweig is interesting as well. Both of them are critical indicators of the distinguished cultural aspects of crisis of modernity<sup>100</sup>. Cecilia Sjöholm speaks about Arendtian aesthetics as an integral part of Arendt’s political ontology to the extent that the question of art, as a matter of appearance and visibility, is by definition a question of public sphere. “She speaks of art”, Sjöholm points out, “as a means towards solidarity, collectivity, and remembrance. For that reason, it must be appreciated as an essential aspect of her work”<sup>101</sup>. Paraphrasing Sjöholm, it could be supported that the art as a synecdoche of public sphere could be perceived as a remedy of laughter<sup>102</sup>. From this point of view, Charlie Chaplin is the ideal contemporary refugee as a conscious pariah in the public field of art. In other words, Charlie Chaplin could be seen as a Socrates of our days, who uses his laughter in order to awaken our consciousness<sup>103</sup>. Marie Luise Knott argues that Arendt invented the act of laughing<sup>104</sup>, particularly via the conscious pariahs, as the metonymy of reflective thinking, imagination, enlarged mentality and judging<sup>105</sup>. These are the main mental and spiritual characteristics of refugees as conscious pariahs.

To sum up, we can say that Hannah Arendt’s philosophical and ontological view on human rights could be seen as an excellent manner in order to efficiently deal with the

<sup>97</sup> Patrick Hayden, “Illuminating Hannah Arendt”, In: Patrick Hayden (ed.), *Hannah Arendt. Key Concepts, Acumen*, Durham, 2014, pp. 14-15.

<sup>98</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2007, p. 149 and pp. 179-202.

<sup>99</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 2006, pp. 194-222.

<sup>100</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2007, pp. 94-109 and pp. 58-68.

<sup>101</sup> Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt. How to see things*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015, p. 153.

<sup>102</sup> Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt. How to see things*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015, p. 137.

<sup>103</sup> Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt. How to see things*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015, pp. 133-153 and Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 286-288.

<sup>104</sup> Marie Luise Knott, *Unlearning with Hannah Arendt*, Granta, Great Britain, 2014, pp. 3-29.

<sup>105</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 7-85.



thorny question of refugees in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Arendtian theses on refugee as a conscious pariah could be perceived furthermore as an entire political and ethical theory on power with the meaning of ‘acting in concert’. ‘Power’, Arendt clarifies in her famous treatise on violence, “corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together”<sup>106</sup>. Refugee, as a man without property, guides us to the free polis, where power firstly means that people act in concert under the aegis of friendship. So, public sphere as an ultimum refugium is a common place or, in other words, a common world which does not belong to anybody. The world belongs to everybody, especially to refugees and homeless people<sup>107</sup>. Each time where people are violently excluded from the world either for religious or national reasons human rights are transformed from a political, ethical and legal structure of the contemporary liberal democratic state into a pseudo-humanistic ideology which opens up the ontological possibility of the nationalism-inspired Totalitarianism. As Hannah Arendt shows, the identification of human rights with national rights, or, in other words, the identification of citizens with nationals or the identification of the citizenship with nationality, challenged the great tradition of Enlightenment and particularly the culture of inalienable rights of human beings and citizens, i.e. the ‘right to have rights’. From this point of view, the “stateless people lost not only citizenship rights but also human rights. Arendt”, Gündoğdu highlights, “captures this double loss with the term ‘rightlessness’, but the meaning of this term is far from obvious. To clarify this loss, she identifies the one truly human right that is not reducible to the rights that we are entitled to as citizens: ‘a right to have rights’ or ‘a right to belong to some kind of organized community’”<sup>108</sup>. Adopting Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft specific analysis on Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas, we can say that thinking and acting for the sake of refugees in a state of world alienation is as if thinking and acting for the sake of public sphere or as if thinking and acting for the sake of amor mundi<sup>109</sup>. This new human condition, in Giorgio Agamben’s own terms, “would no longer be the *ius* (right) of the citizen but rather the *refugium* (refuge) of the singular”<sup>110</sup>. This is why Hannah Arendt matters today more than ever.

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<sup>106</sup> Hannah Arendt, On Violence, A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Inc., Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, London, 1970, p. 44.

<sup>107</sup> Spiros Makris, “Emmanuel Levinas on Hospitality. Ethical and Political Aspects”, In: International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science, No. 2, Vol. 2 (2018), pp. 79-96.

<sup>108</sup> Ayten Gündoğdu, “Statelessness and the right to have rights”, In: Patrick Hayden (ed.), Hannah Arendt. Key Concepts, Acumen, Durham, 2014, p. 110.

<sup>109</sup> Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft, Thinking in Public. Strauss, Levinas, Arendt, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2016, pp. 1-22 and Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, Why Arendt Matters, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2006, pp. 1-29.

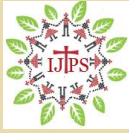
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## MYSTICAL UNION IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

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*Motto:* «Theologians may quarrel, but the mystics of the world speak the same language». (Meister Eckhart)

### ABSTRACT

*This article presents the so-often discussed problem of the core of religions, of what seems to link them rather than to separate them. Thus, after having presented the characteristics of unitive mysticism and its language at a phenomenological level, we turn to mystical union in the three major monotheistic religions of the world. Judaism, Christianity and even Islam have all developed the idea of a personal God, this ideal representing religion at its best. In the monotheistic faiths the God of creation, revelation, and redemption is not a static and indifferent First Principle but a loving and all-knowing God, who creates humans whose likeness to Him consists precisely in their ability to know and to love. However, the variations found in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam on this topic are too multiple to be easily characterized. That's why it is difficult to appreciate the dynamics of union unless one addresses the relation between unitive expressions and the roles of love and knowledge. Union, whether conceived of as the uniting of God and human or in a deeper way as some form of identity with God, has been a key feature of the mystical traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Most mystics claim that both knowing and loving are necessary in the way to God, but many mystics stress the superiority of love, often expressed in highly erotic ways, whereas others conceive of union as attaining mental identity with the Divine Intellect. They make use of a variety of images and symbols, as well as distinctive expressions and forms of technical discourse, in their attempts to suggest through language what lies beyond language: the 'ineffable' God.*

**Keywords:** mystical union, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, God, person, identity, love.

### INTRODUCTION

In an era fully marked by the hegemony of empirical world, of what we know only through what our senses perceive, of what seem to many people a matter of common sense, the perceptual world, the world that we perceive with our five senses, is the only world that exists. Simple as these statements appear to be, they have formed the basis of great metaphysical problems. How can we know, it is asked, that which is outside our experience? But then what do we mean by “experience”? And why should the knowledge of our senses contain the whole of our experience?

On the other hand it is contended that the data given by the senses about reality are not valid as it is so strongly influenced by the nature of man and by his perceptual equipment and by his techniques of perception. The mystic believes that by means of special training he



can so discipline, tune, and train his total organism that will be able to transcend these limitations and perceive reality more accurately.<sup>1</sup>

Leaving outside the mystical experiences from non-Judeo-Christian Tradition, we can start by showing the hardship to describe the nature of mystical union in the three monotheistic faiths is a task fraught with difficulties and ambiguities both conceptual and real. First, the term *unio mystica* is primarily a modern expression; though the phrase does occur in Christian mysticism, its appearance is relatively rare. Various words for and descriptions of union or uniting with God, however, are important in the history of Christian mysticism, and accounts of union with God are also prominent in Judaism and Islam.

Second, even the term *mysticism* itself, another modern creation, has come under attack. To what extent, for example, does the use of a term created in the modern Christian West distort the meaning of key figures, movements, and texts from the traditions of Judaism and Islam? The question is a real one, but the position adopted here is that, if mysticism is understood broadly as the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the effect engendered by what mystics describe as a direct and immediate transformative contact with the divine presence, then it is useful to speak of a strong mystical element in each of the three faiths.

Third, if one allows that mysticism is a helpful term in the study of religion, is mystical union to be conceived of as its essence? Though some investigators have so claimed, the study of mystical traditions indicates that the language of union is only one of the linguistic strategies used by mystics to try to describe, or at least to point to, what they contend is the ultimately ineffable nature of their contact with God. Unitive mysticism is one of a group of interactive and nonexclusive semantic fields found in the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. There are mystics in each tradition who either explicitly avoid union language (e.g., Augustine of Hippo) or else who tend to relegate such language to the margin in favor of other modes of mystical expression, such as those related to the vision of God or to theurgical action in the divine realm.<sup>2</sup>

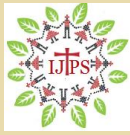
## 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF UNITIVE MYSTICISM AND ITS LANGUAGE

*Definition:* Mysticism is an umbrella concept for (1) experiences in which boundaries are dissolved – those of the *subject*, such as in a vacuum of thought, or in ecstasy; those of the *object*, so that dualities are removed; those of space, to experience the infinite in the finite; those of time, when the ‘timeless, everlasting now’ replaces successive time. ‘Mysticism’ also denotes (2) the concepts, teachings, and literary genres that contemplate, recount, or describe this immanent transcendence, or transcendent immanence. The intensity and quality of the experience are dependent on whether the transcendence in question is unprepared, and occurs spontaneously, or whether it is induced by techniques; on whether it occurs punctually, regularly, or permanently; on whether it is perceived purely mentally, or expresses itself in strong affects; on whether it is accompanied by (para-) sensory phenomena, such as visions, or even psychosomatic alterations, including permanent marks on the body, like stigmata.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. M. ABRAHAMS, *A comparative survey of Hindu, Christian & Jewish Mysticism*, Sri Satguru Publications, Indological and Oriental Publishers, a Division of Indian Books Centre, Delhi, India, 1995, p. XV.

<sup>2</sup> Michel DUPUY, “L’union a Dieu”, in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualite: Ascetique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, edited by Marcel Viller et al., vol. 16, cols. 40–61. Paris, 1992. A survey of Christian materials.

<sup>3</sup> Annette WILKE, “Mysticism”, in: *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, edited by Kocku von STUCKRAD, Revised edition of Metzler Lexikon Religion, edited by Christoph Auffarth, Jutta Bernard and Hubert Mohr, transl. from the German by Robert R. Barr, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, Boston, 2006, p. 1279.



Treatments of mystical union have often employed the terms *pantheism* and *monism* to characterize unitive expressions, but pantheism and monism are not adequate categories for discerning the import of unitive language. God is certainly all things in the monotheistic faiths, in the sense that the world is a manifestation of God; but God is also transcendently more than the world, so the simple identification between God and world implied in pantheism is not an accurate term. Monism, understood as the belief that there is one basic principle underlying all reality, is true of most forms of mysticism of the monotheistic religions (though not of Qabalah). But monism tells little more than this and hence is an empty category for serious investigation of mysticism<sup>4</sup>. Previous scholarship on mysticism often employed oppositional terminology, such as *impersonal* versus *personal union*, *absorptive* versus *non-absorptive union*, *habitual* versus *ecstatic union*, *essential* union versus *intentional* union, and the like. Such typologizing, however, should not be applied in any crude way, as if mystics could easily be pigeonholed into one or the other category. The comparative dimensions of mystical union emerge from attention to some of the profound issues at work in unitive texts.<sup>5</sup> The persistence across traditions of particular doctrinal and ethical issues concerning union and the employment of certain distinctive forms of language to describe unitive states points to a fruitful realm of comparative dynamics.<sup>6</sup>

Mystics make use of a variety of images and symbols, as well as distinctive expressions and forms of technical discourse, in their attempts to suggest through language what lies beyond language. Images of erotic love – the kiss, the embrace, the memory of encounter, even sexual intercourse – are favored ways of expressing mystical union.

Three images for mixing substances that originated in ancient philosophical writings are also popular among the mystics: the drop of water in a vat of wine, the bar of iron in fire, and air illuminated by the sun. Some images lend themselves more aptly to symbolizing the absorption that leads to mystical identity, such as the ocean, the desert, the mirror, the abyss, cloud and darkness, and the identical eye. As Meister Eckhart emphasizes: “The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me”<sup>7</sup>. Another powerful image for absorption is eating and being eaten. There are also distinctive linguistic expressions and strategies found across the three traditions: ecstatic identity pronouncements (especially in Islam); forms of dialectical language expressing fusion and indistinction; the language of the return to the pre-creational state; and reduplication discourses, often involving referential ambiguity, especially in dealing with pronouns signifying God and the human.<sup>8</sup>

Any attempt at a definition of mysticism must be deficient, not only on grounds of the broad spectrum of phenomena seen as mystical, but also on grounds of the historical transformations of the concept. First of all, it denotes the ‘closing’ (in Gk., *muein*) of the eyes and lips in the act of initiation into the Greek mystery religions, lest their secret

<sup>4</sup> Bernard MCGINN (2005), “Mystical union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam”, in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, Lindsay Jones, Editor in Chief, vol. 9: *Mary • Ndembu Religion*, Macmillan Reference USA, Thomson Gale, 2005, pp. 6334-6335.

<sup>5</sup> Alois M. HAAS, “Unio mystica”, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, edited by Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Grunder, and Gottfried Gabriel, vol. 11, cols. 176–179. Basel, Switzerland, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Grace JANTZEN, “‘Chang’ an Where Two Are to Become One’: Mysticism and Monism”, in *The Philosophy in Christianity*, edited by Godfrey VESEY, Cambridge, U.K., 1989, pp. 147-166.

<sup>7</sup> Meister ECKHART, *Despre omul nobil, cupa din care bea regale* (*About the noble man, the cup from which the king drinks*), transl. and notes by Gabriel H. Decuble, Foreword by Anca Manolescu, Humanitas, București, 2007, p. 84.

<sup>8</sup> The unitive language is explicitly studied in: Bernard MCGINN. *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, New York, 3 vol.: 1991–2004.



knowledge be betrayed. In *Christianity*, mysticism acquires the meaning of experiential knowledge of God (in Lat. *cognitio Dei experimentalis*) – especially, extraordinary ‘experiences of God’, understood as a special manifestation of grace, experiences occurring in rapture, visions, and ecstasy, whose purpose is a union with God in love and knowledge (*unio mystica*, Lat. ‘mystical union’).<sup>9</sup> In Romanticism’s veer from the Renaissance belief in reason and progress, mysticism became (1) a religion of emotion, of profound inner sensation, and (2) a pantheistic philosophical monism of union. The Romantic rediscovery of mysticism forms the image of mysticism in modern times, and fosters a modern individual piety. Mysticism becomes the expression of a spirituality joining East and West, a *Philosophia Perennis* (Lat. ‘eternal philosophy’) uniting humanity in a religion beyond institution and historical transformation, a content of all that is deepest and best in the religions.<sup>10</sup>

Very much allied with the difference between mystical uniting and mystical identity is the issue of *annihilation*. Many mystics have insisted that union-identity can only be found through annihilation of the self, but the meaning of annihilation is complex and open to a host of questions. What self is being annihilated: the created self or also a deeper, pre-creational self, found in God? Is the ego annihilation total and final or only in certain respects and for particular times and circumstances? Finally, is the annihilation in some way a mutual one in which both God and human lose themselves in some deeper reality?<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore when annihilation language is used in texts that stress mystical identity, it is often accompanied by strategies of qualification that must be taken into account to get the full measure of the meaning of annihilation. Some of these strategies are dialectical in the sense that they insist on the coexistence of indistinction and distinction in the relation between God and human – from one perspective union is total identity; from another, it coexists with an ongoing real difference between the two. Other qualifications are more perspectival, claiming that annihilation is essentially a matter of the consciousness of the mystic and not the structures of reality themselves.<sup>12</sup>

Romanticism’s image of mysticism characterizes attempts at systematization on the part of early religious science. According to psychologist of religion *William James* (1902), mystical states are primarily pantheistic and optimistic; far from being knowable in words and concepts (‘ineffability’), they are determined by feeling and knowledge, and therefore lead not to a ‘faith’ open to rational discussion; rather, they transmit subjective insights of unconditional value (‘noetic quality’). James holds mystical states to be the root of all religion<sup>13</sup>. For religious scholar *Rudolf Otto*, the ultimate foundation of religion is mystical. Each individual religion is ‘a priori’ preceded by the primitive religious feeling of each individual, and the object of its relation (the *numinous*); these are the basic data of all religion, inexpressible because they are mystical.

<sup>9</sup> An acquaintance with Eastern teachings whose preferred theme is the one Being ‘behind’ all that is, in combination with Romantic medievalism, led to a universalization of the concept: it even became possible to speak of an a-religious mysticism.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Steven FANNING, *Mystics of the Christian Tradition*, Routledge – Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York, 2001, p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> Annihilation is not a simple or univocal category but is, rather, analogical, dialogical, and paradoxical.

<sup>12</sup> Dan MERKUR, *Mystical Moments and Unitive Thinking*, Albany, N.Y., 1999. The author argues for a new psychological approach to unitive thinking and contains a useful survey of modern theories of *unio mystica*.

<sup>13</sup> V. William JAMES, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, New York, 1916, Seven Treasures Publications, 2009.





The 'essence' of mysticism is held to lie in the preponderance of "irrational and numinous moments" as the "reference object of religious feeling."<sup>14</sup>

The *controversy over a 'universal mysticism'*: The common 'essence,' the coherent, transcultural 'nucleus' of all mysticism was seen by Rudolf Otto in the common subject of reference and in the common experience. Otto's concept of the Holy remained imprisoned in the Judeo-Christian image of God, so that his 'Western-Eastern mysticism' was actually one-sided. R.C. Zaehner was also biased when it came to belief, since he undervalued monistic mysticism as not being in consonance with reality. Contemporary representatives of a 'universal mysticism' argue that the possibility of a common experience attaches to the structure of consciousness – something like a mind empty of thought and a psyche as an expansion of the inner world to the outside.<sup>15</sup>

In the late 1970s, Steven Katz began to present his ever-sharpening criticism of the notion of a 'universal mysticism.' Katz holds that insertion into a given culture and the interweaving of cultural variables and mystical experience are determinative: there is no 'pure,' immediate experience, or 'pure consciousness'. Instead, *Weltanschauung* and social environment have already generated the experience itself, and not only its description. Nothing can be experienced that is not already 'etched in.' Mysticism is conservative, and endorsing of tradition.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, another thing is to be stressed out: the narrow or the wider usage of the word "reason". In general the justification lies in the necessity of splitting things up and considering each part of the subject in turn. When the mystic says that his revelation is outside reason, he plainly does not mean that it is outside the sphere of the reasonable. No doubt he will urge that in the end the mystic life is the only reasonable one for a man to live. And this is better treated under the head of the relation between mysticism and ethics.

It has been claimed that mystical experience is altogether *unconceptualizable*, and that it is for this reason that it is said to be 'ineffable'. No doubt when the mystic says that his experience is "above" reason, he may mean *both* that it is outside the sphere of logic, and that it is beyond the reach of the understanding altogether; and no doubt the two statements are very closely connected, and may even imply each other.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Rudolf OTTO, *West-östliche Mystik. Vergleich und Unterscheidung zur Wesensdeutung*, Munich 1971 (1926) (Engl.: *Mysticism East and West: An Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism*, York, 1957); Typologizations in religious studies such as Friedrich Heiler's distinction (1919) between monistic (mystical) and dualistic (prophetic) religions, and Robert C. Zaehner's differentiation (1957) between monistic (natural) and theistic mysticism challenged Christian apologetics: Christianity is held to be characterized by its prophetic/ ethical commitment, while Eastern religions deny the world: redemption by grace plays out against a self-redemption, preferably by psycho-techniques. Cf. Annette WILKE, "Mysticism", in: *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, p. 1280.

<sup>15</sup> Although this argument criticizes Otto and Zaehner, it, too, is based on the supposition that the experience itself is amorphous, and independent of cultural qualifications, and that the background in terms of a *Weltanschauung* qualifies only interpretation and enunciation: thus, it is only here that the multiplicity of mystical descriptions emerges in the distinct cultures. V. Frits STAAL, *Exploring Mysticism A Methodological Essay*,

Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, UC Berkeley, Middlesex 1975.

<sup>16</sup> Jewish and Christian patterns of experience, for example, are begotten and marked by Jewish and Christian expositions of the Song of Solomon. For details: Steven T. KATZ (ed.), *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, Oxford University Press, 1983.

<sup>17</sup> W.T. STACE, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, Macmillan & Co ltd, London, 1961, p. 252.



## 2. MYSTICAL UNION IN JUDAISM

“Pre-Christian Judaism”, asserted R. C. Zaehner, “is not only unmystical, it is anti-mystical [...] exclusively obsessed by the transcendent holiness of God and man's nothingness in face of him.” God is a great and terrifying mystery in the Bible, and “not even in the Qur'an does this *mysterium tremendum* make itself so tremendously felt”<sup>18</sup>.

Judaism, Christianity and – probably to a lesser extent – Islam have all developed the idea of a personal God, so we tend to think that this ideal represents religion at its best. The personal God has helped monotheists to value the sacred and inalienable rights of the individual and to cultivate an appreciation of human personality. The Judaeo-Christian tradition has thus helped the West to acquire the liberal humanism it values so highly. These values were originally enshrined in a personal God who does everything that a human being does: he loves, judges, punishes, sees, hears, creates and destroys as we do. Yahweh began as a highly personalised deity with passionate human likes and dislikes. Later he became a symbol of transcendence, whose thoughts were not our thoughts and whose ways soared above our own as the heavens tower above the earth. The *personal* God reflects an important religious insight: that no supreme value can be less than human. Thus personalism has been an important and, for many, an indispensable stage of religious and moral development. The prophets of Israel attributed their own emotions and passions to God; Buddhists and Hindus had to include a personal devotion to avatars of the supreme reality. Christianity made a human person the center of the religious life in a way that was unique in the history of religion: it took the personalism inherent in Judaism to an extreme. It may be that without some degree of this kind of identification and empathy, religion cannot take root.<sup>19</sup>

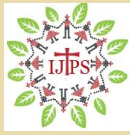
The significance of *unitive language* in Jewish mystical traditions has been the subject of contention. Scholarly study of Judaism, born in the Enlightenment, relegated mysticism to the margins, seeking to demonstrate that Judaism was a rational form of moral monotheism. Even the celebrated scholar of Judaism, Gershom Scholem, who resurrected mysticism as central to Jewish history, sought to distinguish Jewish mysticism from Christian and Islamic forms, because its strict sense of the gulf between God and human made claims for mystical union, and especially mystical identity, suspect and secondary.<sup>20</sup> Since the 1980s, however, new research by Moshe Idel<sup>21</sup>, Bernard McGinn, and Rachel Elior

<sup>18</sup> Though the edge is taken off this statement when a few pages later this author says of the Qur'an, “Not even in the Old Testament do you have such an over-mastering insight into Omnipotence.” See R.C. ZAEHNER, *At Sundry Times*, Faber and Faber, London, 1958, pp. 15, 27, 171.

<sup>19</sup> Yet a personal God can become a grave liability. We can assume that he loves what we love and hates what we hate, endorsing our prejudices instead of compelling us to transcend them. When he seems to fail to prevent a catastrophe or even to desire a tragedy, he can seem callous and cruel. A facile belief that a disaster is the will of God can make us accept things that are fundamentally unacceptable. The very fact that, as a person, God has a gender is also limiting: it means that the sexuality of half the human race is sacralized at the expense of the female and can lead to a neurotic and inadequate imbalance in human sexual mores. A personal God can be dangerous, therefore. Instead of pulling us beyond our limitations, 'he' can encourage us to remain complacently within them; 'he' can make us as cruel, callous, self-satisfied and partial as 'he' seems to be. Instead of inspiring the compassion that should characterize all advanced religion, 'he' can encourage us to judge, condemn and marginalize. It seems, therefore, that the idea of a personal God can only be a stage in our religious development. The world religions all seem to have recognized this danger and have sought to transcend the personal conception of supreme reality. V. Karen ARMSTRONG, *History of God, from Abraham to the present: the 4000-year Quest for God*, Vintage U.K., Random House, 1999, pp. 243 f.

<sup>20</sup> Gershom SCHOLEM, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York, 1941. Classic work, though Scholem's view of the role of union in Judaism is contested. Also, Idem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York, 1971. See the essay “*Deveikut*, or Communion with God”.

<sup>21</sup> Moshe IDEL, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, New Haven, Conn., 1988a.



has shown that unitive language, even expressions of mystical identity, is not at all foreign to Jewish mysticism, though it is late.

The earliest stages of Jewish mysticism represented by the Merkavah literature (c. second to tenth century a. Chr.) do not feature the language of union but concentrate on heavenly ascensions to a vision of the throne of God. Unitive language first appears in the mid-twelfth century in the early stages of Qabalah. Though Jewish forms of unitive mysticism show important analogies to Christian and Muslim forms, the distinctive practices and linguistic character of Jewish mysticism, both in the various types of Qabalah and in the later Hasidic mysticism, have their own hermeneutics.<sup>22</sup>

We start our demarche by appealing to the text of *Deuteronomy* 4:4 that states, “You who cleave to the Lord God are all alive this day” (cf. *Dt.* 10:20 and 13:5). The notion of “cleaving” (*devekut*) provided a biblical warrant for later unitive forms of Jewish mysticism, not only those of mystical uniting but also stronger connotations of mystical identity. Moshe Idel has suggested that unitive understandings of *devekut* and related terms, such as *hitahed* (uniting) and *yihud* (union), express two models of mystical union: a universalizing type in which the soul of the mystic becomes all-embracing by cleaving to the Universal Object<sup>23</sup>; and an annihilative-integrative model in which the mystic’s ego is annihilated in order to be perfectly integrated into the divine realm. The qabbalistic and Hasidic mystics who used strong forms of mystical identity, like their Christian and Muslim counterparts, usually qualified their statements by insisting that identity with God was not total; the ego remains or returns, at least in some way. Similarly even the most powerful proponents of identity language never broke with Jewish *halakhic* practice or lapsed into an antinomian posture.<sup>24</sup>

*Jewish unitive mystics.* Among the earliest Jewish thinkers who spoke of mystical union was the mid-twelfth century philosopher *Abraham ibn Ezra*, who saw Moses’ cleaving to God as a model for the soul’s return to its primordial state of universality. This theme continued on in *Qabalah*, for example in Ezra of Gerona (c. 1250), who held that the soul of a prophet ascends until it is united to the “supernal soul in a complete union”<sup>25</sup>, a formulation that seems to be influenced by Neoplatonic views. The most impressive work of Spanish Qabalah, the *Zohar*, produced by mystical groups centered around *Mosheh de Leon* in the late thirteenth century, did not use extensive language of union, though the appearance of some unitive expressions (e.g., *Zohar* III.288a) became a proof text for later mystics.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Bernard MCGINN (2005), “Mystical union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam”, in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 9, p. 6339.

<sup>23</sup> Moshe IDEL, and Bernard MCGINN, eds., *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, 2d ed., New York, 1996.

<sup>24</sup> The only real heresy in the past eight centuries of Jewish history, that of Shabbetai Tsevi, was messianic in origin, not mystical.

<sup>25</sup> Apud Moshe IDEL, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 42.

<sup>26</sup> Apud Gershom SCHOLEM, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 173. Other theosophical qabbalists, however, did employ considerable unitive language. For example, *Isaac of Acre* (c. 1300) understood cleaving as the means for attaining the gift of prophecy in the soul’s ascent to union with the hidden godhead of Qabalah, the Ein Sof. Commenting on *Leviticus* 19:24, he says that the years of the maturation of fruit trees mentioned in the text are to be understood as the advance of the soul through mystical stages until, “‘And in the fifth year’, which refers to the ‘Eiy Sof which surrounds everything, this soul will cleave to the ‘Eiy Sof and will become total and universal, after she had been individual, due to her palace, while she was yet imprisoned in it, and she will become universal, because of her source” (Idel, 1988a, p. 48). This reference to attaining a pre-creational state echoes a theme found in contemporary Christianity and Islam. See: Moshe IDEL, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 48.



But the most extreme formulations of identity mysticism in Qabbalah occur in the writing of *Abraham Abulafia* in the late thirteenth century. Abulafia's ecstatic form of Qabbalah, based upon practices of meditation and number manipulations, was fundamentally intellectualist. Like Plotinus, he envisaged an ascent to union with the Agent Intellect and finally to the Hidden God. Abulafia expresses this last stage in reduplicating language of fused pronouns comparable to some of the most extreme Muslim mystics:

“For now he is no longer separated from his Master, and behold he is his Master and his Master is he; for he is so intimately united with him, that he cannot by any means be separated from him, for he is he”<sup>27</sup>

Speaking about the most important trend of Judaism's mystique, one can note that it is commonplace in contemporary scholarship to distinguish between two major typological trends of medieval Kabbalah, *theosophic-theurgic* and *ecstatic-prophetic*, a distinction that can be traced to nineteenth century scholarship though only developed in the twentieth century. This classification, however, runs the risk of oversimplification. Careful scrutiny of the relevant texts indicates that kabbalists whom we dub as ‘theosophic’ were capable of ecstatic experiences of a unitive nature and that kabbalists labeled ‘ecstatic’ presumed that esoteric gnosis imparted theosophic wisdom. Moreover, shared traditions about the secret names of God, and particularly the most sacred of these names, «YHWH», the sefirotic potencies as the means and end of mystical communion and the theurgical interpretation of ritual, bridge the presumed gap separating the proposed schools of Kabbalah.<sup>28</sup>

But *unitive mysticism* was at its strongest in some of the forms of *Hasidic mysticism* that began in Eastern Europe in the 18th century and that continue to flourish in the 21st century. The Hasidic mystics were deeply influenced by Qabbalah, but the qabbalists were generally more concerned with repairing the structures of the divine world, whereas the Hasidic masters stressed personal experiences of union. Amid a wealth of *unitive statements* found in Hasidic mysticism, the materials from the *Habad movement*, founded by Dov Ber (d. 1772), stand out. In a disciple of the maggid<sup>29</sup>, Shne'ur Zalman of Liadi (d. 1813), one finds extreme statements of annihilation and identity with the divine. In explaining the meaning of mystical interpenetration (*hitkalelut*), Shne'ur says:

“When man cleaves to God, it is very delightful for Him, and savourous for Him, so much so that He will swallow it into his heart, [...] as the corporeal throat swallows. And this is the true cleaving, as he becomes one substance with God in whom he was swallowed, without being separate [from God] to be considered as a distinct entity at all”<sup>30</sup>

Dov Ber of Lubavitch, Shne'ur's son, wrote *Tract on Ecstasy*, which carefully discriminated five levels of ecstatic progression in which the fourth level, one of annihilation, leads to the fifth form of ecstasy, “actual essential *yehidah*”, which is “called ‘ecstasy of the whole essence’, that is to say his whole being is so absorbed that nothing remains and he has no self-consciousness whatsoever”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> J. ABELSON, *Jewish Mysticism*, London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913. See: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/jm/index.htm>

<sup>28</sup> But in spite of the legitimate challenge to the typological schematization, it is still useful to utilize these categories in providing a thumbnail sketch of the different schools of Kabbalah. V. Elliot R. WOLFSON, “Kabbalah”, in: Kocku von STUCKRAD, ed., *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, 1052.

<sup>29</sup> An itinerant Jewish preacher.

<sup>30</sup> Moshe IDEL, and Bernard MCGINN, eds., *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> Louis JACOBS, trans. and ed., *Dobh Baer of Lubavitch: “Tract on Ecstasy”*, London, 1963, pp. 136–139. Other Habad mystics, such as *Aharon Halevi Horowitz* of Staroselye (d. 1828), were even more daring in their



Judaism has produced forms of mysticism so unlike any other and so variant among themselves that no common characteristic marks them all. At most we can say that they “commune” with one another, not that they share an identical spirit.<sup>32</sup> The eschatological element most clearly appears in the earliest trend: the often gnostically influenced mythical speculation on Ezekiel’s vision of the throne-chariot, the *merkavah*. Mysticism around this theme began in the first centuries a. Chr. It consisted of an attempt to ascend to the divine throne beyond the various intermediate spheres (the *heikhalot*). Except for its biblical starting point (first developed in the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Enoch*), the impact of Gnostic *pleroma* mythology dominates this spiritual “throne world.” But also the typically Hellenistic connection of mysticism and magic appears to have been strong. *Merkavah* mysticism declined after the seventh century, but enjoyed a steady revival in Italy in the ninth and tenth centuries, which, in turn, may have influenced medieval German Hasidism.<sup>33</sup>

It is hard to evaluate the precise ‘mystical’ significance of so popular a movement: Hasidism. Yet the intensive religious experience of its greatest writers leaves no doubt. Here particularly we should restrain ourselves from imposing too narrow limits on the term *mystical*. Hasidism may be more practical and certainly more social than earlier spiritual movements, but its emphasis upon a joyful spirit and moral living derives from a mystical source. *Jewish mysticism* shows an unparalleled variety of forms ranging from deep speculation to purely emotional experience. It consistently appeals to scriptural authority, yet no mystical movement ever strayed further from theological orthodoxy than late messianic *Qabbalah*. And still for all the variety of its forms and of the external influences to which it was exposed, Jewish mysticism unquestionably possesses a powerful unity of its own. In it the word dominates, and the often tragic experience of the present lives in constant expectation of the future.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. “UNIO MYSTICA” IN CHRISTIANITY

It has been common to discuss *Eastern Orthodox Theology* and mysticism separately from Western Catholic, but the Orthodox Church regards itself as catholic and universal, and the formal division of East and West did not come till the eleventh century when it was as much attacked from the Western Crusades as doctrinal differences that caused the split. Eastern Christians owed much to the Western Augustine or Gregory the Great, as Westerners were indebted to Eastern teachers like Athanasius and Basil.

The Greek qualifier *mystikos* is derived from the verb *muein*, meaning “to close the mouth or eyes.” Ancient writers used the term in the sense of something hidden, as in the

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claims for attaining mystical identity, but this is not the place to pursue mystical union in Habad, or among other Hasidic leaders, such as the famous Nahman of Bratslav (d. 1810).

<sup>32</sup> Gershom Scholem wisely embedded this irreducible diversity, reflective of a spiritual Diaspora, in the very title of his authoritative work *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941).

<sup>33</sup> Louis DUPRÉ (1987), “Mysticism” [first edition], in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, Lindsay JONES, editor, vol. 9, p. 6352.

<sup>34</sup> For details: Moshe IDEL, and Bernard MCGINN, eds., *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Ecumenical Dialogue*. 2d ed., New York, 1996; Moshe IDEL: *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, New Haven, Conn., 1988; Also Idem, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*. Albany, N.Y., 1988; Also Idem, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic (Hasidismul între extaz și magie, Hasefer, Bucuresti, 2001)*, Schocken, Ierusalim 2000; Rachel ELIOR, *The Paradoxical Ascent to God: The Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad Hasidism*, Albany, N.Y., 1993. An introduction to Habad Hasidism and its language of union; Gershom SCHOLEM, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York, 1941. Also, Idem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York, 1971.



case of the mystery cults, but from the second century CE Christians adopted *mystikos* to signify the inner realities of their beliefs and practices. The word was most often used to describe the hidden spiritual meaning of the Bible, but it was also employed in speaking of the Sacraments and of the vision of God. Around the year 500 CE Pseudo-Dionysius coined the term “*theologia mustikē*” to indicate the knowledge (or better, superknowledge) by which mystics attain God.<sup>35</sup> And Pseudo-Dionysius was the first to use the term *henosis mustikē* (*Divine Names* 2.9).<sup>36</sup>

If the term *mystical union* is rare, the reality of union with God is old in Christianity. The earliest Christian mystical system, that found in the Alexandrian exegete *Origen* (d. 254 CE), already displays a rich teaching on the union between the loving soul and the Incarnate Logos, especially as found in the spiritual reading of the *Song of Songs*. Commenting on *Song of Songs* (2:10-13), Origen says: “For the Word of God would not otherwise say that the soul was his neighbor, did he not join himself to her and become one spirit with her.”<sup>37</sup> Here Origen is referencing a text from St. Paul (1 Cor. 6:17: “Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him”), a passage that became the leitmotif for those forms of Christian mysticism that emphasize mystical uniting. For Origen and others, the soul burning with love for Christ is divinized by grace to enjoy a union of loving conformity with the Logos that introduces it to the delights of “mystical and ineffable contemplation.”

The tenor of early Christian mysticism was determined by the New Testament and by trends in Hellenistic Judaism (especially Philo Judaeus’s scriptural theology and the late Judaic meaning of *gnōsis*). A third factor, usually referred to as Neoplatonism, must be added. Yet that movement, though influential in the development of Christian spirituality, may be too restricted an account of its beginnings; Origen (and, to some extent, even Clement) had already developed a mystical theology of the image before Plotinus. It might be more accurate, then, to look to the entire philosophically Platonic, religiously syncretic, and generally Gnostic culture of Alexandria at the end of the second century.<sup>38</sup>

Controversy followed Origen’s teachings long after his death. As with Clement, the progression of Christian theology in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries left behind much of his theology and some of his Platonic base. He taught a first creation before the creation of the material world, the pre-existence of souls before their eventual bodily incarnation, the salvation of all beings and the subordination of Christ to God the Father<sup>39</sup>, while denying the

<sup>35</sup> The earliest uses of the term *mystical union* are found in the *Spiritual Homilies* ascribed to the Egyptian monk Macarius but actually written in Messalian circles in Syria in the late fourth century CE. See St. Macarius, *Homilies*, 10.2, 15.2, and 47.17.

<sup>36</sup> The Latin translators of the Dionysian corpus employed various terms for Dionysius’s *henosis*, but use of *unio mystica* was rare, despite the many discussions of union found in the medieval and early modern periods. The term *did* emerge in some of the textbooks on mysticism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Cf. Michael A. SELLS, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, Chicago, 1994. A challenging analysis of strong identity statements in Neoplatonism, Christianity, and Islam.

<sup>37</sup> Apud Michel DUPUY, “L’union a Dieu”, in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualite: Ascetique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, edited by Marcel Viller et al., vol. 11, Paris, 1992. See: J. Christopher KING, *Origen on the Song of Songs as the Spirit of Scripture: The Bridegroom’s Perfect Marriage-Song*, Oxford Scholarship Online: February 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, “Outlines of comparative view of Hindu and Christian Mysticism”, in: *International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science* (IJTPS), No. 2, Year II, May, 2018, Valahia University Press, p. 70.

<sup>39</sup> The fourth-century condemnations were a serious blow to his reputation, while his censure at the fifth ecumenical council in Constantinople in 553 left him posthumously branded as a heretic and many of his works were destroyed.



resurrection of the physical body. Nonetheless, Origen's influence on Christian mysticism is immense. His allegorical interpretation of scriptures and his mystical view of the Song of Songs became standard among Christian spiritual writers, and, along with Clement of Alexandria, he was the founder of the exaltation of Christian asceticism as necessary preparation for mysticism that produced the monastic movement in the deserts of Egypt at the beginning of the fourth century.<sup>40</sup>

The view of Clement and Origen that Christianity existed on two levels – an *inner, higher*, mystical Christianity concerned with receiving the knowledge of God given only to those who had freed themselves of their passions (a state of *apatheia*, passionlessness), and ordinary Christianity concerned with instructing the masses in the moral teachings of the faith – continued to dominate the Church and attained its most extreme expression at the beginning of the fourth century with the appearance in Egypt of the Desert Fathers. By about the year 300 the Christian ideal of withdrawal from the world took a more literal expression when great numbers began to leave their homes and families and move out into the desert to live their lives in 'solitude'. Three types of *monastics* ("those who live alone") came to be found in the desert, hermits who truly lived apart from others, those who lived in *laurae*, collections of huts where the monks of the community lived alone but met together in a common church where the monastics would meet on Saturdays and Sundays for services, and *cenobia*, where the monks and nuns lived communally in barracks.<sup>41</sup>

St. Athanasius of Alexandria (†373) marks an important step forward in the Christian understanding of the soul's way to God. In contrast to earlier forms of mystical theology based on the Platonist premise of the soul's natural kinship with God, Athanasius posits a great ontological gulf between God and all else – souls included. This gulf can only be crossed by God: man can only know God if God comes to him, comes down into the realm of corruption and death that man inhabits. And this he does in the Incarnation. Athanasius' understanding of the Incarnation and his understanding of the monastic life thus link up with each other. In the light of the Incarnation, those who desire to identify themselves with this God who comes down must follow the same movement.<sup>42</sup> So, in Athanasius' *Life of Antony*,<sup>43</sup> we read nothing of the soul's ascent to God in contemplation, but rather of its descent into the world given over to sin, a descent to the place of the demons there to do battle with them. And two centuries later, when the greatest of the monastic rules came to be written, that of St. Benedict, we find no word in it about *contemplation*.

And yet this anti-mystical strand in monasticism is only part of the story. The life of contemplation, the search for a sense of kinship with God, continues to call men, and so the two strands, what we might call mystical and anti-mystical, are woven together in the history of Christian monasticism and are the source of endless tensions. But, at the outset of this

<sup>40</sup> Steven FANNING, *Mystics of the Christian Tradition*, pp. 25 f.

<sup>41</sup> While the terms 'flight' and 'withdrawal' suggest that monastic life was an escape, it actually represented spiritual combat with oneself in a struggle to overcome the body and its passions and appetites in a life of asceticism, a term derived from the Greek word *ascesis*, 'discipline'. This was not asceticism for its own sake but rather for its reward, living in the presence of God and gaining knowledge of God, which was the life of the angels – a foretaste of the heavenly life. Cf. Johannes QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. 2, *The Ante-Nicene Literature After Irenaeus*, Westminster, MD, Newman Press, Utrecht-Antwerp, Spectrum Publishers, 1962.

<sup>42</sup> No longer will they be drawn upwards to holiness in ever greater likeness to the invisible God; now they will find themselves being drawn down into the material world with the Word made flesh. See Bernard MCGINN, "Ocean and Desert as Symbols of Mystical Absorption in the Christian Tradition", in: *Journal of Religion* 74 (1994): 155–181.

<sup>43</sup> *Life of St. Antony*, 14, 67, 47: R. T. Meyer's translation in *Ancient Christian Writers X*, Longmans, 1950.



history, we find them both embodied in a state of perfect development in one man, Evagrius of Pontus.<sup>44</sup>

Sometime in the years around 500, a writer, perhaps a monk in Syria, using the name of *Dionysius the Areopagite* (an Athenian converted to Christianity by St. Paul, mentioned in Acts 17.34) wrote a number of works which were regarded as quasi-apostolic and gained stature and authority very close to that of the Bible. Among the works of this author, now called Pseudo-Dionysius, was the very short tract *Mystical Theology*, presenting an essentially Platonic description of mysticism. To see “the mysterious things,” one must pass beyond the intellect and reason and leave behind

“Everything perceived and understood, everything perceptible and understandable, all that is not and all that is, and, with your understanding laid aside, to strive upward as much as you can toward union with him who is beyond all being and knowledge.”<sup>45</sup>

One must plunge into the truly mysterious darkness of unknowing. Here, renouncing all that the mind can conceive, wrapped entirely in the intangible and the invisible, he belongs completely to him who is beyond everything. Here, being neither oneself nor someone else, one is supremely united by a completely unknowing inactivity of all knowledge, and knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing.<sup>46</sup>

God, the author argued, was beyond all description, having “neither shape nor form, quality, quantity, or weight” and can “neither be seen nor be touched. It is neither perceived nor is it perceptible.” One ascends to God, who “cannot be grasped by understanding”, who “is beyond assertion and denial.” The farther upward one flies, the more “our words are confined to the ideas we are capable of forming; so that now as we plunge into that darkness which is beyond intellect, we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing.”<sup>47</sup>

For Pseudo-Dionysius, one could reach God only by entering into a darkness of unknowing, for God transcends all human language and concepts. In this and in other extant works bearing his name, the author stresses the superiority of the *apophatic* method of describing God (that is, the way of negation, of stating what God is not) over the *cataphatic* (the way of affirming what God is), because the way of negation

“seems to me much more appropriate, for, as the secret and sacred tradition has instructed, God is in no way like the things that have being and we have no knowledge at all of his incomprehensible and ineffable transcendence and invisibility.”<sup>48</sup>

The mystical way in the East was distinguished by different writers. For the Pseudo-Dionysius there were two ways, of affirmation and unknowing, and three ways of spiritual life: purgation, illumination and union. *Isaac the Syrian*, an ascetic writer of the seventh century, distinguished three stages on the way to union: penitence that is conversion of the will, purification that liberates from the passions, and perfection that is perfect love through grace. In *Hesychasm*, 'quietism', the mystical system taught by the monks of Mount Athos from the fourteenth century, emphasis was placed upon ascetic practices, quiet of body and mind, and attainment of the vision of the Uncreated Light of God. Breathing exercises were used which had some resemblance to Yoga, and concentration was fixed by repetition of the

<sup>44</sup> Andrew LOUTH, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys*, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press Inc., New York, 2007, pp. 96-97.

<sup>45</sup> *Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works*, 1.1., Colm Luibheid (trans.), New York and Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 1987, p. 135.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.3, p. 137.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, p. 141. 102; *Ibid.*, 3, p. 139.

<sup>48</sup> *Celestial Hierarchy* 2.3, in *Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works*, p. 150.





Jesus-prayer: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’. There was considerable controversy over disciplines and doctrines, particularly over a distinction made between God’s essence and his light, but for centuries Hesychasm was virtually identified with Orthodoxy.<sup>49</sup>

The leading hesychast *Evagrius Pontus* (†599) insisted that the ‘knowledge’ that we had of God in prayer had nothing whatever to do with concepts or images but was an immediate experience of the divine which transcended these. It was important, therefore, for hesychasts to strip their souls naked: “When you are praying”, he told his monks, “do not shape within yourself any image of the deity and do not let your mind be shaped by the impress of any form”. Instead, they should “approach the Immaterial in an immaterial manner”.<sup>50</sup> Evagrius was proposing a sort of Christian Yoga. This was not a process of reflection; indeed, ‘prayer means the shedding of thought’. It was rather an intuitive apprehension of God. It will result in a sense of the unity of all things, a freedom from distraction and multiplicity, and the loss of ego – an experience that is clearly akin to that produced by contemplatives in non-theistic religions like Buddhism. By systematically weaning their minds away from their ‘passions’ – such as pride, greed, sadness or anger which tied them to the ego – hesychasts would transcend themselves and become deified like Jesus on Mount Tabor, transfigured by the divine ‘energies’.<sup>51</sup>

The goal of Orthodox Christian mysticism or spirituality is, however, the union of man with God in Christ. But since God is endless, the goal of union with Him, of our perfection, never corresponds to an end from which man can no longer advance. All Eastern Fathers agree that perfection has no end, but is an advance “from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18), or the *epektasis* about which speaks St. Gregory of Nazianus. For the characterization of this union, the pretty bold term of *deification* or participation into divinity is used in the East (“partakers of divine nature”, 2 Pet.1,4).

This destiny of man, who lives godly, but not by himself, but by participation – a distinction that avoids us to understand the union in pantheistic terms – is expressed by St. Athanasius’ axiom: “God became man, so that man becomes God”. The destiny of man in Christianity is to become a *Christ by the likeness*, that is, an adoptive son of God, or to become God not by identity but by *participation* in the divine nature. This union always retains its theandric character in Orthodox theology.<sup>52</sup>

#### 4. MYSTICAL UNION IN ISLAM

What has become known as “Islam” emerged as the third religious movement within the Abrahamic tradition. On the seventeenth night of the month of Ramadan in 610 CE, during his month-long spiritual retreat to a cave on Mt. Hira, an angel (Gabriel) gave Muhammad a command “to recite” (*iqra*). Enveloped by the overpowering presence of

<sup>49</sup> Vladimir LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, J. Clarke, 1957, pp. 208 f.

<sup>50</sup> EVAGRIUS Pontus, *On Prayer*, 67, apud Karen ARMSTRONG, *History of God, from Abraham to the present: the 4000-year Quest for God*, p. 255.

<sup>51</sup> Later hesychasts refined this exercise: contemplates should sit with head and shoulders bowed, looking towards their heart or navel. They should breathe ever more slowly in order to direct their attention inwards, to certain psychological foci like the heart. It was a rigorous discipline that must be used carefully; it could only be safely practised under an expert director. Gradually, like a Buddhist monk, the hesychast would find that he or she could set rational thoughts gently to one side, the imagery that thronged the mind would fade away and they would feel totally one with their prayer. *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>52</sup> Dr. Alexandru-Corneliu ARION, *Panteismul hinduist și învățătura creștină despre Dumnezeu (Hindu pantheism and the Christian teaching on God)*, Enciclopedică Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 437-438.



God, Muhammad recited divinely inspired words. The Revelation makes a direct connection to previous revelations given to the Jews and Christians, and in fact presupposes them. The Quranic revelation finds its uniqueness in the fact that this was the first time in Arabia that the One God, “the God” – “al-Llāh” or “Allāh,” had revealed himself in the people’s own language.<sup>53</sup>

The root *slm* in Arabic means “to be in peace, to be an integral whole.” From this root comes *islām*, meaning “to surrender to God’s law and thus to be an integral whole,” and *muslim*, a person who so surrenders. It is important to note that two other key terms used in the Qur’ān with high frequency have similar root meanings: *īmān* (from *amn*), “to be safe and at peace with oneself,” and *taqwā* (from *wqy*), “to protect or save.” These definitions give us an insight into the most fundamental religious attitude of Islam: to maintain wholeness and proper order, as the opposite of disintegration, by accepting God’s law. It is in this sense that the entire universe and its content are declared by the Qur’ān to be *muslim*, that is, endowed with order through obedience to God’s law; but whereas nature obeys God’s law automatically, humanity ought to obey it by choice. In keeping with this distinction, God’s function is to integrate human personality, both individual and corporate: “Be not like those who forgot God, and [eventually] God caused them to forget themselves” (*sūrah* 59:19).<sup>54</sup>

What is striking about Islam is the way in which strong forms of mystical identity emerged quite early in the development of the *Sūfī* tradition. In part this reflects the impact of the noted union *ḥadīth* (an extra- Qur’ānic divine statement):

“I became the hearing with which he hears, the seeing with which he sees, the hand with which he grasps, and the foot with which he walks.”<sup>55</sup>

The emphasis on identity coexists along with highly developed forms of erotic union language. Through the absorption and transposition of themes from pre-Qur’ānic Arabian love poetry, the *Sūfī* mystics, in both prose and verse, stand out among the most fervent proponents of the role of absolute, single-minded love in the pursuit of God, as such figures as Rābi’ah al-‘Adawīyah (d. 810 CE), Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273), and Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī (d. 1289) demonstrate.<sup>56</sup>

*Tawḥīd*, “to declare that God is one,” is the central duty of all Muslims. The recognition that God alone is, that he is the sole agent, and that he alone can truly say “I” emphasizes that the absolute unity and simplicity of the transcendent creator also constitutes the immanent reality of all things, as the union *ḥadīth* indicates. Annihilation and identity are central to Islamic belief and the mysticism based upon it.

What we know today under the rubric “*Sūfīsm*” developed spontaneously within Islam as special religious and moral practices. The appellation “*Sūfīsm*” (*tasawwuf*) most likely stems from the Arabic term *suf*, meaning “wool,” and was applied to those who practiced a life of self-surrender and who donned this coarse woolen attire of humility to set

<sup>53</sup> See Karen ARMSTRONG, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*, New York: HarperCollins, 1993, pp. 69 ff.

<sup>54</sup> Fazlur RAHMAN, (1987), “Islam: An Overview” [First Edition], in: *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Second Edition, Lindsay Jones, Editor in Chief, vol. 7: *Iconography • Justin Martyr Religion*, Macmillan Reference USA, Thomson Gale, 2005, pp. 4560-4561.

<sup>55</sup> V. 40 Hadith Qudsi, Hadith, 25. See: <https://sunnah.com/qudsi40/25>

<sup>56</sup> Reynold A. NICHOLSON, *The Mystics of Islam*, 1914; reprint, Beirut, 1966, p. 68. Also: *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 1921; reprint, Cambridge, 1977.



themselves off from a lifestyle of selfishness, comfort, and luxury.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps the best response was supplied by Abu Bakr al-Shibli, who was asked: “Why are the Sūfis called by this name?” He replied: “It is because of the traces of the self that remain within them. If this were not the case, there would be no name attached to them!”<sup>58</sup>

Whatever etymology or origin we might ascribe to the term *Sufism*, it nevertheless depicts a profound religious and moral movement within Islam that internalizes the self-abandon to the One God on the model of the Prophet Muhammad. This mystical path has centered on serving God absolutely with the hope of experiencing Allah in a direct and personal manner. Such a practice intrinsically dissociated itself from knowing God through reason, from following ethical precepts by rote, and from merely taking for granted the messages of the prophets.<sup>59</sup> Beyond the ascetic and devotional practices of early Islam that characterized Sufism in the very beginning, by the ninth century, which begins the classical period of Sufism, Sufism was given to creative spiritual introspection and the examination of moral, legal, and philosophical issues inspired by lived experiences.<sup>60</sup>

For most of the Jewish mystics, the deeper meanings of the Torah are expressive of God’s passionate love for humanity. The “Song of Songs,” exemplifies this love, becoming not an inter-human ode, but a fervent, adoring love poem between God and human beings as lover and beloved. This intimate love relation between God and humanity is the mystical theme of the Quran for the Sūfis. To evoke their intimate relation with God, many of the Arabic and Persian Sūfī writings are filled with such images adopted from the courtly literary tradition that are Islamic and pre-Islamic in origin.<sup>61</sup>

The essence of their doctrine is moral contrition and detachment of the mind from the “good things” of the world. But from its very early times, Sufism also had a strong devotional element. The love goal of God led to the doctrine of *fanā* or “annihilation” (that is, of the human self in God). There were definitely Hellenistic Christian influences at work here. But the annihilation ideal was soon amended into “survival after annihilation,” or (re)gaining of a new self, and this formula was given different interpretations. Most Sūfis taught that, after the destruction of the human attributes (not the self), mortals acquire divine attributes (not the divine self) and “live in” them. The firm view of the orthodox and influential *Sūfis al-Junayd* was that when a person sheds human attributes and these attributes undergo annihilation, that person comes to think that he or she has become God. But God soon gives that person the consciousness of otherness (not alienation!) from God, which is extremely painful and is only somewhat relieved by God’s also giving the consolation that this is the highest state attainable by human beings. Yet there were also Sūfis who, most probably under the influence of Hellenistic Christianity, believed in human

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<sup>57</sup> This is the generally accepted derivation of the term, though already the tenth century Sūfī al-Qushayri (986–1072) entertains other derivations. Some say the name “Sūfism” comes from the Arabic word for purity, *safa*; others hold that it comes from the early disciples who, in their devotion, left their homes and surrounded the Prophet on the bench (*suffa*) outside the mosque. See al-QUSHAYRI, *Principles of Sūfism*, trans. B.R. von Schlegell, Berkeley, Calif.: Mizan Press, 1990, esp. pp.301–302.

<sup>58</sup> Cited by al-QUSHAYRI, *Principles of Sūfism*, p. 306.

<sup>59</sup> See Sachiko MURATA and William C. CHITTICK, *The Vision of Islam*, St. Paul, Minn.: Paragon House, 1994, 238ff. However, this is a point contested by philosophers who are also mystics, e.g., Mulla Sadra. See Seyyed HOSSEIN NASR, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1989.

<sup>60</sup> See Carl W. ERNST, *Words of Ecstasy in Sūfism*, Albany, N.Y., 1985, 4ff. Important study of the role of ecstatic utterances in Sūfism.

<sup>61</sup> Carl W. ERNST, *Sūfism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam*, Shambhala, Boston & London, 2011, pp. 154–61.



transubstantiation into God. In 922, the Persian mystic and poet *Mansur al-Hallāj*, a representative of this school, was charged with having uttered the blasphemous statement “I am God” (Ana ‘I-Ḥaqq), and was crucified in Baghdad.<sup>62</sup>

This example of such divergent interpretations of a fundamental doctrine should warn us that with Sufism we are dealing with a truly protean phenomenon: not only do interpretations differ, but experiences themselves must differ as well. However, under pressure from the ‘*ulamā*’, who refused to acknowledge any objective validity for the Sūfī experience, the Sūfīs formulated a doctrine of “spiritual stations” (*maqāmāt*) that adepts successively attained through their progressive spiritual itinerary. These stations are as objectifiable as any experience can be. Although the various schools have differed in the lists of these stations, they usually enumerate them as follows: *detachment* from the world (*zuhd*), *patience* (*ṣabr*), *gratitude* (*shukr*) for whatever God gives, *love* (*ḥubb*), and *pleasure* (*riḍā*) with whatever God desires.<sup>63</sup>

After the violent death of al-Hallāj, another important doctrine of the dialectic of Sūfī experience was developed by orthodox Sūfīs. According to this doctrine, the Sūfī alternates between two different types of spiritual states. One type is the experience of *unity* (where all multiplicity disappears) and of the inner reality. In this state the Sūfī is absent from the world and is ‘with God’; this is the state of “intoxication”. The other state, i.e. that of “sobriety”, occurs when the Sūfī “returns” to multiplicity and is “with the world.” Whereas many Sūfīs had earlier contended that “intoxication” is superior to “sobriety” and that, therefore, the saints are superior to the prophets (who are “with the world” and legislate for society), the orthodox Sūfīs now asserted the opposite, for the goodness of saints is limited to themselves, whereas the goodness of prophets is transitive, since they save the society as well as themselves.<sup>64</sup>

*Ibn al-‘Arabī*’s († 1240) doctrine, known as *Unity of Being* teaches that everything is in one sense God and in another sense not-God. He holds that, given God, the transcendent, another factor that in itself is not describable “either as existent or as nonexistent” comes to play a crucial role in the unfolding of reality. This factor is neither God nor the world; it is a “third thing,” but it is God with God and world with the world. It is the stuff of which both the attributes of God (for God as transcendent has no names and no attributes) and the content of the world are made. It is eternal with the eternal and temporal with the temporal; it does not exist partially and divided in things: the whole of it is God, and the whole of it is the world, and the whole of it is everything in the world. This “third thing” turns out finally to be the Perfect or Primordial Human Being (who is identified with the eternal, not the temporal, *Muḥammad*), in whose mirror God sees himself and who sees himself in God’s mirror.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Yet, a somewhat earlier mystic, al-Bistāmī (d. 874), who is said to have committed even graver blasphemies, was never touched by the law. See A. J. ARBERRY, *Sūfism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, London, 1950, p. 145.

<sup>63</sup> J. Spencer TRIMINGHAM, *The Sūfī Orders in Islam*, New York, 1971, pp. 128-129.

<sup>64</sup> Fazlur RAHMAN, (1987), “Islam: An Overview” [First Edition], in: *Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 4569. See also Anne-Marie SCHIMMEL, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1975. On the basis of this doctrine, al-Hallāj’s famous statement was rationalized as “one uttered in a state of intoxication” and as such not to be taken at face value. But it was al-Ghazālī who effected a meaningful and enduring synthesis of Sūfī “innerism” and the orthodox belief system.

<sup>65</sup> This immanent God and Human Being are not only interdependent but are the obverse and converse of the same coin. There is little doubt that *Ibn al-‘Arabī* represents a radical humanism, a veritable apotheosis of humanity. V. Muḥammad IQBĀL, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 1934; reprint, Lahore, 1960.



It is to be noted the severe reaction against Sūfī excesses on the part of Ibn Taymīyah<sup>66</sup> in the 14th century. It may be mentioned here that for Ibn Taymīyah the ultimate distinction between good and evil is absolutely necessary for any worthwhile religion that seeks to inculcate moral responsibility, and further, that this distinction is totally dependent upon belief in pure monotheism and the equally absolute distinction between man and God. He sets little value on the formal fact that a person belongs to the Muslim community; he evaluates all human beings on the scale of monotheism. Thus, as seen above, he regards pantheistic Sūfīs as being equivalent to polytheists.<sup>67</sup>

Going beyond all these contrasts, one can easily notice that while the mystical experiences described by the Sūfī mystics follow the same general pattern as those described by the mystics of other religions, there are elements in Sufism which make it of great interest to the student of mysticism. To the Sūfī mystic self-renunciation is the essential thing if any real progress in the higher stages of the spiritual life is to be made. It is not, however, as in some mystics, a renunciation of the world, in the sense of turning one's back on the world. Rather, the Sūfī aspirant to union with God is bidden to plunge into the world, to merge himself in it, so that he may be able to understand what it truly is.

This process of self-mergence in the world is, however, different from that of the typical nature-mystic. For the Sūfī aspirant was taught that, in order to be able to see the world as it really is, the senses must be purified; the would-be mystic must free himself from egocentric judgement, his organs of perception must become clear and unclouded, his 'I-hood' must be surrendered, his affections and will must be subjugated. Then, and only then, can his heart become the measure of Divinity; then, and only then, can the rhythm of his inner life be in tune with the Universal Life, with Spirit, with Self, with the 'Love which moves the sun and the other stars'<sup>68</sup>. We come to an end by appealing to few noticeable verses about the human soul and his relation to God, within Sūfī paradigm:

“Played by Thy Hand, the soul makes melody,  
How art Thou in, and yet without the soul?  
With Thee, my flame, I burn, without Thee, die;  
How farest Thou without me, O my Whole? ....  
Garden and mead are in His radiance dight,  
His wine the rose adorns in lustre bright,  
None in this world benighted He hath left,  
His brand hath kindled in each heart a light.”<sup>69</sup>

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For details: Remus RUS, *Istoria filosofiei islamice (The History of Islamic Philosophy)*, Enciclopedică, București, 1994.

<sup>66</sup> He was a controversial medieval Sunni Muslim theologian, juriconsult, logician, and reformer.

<sup>67</sup> Then come the Shī'ah and Christians because both consider a human being to be a divine incarnation; and last come Zoroastrians and the Mu'tazilah, since both posit two ultimate powers. See A. J. WENSINCK, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development*, 1932; reprint, New York, 1965.

<sup>68</sup> Because the mystic has become 'merged' in God, he is able to see the world as it is, that is, as God sees it. It then assumes a new complexion. Beauty and serenity are seen beneath all its apparent deformity and inhumanity. He hears in it a new music, sees a new color, and smells a new fragrance. God-mysticism and nature-mysticism coalesce. See F.C. HAPPOLD, *Mysticism, a Study and an Anthology*, Penguin Group, 1963, reprint 1990, pp. 249-250.

<sup>69</sup> Muhammad IQBĀL, "The soul and God", trans. by A. J. Arberry, apud F.C. HAPPOLD, *Mysticism*, pp. 254-255.



## CONCLUSION

In the monotheistic faiths the God of creation, revelation, and redemption is not a static and indifferent First Principle but a loving and all-knowing God, who creates humans whose likeness to Him consists precisely in their ability to know and to love. The various ways of expressing mystical union are intimately connected with the relation between knowing and loving, both in the path to union and in its realization. Most mystics claim that both knowing and loving are necessary in the way to God, but many mystics stress the superiority of love, often expressed in highly erotic ways, whereas others conceive of union as attaining mental identity with the Divine Intellect. In unitive states some mystics contend that one reaches a higher divine way of knowing (*gnōsis*); other mystics see all loving and knowing, at least as most people conceive them, as abrogated when union or identity is attained. The variations found in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam on this essential problematic are too multiple to be easily characterized, but it is difficult to appreciate the dynamics of union unless one addresses the relation between unitive expressions and the roles of love and knowledge.<sup>70</sup>

Among the other persistent issues concerning the comparative dimensions of *mystical union* is that of the ethical implications of claims of having attained union-identity with God. If mystics think they have become in some sense one with God, what does this mean for their behavior and their relation to the wider community of faith? Does this indicate, for instance, that the ordinary religious practices, and perhaps even the moral code, no longer are binding on mystics? In both Christianity and Islam mystics, especially those who claimed identity with God, have been suspected of holding such views.<sup>71</sup>

*Union*, whether conceived of as the uniting of God and human or in a deeper way as some form of identity with God, has been a key feature of the mystical traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Although direct links between the mysticisms of the three faiths have been relatively rare, the common dynamics of monotheistic attempts to express their consciousness of becoming one with God display analogies that invite further investigation and promise important contributions to ecumenical understanding.<sup>72</sup>

Whatever the path trod, the quest for complete and absolute self-mergence in Divinity is beset with danger. When the contemplative, to whatever religion he belongs, attains the state of the Unitive Life and undergoes the experiences which mark that state, he feels as though his individual self has ceased to exist, that it has been entirely lost in God. One need not go to the Sūfī mystics to find this. It is there in Ruysbroeck, in Eckhart, in St John of the Cross's 'each seems to be God', in St Paul's 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'. It is at the heart of the Hindu 'Tat twam asi' (*Thou art That*) formulation. It can, however, easily result in an egocentric deification, which is not a loss of selfhood, but a glorification of the individual ego, and be expressed in exaggerated outbursts, such as: I am the One Real/ Glory be to me/ How great is my glory!<sup>73</sup>

"This mystical way of looking at things", says the philosopher J.N. Findlay, "enters into the experience of most men at many times". Rather than being a peculiar practice, possibly heretical, mysticism is but the fullest extension of the common way of humanity.

<sup>70</sup> Michael A. SELLS, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, Chicago, 1994, p. 198.

<sup>71</sup> These mystics were at times subject to persecution, imprisonment, and even death, as shown by the examples of al-Hallāj and 'Ayn al-Hamadhānī in Islam and Meister Eckhart, and Miguel de Molinos in Christianity.

<sup>72</sup> Bernard MCGINN, "Mystical union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam", in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 9, p. 6340.

<sup>73</sup> F.C. HAPPOLD, *Mysticism, a Study and an Anthology*, p. 250.



On this view, “the so-called great mystics, people like Plotinus, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, St Teresa and so on, are merely people who carry to the point of genius an absolutely normal, ordinary, indispensable side of human experience”<sup>74</sup>.

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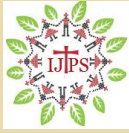
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<sup>74</sup> J. N. FINDLAY, *Ascent to the Absolute*, p. 164. apud Geoffrey PARRINDER, *Mysticism in the World's Religions*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 1995, p. 185.



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