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**THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTE OF
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Symposium

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Theodor Damian, Ph.D., President

30-18 50th Street, Woodside, NY 11377, Tel.: (718) 626-6013,
E-mail: DamianTh@aol.com

Editor: Theodor Damian

Assistant to the editor and designer: Claudia Damian

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THEODOR DAMIAN

Quo Vadis Homo: The Digital Age and the Metaphysical Question

Abstract: Everything in the created order is a sign of something else, namely the ontological and metaphysical belonging that man unconsciously longs for. Everything physical and conceptual is metaphysical at the same time. It indicates – as signs do – something beyond itself. There is a kind of metaphysical dimension of the digital world and, in this text, that is compared with the type of metaphysics Christian theology teaches and promotes.

Keywords: apophaticism, kataphatic approaches, metaphysics, machine, digital world, theology, God.

The question of direction in man's life is as old as man's existence. In the Garden of Eden when God asked „Where are you, Adam?,” the question of direction was implied: „Where did you go? I did not find you where you were supposed to go.” Life is a countless number of intersections and we have to constantly choose. How and what we choose is based on how we understand life, our destiny and destination, and our understanding is based on our values.

Tell me what values you choose and I will tell you where you will be going. Choosing values is in itself a metaphysical operation regardless of whether the values in themselves relative or absolute, local or universal, theological, economic, political or of any other kind. There is always a beyond, an unknown in the complex combination of factors that determine our choice, just as we don't know whether what we consider important or of interest at a certain moment in life is really going to bring us in the right direction.

<p>Theodor Damian, PhD, is Professor emeritus of Human Services and Education, Metropolitan College of New York; President of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, New York; President of the American Branch of the Romanian Academy of Scientists.</p>

Far from living in an age that many call the end of metaphysics we see how metaphysics permeates our entire life, even where we think it is less present, and that includes digital technology and our using it.

The relation between the apophatic and the cataphatic

In the universe, in life, in the entire creation, visible and invisible, everything is relation, related and relational. As A. von Heuer puts it, without relation nothing can be fundamentally understood.¹ Yet relation is metaphysic, transcendental and hence apophatic, even if it has a cataphatic dimension as well. The two terms apophatic and cataphatic seem to be opposites, mutually exclusive, yet they are rather complementary, just as when we speak about God. We describe Him in cataphatic terms when we say that God is creator, good, loving, merciful, however the apophatic language describes Him even more appropriately when we say that He is infinite, unknown, incomprehensible, immutable, immortal and so on.

As Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagites explains in his book *The Divine Names*, „of Him [God] there is conception, reason, understanding, touch, perception, opinion, imagination, name and many other things. On the other hand He cannot be understood, words cannot contain Him and no name can lay hold of Him. He is not one of the things that are and He cannot be known in any of them. He is all things in all things and He is no things among things.”²

For instance, we imagine God as being, but He is beyond our conventional and imperfect language; as Pseudo-Dionysius teaches, He is beyond being, and thus the apophatic and the cataphatic language apply concomitantly. This linguistic ambivalence is also present in the universal relation between cause and the caused. Again, in Pseudo-Dionysius' terms, „in reality there is no exact likeness between caused and cause, for the caused carry within themselves only such images of their originating sources as are possible for them, whereas the causes themselves are located in a realm transcending the caused.”³

This is similar to the theological doctrine about the divine revelation to the world. God reveals Himself to us only inasmuch as we can carry or comprehend and inasmuch as it is necessary for our salvation. That is cataphatic. All the rest is apophatic, not to speak of the fact that even in the positive language there is an apophatic dimension.

Among modern philosophers, Giorgio Agamben describes in detail, in his own terms, the relation between cataphatic and the apophatic when he speaks of the relation between the sayable and the unsayable and considers the nonlinguistic, the ineffable, a genuinely linguistic category, even the

category “par excellence,” and also, when he considers that any relation is preceded by the unrelated all the while it excludes it.⁴

In other words, the unrelated represents the potential for relation, it pre-supposes it, to use Agamben’s language; the metaphysical represents the ground for everything physical. The first is the unsayable, the apophatic, and then comes the sayable, the cataphatic, even though, as mentioned, only to a certain point beyond which, even there, one meets the ineffable.

That means that whatever comes from an apophatic metaphysics (pleonastically speaking!) – and everything physical comes from there – retains something from the characteristic of the origin. In Agamben’s view, even if we use language to communicate ideas, which keeps us in the realm of the cataphatic, the category of language, in fact, belongs to the ineffable as the potency for language. Then, the apophasis is the fundamental, the real category, even if one can think that it may include at the same time other categories and maybe only part of it would be pre-supposing the sayable.

Yet, if the ineffable could have many dimensions or categories, one can think that in the metaphysical realm they are not so clear cut as in the physical or even conceptual realms but are intertwined in a kind of perichoretic relationship, as in the intra-Trinitarian relationships as taught by Christian theology. In such a context every category participates in the other and others and hence it is easy to think of the infinite richness when it comes to their intra-system existence, but also in their extra-system manifestations.

However, if the metaphysical represents the category “par excellence”, as Agamben puts it, when, instead of going backward and naming the unnameable starting from the nameable, one would proceed in the more logical way by going forward from the ineffable down to the effable and give to the latter some characteristic of the first just, in a sense, like when describing the effect based on the cause instead of vice versa, thus indicating a true metaphysical realism. That would be in the noumenal world.

Nevertheless, in the human phenomenal world, one can have only some knowledge of the cause and based on that describe the effect and thus give justice to the apophatic. That would also indicate metaphysical realism.

In other words, every real physical and conceptual thing has as a main characteristic the ineffable, which is its origin; that can lead to the idea that the real can be eclipsed into the possible as in quantum mechanics, as Damiano Sacco explains when speaking of a certain similarity of Agamben with Heidegger.

Simply put, everything begins in apophasis and ends in apophasis.

The metaphysics of the digital world

When we read that in 2017 alone „Facebook reported that its WhatsApp and Messenger apps field more than sixty billion messages per day,” „in addition to the half million posts made *each minute* on Facebook proper”⁵ (and that does not include other platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, Tiktok, and others or the increase in numbers since then), the question that comes to mind is as follows: what is this unthinkable quantity of message telling us? How should we understand that? What kind of magnet is this?

One can envision some relative responses: For some, it indicates the fundamental need for relation; for others, the need to belong; for others yet, the need to get exposed.

All these possible responses have a metaphysical dimension. We are not just beings, but beings-in-relation and therefore the search for relation, like the search for meaning and the need to belong and be known by others is an ontological feature of human existence. It comes from the depth of ourselves, depths that we do not „possess”, as it possesses us, and which indicates in one way the metaphysical component of our being, but also propels us forward towards the other, or the Totally Other, as Karl Barth would say, towards the unknown, not any kind of unknown but a personal, personified one where we feel more comfortable as there is a common ground between us and the other. As Roger Garaudy rightly observed, the other is my transcendence.

There is even an unconscientized hope in this tendency to think that in the encounter with the other, face to face, we will recognize our belonging together and that this will strengthen the meaning of our life or offer a new meaning which will make us stronger.

This natural propensity towards the encounter operates like a necessity in all aspects of one’s life, including the digital life. To the big question: what is the cause of this existential necessity, one answer can be found in Christian theology based on which we are all made in the image of God, meaning we all belong together and then we all belong ultimately to God.

Yet there is a second category of belonging, even between us and everything else in the created order as everything was made through the divine Logos (John 1, 1-3) and we, as a reflection of God’s image – including that of the Logos – share the light of the Logos, a rationality, as Maximus the Confessor wrote in the seventh century, with all created things, or as even much earlier, in the second century AD, Justin the Martyr and Philosopher asserted speaking of the *Logos spermatikos*, the seed of divine rationality disseminated in all things created.

In fact, everything in the created order is a sign of something else, namely the ontological and metaphysical belonging that man unconsciously longs for. Everything physical and conceptual is metaphysical at the same time, it indicates – as signs do – something beyond itself.

That applies to the digital world as well. According to Leif Weatherby, „the digital is not [...] anything other than a (very) long series of signs. But without signs we could have no world in the first place. The digital, precisely as a kind of abstraction, constitutes our metaphysics, forcing us to reevaluate how we deal, in even the most basic categories, like that of causality.”⁶

This metaphysical character of the digital is in line with Warren McCulloch’s view that the digital is transcendental and real at the same time.⁷

The idea is not foreign to Christian theology. Through parables and analogies Jesus Christ made the Kingdom of God real to us, yet without stripping it of the transcendent, the transcendent being the fundamental, basic condition of the Kingdom.

On the other hand, the digital helps us decipher, imagine, know some things in depth and know others as new, yet neither depth nor novelty will exhaust the thing in itself when it comes to our knowledge of it. We don’t know how long and how much knowledge is still available when the quantity of this knowledge grows exponentially, in geometrical progression thus advancing into an infinite impossible for us to define.

This is what some call the cybernetic „black box” which „denotes that we cannot see what the digital is even by analogy.”⁸ What we do know is that the digital world is based on ever more complex interactions of ever more complex algorithms that make our imagination pale in front of a reality that we understand less and less.

The narcissistic factor

Together with the need to belong, to be in relation and to be validated, there is another need that Joseph E. Davis calls self-optimization. „Seeing and being seen by people whose approval they care about,” he writes, „drives them to introject themselves into the relentless feedback-driven process of self-optimization.” This is a „participatory surveillance, cloaked in the language of self-fulfillment and autonomy.”⁹

While the ideas of self-fulfillment and autonomy might have many positive connotations that would justify one’s behavior, they can also indicate a fragile self and a complex of inferiority, that in turn generate an attitude of self-centeredness that can become narcissistic.

Davis writes that people behave the way they do due to social dynamics and influence and not based on their own beliefs or intentions.¹⁰

This is true only partially because in the context of social dynamics I also have my own beliefs and values that also can influence others and that will have an important part in what I decide to do.

Also, if I have narcissistic tendencies, even if there will be external influences, the attitude I take is still based on a personal factor.

In other words, even if we speak of social dynamics, even behind them there is a personal belief at play that generates the waves.

One has to discern what is the belief and motivation of any social dynamic before deciding to adhere to it. And because the waves are visible but the belief or intention behind them are invisible – another type of metaphysics – one needs to be careful when thinking to go to swim in the often welcoming, warm, blue waters of any pool.

Speaking of narcissism, French philosopher Jean Baudrillard describes it in his own way: „The collector aims to surround herself with her own image, until, at last, she sees herself reflected back no matter where she looks. What you really collect, Baudrillard concludes, is always yourself.”¹¹

That means that „in the end your collection always ends up collecting you.”¹²

Even if in this phase of the development and use of the digital technology most users seem to be less and less concerned about the fact that the technology collects their data including locations, preferences, hobbies, relations, plans, and that the data will be used to draw them closer and make them more dependent of the system by nourishing their interests and pleasures. This might have to do with a certain narcissistic projection of the individual or it might have to do simply with attitudes like „I don't care-ism” or even „exposure-ism”. Many would base their „I don't care” attitude on the assumption that „I have nothing to hide” or „I am not a criminal” etc.

On the other hand, those who do not care about being exposed or even take pleasure in it, not in the exhibitionist sense, find nothing wrong with sharing with the system, with others, different types of intimacies.

The moving borders of technological innovation contribute to this phenomenon; the technology, as expected, constantly brings new possibilities and opportunities and the user is tempted to try them and see the effects and results. The users are moved incessantly to a new frontier that addresses the natural feature of human curiosity, and by trying to cross the border and step into the new territory gives them a sense of a pioneering activity or type of existence.

Slowly, most of the times, without conscientizing it, man takes the image of the machine and this, because the machine, to begin with, is conceived in man's image in terms of thinking, logic, functions and functionality.

The psychological substrate here lies in the fact that when man discovers something that resembles him, he develops for that thing a type of attraction, somehow in the sense of the French saying: „qui se semble se rassemble” (what is similar has a tendency to get together). When he sees somewhere a copy, a resemblance that reflects and mirrors him, he feels validated, expanded.

One can see here the narcissistic syndrome in covert or overt form.

You look into the mirror of the water, of glass, or of digital systems and suddenly you like what you see, maybe even fall in love with what you see, yourself. A form of idolatry.

What is this entire phenomenon based on? The legend of Narcissus does not explain. Our psychologists often offer contradictory or insufficient explanations. Yet, one possible, simple explanation may come from theology: man was created in the image of God, and consequently the love of God and of himself is part of his ontological condition, embedded in his being. That is why Jesus Christ, speaking about the need to love others starts with the need to love yourself, making it a fundamental criterion for salvation. Self-love is taken for granted by Jesus. It is there, part of who we are.

Jesus, however, refers to the authentic self, the one man received at creation and not to the constructed self, the one we build in our fallen existence, often suffocating the original one.

The artificial self reflects man’s corrupted existential condition just like other spiritual features such as reason, perception, understanding, all are imperfect, yet with an open possibility of healing, improvement, perfection.

Narcissism, in any form, including the digital one, is like a prison where you enter on your own willing, and just because you feel good there, your will never get out.

In a sense, the risk is that one can go, *in extremis*, to one’s own destruction, somehow in the sense of Nietzsche’s story of the overman. In his madness, as he marginalizes or destroys everything around, as he inflates the balloon of the self, he comes to kill even God. He takes God’s place, but then he lives the unbearable sentiment of inadequacy and what follows is suicide.

In a regular scenario, like in that of game addiction, the user is pushed by external forces towards the pit in an irreversible fall.

In both cases it is too late to come back. Consequently, as a researcher observes, „we are what we make; but when what we makes us in ways that we fail to understand, the human at the core of culture grows dangerously fragile.”¹³

The epektasis of the digital

Epektasis is a concept developed by St. Gregory of Nyssa which means that in the kingdom of God there will be no boredom. As God is inexhaustibly infinite, those in His communion will grow endlessly into the new horizons of joy and fulfillment.

This concept can be applied to digital technology in the sense of how one user can grow in using ever new technological discoveries, each one paving the way for the next one. However, in the machine system one does not have a clear idea as to where this progression will ultimately lead. In the theological system, which is not neutral, but clearly bifurcated - good and evil, right and wrong -, one is informed of the consequences of one's choices. This is related to the theological concept of human freedom. In Christian theology, it is revealed that man was created in the image of God, which consists of reason, feeling and will, with the possibility of achieving the likeness to God, that is holiness and immortality.

The divine planning was for man to be created both in God's image and likeness. However, in God's order, only image was given as a first step based on which likeness was to be achieved, acquired by man's freedom, the highest divine gift bestowed on man at creation, as God Himself is a free person. Man is called to achieve likeness through God's grace but also through his own effort based on obeying the divine commandments and requirements.

Freedom, as a divine gift, will not be annihilated by God Himself who bestowed it as a reflection and crown of the image. God would not go against Himself. That would be neither logical, nor theological. Yet, based on the great gift of freedom, the burden of man's destiny and destination is placed on man himself, as one reads in the Old Testament: „See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction” (Deuteronomy 30, 15). Man is advised to choose to stay within God's commandments and live.

This idea is wonderfully expressed by Pico della Mirandola in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*:

We have given you, oh Adam, no visage proper to yourself, not any endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may with premeditation select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision.

The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains.

We have made you a creature neither of heaven, nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.¹⁴

Yes, the machine does offer freedom to the user. But it does not tell him where that choice will lead to in the end. A machine will offer different options in a certain situation but it will not be an arbiter between good and bad, right and wrong, since these categories are increasingly relative in the fluctuating world of values we are navigating in.

Yet, the theological standards are clear. Either this or that. Divine revelation is clear if one wants to read it. Options are clear with descriptions of outcomes. There is no ambivalence, no confusion. This is exactly what man needs in his complex life, in particular in the age of the confusing digital technology. One needs a guide, and God offers this guidance. We only have to accept it.

Seeing as metaphysics of the digital

Alex Pentland, head of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) proposes the following projection: Imagine „if you could see everybody in the world all the time, where they were, what they were doing, who they spent time with, then you could create an entirely different world”, a system called „God’s eye view”, „a far better world.”¹⁵

We can continue this mental exercise. Imagine in addition: if you could „see” also everybody’s thought and feeling and have total knowledge of what is going on in every person’s life, mind and feelings, that would qualify even more for the term „God’s eye view”.

Yet God does have such knowledge as He is all-knowing, and He does record everything we think, say and do. According to an old saying, everything gets written in one’s book of life; nothing is lost. Jesus Christ warned about that when He said that for every single useless word people uttered, they will have to respond on the day of the Last Judgement (Matthew 12, 36). Yet, every word starts in the mind, and Jesus also drew attention to this when He was confronting the pharisees and teachers of the law: “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?” (Matthew 9, 4).

Big data scientists even call this phenomenon “God’s eye view” with God’s name which validates the doctrine about God as a Seer (as the Greek word for God is Theos which comes from the verb *theastai* which has to do with seeing).

Also, the use of God’s name for this phenomenon indicates a type of metaphysics in two possible stages.

Stage one: if digital science comes to the point of knowing such aspects of everybody's inner and outer life, that would qualify for a metaphysical claim in the sense that based on knowing what is going on currently, one can be imagined as being able to think anything unthinkable.

Stage two: this type of situation validates the theological metaphysics based on which everything in this created order comes from God – and we can call that an *a-priori* metaphysics, and also, that everything goes to God or at least is meant to go to/towards God – and we can call it a *a-posteriori* metaphysics.

This drive of things toward God is ontologically embedded in the created order based on the Logos element in every thing's very existence.

Therefore, in theological discourse there is no physics without metaphysics and if one would think so, that would not be a theological view but a heresy even if the label as such might not be applied.

In his famous book *The Physics of Immortality*, Frank J. Tipler, professor of mathematical physics and a major theoretician in the field of global general relativity, not only proclaims the unification of science and religion but that theology is a branch of physics and that „physicists can infer by calculation the existence of God and the likelihood of the resurrection of the dead to eternal life in exactly the same way as physicists calculate the properties of the electron.”¹⁶

More precisely, he argues that theology „is a natural science, in fact, a branch of astronomy.”¹⁷ Based on his Omega Point Theory Tipler explains how „theology is nothing but physical cosmology,” and that „physics has now absorbed theology; the divorce between science and religion, between reason and emotion, is over.”¹⁸

There is yet another thing that differentiates the metaphysics of the digital from the theological one. The metaphysics of the digital has at its center the machine, even if it is made in man's image. It is still the machine that based on man's brain offers these increasingly new possibilities and brings one to ever new horizons. Yet, slowly, becoming dependent of the machine, man takes the image of the machine, as A. Heschel explains,¹⁹ which, in N. Berdyaev's terms, leads to dehumanization, and even bestialization and then to the deification of the bestial;²⁰ in other words, when one worships the machine, the machines become idols, and the idols become monsters.²¹

In theological metaphysics, however, God is not a machine, He is a person; and more than that, complexifying the mystery, a trinitarian person.

While the machine does not make revelations and does not present itself as ultimate authority for how one has to live in the earthly existence, God, the personal God in whose image we have been created, reveals Himself as being in the closest possible relation to man, yet in a clear and strong position of authority, as we read in the first commandment of the

Decalogue: „I am the Lord, your God... you shall have no other Gods, but Me” (Exodus 20, 2-3).

This order can be translated as follows: „I am the Lord, your God, don't take the machine for a god.” The commandment summarizes the entire discourse on idolatry in the Old Testament where God presents Himself as a „jealous” God (Exodus 34, 14) and does not allow for replacements, and, if that happens, punishment will come.

In the complex machine or digital systems, one can place an order pressing the wrong key or spot and there will be no desired result or a result with negative implications and complications for the user. All the more in the case of a relation with the personal God, in God's system, where God sets the rules and emphasizes them again and again periodically, in different ways. It is logical to expect success or failure: in other words, more gravely, salvation or punishment, in terms of which direction one takes in life by one's own choosing.

In addition, and most importantly, in Christian revelation and doctrine, God is a person who loves His creation. Hardly or impossible for one to say such a thing about the machine. Then, as God is a person who loves, this love is the ultimate type of metaphysics one can think of. It goes way beyond logical and philosophical thinking, more so than any type of metaphysics of the digital technology or world.

John the Theologian explains that better than anyone else: „So much God loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3, 16).

The machine can copy a lot of human features. But such a declaration, and then, fact, cannot be stated by a machine, and even if it would, it would have a mechanical character, like being a programmed imitation of the human declaration, yet still a machine.

In other words, the machine will never go into the paradox of God's sending His beloved Son to be incarnated for us and for our salvation, to teach, accept being crucified and then resurrect.

The machine cannot save, because it does not have a heaven or earth, even if, occasionally, based on programming, it might say: do this or don't do that, in terms of moral behavior. However, in such a case it will be the algorithm that will say this or a semblance of a human, not God himself or a prophet or His only Son, meaning a real person, a living person. The imitation will never be a hundred percent replacement of the original.

And even if with technological advances, Big Data scientists will be able to read one's knowledge, preferences, hobbies, attitudes and even feelings, a digital area called „sentiment analytics”, as Joseph E. Davis explains, where people's moods and feelings will be interpreted,²² the machines and those behind them might be able to make predictions for the future, but not like in theological metaphysics where eschatological realities

are revealed, such as those related to the Kingdom of God, the Last Judgment, paradise and hell, and others.

As it is known, „today, every procedure, text, post, like, chat, e-mail, call, search, file transfer, site visit and swipe can be encoded and stored.”²³

If one connects this reality to the millions, indeed billions of such acts, each minute, as reported by Richard Hugues Gibson,²⁴ and their exponential growth, one can imagine the power of control the machine and those behind it might have over us. The question that comes to mind is: can I trust them? Can I entrust my eschatological future to them? As the theological metaphysics reveals a loving God, it goes without explanation why I will go in God’s direction and live under His commandments.

Conclusion: The need for transcendence

According to Philip S. Gorski „Pre-Axial religions were predominantly immanent, the post-Axial ones, predominantly transcendent” even though „transcendent religions always contain at least some measure of immanence.”²⁵

One can see a development in the evolution of religion in the sense that revelation is offered to man in function of his stage of development. From very simple forms, such as parables, metaphors, and real life illustrations to more complex and abstract forms, revelation addresses man in the place and time of his existence.

One wonders what kind of revelation we have today with the super-development of our sciences and knowledge. Would quantum theories that indicate how little we know about the universe be such a type of revelation meant to show that God is completely beyond what we can imagine and say about Him? Could that be a kind of confirmation of the apophatic way of approaching God described in ancient theology, yet raised to a new level?

Each age has its own characteristics in terms of human development and consequently each age has its own kind of prophets. One type in the Old Testament, another one in other ancient religions, a different one in ancient philosophy or in the New Testament and in the history of the Christian doctrine and a different one today. Are our frontier scientists the prophets of our current age? How do we distinguish the false prophets from the true ones? From a theological point of view, conformity with or validation of Christ’s teaching would make for that criterion, such as in the case of Frank Tipler who demonstrates mathematically the existence of immortality and eternal life.

There are other prophets who, based on how algorithms invade and engineer our lives predict the transfer of the human mind into the “cloud,” as futuristic neuroscientists do, or those who adopted the concept of

singularity, a prediction that artificial intelligence will allow our mind to transcend biological limits.

What is to be noticed though, in our time, is the fact that not only theologians but also scientists, philosophers, sociologists speak of the need of transcendence, of the need to conscientize people about it and of bringing it in more concrete ways into the daily life, such as through spiritual practices like meditation, for example.

As Carolyn Chen writes, „I saw a social ecosystem where workplaces have taken on the institutional functions of religion, fulfilling employees’ social and spiritual needs for identity, belonging, meaning, purpose and transcendence.”²⁶

Rediscovering the sense of transcendence in our lives can take many forms. Of course, one is to go back to God in institutionalized religion that promotes faith as a system of values meant to offer stability in one’s relation to God and to other people. Another one would be more directly related to people where, as mentioned above, as Roger Garaudy wrote, we need to see the other person as our own transcendence, in contrast to J. P. Sartre who famously said „l’enfer, c’est les autres” (hell is other people).

Martin Luther King Jr. also drew attention to how important it is to learn to transcend your own self and not be blocked in it when he wrote that man must not become a mirror where he sees himself, but a window that he can open and through which he is seen and sees others.

In fact, with each analysis of reality it is sufficient for one to look inside at the object of contemplation in order to realize that there is an entire universe that transcends us.

To put it more poetically, transcendence plucks us from here, from the hardening of dust, and anchors us in eternity.

NOTES:

¹ Anoushka von Heuer, *Le huitième jour ou la dette d’Adam*, Jean-Luc de Rougement Editeur, 1980, Genève, p. 38.

² *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid, Paulist Press, New York, 1987, p. 109.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

⁴ See Damiano Sacco, „Shifting presence: Giorgio Agamben’s and Karen Barad’s Reflections on Quantum Mechanics” in *The European legacy: Towards new Paradigms*, vol. 27, Nr. 1-2, 2022, p. 253.

⁵ Richard Hugues Gibson, „Just Staying in Touch,” in *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 20, Nr. 1, Spring 2018, p. 9.

⁶ Leif Weatherby, „Digital Metaphysics: The Cybernetic Idealism of Warren McCulloch,” in *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 20, nr. 1, Spring 2018, p. 31.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁹ Joseph E. Davis, „Social Physics Comes to the Workplace,” in *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflection on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 22, Nr. 2, Summer 2020, p. 70.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

¹¹ See Becca Rothfeld, „To Have and to Hold: Arguing with Maria Konda,” in *The Hedgehog Review: Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 22, Nr. 2, Summer 2020, p. 97.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ Editor, „Are We Marching to Estonia,” in *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 20, Nr. 1, Spring 2018, p. 8.

¹⁴ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, Gateway, Chicago, 1956, pp. 7-8.

¹⁵ See Joseph E. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

¹⁶ Frank J. Tipler, *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead*, Doubleday, New York, London, 1994, p. IX:

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 336.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

¹⁹ Abraham Heschel, *Who Is Man*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1965, p. 21.

²⁰ Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, The University of Michigan Press, 1963, pp. 30, 27.

²¹ A. Heschel, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

²² Joseph E. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

²⁴ Richard Huges Gibson, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²⁵ Philip S. Gorski, „The Return of the King: The Politics of Immanence and the Disenchantment of Liberalism,” in *The Hedgehog Review. Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 24, Nr. 1, Spring 2021, p. 47.

²⁶ Carlyn Chen, „When Job Fills in for Your Faith, That’s a Problem,” in *The New York Times*, Nr. 59435, Thursday, May 26, 2022, p. A 23.

RICHARD GRALLO

Invitation to Self-Knowledge

Abstract: If the mental events of *question, insight, desire to know* and *social trust* have specific functions in my life, then what are those functions? What happens when they are present? What happens when they are absent? What happens when I take ownership of them and manage them better as part of an explicitly mindful practice?

If the *patterns of problem solving* each have a specific function in my life, then what is that function? What happens when it is present? What happens when it is absent? What happens when I take ownership of these patterns and manage them better?

Keywords: Self-knowledge, insight, question, social trust, facts, values, learning

On the highway cars sometimes go out of control. These cars become a danger to their occupants and to occupants of other cars and pedestrians. In everyday interactions, some people are out of control. These individuals can become a danger to themselves and to anyone nearby.

They can be cognitively out of control whereby their thoughts and thought processes frequently fail to achieve understanding or knowledge. They can be emotionally out of control whereby their experience of emotion is so overwhelming that they become engulfed by it and it replaces any possibility of understanding or rational thought. They can be behaviorally out of control whereby their actions are more triggered reactions and rarely deliberative decisions. Or, they could be any combination of these.

Self-knowledge is useful for any person because it can reveal whether or not they are cognitively, emotionally or behaviorally out of control. If a person is currently out of control and if they can nevertheless improve in these areas then they will be taking possession of themselves. (This is what

Richard Grallo, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of Human Services at Metropolitan College of New York. The author wishes to take this opportunity to thank Prof. Theodor Damian for his work in coordinating and producing the journal *Symposium* over of the last two decades.

used to be called “self-control.”) Self-control is a special kind of freedom. Consider an aviation example. In learning how to fly an airplane there are many things that one must not do if one values life. However, if one learns these things and disciplines oneself to manage the required skills, then one experiences a new type of freedom – the freedom of flight.

The self-knowledge mentioned here is not the kind of self-knowledge achieved in psychoanalysis, or in performance reviews, or in casual observations made by friends and acquaintances. This kind of self-knowledge is knowledge specifically about how we solve problems and engage in complex human learning, and also how we interfere with those processes.¹ In this kind of self-knowledge, we witness first-hand how we learn or fail to learn. It is also a kind of self-knowledge that has implications for our currently constituted personality: how it functions and malfunctions, and how it got this way.

The benefits of this special self-knowledge extend to other aspects of our conscious lives. It relates transformative learning and problem-solving to specific experiences, as well as to specific feelings and emotions. It extends to helping us understand our experiences of learning over our lifetime, and to our unconscious tendencies, habits, and dreams. It extends to how we use our bodies and how we formulate and relate to our goals.

Key mental events

Readers are invited to observe and make note of mental events that occur with some regularity in their own conscious lives. These events are as close as our thoughts and desires. They are free of charge and are available to most anyone of normal intelligence. These mental events do not automatically come as a part of an educational program, although they could. They are not easily predictable, but they can be nurtured. The price of admission is to spend time with them.

Individuals are invited to take possession of these mental events so that they can manage their own conscious life for more balanced and effective living. This gradual “taking possession” of one’s own conscious events has been named many things including “self-appropriation”² and “self-regulation of learning.”³ Since it is gradual, we will call it “partial self-appropriation.”

The mental events included in this detailed self-knowledge include: questions and insights, the desire to know, sensations and perceptions, images and evidence, formulations, judgments and decisions, expressive actions and habits, pleasures and pains, dreams, feelings and emotions, and social trust. Among these, the following four are highlighted as being particularly noteworthy: *question*, *insight*, the *desire to know* and *social*

trust. These facts of consciousness are available to most anyone who chooses to explore them. Managing them well will likely result in better learning and problem-solving and an improved quality of life. While they are not entirely predictable, one can learn to manage them well.

As described by philosopher Bernard Lonergan, *insight* is a mental event that has the following characteristics: (a) It comes as a release to the tension of inquiry. (b) It comes suddenly and unexpectedly. (c) It is a function of inner conditions, not outer circumstances. (d) It pivots between the concrete and abstract. (e) It passes into the habitual texture of mind.⁴ Insights provide greater clarity on problem situations and may hold the key to a solution. Insights are available to all; however, they are fleeting. Once an insight arrives it must be captured in writing, or in a formula or in some other coding system. Otherwise, it may be lost.

Questions are also mental events. As such, they are recognition that there is a gap in or experiencing, understanding, judging or practice. They can have the following traits: When coupled with the *desire to know*, questions become the driver of inquiry. Questions may come suddenly and unexpectedly, or they may be part of a prepared protocol. Unformulated questions are recognitions of gaps in our experience, understanding, knowledge or practice. Formulated questions may be concrete or abstract. Questions, answered for ourselves, pass into the habitual structure of mind and are deeply transformative not only of problem situations but of ourselves as learners. Like insights, questions as mental events are a change in our consciousness.

The *desire to know* is itself a basic mental event. As Lonergan describes it, it is unrestricted, detached and disinterested.⁵ It is unrestricted because it opposes obscurantism that “hides the truth or blocks access to it in whole or in part.” It moves past obscuring walls and blocks. It is also detached because it is opposed to “the inhibitions of cognitional process that arise from other human desires and drives.” It is playful and leaves the other desires and drives alone. Finally, it is disinterested because it is opposed to “the well-meaning but disastrous reinforcement that other desires lend cognitional process only to twist its orientation into its narrow range.” It gathers no other agendas and has no interest in them. To achieve and to follow the desire to know is no mean accomplishment. It is an exercise in a disciplined form of mindfulness. To continue with its work, the *desire to know* must be nurtured. If it is nurtured it will bring with it a life transforming learning and problem solving.

Social trust is both a mental and a social event. As a mental event, it is primarily a decision to rely on the words and works of another because that person is judged to be trustworthy. As a social event, it is a bonding with another person or persons for problem solving purposes. The purposes of problem solving can become much easier if assistance is provided by like-

minded others. The social bond will inevitably involve *believing* the reports of others and relying on what those others say and do as part of the problem-solving enterprise. When social trust works, it helps to establish growth-oriented social relations, and it thereby contributes to the construction of the common good. Well managed medical teams provide clear examples of the functioning of social trust.

Patterns of problem solving

When we are in a problem-solving state of mind, facts of consciousness can coalesce into four patterns of problem solving: *seeking understanding*, *judging facts*, *judging values* and *deciding*. Each pattern of problem solving is an ordered sequence of mental events guided by a question or questions and leading to a problem-solving outcome. The patterns of problem solving are responses to what is presented in *experience* and what we attend to in it. What we do not pay attention to tends to slip away. For each pattern of problem-solving, the issue of quality assurance will arise to determine if the well-ordered sequence has been followed or if it is missing key elements. At any point, the learner is free to proceed towards growth or to cut things short and escape from the work of growth.

The pattern of problem solving called *seeking understanding* is generally guided by this question: "What does it mean to really understand something?" Consider the example of gaining a preliminary understanding of a train crash. What would need to be done? What would investigators need to examine and what questions would they need to answer? How can one ensure quality performance throughout an investigation like this? In this case, the outcome would be a comprehensive preliminary understanding of what happened in the train crash. Failure in this pattern would be an incomplete understanding or an outright flight from understanding.

Another pattern of problem solving is called *judging facts*. This is a form of critical thinking because it uses a criterion to settle issues of fact. An example would be the attempt to determine the presence or absence of cancer in a medical diagnosis. The guiding question in this pattern is something like: Is this possible diagnosis, correct? The criterion used will be some criterion of truth or likelihood. Success in this pattern will settle the question of fact one way or another, based on sufficient evidence. Failure in this pattern would be rashly affirming a conclusion that we like, without regard to available evidence.

A third pattern of problem solving is called *judging values*. This is a form of critical thinking because it uses a criterion to settle issues of value. For example, a technology supervisor may be weighing which new technology would be best for his manufacturing company. The guiding

question in this pattern is something like: Is product X useful for my manufacturing company? The criterion used will be some criterion of value or worth. Success in this pattern will settle the question of value one way or another, based on sufficient reasons and evidence. Failure in this pattern would be reactively approving a value without regard to reasons and evidence related to it. In other words, not settling the question of value would, in effect, leave in place some unexamined value already assumed.

A final pattern of problem solving is called *deciding*. This is a form of critical thinking because it uses a criterion to settle issues of possible courses of action. For example, a recent college graduate may be weighing three job offers in different companies and locations. The guiding question in this pattern is something like: Should I accept job offer A, B or C? The criterion used will be some criterion of value for oneself or others. Success in this pattern will settle the question of choice one way or another, based on sufficient reasons and evidence. Failure in this pattern would be impulsively choosing an option without reference to related reasons, evidence, or values.

Contexts for transformative learning and problem-solving

Transformative learning and problem-solving do not occur in a vacuum. Rather they operate in successively larger contexts of personality, social relations, culture, and history. *Personality* provides a context because one simply does not leave one's personality behind when one attempts to learn or to solve a problem. Personality is defined as a relatively stable configuration of thoughts, emotions, behaviors and habits. It can affect learning because we approach all situations with our personality as it is currently constituted. It can also be affected by learning because the personality itself can change, especially through powerful learning experiences.

Social relations are a larger context in which problem-solving can take place. They include the totality of interactions that individuals have among themselves. When individuals become a problem-solving group, they are temporarily united in the effort to solve a problem. Succeeding at this will require some measure of *social trust* among the group members. The learning of individuals can affect the learning of other members of the group, and vice versa.

Culture constitutes a much larger context for complex human learning and problem-solving. It has been defined as the "distinctive, customs, values, beliefs, knowledge, art and language of a society or a community. These values and concepts are passed on from generation to generation, and they are the basis for everyday behavior and practices."⁶ Culture provides learning materials for individuals and small groups, and

sometimes the learning of individuals and small groups affects the larger culture.

History is the largest context of all for problem-solving. It may be regarded as the collection of events that shaped the succession of cultures through time. Like culture, history provides learning materials for individuals and small groups, and sometimes the learning of individuals and small groups affects the larger course of history.

Implications

If transformative learning is a response to what is presented in experience, then any contraction of relevant *experience* will result in diminished learning.

If *transformative learning* consists of *understanding, judging facts, judging values* and *deciding* in response to experience, then elimination of any one of these patterns of problem-solving results in a defective problem-solving effort.

If each *pattern of problem-solving* consists of specific mental events, then elimination of any of these events results in a reduced effort and defective product.

If a person's horizon includes a serious commitment to the *desire to know*, then that person's life will be more learning-centered, and it will result in a *learning personality*. That is a personality that has a greater degree of self-determination and is less prone to losing that freedom to outside influences.

If anyone is involved in any form of growth activities, then the self-knowledge explored here can function as a blueprint that can assist in identifying a way forward and in removing blocks to *transformative learning and problem-solving*. (Examples of growth activities could include self-improvement programs, and for academics, program assessment activities.) Transformative learning and problem-solving then become a way of life and a comprehensive and flexible approach to the universe.⁷

If the account of complex human learning presented here is correct and is more widely adopted, it will be more likely in the future to have accounts of complex human learning that explicitly incorporate the mental events of *question, insight, desire to know* and *social trust*.

Applications

Are there some things that the reader can do to implement these ideas into an everyday mindful practice?

Engage in this thought experiment: Search out everyday examples of when *questions*, *insights*, *desire to know* and *social trust* are present or absent. Follow and learn what happens or does not happen in each case.

Keep an Intellectual Journal of your own experience with *questions*, *insights*, *desire to know* and *social trust* and the absence of them. Become something of a specialist in this area.

With Epictetus attend to what is in your control.

Reignite and nurture the *desire to know*. Many of us had it when we were three years old. What happened to it?

Arrange and re-imagine times and places for study. This is not a one-time thing. It can be re-visited on a regular basis.

Associate with other authentic learners. Learn from them. Do not spend too much time with those who have little or no *desire to know* and *desire to grow*. Identify those authors in times past and present who have discovered the kind of self-knowledge described here.

Get in the habit of improving habits, including habits of learning and problem-solving. Work to reverse or eliminate blocks to learning and the patterns of problem-solving. Crowd out growth-defeating habits and replace them with growth-promoting habits. Keep track of progress in the Intellectual Journal.

Further relevant personal questions

If the mental events of *question*, *insight*, *desire to know* and *social trust* have specific functions in my life, then what are those functions? What happens when they are present? What happens when they are absent? What happens when I take ownership of them and manage them better as part of an explicitly mindful practice?

If the *patterns of problem solving* each have a specific function in my life, then what is that function? What happens when it is present? What happens when it is absent? What happens when I take ownership of these patterns and manage them better?

On the highway, when a car goes out of control it is a danger to self and others. In social interaction, when a person is out of control, they may become a danger to self and others. Am I out of control?

NOTES:

- ¹ Richard Grallo, *Question and Insight in Everyday Life: A Blueprint for Transformative Problem-Solving*, Lexington Books, New York, 2021 (<https://Rowman.org/Lexington>).
- ² Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1992.
- ³ D. Schunck and B. Zimmerman, *Self-Regulation of learning and Performance: Issues and Educational Applications*, Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ, 1994.
- ⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-31.
- ⁵ Bernard Lonergan's discussion of this point and the quotations in this paragraph come from, *Insight*, pp. 404 ff.
- ⁶ American Psychological Association, *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 2015, p. 274.
- ⁷ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Blackwell Publishing, Cambridge, MA, 1995.

Do Smart Monkeys have more Value than Human Babies?

A Cross Section of Theological-Philosophical Reflection on Peter Singer's Revived Theory of Speciesism and the Place of Man among Other Animals

Abstract: In discussions about the value and the beginning of human life, also in the Slovak society, various attitudes appear, at different levels, which are often influenced by different philosophical currents and thinking. In recent years, the increasing influence of the thought of Vienna-born Australian Peter Singer, who has influenced several Slovak philosophers, has also contributed to this. In this paper we provide some reactions and opinions on Singer's theory of antispeciesism, which is close to Anglo-Saxon thought, and other views of his from the perspective of philosophical and theological ethics. In particular, we will look at the views of authors from a German-speaking background who in their writings also consider Singer's theory of antispeciesism. Germany is still struggling with the consequences of Nazism, the nightmare of the 20th century, which is closely related to this theory. However, the aim of this paper is not to logically refute Singer's theory, but to point out its shortcomings and to highlight the reasons why it cannot be accepted from an ethical point of view. In the final section, we attempt to turn the argument towards those who prefer research on human embryos and on human embryonic stem cells. It is these experts who, in our view, should endeavor to make it clear that human embryos are not a human being (or a person) and that they can therefore be used and therefore killed for the scientific research.

Prof. Dr. Dipl.-Ing. Inocent-Mária Vladimír Szaniszló OP, PhD, is an inaugurated professor of Catholic theology in Slovakia and since October 2017 Senior Lecturer for Human Rights, Moral theology and Ethics at Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome, Italy.

Keywords: Peter Singer, antispeciesism, theories about the beginning of the human life, the need to protect the human zygote, human dignity at the modern time.

Recently, in the Slovak society, too, slowly but surely, there has been a lively discussion about the protection of human life and the need to take a stance towards the increasingly (so far only laboratory) accessible manipulation of human embryos. On the other hand, in the name of treatment of some difficult-to-treat diseases, or easier possibility of further transmission of human life, ways of defending these newly discovered biotechnical processes are being sought, often still residually conducted in the name of bright tomorrows of humanity.

The controversies that are stirring the philosophical and theological world today also concern a problem that may seem unnecessary to some, because the answer is clear to them, and to others, on the contrary, the solution of this problem causes considerable difficulties. In fact, it is the only problem, also frequently mentioned in the media, in which we deal with the question of when in the development of human life we can speak of a beginning, and therefore of human life itself - a human being who deserves protection. The question of the protection of human life has become a problem to such an extent that many times we cannot find a sufficient answer that satisfies both views. In practice, however, it is simply a question of ensuring that all biomedical practices currently in use are in accordance with ethics and natural law. The general norm should be that no developing human being can be killed for therapeutic research, however important and beneficial it may be. The life of every human being should be under the protection of the law. However, the same law that protects life allows it to be violated in special cases under certain conditions, e.g. abortion, artificial insemination, cloning, euthanasia, etc. If we were to argue that human life in a given situation is of lesser or greater value, we would be admitting that this life, and therefore the human being himself, is not always of equal value, and thus some potential human being can be deprived of life at any time without breaking the law. It is necessary to think more deeply about this and to justify such a statement which says that a human life is always of the same value from beginning to end.¹

Even in the Slovak daily and especially in the academic press there is quite often a discussion on the issue. We consider these efforts to be a positive trend. Even recently in the professional press, in the periodical *Filozofia*, there has been a long-running philosophical debate on a scientific and argumentative level between Peter Volek from the Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University in Ružomberok and Peter Sýkora from the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava in Slovakia, on the topic of the need to protect the human zygote.² As a result,

in 2008 the Society of Slovak Writers, with the support of the Ministry of Culture, published (with the subtitle “The most widely read academic book since Bertrand Russell”) some of Singer’s articles, pointing to the interest of a certain part of the Slovak public in his ideas.³ We would like to contribute a few remarks to this contemporary philosophical discussion and thus broaden the horizons of the issue from our own philosophical-theological-ethical point of view.

The problem of the acceptability of antispeciesism

Sýkora accuses Volek of not accepting the generally accepted understanding of human dignity in modern liberal-democratic societies of the Western type.⁴ But such a Western understanding of these fundamental issues was opposed by the Vatican’s instruction *Dignitas personae*, published some years ago. Article 34 states: “This is the case with *experimentation on embryos*, which is becoming increasingly widespread in the field of biomedical research and is legally permitted in some countries... [T]he use of human embryos or fetuses as an object of experimentation constitutes a crime against their dignity as human beings who have a right to the same respect owed to a child once born, just as to every person. These forms of experimentation always constitute a grave moral disorder”.⁵ However, Sýkora goes on to criticize Volek for not allowing the killing of any human being for one reason, namely that he is a member of the human race. We judge this argument, as well as the notion of human dignity in Volek, to be a speciesist position that recognizes the right to life only insofar as it suits his argument.⁶

In the case of antispeciesism, Sýkora argues for the aforementioned Peter Singer (and Ghiselin’s 1966 conception of biological species), who explicitly condemns this reserved philosophical stance biased against only those creatures that feel pain and show signs of intelligence.⁷ Sýkora has already drawn attention to such antispeciesism in his previous paper⁸, yet he is not supposedly defending Singer’s theory of antispeciesism as such, but wants to be morally consistent.⁹ Thus, just as any other categorization of humans, such as racism or nationalism, is ethically unacceptable, he rejects the killing of other intelligent creatures, not just humans. It is just at this point that his argument does not show a clear stance. It is as if he cannot decide whether or not he is in favor of a particular antispeciesism.¹⁰

Since the given theory of antispeciesism, after its great Western European controversy, appears with a certain time lag also in our Slovak space, let us at least try to look a little into the history of Singer-induced argumentation in moral philosophy and theology.

A reflection on Singer's ideas in philosophical and theological ethics

A well-founded scepticism towards Singer's and similar arguments for antispeciesism¹¹ (as supported in the late 1980s and early 1990s by, e.g., Derek Parfit, H.-M. Sass, M. Lookwood, William K. Franken and Joel Feinberg, Joseph Fletcher, Michael Tooley, and others) was already reflected in articles vehemently opposing these theories 16 years ago.¹² Against such, mainly Anglo-Saxon, views of 20th century biologists and philosophers of biology, we will try to present some objections coming from various important moral theologians and philosophers who have dealt with these ideas.

Although Singer's theory of speciesism from the mid-1980s is¹³ indeed outdated in the media, it is interesting how it is beginning to be cited again towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Even the speakers at the 3rd International Ethics Days in Strasbourg¹⁴, who are concerned with the integration of ethical-philosophical values into medical and biological practice, attempted to take a mainly negative position on Singer several times during their lectures.¹⁵ For Singer is concerned with the application of so-called "preferential utilitarianism," which applies only to that being which has its particular interests at stake. Since the intensity and extension of "human" and "member of the species homo sapiens" are, according to Singer, different, he proposes that a distinction should be made with "human" between "person" and "member of the species homo sapiens." Thus, simply put, only living beings who have self-consciousness can have the privilege of being preferred. For only they can experience pleasure or pain, and thus independently acquire their own preferences. In Singer's theory, the preferences of persons are particularly important because they are more capable of having an impact on the future than are the preferences of non-persons. However, preferences of persons, unlike non-persons, are equally important in each individual, such as the preference "not to experience any pain", so preferences in this sense are understood as what predetermines being.¹⁶

Of course, this theory clashes sharply with the doctrine of the sanctity of human life. Schlegel even thinks that the theory of antispeciesism harms animals themselves as a race, especially if we recall the many theories of the moral status of man and animal and their associated duties and rights.¹⁷ Singer tries to show the unjustified partisanship and domination of man, as a distortion stemming from Christianity. He calls speciesism an essential part of the unquestioned moral orthodoxy of European civilization.¹⁸ Basically, his views seem to imply that if animals can be used for experimentation, then in that case humans, who have no reason or self-awareness, could be used for the same purpose. Singer didn't go that far in his views, though.

Nevertheless, he stresses that the pain in this world must be alleviated, that is, the pain of animals that have no self-consciousness¹⁹, but at the same time he argues, on the other hand, that belonging to the human race, or to some other species, cannot be a criterion for the moral status of a living being. What distinguishes species from one another, or what is common in their moral status, are only certain qualities that are intrinsically theirs.

The argument of antispeciesism looks at first sight, in a tolerant society, very attractive. However, when race or gender is used as a criterion for attribution, consideration, or complete disregard for the interests of the individual, such an approach inevitably renders social action racist or sexist. However, if one has the same attitude towards each species and acts in the same way, if one uses species membership as a criterion, then one is acting speciesistically.²⁰

Eberhard Schockenhoff notes that authors like Singer have been left standing halfway by extending the demarcation line of validity of (moral) rights only to animals and not also to the world of plants and wildlife.²¹ Singer's theory is not new, but the way it has been reintroduced by utilitarian philosophers of the 20th century quite clearly escalates it to the extreme.²² Of course, each extreme is a response to the previous extreme. The cause of these extreme views, in particular, was a reaction to the extremely inappropriate animal cruelty carried out in various scientific experiments. In the UK alone, in the 1980s, at least 4.5 million animals fell victim to these experiments.²³ According to Singer, therefore, the preference for consumption and the pleasure of eating animal flesh and selling it cheaply must not be prioritized over the suffering and pain that these animals have to endure for this human pleasure.²⁴

The most extreme of this theory, however, was Singer's provocative thesis that handicapped children are granted the ultimate right to life even weeks after their birth, that is, only when we can predict with certainty their future development. As a result of this theory, during the aforementioned period, for example, the parents of a hemophilic child would have the right to abort or even kill the child, to 'exchange' it for another healthy individual, even if they do not want to exceed the number of children they wish to have, or, alternatively, if they just want to make room for healthy children at the expense of the disabled ones. Thus, too, on such a theory, they could contribute appropriately to the resulting total amount of happiness.²⁵

Killing one such person, according to Singer, can be compared to breaking a stone, because such an entity cannot receive preferences since it lacks the capacity to feel.²⁶ Likewise, termination of pregnancy and infanticide (i.e., the ending of a child's life by its own parents) are *prima facie* morally equally assessable.

Marek Orko Vácha, chairman of the Institute of Medical Ethics at the 3rd Medical Faculty of Charles University, objects to such speciesism by

noting that according to this theory, if you should stand up for a mentally handicapped child at the expense of a dog (or a chimpanzee - authors' note), then you are a racist who favors one creature over another solely on the basis of its species affiliation.²⁷

Schockenhoff adds that subtle variants of this advocacy strategy assume that the human individual possesses a different value of himself according to how happy or successful he is or how long and fruitful a life he has yet to lead. His moral valuation also depends on his degree of self-satisfaction, the intensity of his experience of happiness, and the expected duration of his existence. His valuation in society, which decides how much of a rejection would be worth killing him for, is thus determined by this.²⁸ Singer, however, according to Schockenhoff, prior to his arrival at Princeton University, had himself substantially modified his statements of this type in his book *Life and Death*.²⁹

Schockenhoff goes on to say that it is important to realize how such an ethics, formulated in this way, is frightening. If the human individual is no longer the bearer of inalienable human rights, but is judged solely by his contribution to the sum total of the common good and the good future of the community, then we find ourselves in a helpless situation of protest. But only until we illuminate the philosophical background that makes such theories possible.³⁰ At the same time, however, Schockenhoff adds that the same background is surprisingly traceable in many bioethicists who start from completely opposite theories.

The fact that all ethics is based on a deontological moral principle such as respect for autonomy, or as a utilitarian consideration of interests with the aim of maximizing happiness, probably plays no role in the question of whether human embryos, newborns, or severely handicapped children possess an inalienable right to life. Indeed, potentiality is no actuality for Singer and therefore, as a stand-alone moral argument, irrelevant. This is shown, he argues, by *in vitro* potentiality. Thus, even experiments on embryos that do not have sentience are merely experiments conducted for the benefit of persons who do have sentience. As regards cloning, Singer takes a temporarily negative position, because of the risk of physical abnormalities. Nevertheless, he calls for a global debate, not the current *laissez-faire* political situation.³¹

Singer, according to Schockenhoff, gives less weight to respect for the autonomy of human individuals than to a utilitarian assessment of their "miserable" lives or the consequences of the effects of their killing on others. The crucial presumption that human embryos or fetuses, but also infants and young children when in doubt, may lead to the non-recognition of their right to life remains equally valid in today's ethical theory of justifying the claim of these rights. Although not clearly justifiable, by means of an already given moral principle, it owes its acceptability, according to Schockenhoff,

precisely to far-reaching acceptances which, despite intense efforts, *are not exclusively testimonial and resist additional philosophical scrutiny*.³²

It is Singer's objection of speciesism that attempts to plug this gap. The suggestive title antispeciesism serves the purpose of condemning talk of human exclusivity in the universe as racist prejudice against the nonhuman world. Thus, the basic moral error of partial exclusion, to which members of alien peoples or ethnic minorities have fallen victim in their own country, is repeated over and over again. Such speciesism is seen as an extension of racism and sexism, which extends the arrogance of white people and their domination of the feminine to the non-human world. This notion needs to be addressed by a theory of non-discrimination that changes man's attitude towards the non-human world and forces him to say goodbye to the illusion of his superiority and recognize all revealed forms of nature equally in principle. Belonging to the human race (*homo sapiens*) is thus by no means a recognition of man's special life chances³³, but Singer sees it in the freedom to be granted to animals as a continuation of the process of liberation from racism and sexism that began with the French Revolution. It is speciesism that prevents its consummation carried out on non-human beings.³⁴

This basic thesis of natural philosophy is further exacerbated if we understand the person of man as the *actual existence of an empirically determined notion of personhood*. From this understanding of the person it follows that for the recognition of the right to life, it is not membership in a particular biological genus that is determinative, but only the degree of consciousness, the use of reason, and the ability to plan for the future attained by certain species of life that is relevant.³⁵ Thus, for Singer, killing a monkey is a far more serious offense than killing a severely spiritually disabled human being, who must be denied personhood status according to the criteria thus established. The practical implications of such a theory then lead to incorrect procedures that reject all experimentation on higher evolved mammals and, on the contrary, recognize the rights to conduct experiments even on somehow disturbed humans, small incompetent children, or spiritually handicapped people.³⁶ However, Sýkora does not make these arguments, and speaks only of not recognizing the designation of murder for the targeted killing of a healthy adult chimpanzee.³⁷

Helmut Weber, former professor of moral theology from Trier, also well known in our country, especially in Czech translation, like Schockenhoff, vehemently protests against Singer's understanding of the person and the human being. According to Weber, there is an important objection that this way limits the image of man, against all human reason, to the actual possession of mental faculties.³⁸ Weber adds that, according to the almost unanimous view in philosophy as well as in theology, man is not constituted by the actual possession of reason and freedom, but by the very

ability (the faculty) to have this possession. Otherwise, even people who are sleeping and in coma living unconscious people could not be called human (this is where we come to Volek's and Damschen-Schönecker's argument). Weber affirms that the human race is at the same time a person and a human being through belonging to the human race. At the same time, the author adds that Singer also confuses person and personality according to G. Virt, moralist from Vienna.³⁹

K.-H. Peschke, another Austrian moralist well known in the Czech-Slovak environment, adds: "Although for Peter Singer a healthy adult human being is of greater value than a mouse (and - one might add to Singer's reflections - his upbringing and education cost much more), nevertheless there are bound to be inhuman living beings whose life is by any measure more valuable than the life of some human beings. Singer does not want to make the lives of pigs and dogs so sacred that they cannot be redeemed from hopeless hardship. But this also applies to humans in the same condition. It means that, according to the principle of the essentially equal value of animal and human life, both may or may not be taken for the same reasons, e.g., in severe imbecility or senility. This is the logical but extremely reprehensible consequence of denying the essential difference between man and animal. It opens the door to a dangerous calculus: where, in the end, is the line to be drawn between a human life worth living and a life unworthy of living?"⁴⁰

Schockenhoff responds to these theses by claiming that if the notion of person means to define that particular life forms are independent of which genus they belong to, then this alternative is undeniable. Thus, if the premise holds that we can regard man and person as two human characteristics that, while factually congruent in the vast majority of cases, are not necessarily to be regarded as simultaneously present, we are left with no convincing argument against Singer's shocking thesis.

To be a person in the moral sense and a human being in the biological sense will, on this view of man, mean that two independent variables which, in a random, common, intersecting surface, exhibit overlapping peripheral regions on either side, will now be defined in their relations to each other by a provocative equation: *not all persons are people and not all people are persons*.⁴¹ This is a consequence of Singer's thought procedure, which, in contrast to the classical notion of person ("people are born of people"), in which being a man and being a person merge into identity, defines a new theory that can be scientifically called the separation of being a man and being a person.

Schockenhoff acknowledges that the first proposition of this equation is not new at all. A historical examination of the philosophical lexicon shows that we are already familiar with the notion of the person from the ancient art of theatre (as a "role" or "mask"). However, it was until the Christian theological understanding of ideas about God and the Christological confession that the concept was given further impulse. Its transfer to

anthropology brings for the first time a secondary approach, in which we can see the important contribution of the Christian faith to the philosophical self-clarification of man's being. Yet neither the reference to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity nor the speculative theories of the Christian dogmas on angels, both of which presuppose the existence of persons who are not of the human race, yet prove the revolutionary conclusion that follows from the second part of the equation in question: namely, *that some members of the human race who, like us, bear the human image, are denied the right to be persons.*

Would it be possible to deny human embryos, newborns, mentally disabled children or comatose patients in an irreversible state of unconsciousness the right to be a human person, thus removing them from the protective zone of human dignity? This, according to Schockenhoff, is the central question of Singer-influenced bioethics, which necessarily requires a clarification of its implicit natural-philosophical assumptions.⁴²

Armin G. Wildfeuer, a professor of philosophy from Cologne, is skeptical in the face of Singer's arguments, wondering whether it is really possible to define what a person is in a non-arbitrary and value-neutral way by means of a description (all these attempts of his remain within this boundary in the end). Attempting to define such a morally-practical notion as person or personal dignity in such arguments comes under the suspicion that they are based on the means of theoretical reason and only secondarily receive moral relevance, as G.E. Moore expressed in 1903 in one of the famous counter-arguments against Hume's principle, the *Sein-Sollen-Fehlschluss* (*being-must-be-erroneous inference*), as already expressed in the past by G.E. Moore in one of his famous counter-arguments against Hume's principle.⁴³

The final proof against the recognition of the limits of a person's being, according to Weber, can also read as follows: "This argument (that a person is not constituted by being, but only by the faculty of rationality and self-consciousness) stands outside general acceptability and is basically useless for any further discussion. Yet the crucial objection can be raised here, that it is not the actual possession of any faculties that determines who is a person, but the *biological membership of the human race*. Any other determination of personhood leads to unbridled arbitrariness."⁴⁴

Schockenhoff, for his part, points out that the concept of human dignity is often objected to in today's bioethical debate as an empty formula that can be filled with arbitrary worldview content and therefore cannot claim any universal connection. Both Peter Singer and the philosopher of law Norbert Hoerster point to the immediate proximity of the idea of human dignity to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Both see in this notion only a disguised disguise of the Christian doctrine of man as the image of God, which lends a secular quasi-legitimacy to the Christian's particular image of man.

To this objection, we mention the opinion of the director of the Vienna-based IMABE Institute, which has been trying for 30 years to conduct a dialogue between medicine and ethics, Prof. Johannes Bonelli, who for www.kath.net evaluates the Vatican instruction *Dignitas Personae* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith as an important contribution to the culture of life. Concerning the philosophical-anthropological perspective of human dignity, that is, from the position of the inviolability of human dignity, which is given to every individual human being from fertilization to death, he adds: "Often such arguments are branded as religiously motivated and thus disqualify them for civil debate. However, this criticism is anything but factual and honest."⁴⁵

Schockenhoff concludes that this whole social-philosophical and bioethical debate shows us that the knowledge of the irreducibility of human life does not belong to the secure heritage of the human ethos, but must be reclaimed and preserved in every age. The social Darwinism of the past and the utilitarianism of the just-ended 20th century deny, to the point of verbal indictment, the coinciding arguments that each human being is inherently inalienable. Other Singer-like arguments of euthanasia propaganda against a Social-Darwinist background in the interwar period, are rigorously analyzed by Schockenhoff, in one of his earlier works.⁴⁶

Wildfeuer adds that such discussions of the person and human dignity as presented to us by modern utilitarians point to a particularly regrettable dependence of ethics on the state of the art of the natural sciences, giving the unwarranted impression that "permanent amputations must be performed in order not to 'ethically' fail to keep pace with technological progress."⁴⁷

Wildfeuer further notes that the question of human dignity and the being of the person is not primarily a theoretical but a *practical problem*, that is, it is less a question of metaphysics than of ethics. The prejudice of antispeciesism forgets the reason why we attribute personhood or human dignity to all members of the human race in traditional non-utilitarian ethics, because, as J. Simon and W. Kluxen in 1986 and 1989: "It is not belonging to the biological genus that establishes the right to moral recognition, but this belonging is the criterion to which we must adhere if we wish to insist on the universality of respect for the human person, just as we do not make moral recognition dependent on certain qualifications, but assign them to the human person as a human person".⁴⁸

It also remains problematic that such consequences of the treatment of human life that arise from the realized actual-qualitative notion of the person contradict basic moral experience. Their *elucidation*, not their *refutation*, constitutes the critical problem of philosophical ethics. The theories of speciesism put forward, in their particularly utilitarian variant, rest on assumptions that are philosophically problematic at the very least and

therefore call for caution in dealing with questions of the treatment of life and death.

Ludger Honnefelder, professor of philosophy in Bonn, notes: "If we do not regard a person as an essence (substance) but only as a bundle of attributes, as has been the case from Hume to Singer, then we must regard their existence as dependent on the actuality of these attributes, and the potentiality for the development of such attributes must be regarded as a mere fiction. But nothing compels us to hold such a metaphysics. Let identity manifest itself in psychic continuity over time, yet let good reasons be given for affirming that identity in that continuity, as Locke and his followers think. And potentiality only then is no clue to personality if we assume that personality consists in actual continuity and in nothing else."⁴⁹

Similarly, Wildfeuer again adds doubt whether the expected foundations of ethics, which seem appropriate here as a solution to the liminal questions of life and death, can actually be achieved with the help of a qualitative notion of the person and through the introduction or preference of certain supposedly proven properties of the person, since the basic notions and distinctions are constructed in a multiply thetical (self-defining, self-determining, dogmatic) way and lack convincing argumentative proof. In fact, there is an overall rethinking of the ethical perspective, but only insofar as it is true that the moral subject is not determined by given values in relation to itself, but values themselves are ascertained by ends or goods in relation to the judging moral subject. Moreover, the strategy of distinguishing between person and personhood is rightly described as argumentatively 'uneconomic', since 'personhood is a sufficient criterion for the protection of life, but the lack of personhood is not a sufficient reason for abrogating the commandment - thou shalt not kill'.

Using Kant's theory of the person as a ground in itself, Wildfeuer concludes, belonging to the species *homo sapiens* (i.e., to the genus of finite rational beings) is no ground for the recognition and attribution of personhood, but only an indication for a place of unconditional recognition that is untestable by empirical methods. For this reason, the logic of reasoning must proceed as follows: *embryos, fetuses, comatose patients, and the handicapped of any kind are necessarily included in the notion of personhood.*⁵⁰

Schockenhoff in his lecture "Ausverkauf der Menschenwürde?- Selling out human dignity" at the symposium "Leben am Prüfstand - Life on Trial" at the Theological Faculty Karl Franzens University in Graz on 13 December 2008, when asked whether it is possible to distinguish between man and person in the sense of J. Locke, //answered// by saying that it is not possible to distinguish between man and person in the sense of J. Locke. Otherwise a university professor would be more of a person than a manual laborer.

In his book *Ethik des Lebens* Schockenhoff also attempts to criticize Singer's grant of a possible personhood status to animals. In this context, J. Koller's remark sounds interesting, who adds that despite Singer's attempt not to accept the so-called "speciesist" special status of man in nature, he uses exclusively human characteristics to determine the concept of person to animals, and this without any critical examination, especially regarding the cognitive-theoretical possibility and permissibility of such an extrapolation.⁵¹

We could return to Sýkora's rejection of Volek's moral appeal to the protection of every human zygote in another paper, from a moral-philosophical perspective. For the protection of every zygote, even those that do not develop into a developmentally viable embryo, is not only Volek's view, but also the view of most people who regard life as inviolable from its beginning to its end. For from the beginning, personal, individual life must be reckoned with.⁵² This philosophical trend has recently been called ontological personalism, and it cites potentiality as its most important argument ("if there is something from which an adult free being can emerge, then I must treat it as if it were really a living being").⁵³ At the same time, this is also the explicit view of the new instruction *Dignitas personae*, expressed, for example, in Pope Benedict XVI's message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace on January 1, 2009.⁵⁴

Similarly, Sýkora's view that such cases in which we must try to save vast numbers of zygotes not nested in the womb and perishing, in our view, again requires a different form of discussion, this time more from the perspective of a moral natural law.⁵⁵ Vácha on the question: "How then do you view the possibility of using frozen embryos for scientific research?" he answers as follows: "I think that they cannot be destroyed or used for research. We don't know an ethically clean solution how to deal with frozen embryos. Maybe in the end it would actually be better to destroy them, because there is no end like the end. This is exactly the argument of people working with embryonic stem cells: we already have the embryos here, so why not use them for research? But the mistake is that the embryos were created in the first place. One contradicts the other."⁵⁶

Why do human zygotes need to be protected?

Even if we are not in a position to prove precisely whether a human zygote is a human being, a person, or a man (because of, for example, an inability to agree on the meaning of these terms), we are not at a disadvantage compared to those who also cannot prove with certainty to the contrary that this organism is not a human being, a person, or a man.

The question can (should?) be this: If someone advocates and wants to do experiments on embryos and embryonic cells, is it not he who should convince others whether or not they are human persons? Who has the burden of proof? It is clarifying the implications of the actual-qualitative notion of person that requires such a response.

A positive attitude towards the human zygote, or, as Sýkora and Volek say, an attitude of ethical caution, seems less fatal and much more meaningful. Until proven otherwise. Although Sýkora sees this stance as a tautology and judges the whole argument to be tautological.⁵⁷ Perhaps what is really at stake is “the far-reaching implications for scientific research on embryonic stem cells”. Indeed, all these moral doubts in acting really lead us to the conclusion that unless we are sure whether or not a developing human being is involved in this case, we cannot act with complete responsibility.⁵⁸

Singer’s view of the concept of the human person after the birth of man can be quoted from his sources: ‘One being who is conscious of itself as a distant entity with a past and a future... Only a being who is aware of this is capable of having desires with respect to its own future... If such a person’s life is taken away without his consent, his wishes with regard to the future are thereby crossed. But if we kill a snail or a day-old baby, we do not cross any wishes of that kind, because snails or newborn babies are incapable of having such wishes...’⁵⁹ Also, one of his critics and partly followers continues: “The interest in survival is held by such a living being who has an explicit wish to continue his life”.⁶⁰

The problem of the understanding of the human person and the dignity which belongs to him has recently been identified by many philosophers and theologians within the Catholic Church as being of particular importance. Evidence of this is one of the main statements that resounded in the public arena in the autumn of 2010: ‘The embryo does not develop towards the human being, but *as a human being*’.⁶¹ Schlegel refers to Singer’s preferential utilitarianism as “the view from nowhere” (*der Blick von Nirgendwo*). This view, understood as a moral method for universalizing, is already logically fundamentally problematic. The utilitarian focus of the good on the useful makes it impossible to guarantee universal rights such as human rights, and at the same time it does not fit descriptively for moral survival either. In particular, the abuse of preference utilitarianism, like any other theory, runs the danger of not recognizing any fundamental limits (such as the ethos of human rights), i.e., that everything is available to its calculus.⁶² Indeed, it is human rights that are gaining prominence as a shared consensus in a globalized world.⁶³

In this study we wanted to show the views of many prominent European philosophers and theologians in assessing Singer’s utilitarian speciesism. Without attempting to mathematically guide our philosophical-

ethical thinking, we have arrived at an important interface of the understanding of the human person as such. We have arrived at the very same frontier of philosophical thinking that the conference “Religions - Threat or Hope for Our Societies?” on the occasion of the 83rd Social Week of France, the philosopher, moral theologian and member of the Consultative National Ethics Committee of France, Prof. Xavier Lacroix, during the studio “Religions and societies in the face of sciences and ethical dilemmas.” He identified the true conception of the meaning of man as the limit at which even philosophical astonishment can no longer help us. Only if we are able to face the unknown will we be able to cross the threshold of understanding the meaning of man, concluded Prof. Lacroix.⁶⁴

Through this work we have attempted to highlight the persistent problem of assessing respect and attitudes towards human life, in the wake of Singer’s ideas of preferential utilitarianism and the understanding of the concept of the human person. Of course, we will try to remain open to various arguments, since the world’s scientific forums have a decades-long head start here (especially in discussions and analyses) over our Slovak Christian ethicists and philosophers. It will also be necessary to sufficiently emphasize and incorporate the arguments of other philosophers and theologians (e.g. M. Machinek from Olsztyn in Poland, Robert Spaemann from Munich, A. Lohner and especially A. Schlegel and others). For nothing less is at stake than the search for an answer to questions about the meaning of man, creation, and the universe.

NOTES:

¹ Cf. reflections from the thesis of Mgr. D. Zálesová, *Prečo treba zygotu chrániť. Vývoj argumentov pre ochranu a proti vedeckému použitiu zygoty v Slovenskom vedeckom prostredí (s prihliadnutím k diskusií Sýkora- Volek)* [Why the zygote must be protected. The development of arguments for and against the scientific use of the zygote in the Slovak scientific environment (taking into account the Sýkora-Volek debate)], Master's thesis in social philosophy at the Theological Faculty Catholic university of Ružomberok in Košice in Slovakia under the supervision of Prof. Szaniszló defended in 2010, p. 8.

² P. Sýkora, “Prečo život každej ľudskej zygoty netreba bezpodmienečne chrániť? [Why does the life of every human zygote not need to be unconditionally protected?]” in *Filozofia*, Vol. 63, 2008, No. 9, pp. 804-816.

³ Cf. P. Singer, *Spisy o etickom žití [Writings on Ethical Living]*, Trans. I. Viskupová, Ed. Spolok slovenských spisovateľov, Bratislava, 2008.

⁴ Cf. P. Sýkora, “Prečo život každej ...,” p. 804.

⁵ Available from https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html (02. 01. 2022).

- ⁶ Cf. P. Sýkora, “Prečo život každej...,” p. 805.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 805.
- ⁸ Cf. P. Sýkora, “Treba život každej ľudskej zygoty bezpodmienečne chrániť? [Should the life of every human zygote be unconditionally protected?],” in *Filozofia*, Vol. 61, 2006, No. 7, pp. 562-568.
- ⁹ Cf. P. Sýkora, “Prečo život každej...,” p. 805.
- ¹⁰ Cf. P. Sýkora, “Treba život každej...,” pp. 562-568.
- ¹¹ The term “speciesism” was first used by the Oxford psychologist Richard Ryder, and Singer used it when reviewing his work *Experiments on animals*, cf. A. Schlegel, *Die Identität der Person. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Peter Singer*, Academic Press Fribourg+Herder Fribourg, 2007, p. 154.
- ¹² A. G. Wildfeuer, “ ‘Person’ und ‘Mensch’. Anmerkung zu einer folgenreichen Unterscheidung in der aktuellen Diskussion um Leben und Tod,” in *Arzt und Christ*. R. 38 pp. 201-211, New edition in E. Schockenhoff (ed.), *Medizinische Ethik im Wandel. Grundlagen-Konkretionen-Perspektiven*, Schwabenverlag, Ostfildern, 2005, pp. 86-96.
- ¹³ Finally, the protests of the paraglacial organisations in West Germany, which led to the interruption of Singer's lecture tour in the FRG (23.6.1989), were also a strong response to this way of thinking, cf. E. Schockenhoff, *Ethik des Lebens*, Matthias Gruenewald, Mainz, 1st ed. 1993, p. 46. And we have not yet mentioned other protests and the need for his personal protection as a professor at Princeton University, cf. A. Schlegel, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
- ¹⁴ Cf. https://www.la-croix.com/Archives/2009-03-25/SANTE.-Des-journees-internationales-d-ethique-consacrees-aux-debuts-de-la-vie.-_NP_-2009-03-25-341707.
- ¹⁵ E.g., prof. Jean-François Mattei, geneticist and former Minister of Health and President of the French Red Cross, in his brilliant lecture at the 3rd International Days of Ethics conference in Strasbourg on 25.3.2009, as well as Professor of Philosophy Dominique Folscheid from the University of Marne-la-Vallée in France at the same conference, cf. www.ethique-alsace.com, video of the opening of the 2009 conference.
- ¹⁶ Cf. A. Schlegel, *op. cit.*, p. 420.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- ¹⁸ Cf. P. Singer, *Praktische Ethik*, Reclam, Stuttgart, Ditzingen, 1984, p. 122.
- ¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 88.
- ²⁰ Cf. A. Schlegel, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
- ²¹ E. Schockenhoff, *Ethik des Lebens. Ein theologischer Grundriss*, Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, Mainz, 1st ed. 1993, p. 74.
- ²² Cf. A. Schlegel, *op. cit.*, p. 155.
- ²³ Cf. H. Weber, *Spezielle Moraltheologie*, Graz, Styria, 1999, p. 161.
- ²⁴ Cf. A. Schlegel, *op. cit.*, p. 422.
- ²⁵ Cf. E. Schockenhoff, *Ethik des Lebens*, 1st ed., 1993, p. 46, according to P. Singer, *Praktische Ethik*, pp. 168, 184 and see also E. Schockenhoff, *Ethik des Lebens*.

Grundlagen und neue Herausforderungen, Herder, Freiburg 2009, p. 209, after P. Singer, *Praktische Ethik*, p. 183.

²⁶ Cf. A. Schlegel, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

²⁷ O. Nezbeda / M. Uhlř, *Epidemie dnešni doby: Rozšířená verze rozhovoru s Markem Váchou o dětech ze zkumavky, morálce a pobytu v trapistickém klášteře - The Epidemic of Our Time: An Extended Version of an Interview with Marek Vácha on Test Tube Babies, Morality and the Trappist Monastery*, available at [www: http://respekt.ihned.cz/rozhovory/c1-48363870-epidemie-dnesni-doby-rozsirena-verze](http://respekt.ihned.cz/rozhovory/c1-48363870-epidemie-dnesni-doby-rozsirena-verze).

²⁸ E. Schockenhoff, *Ethik des Lebens. Grundlagen und neue Herausforderungen*, p. 209.

²⁹ P. Singer, *Leben und Tod. Der Zusammenbruch der traditionellen Ethik*. Fischer, Erlangen, 1998.

³⁰ Cf. E. Schockenhoff, *Ethik des Lebens*, 1st ed. 1993, p. 47.

³¹ Cf. A. Schlegel, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

³² E. Schockenhoff, *Ethik des Lebens. Grundlagen und neue Herausforderungen*, p. 53.

³³ Cf. P. Singer, *Befreiung der Tiere*, Hirthammer, Munich, 1982, p. 26.

³⁴ Cf. E. Schockenhoff, *Ethik des Lebens. Grundlagen und neue Herausforderungen*. p. 578.

³⁵ Cf. P. Singer, P., *Leben und Tod. Der Zusammenbruch der traditionellen Ethik*, p. 135.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁷ Cf. P. Sýkora, "Prečo život každej...", p. 806.

³⁸ Cf. H. Weber, *Spezielle Moraltheologie*, p. 97.

³⁹ Cf. H. Weber, *Spezielle Moraltheologie*, p. 97. Citation of Prof. G. J. Gründel (ed.), *Leben aus christlicher Verantwortung. Ein Grundkurs der Moral*, Patmos, Düsseldorf, Vol. III, 1991, pp. 95, 102.

⁴⁰ K.-H. Peschke, *Křesťanská etika. Christian Ethics*, Vyšehrad, Prague, 1999, p. 661.

⁴¹ E. Schockenhoff, *Ethik des Lebens*, 1st ed. 1993, p. 49, after H. T. Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Bioethics*. New York: Oxford University Press 1986, p. 107.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 96. From a number of pure sentences about being, no sentences about duty can be deduced, unless we imperceptibly insert a sentence about duty beforehand. This is a critique of the "naturalistic fallacy of inference," (cf. G. E. MOORE, *Principio Ethica*, Reclam, Stuttgart, 1970). This argument speaks of an invalid direct inference which concludes a norm from some fact in the world.

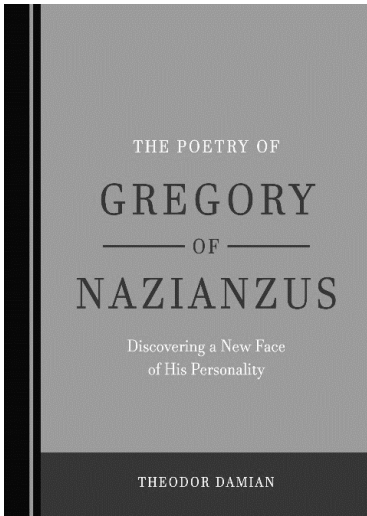
⁴⁴ This justification is given by Weber when arguing against euthanasia in general, cf. H. Weber, *Spezielle Moraltheologie*, p. 221.

⁴⁵ "Kompromissloses Ja zum Leben," www.kath.net/detail.php?id=21610 (27. 12. 2022).

⁴⁶ Cf. E. Schockenhoff, *Sterbehilfe und Menschenwürde. Begleitung zu einem eigenen Tod*, Pustet, Regensburg, 1991, pp. 62-66.

⁴⁷ This is how Wildfeuer presents the view of J.-P. Wills, professor of philosophical ethics from Nijmegen in the Netherlands, cf. A. G. Wildfeuer, " 'Person' und

- 'Mensch'. Anmerkung zu einer folgenreichen Unterscheidung in der aktuellen Diskussion um Leben und Tod," pp. 201-211.
- ⁴⁸ E. Schockenhoff (ed.), *Medizinische Ethik im Wandel. Grundlagen-Konkretionen-Perspektiven*, p. 92.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92 according to L. Honnefelder, "Person und Menschenwürde: Zum Verhältnis von Metaphysik und Ethik bei der Begründung sittlicher Werte." in (ed.) *Ethik in der Psychiatrie*. Springer, Berlin-Heidelberg, 1994, pp. 22-39.
- ⁵⁰ E. Schockenhoff (ed.): *Medizinische Ethik im Wandel. Grundlagen-Konkretionen-Perspektiven*, p. 94.
- ⁵¹ Cf. J. Koller, "Personalität und Tierethik," in *Ethica* 16 (2008), pp. 333-346, here p. 343, cf. E. Schockenhoff, *Sterbehilfe und Menschenwürde. Begleitung zu einem eigenen Tod*, p. 565.
- ⁵² Cf. H. Weber, *Spezielle Moraltheologie*, p. 101.
- ⁵³ Vácha says: "In short, it would be a good thing for all parties if at some point a human fetus sat up in the womb, wiped the sweat from its brow, began to cognitively reason, feel pain, and be capable of moral decision-making. It's just that it's all continuous." Concerning ontological personalism he again says: "It reflects, in part, Christian philosophy and its conception of an immortal soul that is inherent only in man, catapulting him to a qualitatively higher plane than the animals. If you cut down a lime tree, it will be cut down and die, the dog will die and that's the end of it. But not so for man."
- ⁵⁴ Available at <http://www.kath.net/detail.php?id=21580> (Dec. 27, 2021). The Pope calls destruction of unborn children elimination of the poorest.
- ⁵⁵ In our study we also did not include Volek's last (third) reply to Sýkora (P. Volek, "Ludské zygóty ako ľudské bytosti a osoby [Human zygotes as human beings and persons]", published in the collection P. Sýkora – R. Balák, *Bioetické výzvy pre filozofiu - Bioethical Challenges for Philosophy*, University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, 2008, pp. 191-203.
- ⁵⁶ O. Nezbeda, M. Uhlíř, *Epidemie dnešní doby: Rozšířená verze rozhovoru s Markem Váchou o dětech ze zkumavky, morálce a pobytu v trappistickém klášteře [The Epidemic of Our Time: An Extended Version of an Interview with Marek Vácha on Test Tube Babies, Morality and the Trappist Monastery]*, <http://respekt.ihned.cz/rozhovory/c1-48363870-epidemie-dnesni-doby-rozsirena-verze>.
- ⁵⁷ Cf. P. Sýkora, "Treba život každej...", pp. 562-568.
- ⁵⁸ Cf. P. Sýkora, "Prečo život každej...", p. 804.
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- ⁶⁰ Cf. N. Hoerster, *Sterbehilfe im säkularen Staat*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1998; 2nd edition: *Ethik des Embryonenschutzes*, Reclam, Stuttgart, 2002, p. 74.
- ⁶¹ Cf. Algermissen, "Embryo entwickelt sich 'als Mensch, nicht zum Menschen'," <http://www.kath.net/detail.php?id=29136> (28.12.2021).
- ⁶² Cf. A. Schlegel, *op. cit.*, p. 423.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 427.
- ⁶⁴ See I. M. V. Szaniszló, "Sú náboženstvá ohrozením, alebo nádejou pre dnešný svet? [Are religions a threat or a hope for today's world?]," in *Duchovný pastier. Revue pre teológiu a duchovný život- Spiritual shepherd. Journal for Theology and Spiritual Life*, No. 2, 2009, pp. 100-105.



Gregory of Nazianzus was a personality of first rank in the complex world of the 4th Christian century. Famous for his theological orations and for his role in the development of the Second Ecumenical Council in 381 in Constantinople, where he was the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, he was one of the most celebrated poets of his time, even though today he is known in particular for his major contributions to the establishment of the Orthodox theology that was confronted with the heresies of the time.

This book will allow the reader to discover not the theologian, but the poet in Gregory, as his poetry is the place where one can see the all-too-human aspects of his personality. As such, it represents a significant contribution to scholarship on Gregory, bringing to light new and defining characteristics of his life, thought and practice.

“Theodor Damian does us a great service in this book by reminding us what a fine poet Gregory was. A well-known and successful poet himself, Prof. Damian is able to enter into the heart as well as the mindset of Gregory’s World” (John McGuckin)

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Faith and Love in Orthodox Christianity

Abstract: Faith and Love, besides Hope, are the basic Christian elements formulated in the Pauline epistle to the Corinthians. They are able to connect the two types of time proper to the life of the human psychosomatic nature: Chairis for the soul and Chronos for the body. The modern physicists and geneticists defined the finely adjusted universe as a matrix governed by laws and came to the conclusion of a Superior Intelligence, who acts like a Supreme Conscience. Science and Religion complement each other in the process of human knowledge. The interaction between human conscience and the universal one raises problems of responsibility. Knowing God in this context becomes a necessity and the reasoning approach is combined with the apophatic one. Why a Triad? Other most important attributes of the Godhead as truth, light and love are discussed. In the mutual relationship God-man love is the universal concept that links the whole universe. How should we see the great tragedies in the world? Why are unanswered prayers? Berdiaeff and Camus' thoughts are mentioned here. How should love for each other function in our modern society? What did Sartre mean by "hell is the others?" Is love active in the complex social problems of our present society? Discovering the sacred time of our life behind the quotidian events of our earthly existence can help us to give a sense and a goal to our spiritual existence.

Keywords: Trinity, truth, light, love, historic time, eternity, apophatic anthropology, quantum physics.

Introduction

"The universe is a «Matrix» governed by laws and principles that could only have been designed by an intelligent being," said the highly respected theoretical physicist Dr. Michio Kaku from City College of New York (CUNY). "The final solution resolution could be that God is a mathematician... The mind of God, we believe, is cosmic music, the music

Horia Ion Groza is an independent author and researcher based in San Diego, California.

of strings resonating through 11-dimensional hyperspace.”¹ Dr. Kaku is co-founder of the modern String Field Theory which successfully ties together concepts of quantum mechanics and general relativity for a better understanding of the physical interactions in the universe, and it corrects the traditional idea of Big Bang.²

It seems also that both the macrocosm represented by stars and planets and the microcosm represented by the DNA denote extreme order that supports the evidence of a superior intelligence who has established it. On August 21, 2017, a total solar eclipse could have been observed across United States. It had been predicted with high accuracy ahead of time for each location. Four new total eclipses are predicted precisely in terms of day and location for the years 2024, 2044, 2045, and 2052. This shows that nature works like a clock well adjusted. Thus, the Book of Nature complements the Book of Sacred Scripture in revealing the magnificent work of God.

The complex and harmoniously structured entity of the universe is illustrated even by the simplest piece of matter – the hydrogen atom, which cannot be satisfactorily defined without taking in account how it is affected by the cloud of the surrounding virtual particles. The quantum theory supports even the idea that “a perfect vacuum is filled with a multitude of particles that flash into and out of existence much too rapidly to be caught by any detector.” Their “ghostly presence” denies the common sense of Physics and in this case, we become prone to accept “the deepest aspects of our existence”, including the “religious belief in God, and Christian belief that God became Man around two thousand years ago,” said Tony Hewish (Nobel Prize for Physics).³

Our life is directly connected with this Superior Intelligence, who acts like a Supreme Conscience. By His decision, we are privileged to know Him better through Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, who talked with us in a language understandable to human beings. “Without Me you can do nothing,” Jesus said.⁴ Without God, we cannot achieve anything. We are powerless. The neuroscientist Andrew Newberg and the specialist in communication Mark Robert Waldman think that “the human brain is really a believing machine.” They wrote interesting things how “the power of belief” can lead to miraculous healings.⁵ The Gospel says that Jesus did not do many mighty works in his own town because of the inhabitants’ unbelief.⁶

“Theism explains more than atheism could, making intelligible what otherwise would have to be treated as merely a happy accident,” correctly noted the physicist and theologian John Polkinghorne.⁷ On the other hand, Religion and Science can complete each other, with their specific domain. Theology asks Why and Science asks How.⁸ These approaches are proper to man who “is the only thinking reality in the world... Why? Because true thinking is in a way paradoxical; it is born of contradictory situations,” as

the Romanian Father Roman Braga wrote.⁹ He invites us to consider the thoughts of the famous English prince of paradox, G. K. Chesterton, looking at the cross and sphere placed on the top of St. Paul's Cathedral's dome. The sphere, as a Greek symbol of perfection, "is limited to itself. Traveling around the sphere, one reaches nowhere. This is the image of philosophy" which "is a closed system... On the other hand, developing a mode of thinking in a cross-like manner gives to the world an infinite freedom." According to the cross diagram suggested by Fr. Braga, the vertical arm lets man freely fly – up towards God or down towards abyss.

According to Saint Maximus the Confessor (quoted by Lossky)¹⁰, all created beings "are first of all defined as limited beings. Their end is outside themselves." They tend toward somewhere else and "are in a continuous state of becoming. Wherever there is diversity and multiplicity there is becoming; everything in the created world is in a state of becoming, the intelligible as well as the sensible, and this limitation and this movement of becoming are the domain of the forms of [their spiritual] space and time. Only God remains in absolute repose and His perfect unmovability places Him above time and space." God produces love in the created beings and this love makes them tend towards Him. "His will for us is a mystery." Consequently, from a spiritual standpoint, we might say that in our universe of created beings, the cause of movement expressed in parameters of reference like space and time, is our conscious or unconscious yearning for God. God is not in movement toward a point because He is everywhere. Not God but we are moving and this spiritual movement is manifest in the diversity and the multiplicity of our human nature.

On one hand, the concept of space comes for us from our limitation. God is unlimited, boundless, and therefore the term of space for Him does not make sense. On the other hand, the concept of time comes for us from our conflict with changes – the diseases and death that our body suffers. God alone is stable, above time. However, our soul, in contrast with our body, is atemporal, it is eternal since we are conceived, since we are brought to life by God. "The world, created in order that it might be deified, is dynamic," Lossky wrote in the spirit of the Eastern Church's tradition.¹¹ Here are some things to think about: the world has time because it is dynamic and undergoes an evolutionary process; the world has space because it needs a unit to measure its spiritual evolution within and beyond.

Man and God

God paid careful attention to the finest details of His creation. Humans are 99% similar with mice for the gene sequence that codes for protein but only 40% similar for the random DNA segments between genes (introns) which are still a mystery for geneticists.¹² The simplistic genetic reductionism cannot explain the outstanding complexity of the human being. John Polkinghorne found at least seven standpoints that essentially distinguish the humans from the rest of mammals with which they have in common 99% genetic background. (1) “Part of humanity’s unique self-consciousness is a keen awareness of ourselves.” Although the higher animals are somehow conscious, “they seem to live [only] in what we may call the near present.” (2) Humans possess a language capable of performances like story-telling and poetry. (3) “A great range of rational skills” defines the human nature. “Even such counterintuitive regimes as the subatomic world of quantum theory, or the vast expanses of cosmic curved space-time, radically different in their character from the world of everyday experience and remote from direct impact on it, have proved to be open to human enquiry and understanding.” (4) No other beings have “great creative powers manifested through art and culture.” (5) In contrast to the animals, humans are moral beings and their concepts of right and wrong and of ethical obligation are proper only to them. (6) “We possess a capacity for what may fittingly be called God-consciousness. Mystical apprehension of unity with One or the All.” (7) Theologians detect in human behavior a certain “slantedness which they categorize as sin, a source of distortion in human affairs that frustrates hopes and corrupts intentions.” This leads to conflicts of large dimensions like wars and genocides that surpass any animal incidents.¹³

The human mind ponders the events of the seen and unseen world, and witnessing its knowledge limits urges the heart to embrace the faith into the Creator and Master of the Universe. The Christians learn to live in this faith which opens new horizons of knowledge. They try to purify their body and soul in order to host Him within them, and become receptive at God’s voice. Life is hope. God is the source and essence of life and they put their hope in Him. This hope is fed by the conscience of the enormous power of God and of His profound wisdom as a creator and coordinator of the universe.

The man’s hope is also fed by the fear for God’s justice and the trust in His reparatory love. “Those who feared the Lord, hoped in the Lord.”¹⁴ The Lord replies immediately to them: “Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy.”¹⁵ His care has the attribute of eternity, therefore “the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring unto ages of ages.”¹⁶ “The Lord is the strength of those who fear Him.”¹⁷ “The

fear of the Lord hates unrighteousness, and both rudeness and arrogance, and the ways of the wicked men.”¹⁸ Therefore, “Salvation is very close at hand to those who fear Him.”¹⁹ In conclusion, we can say with the psalmist, “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.”²⁰ Practicing this fear we gain a good understanding of all God’s works. However, the fear of God is not the beginning of faith. Faith means living with God, wearing God in our hearts. The beginning of true faith, which follows the primary stage of fear and understanding, is marked by love. In this sense, the Saint Basil’s Prayer at the Great Compline says, “Nail our flesh to the fear of Thee and wound our hearts with the love for Thee.”²¹

If we may paraphrase the historian of religions Mircea Eliade’s terms²², we might say that, for a person who believes in God, there are two kinds of time: sacred time and profane time. The sacred time is the time of God, of the Creator; it is *chairo*s and it is eternal. The profane time is the historical time, the time of the creation, of man and of all living creatures; it is *chronos*, the quotidian time that flows unceasingly without repeating itself. Our soul is immortal and its time, since we were conceived, is eternal. Our body is perishable and its time is transitory. Mircea Eliade called this manifestation of the sacred in the ordinary world of creation “hierophany.”²³ Thus the incarnation of the Son of God is a hierophany. By incarnation, the Son of God, a Divine Person living in the everlasting time, entered into the world of the creation, sanctifying the historical time. The most eloquent picture of this is elderly Simeon receiving in his arms the infant Jesus in the sacredness of the Temple.²⁴ It illustrates perfectly the meeting of the human perishable time with the divine eternal one, as we can see it in the very expressive famous painting of Rembrandt.

Therefore, a Christian is called to discover the ever-living time of his soul, and especially the sacred aspect of it. God is our only shelter. “O Lord, You became a refuge to us in generation and generation... From everlasting to everlasting You are.”²⁵ He is a good refuge because He “exists outside time,” above our daily trials and tribulations.²⁶ God provides to our soul a place where we can abide, which is always warm and hospitable, and where we can restore our energies for facing again the storms and blizzards of outside.

Polkinghorne and Beale stressed the fact that “most contemporary theologians believe human beings to be psychosomatic unities, a kind of package deal of matter/mind in a complementary relationship.” They bring to our attention “a famous and much-quoted phrase, as «animated bodies rather than incarnated souls».”²⁷ In His love for men God the Father gave His Son to be incarnated in this very “animated body” in order to be closer to men, to teach and heal them, and to pave their way back to the lost heavenly kingdom, by His supreme sacrifice and victory upon death.

As Father Dumitru Stăniloae wrote, God wanted “to give being to all forms of existence.”²⁸ Consequently, He created and ordered matter in such a way that the matter can have in the middle of it the humans made of both spirit and body. In the unity of terms thus created, the will of humans can affect the matter and manifest their love and spiritual strength within the universe. “Having created everything through His Word and only begotten Son, God created men as images of His Son so that God might extend His fatherly love to other sons.” However, these “other” sons, the humans, “do not share the same essence with Him, and therefore they are not sons according to the intrinsic laws, for this would relativize the only begotten Son and would subordinate God to laws, thus breaking down the distinction between God and the world” He created.

Knowing God

In his well-known essay on the mystical theology of the Eastern Church, the theologian Vladimir Lossky referred to Saint Basil who wrote that all the characteristics we attribute to God the Father unveil His energies which descend to us but do not unveil His inaccessible Being. Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagite, quoted by Lossky, defined God in an apophatic manner, “of an unknowable nature, the Lord of Psalms, who made the darkness His shelter.” As Lossky wrote, Moses experienced on Mount Sinai his “helplessness of knowing God ...when he entered the darkness of His inaccessibility,” while Saint Paul realized his powerlessness “when he heard the words that expressed the divine inexpressiveness.”²⁹ Saint Paul described how limited is our perception of the Lord in this world in contrast with the world beyond where we will go after our physical death and where we will contact Him directly: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know, just as I also am known.”³⁰

While we are on earth an apophatic approach, a negative theology, is more appropriate for knowing God. “Only the uncorrelated «a» (alpha privatum) can express” the “powerful negation” needed, by “suggesting the superessential [(*supraființial* in Romanian)] principle, the intangible nucleus symbolized by silence, its mystical expression. Divine Being is «alogia» «anoesia» or «anonumia»; the soul feels Divine Presence intuitively, not only as an inherent transcendence for its abilities to comprehend intellectually, but as a living reality.”³¹

Father André Scrima quoted St. Gregory Palamas’ apophatic modality of discussing about Divinity: “there is no name for God in this world or in the one to come, and there is no word born in the soul or uttered in any language that could express Him. There cannot be any touch with Him, experienced or thought, and there is no image that could fit Him,

regardless of the image... Divine Essence is communicable [only] through Its energies, although not in Itself ... maintaining in this way the incommunicability and the non-revealing of the non-exteriorized Essence".³²

The Holy Trinity is the formula through which God becomes absolutely transcendent, not cut off from His creation, and personal. He is a Trinity of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, i.e. not only a unit but a union. As Polkinghorne pointed out, "the perichoretic mutual indwelling of the Person within the essential life of the Godhead – what theologians call the immanent Trinity – provides the internal basis for understanding this divine unity."³³ The Cappadocian Fathers Basil the Great, Gregory of Nysa, and Gregory of Nazianzus underlined the fact that "a united separation and a separated unity" is essential for a relationship which implies a mutual engagement within unity and does not destroy the identity of each member. In regard to this paradoxical definition, the theologian physicist does not resist the temptation to make an analogy to the relationship between two quantum entities which remain mutually entangled with each other regardless of the distance between them (the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen effect).³⁴

However, our mind might not follow our heart that understood everything by faith and love, and might wonder: Why three? Why a triad? We learn from Vladimir Lossky's essay on the mystical theology of the Eastern Church that a monad is incompatible with the multitude of God's faces. The dyad is used by philosophers in all the antinomian pairs applied to the nature of this world, but it cannot characterize the Divinity that is above everything, above matter and form. Then the triad is the correct formula for, as a Trinity, the Godhead does not remain limited within Its boundaries and neither does It spread infinitely. The triad as a unit would be a Judaic monotheistic concept while as three separated persons would be a Greek polytheistic concept. Lossky wrote the following about the mystery of the number three, which is applicable to the Deity: the Divinity is neither one nor a multiple. The real perfection is superior to the multiplicity of the Gnostic dyads generated by a duality, because two is the number that splits, while three is the number that goes beyond the separation. We venerate the Holy Trinity as a Divine Family and as a divine unit, not as three gods. In fact, it is very difficult for man to fully understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Lossky wrote that the "dogma of the Trinity is a cross for human thought. An apophatic ascent is like walking up Golgotha. This is why no philosophical speculation is able to reach the height of the mystery of the Holy Trinity."³⁵

Father Stăniloae quoted St. Gregory of Nazianzus with a slightly different definition: "the Trinity is a monad taking its impetus from its superabundance, a dyad transcended (that is, it goes beyond the form and matter of which bodies consists), a triad defined by its perfection since it is the first to transcend the synthesis of duality in order that the Godhead might

not be constricted or diffused without limit.”³⁶ St. John of Damascus, quoted by Father Stăniloae, gives a beautiful definition: “It is like three suns cleaving to each other without separation and giving out light mingled and conjoined into one.”³⁷

The understanding of Godhead in Trinity fills our souls with joy and light because we are a pale mirror of God’s image. It gives us on the other hand a sense of our spiritual existence. Father Stăniloae wrote, “No conscious being exists except in hypostases or persons: the divine essence in three Persons, the human in many persons. Otherwise, neither God nor humans would fulfill the destiny of loving existence and, through this, achieve eternal happiness.”³⁸ The language of communication among the Persons of the Holy Trinity is prayer. Prayer is also our way of communication with Our Master and Creator.

Orthodox Christians approach God first in an apophatic manner with their heart’s faith, trust and love, and only second with their mind that, helped by the heart’s faith, discovers the hardly accessible truth, without being affected by the subjective limits that it could face at a direct reasoning. In this sense, Father Scrima wrote, “the apophatic attitude stops being determined by subjective elements (that belong to the knowing subject) in order to be revealed as an objective structure, independent from the contingent creature and its gnoseological aptitude or inaptitude.”³⁹

God is Truth. We have to learn this well. Otherwise, He cannot be our Savior. The Lord is as He is (see the reply given to Moses),⁴⁰ not as each of us might like to see and feel Him. We have to learn to know Him as He really is. This is actually the Truth, the essence of life and the universe, the essence of everything that the Scriptures talk about and that the man searches for, with continuous scientific and spiritual efforts. Pilate asked Jesus, what is Truth. The Holy Fathers said that he had to ask correctly, who (not what) is Truth. Jesus said to Thomas, when he asked Him about the way to go, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”⁴¹ The minstrel of the Holy Trinity, Saint Gregory of Nazianz, quoted by Lossky, wrote, “The Father is He who is True, the Son is Truth, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth.”⁴² Christ tells the Samaritan woman at the well, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”⁴³ His words tie the latter two notions together, as the Christian prayers have to respond to the attributes of the Divine Trinity. It is specific to the Christian religion that the Truth is represented by a Person in three hypostases. The Truth is not an abstract notion. God knows us entirely by His nature of a Creator, while we know only a part of Him by grace. If we learn God as being The Truth, we can respond fully to His call for our deification into Him.

If God is Truth, we, the created sons of God, have to live in truth all the days of our life. This is a frightening task and a hard responsibility given to us by God, as a very pious friend of mine used to repeat often. But what

does “living in truth” mean? What is the untruth? It is promoted by the fallen angel who is man’s enemy and can be a denial of the truth, which causes a void, a nothingness, and destroys the being. It can be also a deformation of the truth, a lie, as the serpent misleading the first human couple said in Paradise: “you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.”⁴⁴ Did man really know good and evil after eating the forbidden fruit? No, he probably became only aware of them. He did not understand them in their essence because he lacked the appropriate spiritual maturity and thus he could not be like gods as the serpent affirmed by deforming the truth. Yes, man is called by God to deification but this is not achieved instantly but at the end of a long process of spiritual maturation.

In conclusion, to live in truth means to live in God – to listen to His commandments, to watch His will, to resist the lying or the nihilistic temptations, and, at the same time, to communicate with God by constant prayer, by the joy of feeling His protective presence, by the tonic feel of awe. Only so, man can finish his spiritual journey of maturation on earth, from the Paradise tree of knowledge of good and evil, with what the Holy Scripture starts, back to Paradise to the tree of life with what the Holy Scripture ends.⁴⁵ This journey is the process of deification.

God is Light. As we read in Genesis, after the Lord created the heavens and earth, the first matter was the light. It was the concrete expression, like a beneficent spring, of an essential attribute of the Divine Nature that is the Spiritual Light. The Light did not cease to accompany the Creator and in the same time it helped the created world even after man, its pivotal element, fell away from the Eternal Truth that is God.

Hell, the dwelling place of death, is the opposite of God’s Kingdom and therefore is a denial of the Light. It is the Dark - a frightening, compact darkness, a state of eternal suffering. It is the very dark that results from the refusal to respond to the loving call of God. As the Holy Fathers say, the gates of hell are locked from inside by those who live in it. Hell is a tenebrous, murky, gloomy place, full of pestilential odor, a place of torture and infinite pain.

Light has certainly a direct physical meaning as the light of sun or candle, and it provides a necessary condition for our eyes to be able to see. However, it has also a profound metaphysical meaning. Saint Matthew the Evangelist started his story about Our Lord’s spiritual work in the world by mentioning the Prophet Isaiah’s words: “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned.”⁴⁶ The manifestation of God in the world is affirmation, is Light. By His incarnation, the Son of God made this Light perceivable by the human race.

Vladimir Lossky mentioned a manuscript, a Hagioritic Tome, from Mount Athos that distinguished three categories of light. The first two belong

to the created world: the visible light (the physical, material one, apprehended by senses) and the light of comprehension (the intuition of mind that notices God's work, presence, and influence – the light of the intellect). The third category belongs to the universe beyond this world. It is the uncreated light of divine nature, which is superior to the first two. The uncreated light illuminates the truth that the faithful people seek with the light of comprehension.⁴⁷

The Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica brought to our attention a quote from the French physicist Louis de Broglie: "The material universe could have been born by the condensation of the light and could die by expanding back into the light."⁴⁸ This thought might illustrate very well the Christian idea of the incarnation of Son of God. "Light of Light, True God from True God," the Creed prayer says. The Uncontainable was contained in a human womb as "the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin" (the Troparion of Annunciation), and the people "saw the inaccessible God as a man accessible to all" (the Akathist of Annunciation). The thought might also illustrate His return to God the Father - His ascension, when the contained went back into the Uncontainable, with important consequences for us Christians. "When You had fulfilled the dispensation for our sake, and united earth to heaven, You ascended in glory, O Christ our God, not being parted from those who love You, but remaining with them and crying: «I am with you and no one will be against you»" (Kontakion of Ascension).

Light is action. The Romanian theologian André Scrima noted that the Lord's words in Genesis, "let there be light," opened the room that the creation needed in the primary space.⁴⁹ The creation is actually neither the earth as a planet, nor the cosmic universe, but the possibility of manifestation of an unpredictable and overwhelming freedom. We might then say that the light is our bridge of communication with the Creator through the freedom given to man. There is light in all the icons of the Saints; it is present in the background that symbolizes the heavenly kingdom and in the halo around the Saints' heads that represents God's individual blessing.

The burning candle that the participants at the Divine Liturgy hold in their hand when they go to receive the communion is announcing the unseen light, the true light that they are going to be offered through the Holy Bread and Wine. After Communion they sing: "We have seen the true light! We have received the heavenly Spirit! We have found the true faith! Worshipping the undivided Trinity, who has saved us."⁵⁰

God's light transforms the human being which needs the physical light for the body and the spiritual light for the soul. In the Kingdom of God, we will not have the burden of the body so our being will continue to live only with the spiritual light. An evening prayer says: O Our Lord, the bodiless powers of heavens praise you unceasingly. They do not need the physical light because they were given the eternal brilliance of Your

impenetrable glory.⁵¹ The Angels perceive the light that feeds everything in God's Kingdom and they praise His glory in their songs. God is Light, as He is Peace and Love.

The divine uncreated light that became manifest to humans was of two kinds: (1) a burning light, as unbearable to the human eyes like the sunlight when we look directly at the sun as in the icon painted by Andrei Rublev, or (2) a warm and gentle light, coming from a fire without flames - an unearthly light, smooth and mild, as in the icon painted by Theophanes the Greek similar to the legendary Easter Light that comes every year to the Church of Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. However, because the source of this miraculous light was the Savior's body, it was still hardly bearable for the disciples' eyes. Despite its gentleness, this light carries a divine power that overwhelms the humans.

Only two persons were enabled to endure the direct brightness of the Divine Light, without being harmed. Moses saw it in the flames of the Burning Bush. Elijah disappeared in the clouds in a carriage of flames. This fact might be another reason why Moses and Elijah were present with the Savior when His face and body were transfigured on Mount Tabor - they had already experienced the fire - so they could take it and also witness it.

The light coming from God reveals to men profound meanings and, like a fire, kindles in them the power of understanding. The immaterial fire of Divinity landed on the Apostles' heads like tongues of fire and illuminated their minds and spirits with a sudden deep comprehension of Christ's words and deeds. The same light spoke to Saul, illuminated his mind, and blinded his eyes. This secret fire was partially perceived by Saul's companions but because they were unworthy spiritual vessels, they either saw the light without hearing the voice or heard the voice without seeing anybody.⁵²

Saint Simeon the New Theologian wrote that the few who are blessed could see God as a powerful Light and, because the Light of His Glory precedes the image of His Face, it is impossible for them to discern Him in another way than within the Light.⁵³

Saint Gregory Palamas said that the person who meets the divine energy ends in being a glowing light himself, when he becomes united with the Lord's Light and is completely conscious that he sees things which remain hidden to those who lack this grace.⁵⁴

There is an old icon that was venerated at Antim Monastery in Bucharest. It represents the Prayer. The Prayer of the mind is represented by Theotokos holding the Holy Child on her right, the foreheads united. The prayer of the mind ignites the prayer of the heart. Therefore, the next step of prayer is the Prayer of the heart which is represented by Theotokos holding Our Lord on her left next to her heart. This latter prayer is the Royal Prayer, the very inner prayer. The Angel of Silence watches from the middle of the icon. He corresponds to the mystery of the inner prayer said in the profound

silence of the soul, and represents the Savior, Jesus Christ Himself. The Mother of God with her face all red, burning with the inner fire of the Prayer of the Heart, is depicted in the lower left side of the icon.

Moses' face was shining when he came down from the mountain with the Tablets of the Law. He "did not know the skin of his face was glorified while God talked with Him."⁵⁵ The great Russian Saint Seraphim of Sarov was transfigured in light as Motovilov, his disciple, described.⁵⁶ Father George Calciu Dumitreasa narrated how he saw a discrete warm light covering the body of the gentle Father Benedict Ghiuș while they were together in the altar place of St. George's Church at Cernica Monastery; when the Elder came to take communion, his hands were hands of Light.⁵⁷

God is Love. Love is the very life of the divine nature of the Holy Trinity, as Saint Gregory of Nyssa said. "It is the Father who distinguishes the hypostases «in an eternal movement of love», according to an expression of St. Maximus," Lossky wrote.⁵⁸ "Someone eager to define this is blindly striving to measure the sand in the ocean," said St. John Climacus.⁵⁹ "The love caused by God is like a spring that never dries out, whose flow never ceases, and whose content is never exhausted (because the Lord Himself is a spring of love)" - these are the words of St. Isaac the Syrian.⁶⁰

God is the wisdom which has to be discovered because He is the Truth. God is the light which cuts clearly the good from evil because He is just. However, more than everything God is love. "The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy."⁶¹ *By love* we have been created, *by love* we are watched and protected, in His lovingkindness we move and live.⁶² "We have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love."⁶³ "The Father is the Love that crucifies, the Son is the Love that is crucified, the Holy Spirit is the undefeatable power of the cross."⁶⁴ Although God has "many names as there are moments when He reveals Himself to us, He is always the same and yet always different".⁶⁵ If it seems that God does not respond to our prayers, His action is not obvious in our life events, and He keeps a profound silence, it is because a blunt rebuke from His part can violate the human freedom and conscience.⁶⁶

A beautiful poem of Paul Evdokimov refers to this as follows: "His love is more than simple love; the love's kingdom breaks the limits of the universe and enters the Lord's immensity. At His supper that will last eternally, there will be always an empty chair for the rich people and for the beggars. The wine cup is unceasingly full like something that never ends and the bread multiplies like the wheat grains in the golden ears. Crumbs fall from the table and cover the sky like the stars. Even the smallest glitters of this immense Joy cross the firmaments and look like the sun's purple light that chases the darkness."⁶⁷

"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love," Our Lord Jesus Christ told the disciples.⁶⁸ The love that comes from the

Father goes through the Son (and the Holy Spirit) to the people most pleasing to God who are the Saints, and then it flows through them to reach all of us, the ordinary people. Therefore, we are on a straight axis of love. The beacon of the warm light that fills our souls comes a long way from God the Father and its shape and density starts to be defined better and better as it comes closer to us. This is how the divine light, after it passes through Our Lord, the Apostles and the Saints, becomes accessible to our common human senses of mind and heart. The whole sphere of the creation whirls in perfect balance around this huge axis of love.

The love of God is limitless and is for all, like the sun and rain for the just and unjust, for good and evil.⁶⁹ However, His Word has to be received and returned in a spiritual ascent to God. “For as rain comes down, or snow from heaven, and does not return until it saturates the earth, and it brings forth and produces, and gives seed to the sower and bread for food, so shall My word be, whatever proceeds from My mouth,” said the Lord.⁷⁰

The Lord is Justice but He is also Love. In fire, God descended upon Mount Sinai when He prepared the people of Israel for receiving the Tablets of Law. A dark cloud, thunder and lightning, smoke as from a giant furnace, and loud sounds of a trumpet blast announced His coming to speak with Moses in front of the people.⁷¹ This frightening manifestation of Justice was preceded by one of Love – under the fire appearance of a burning bush, never consumed, God talked to Moses on Mount Horeb, showing His intention to deliver His people out of the hand of the Egyptians and to lead them to “a land flowing with milk and honey.”⁷² Lev Gillet noted that Sinai and Horeb are the two different peaks of the same geographic mountain unit and the difference between them has a profound spiritual significance: “for those who remained untouched by the [love] revelation of Horeb, there have to be commandments written on tables of stone [(on Sinai)].”⁷³

God is Love, but if man’s spirit is not burning with the fire of faith, man cannot receive God’s love in his soul. Unreceptive to a revelation as that on Horeb, man has to go through a learning process in order to reach the spiritual maturity that makes his soul ignitable at the Word of God as Moses’ soul was. First, God called the unsteady people to the School of the Ten Commandments, in order to reach the level of fearing God. This would lead to the profound understanding, the strength of virtues, and the cleanness of the soul, needed by man to reach the superior spiritual level of loving God. This is why, at the time of the incarnate Son of God’s coming among us, people heard the ten Commandments of the Law summarized in only two simple rules of love: love for God and love for neighbor.⁷⁴

Love for others

The idea of love for the neighbor is not new - it was mentioned in the Deuteronom and Levitic. What is new is the dimension of love extended up to the sacrifice of life, as Jesus' love was.

Christ said to His disciples before His sacrifice on cross, "As I loved you, that you also love each other... Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."⁷⁵ The love and faith transforms the human soul. "Only God is good by nature; humans can become good by their will, if they imitate God," said St. Maximus.⁷⁶ "If God is love, the man that is a love bearer has God inside himself," noted St. Theodor of Edessa.⁷⁷

Father Stăniloae wrote that the divine love is "God's movement towards creatures, towards union with them. But for there to be movement towards someone, an eternal movement of this kind must exist in God... This means that in God there is a community of persons among whom love is manifested," i.e. a Holy Trinity.⁷⁸ In other place of his book Father Stăniloae wrote that the common human nature is possessed "by many persons through its repetition in each," and therefore the humankind is not fully united in its persons" in contrast with the Holy Trinity whose "nature is not repeated in the divine Persons but is possessed communally in its entirety."⁷⁹ Based on the affirmation of St. Basil the Great that essence is dispersed in men, Father Stăniloae observes that within the humankind "we see the same essence repeated in hypostases, not fully united yet identical in their repetition." This explains the fact that "people communicate only in part" and that there exists a space (or other objects) between them preventing a full communion. This rupture is amplified by the existence of the bodies that hinders a perfect connection "even if souls could communicate more easily", in an intimate and blessed way. This connection, love for each other, is perfected by God who works through our faith.

Those who struggled to walk on the earthly narrow trail toward God will fully share a sacred light in the eternal life, as a gift from God's great attribute which is Light. "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear," Christ said.⁸⁰ In order to be able to receive this powerful light we need to live in virtue and purity; otherwise, the sunbeam of God's love cannot enter the unclean temple of the human body and soul. Light works in unit with love. Only then, both body and soul are blessed with plenitude and splendor. "He who says he is in the light, and hates the brother, is in darkness," wrote St. John the Theologian.⁸¹

Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."⁸² Abba Anthony the Great added, "Our life and our death is with our neighbor. If we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we

scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ.” If we bring a spiritual benefit to our neighbor, we gain Our Lord’s love. If we hurt our neighbor, we hurt Christ.” Other wisdom words from the Holy fathers are: “A dog is better than I am for he has love and he does not judge” (Abba Xanthias) and “Your hands will not be opened to gather together but open to give” (Abba Chomas).⁸³

We all know Jean-Paul Sartre’s words “Hell is other people”. Such an attitude is terrible for a Christian. If we judge and hate the others, we do not follow Our Lord’s advice and urge; we do not work towards our salvation and we will perish. However, this ad litteram interpretation of the French philosopher’s thought is only partially right.

First of all let us see the context of the play “No Exit” (“Huis Clos,” in French), written in 1943. The characters Garcin, Estelle, and Inez entered the hell where, to their surprise, there was no punishment, no torture, no flames, but just an empty room with no exit. Garcin felt something strange, had a revelation and yelled in terror, “All those eyes intent on me. Devouring me. What? Only two of you? I thought there were more; many more. So, this is hell. I’d never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone, the ‘burning marl.’ Old wives’ tales! There’s no need for red-hot pokers. Hell is other people!”⁸⁴

As a commentator noticed, this assumption addresses the problem of solipsism. Sartre does not actually hate the others but he is hurt by the interrelation with the others which destroys his freedom. The human being, according to the philosopher, is composed of the unconscious being (in-itself) and the conscious, the aware being (for-itself). Man cannot work on his in-self but is in continuous construction of for-itself, construction that started from nothingness. Sartre asserted that “man is what is not and is not what it is.” The goal of working with for-itself is to become a being-in-itself, i.e. to become an object of his subjectivity. Sartre is not an egoist. He does not hate the others to take things from them for him. He is an egocentric and is bothered by the others because they interfere with his efforts of self-construction. The others see him and define his being as they think – vulgar, proud, shy or whatever. This definition is, as the commentator noted, like a number at bingo: It cannot be recalled. It is nailed. Therefore, man is deprived of his freedom to work on himself and to define himself as he wants and thinks. The gaze of others nails him in a certain definition and consequently turns him into a subject.

“You shall love your neighbor.” Love is giving yourself to the others. It is a flow which goes from you to them, not from the others to you for your good. Sartre is not covetous and predatory but he stops any flow from any direction because he wants no interference in the process developed by his conscious being. This makes him anxious and hostile in the company of others and makes him to say that “the hell is others.”

Christ taught the disciples that you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Sartre loves only himself. Some Christians, based on the Socratic advice “knowing thyself is the beginning of wisdom”, erroneously think that, in order to follow the urge of Jesus of loving the neighbor, you have to deeply search your ego first and then to approach the neighbor with the knowledge you have acquired. Yes, you have to descend in the depth of your soul because, regardless of its uncleanness, it abides the breath of the Lord, of the Creator. However, we finish by knowing ourselves as a reflection of the love that we give to the others. Sartre hoped that by working hard on his for-self will transform the frozen and untouchable in-self. For a Christian this transformation, which is actually a transfiguration, does not result exclusively from his efforts but it occurs as a gift from the Holy Spirit Who rewards man for the love for God and neighbor.

In our days we witness another aspect regarding the relationship with the neighbor. There is a certain trend to dehumanize the individual and to make him identified with a group.⁸⁵ Mark Levin asserts the possibility that “the allegedly oppressed become the real oppressors despite their limited appeal and smaller numbers.” The individuals risk to lose their “identity and uniqueness” and to be assigned to “a group identity.” The “receptive audience” blames the surroundings and “disparages and diminishes the successful and accomplished.” Mark Levin considers that, unfortunately, the individual might end by being “reinvented and remade, conditioned and programmed” by politicians who encourage mass movements “centered on an intense if not obsessive hatred.” Abba Anthony the Great, who lived in the third century, used to say, “A time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him saying, «You are mad, you are not like us».”⁸⁶

Tragedies in this world

The King James Version of the Holy Scripture translated with harsh words the Lord’s words about His power and goodness: “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and *create evil*. I the Lord do all these things.” The Orthodox Bible uses milder words: Who “creates troublesome things.”⁸⁷ It sounds really frightening. Should the Scripture mean that it is not the fallen angel that brings evil in the world but it is God Himself, known by definition to be only love and justice? Who then corrupts humankind and strikes the Christians with misery, tragedy, and disaster, even if they did not sin? The case of Job, who was a virtuous man and most pleasing to the Lord, could bring forth an argument supporting the idea of such an unjust treatment.

However, we should be cautious when we start to launch ourselves into this kind of reasoning. The good and evil were expressed in Paradise by the tree of knowing Good and Evil, and Paradise was created by the Lord. God is love, by definition. He did not create us to be like an interesting toy that He can put under favorable and unfavorable circumstances to see how it reacts, as some have interpreted Job's story. How could we deny the Lord's love when we know that He sent his Son, one of the Holy Trinity, to the human world to help, to teach, to heal, to suffer with it and for it, and to save it from the fall that resulted from a wrong option taken by the human's free will? Does the Lord enjoy harming us and striking us with evil? No, because He is love. Might He do that as a punishment because He is also justice? No. The so-called "punishment" is not a consequence of a correct and cold judgment of the Lord. As the Holy Fathers said, if the people were to be punished for the wrong things they have done no one could stand. Fortunately, God is a forgiving Master. This is why we are Christians and have hope and faith in Christ, our Savior. The "punishment" is actually an effect of our disrespect of the laws which keep the order of the universe. If a child does not believe his parent's preventive advice and puts his finger into the fire, his finger will burn according to the laws of Physics.

There is another hard question that tortures sometimes our mind's logic. Can God, Who created everything, decide to let the evil be manifest in our life? Does He, Who knows perfectly our future, our "destiny," plan a definitive fall for us? Did the Lord establish Judas' destiny to sell the Savior, already at Judas' very birth? Did Judas not have any chance to defend himself against his "destiny" and change the end of his life? The Orthodox Church teaches us that God does not predestine people to do evil and consequently to go to hell. Man has his freedom of decision and how he acts in his life is the result of his own decision. However, the Lord can foresee what decision man will make.⁸⁸

Let us not forget that Judas had several warnings and chances to avoid his sin of betrayal. Judas had a chance to be saved even after he had fallen into such a terrible sin. Let us think of the repenting thief dying on the cross who was forgiven, as we read in the Gospel.⁸⁹ Peter truly repented for his denial and he was absolved, while Judas hanged himself. Maybe it would be interesting here to share a story about Judas. Is the Lord truly good to some, and malicious to others? Does he pre-establish who will be saved and who will be condemned? Does He consider evil as an intrinsic part of our imperfect being? The Orthodox philosopher Nicholas Berdiaeff debated this subject which seems to be tragic and without a clear conclusion. Therefore, some critics classified the author as an existentialist and his work as belonging to the tragic Absurd. He considered that "tragedy is always linked to freedom"⁹⁰ and "if the antique tragedy was a tragedy of destiny, the Christians' tragedy is one of liberty."⁹¹ Freedom, Berdiaeff thought,

preceded the whole creation and preceded being. It is being that resulted from freedom, and not vice-versa. God created man and enabled him with a free will. God does not experiment with man in order to verify His anticipative calculation, as the atheists affirm. It is the manner in which man uses freedom for bringing significance to the notions of good and evil that counts and that could generate life's tragedy, the tragedy of "destiny." The notions of good and evil are actually simple antinomian categories and do not mean fortification or destruction.

Surprisingly, Berdiaeff considered that "the greatest human tragedy is connected with the suffering caused by good" and not by evil. He meant that the conscience of the good that we do not accomplish causes deep remorse which tears our heart. The suffering in hell is in essence the soul's refusal to accept the love and peace offered by God, and the preference for its own ego which ends by devouring itself. I think a significant example of rebellion against a correct knowledge of good and evil, as the Lord's commandments defined these two categories, is the relativism promoted nowadays by the post-modern man who uses his individual freedom in a selfish manner. He says that what is good for him is what suits his goals and aspirations. If this kind of good hurts others it is not his fault but theirs because they do not understand and do not love him. According to the post-modern man, every individual has the right to have his own definition of good, different from the others.

Abominable things happen in our world and they fill our soul with terror. People are killed in terrible accidents, in earthquakes, tornadoes, and hurricanes, in explosions and fire. Our mind finds some reasons: probably all these atrocities are caused by the fact that we all have sinned and therefore we are punished. Some, without any guilt, are arrested, tortured, persecuted, and executed. Others are murdered by mad people. However, he who harms others brings unhappiness to himself. "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come," Our Lord Jesus said.⁹²

Several tragedies are due to a natural cause: they are part of the order of the universe's life and their effect can be partially diminished by man but cannot be avoided. So are the earthquakes, the volcanic eruptions, the flooding, the hurricanes, the tsunamis. As the British physicist and priest John Polkinghorne commented, science knows that Mother Nature comes to us with good and evil in the same package.⁹³ Let us talk for instance about earthquakes. If God had covered our planet with a solid, continuous, and deep crust, it would not have been good for us. The tectonic plates, which move to adjust to each other over the spaces between them and produce damaging earthquakes, allow the mineral resources to move up to the surface of earth through those free spaces. Without a refreshment of the mineral resources, life on the surface of our planet would not be able to continue.

On the other hand, many mass tragedies are the result of man's striving for better comfort; so are the crash of planes, the derailment of trains, the sinking of ships, the collapse of dams, the crumbling of mine galleries. Tragedies are the result of man's interference with nature's flow; so are the epidemics, radioactivity and pollution of the air, water, and soil. They might be caused as well by man's selfish passions and lack of love for others; as are the wars, political persecutions and prisons and the undermining of the economy of other states.

Other mass tragedies are due to the Divine Will. They can be the effect of the rules of a well-adjusted functioning of the universe, as we could see in the examples above. In this case, the Lord decides to finish the people's lives in an abrupt manner in order to protect them from a long intense suffering. Tragedies also can be the effect of the evil produced in the world by human free will. In this latter case, the Lord decides to stop the spread and aggravation of the moral corruption caused by man in order to save the world. Consequently, He ends the life of those people who are so deep in sin that there is no more hope of their correction, while He warns and reproves those whom He keeps alive, giving them a chance to correct. The Church thinks that the reason why Our Lord Jesus decided to bring the widow's son back to life was not only the compassion for her grief and despair but also the will to give the young man another chance to properly live his life.⁹⁴

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Saint Apostle Paul wrote.⁹⁵ "The fear of the Lord hates unrighteousness, and both rudeness and arrogance, and the ways of wicked men; and I hate the perverted ways of evil men".⁹⁶ At the same time, fear is a good teacher and eases comprehension.

Respect of the laws saves us from harm. This wisdom is called fear of God, which does not mean anxiety and terror but just paying attention to the requirements of a harmonious functioning of the Creation of God. Therefore, keeping order and avoiding corruption is the attribute of people with a wise mind. "All wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and in all wisdom there is the doing of the Law."⁹⁷ Man learns by aging in the school of life. "The crown of old men is great experience, for their boast is the fear of the Lord."⁹⁸ This advice hides a promise that should guide us for everything we do. "Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Take care and so do it, for there is no wrongdoing with the Lord our God, neither partiality nor taking of bribes."⁹⁹ We should proceed as Jehoshaphat commanded the people of Israel, "Thus you shall act in the fear of the Lord faithfully and with a mature heart."¹⁰⁰ Saint Apostle Paul was absolutely right when he wrote to the Corinthians, "Having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."¹⁰¹

What is entirely amazing in all these mass tragedies is the fact that several people escape untouched by the disaster. So are the few houses that are protected by air drafts and humidity and remain unburnt in the midst of a broad zone destroyed by fire, or the little child, a few months old, found alive under a two-yard thick pile of debris carried by the wrath of the tsunami in Japan. This proves that God's love works. Unfortunately, we notice the Lord's love only under extreme circumstances. We ignore His love when we are busy with our daily life as we ignore the benefits of health as long as we are healthy.

We might ask: why do the innocent people, as the children are, suffer and die? Our Lord told the disciples, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."¹⁰² Little girls are kidnapped, raped and murdered; some children die of cancer after long periods of unimaginable pain, others die of heart anomalies; some children suffer from asthma, diabetes, or epilepsy from a very early age; others are handicapped and carry this yoke their whole life, etc. It is a fact hardly acceptable by our heart and mind. "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" the disciples asked Our Lord Jesus.¹⁰³

This is exactly the burning question asked by the priest Paneloux, a character in the book *The Plague (La Peste)* written by Albert Camus. Surrounded by dying people, he concluded that there is evil doing in the world, which functions reasonably as a necessary punishment for sinning grown-ups. But why are the innocent children punished? Facing the reality of this overwhelming tragedy, what should we think? Should we deny God's love? Should we say like Paneloux, "We must believe everything or deny everything, and who would dare to deny everything?" We risk losing our faith in tragic times, and without faith we cannot go further and struggle for our life. This is our challenge. In my translation from French his words sound as following: "A child's suffering is humiliating for the heart and the mind. But just because of that we have to go through it... The children's suffering is our bitter bread, but without this bread our soul would perish by spiritual hunger... The love for the Lord is a hard love... However, only this love can reconcile the children's suffering and death, only this love can make them necessary; otherwise, it is impossible to understand them and the unique thing that we are able to do is not to want them."¹⁰⁴

The problems raised by such a calamity remain valuable for our days as well. F.X.R. Salcedo wrote an essay based on a parallel between the extreme conditions created by the plague described by Camus and those created by the present pandemics of Covid-19. Listing all the aspects like exile and imprisonment, suffering and death, defiance and heroism, he commented "the traditional tension between preserving oneself from the consequences of an environmental crisis and reaching out to others despite the risks it entails."¹⁰⁵

In his writings about the school of prayer, Metropolitan Anthony Bloom wrote that sometimes we feel that Christ does not care that we are in trouble, despite the fact that a single word would be enough to help us, as it happened to the centurion, whose servant was healed just with a word from Christ.¹⁰⁶ With just one word we could be healed and saved. How was it when the disciples were disappointed that Our Lord Jesus was sleeping and did not care that they might perish in a terrible storm? He stood up and ordered the wind to calm down and then He scolded them for being unfaithful.¹⁰⁷ Metropolitan Anthony explains the unanswered prayers with St. John Climacus' words: "Do not be distressed if you do not receive at once what you ask for – God wants to do more good through your perseverance in prayer."¹⁰⁸

The reality is that we understand too little of God's will and how it works. Paul Lungin, the director of the Russian movie *The Island (Ostrov)*, made in 2006, emphasized the fact that none of the needy people coming with a request to the holy man, the main hero of the story, received the expected response despite the fact that something miraculous happened. God has His own ways to solve our problems; we do not know what actually is best for us.

When Elijah was running for his life far from Queen Jezebel's wrath, he was frightened and he forgot that God had given him so much power that he was able to bring fire, drought, or rain. The Lord could punish Jezebel striking her directly, but He chose to tell Elijah to go and anoint Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha, because their sword was going to punish her and the people of Israel.¹⁰⁹ Our problem is that our faith and devotion to God is too weak. We have to live by God's ways and not ours, and it will be for our good.

Conclusion

Today the sin is between man and God. That began when Adam disobeyed in Paradise and it continues every day with our own sins. Because of the sin, man cannot look at God without being hurt. Origen noticed that we, the Christians, confirm the truth in Plato's statement that it is difficult to see the Creator and the Father of the universe.

However, God can be seen because we read in the Gospel, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."¹¹⁰ In addition to these, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the image of the invisible God, said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."¹¹¹

God the Father remains inaccessible to us in regards to His being, but our heart can feel Him by His uncreated energies that descend to us. We can intuit His wonderful greatness by contemplating the order and the harmony of His creation. Therefore if, for a fraction of time, we have eyes and ears,

we can discover God's presence within each of us. This is the discovery of the sacred time of our life. The emotion of this discovery will be almost as strong as that felt by the two travelers to Emmaus, after they saw the Savior blessing and breaking the bread. "Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight."¹¹² Just as they lost Christ's presence after that revelation, we quickly lose that deep insight into our neighbor's and our soul, and are burdened again by the weaknesses of our sinning human nature and by the nothingness of the daily chores.

Let us make the effort to discover the sacred time of our life behind the quotidian events of our earthly existence and let us try to adjust and live it fully, with the richness of every minute, not forgetting that the supreme goal of our spiritual existence is deification. Let release a little bit the gates of the dam we have built in our minds and hearts and allow a drop of eternity to enter the flow of our historicity. Our reward will be a better understanding of things and an unshakeable peace accompanied by hope.

"In wisdom God designed the ages of this world – some were for the time needed for God to descend into the humankind, others will be for man to ascend to God," St. Maximus the Confessor wrote, having in mind St. Paul's epistolary words that "the ends of the ages have come". That means the first goal was accomplished by the incarnation of Son of God and the work of Jesus Christ, the preparatory and the action time ended. From now on the coming ages are destined to the second goal, the silent work of God in ourselves for deification of the human soul.¹¹³

"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."¹¹⁴ God blesses those who are living these three and covers them with His spiritual Light.

NOTES:

¹ Barbara Hollingsworth, "String Theory Co-Founder: Sub-Atomic Particles Are Evidence the Universe Was Created," <http://cnsnews.com/news>, June 17, 2016.

² Robert Perkins, "String field theory could be the foundation of quantum mechanics," <https://news.usc.edu/70443/have-scientists-cracked-the-mystery-behind-quantum-mechanics/>, November 3, 2014.

³ Tony Hewish, Foreword to the book John Polkinghorne and Nicholas Beale, *Questions of Truth*, Westminster John Knox Press, Kentucky, 2009, p. XII.

⁴ *The Orthodox Study Bible* (SAAS™ and NKJV®), St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, Elk Grove, California, 2008, John 15:5.

⁵ Andrew Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman, *Born to Believe: God, Science, and the Origin of Ordinary and Extraordinary Beliefs*, Free Press, New York, 2006, quoted in Horia Ion Groza, *Living the Sacred Time of Our Life*, Reflection Books, Citrus Heights, California, 2008, pp. 18-19.

⁶ Matthew 13:58.

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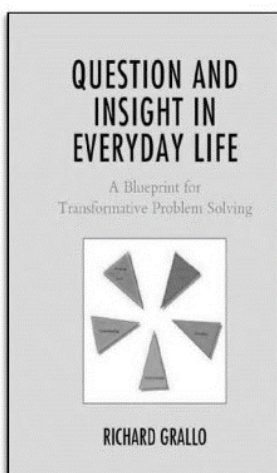
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QUESTION AND INSIGHT IN EVERYDAY LIFE
A BLUEPRINT FOR TRANSFORMATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

By Richard Gallo



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- Chapter 1: Problem Solving in Overview
- Chapter 2: Pattern 1: Seeking Understanding by Considering Possibilities
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In *Question and Insight in Everyday Life: A Blueprint for Transformative Problem Solving*, Richard Gallo examines the nature and patterns of human problem solving. Gallo identifies four patterns of problem solving that together result in complex human learning and growth. The four patterns constitute a cycle that is transformative not only of problematic situations but of the problem solvers themselves. This book also explores the roles of questions, insights, the desire to know, and social trust in problem solving. Its conclusions apply equally to the problems of everyday life as well as to challenges that arise in educational, counseling, political, engineering, and science fields.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Gallo is emeritus professor of human services at Metropolitan College of New York.

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Dintr-un Lemn Monastery – A Unique Monastic Complex in Romania

Abstract: This article contains information regarding Dintr-un Lemn Monastery, which has a special status among Romanian Orthodox monastic settlements. It is a unique place of prayer dedicated to the Romanian Navy, Aviation and “Michael the Brave” 30th Guard Brigade. The study also highlights the essential role that General Paul Teodorescu (1888-1981) had in the transformation of the monastery in a Holy place for prayer for the military in the three branches mentioned before.¹

Keywords: Dintr-un Lemn monastery, aviation, navy, Paul Teodorescu, Romanian Orthodox Church

25 km from Râmnicu Vâlcea, the capital of Vâlcea County, and 6 km from the town of Băbeni, on a marvellous plain, at the border of the village of Mănăstireni, at present Dezrobiți, belonging to the village of Frâncești, bounded by the Otășău brook, flowing on the left into the Bistrița river, flowing in its turn in the Olt, one of the great rivers of Romania and also bounded by the hillside with oaks and fruit trees, pilgrims are revealed the majestic Dintr-un Lemn Monastery. Here, since the sixteenth century, the land has been creatively valued and the churches and the ensemble of adjoining buildings have risen on successive terraces in a vision that has tended towards monumentality.

The pilgrims who walk through the three gates of the monastery have the chance, by climbing the steps leading to the stone church and the wooden one, both guarded by the secular oaks, to know its history and to connect to the Orthodox spirituality of the holy sanctuary. A secular past tied the legend to the historical truth, synthesized as best as possible in the unique name of the monastic complex – Dintr-un Lemn Monastery (the Monastery from One Wood).

<p>Valentin Ciorbea, PhD, Professor of History, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Romanian Scientists, Romania Nicoleta Stanca, PhD, Associate Professor, Ovidius University, Constanța, Romania</p>

Three pieces of evidence of historical ascendancy, visible today as well, are strong arguments to support the legend of the foundation of monastic life in this place: *the secular oaks, the wooden church, and the Icon of Virgin Mary with Child, the Wonderworker*. These are the landmarks that were later added to the stone church, which placed the history of Dintr-un Lemn Monastery in a secular evolution about which pilgrims and visitors find out from the nuns whose duty is to act as guides.

*

Impressed by the narrations of the evolution and temptations which the Mother Abbess Paisia Vasilescu and the monastic community had to face, the pilgrims ask the guide a recurrent question: Were the prayers of the mothers at the Icon of the Mother of God not been heard? “Although there have been difficult years, with many trials, with many worries, in the community the faith in the power and help of the icon to which they pray daily did not diminish. The prayers are fulfilled,” says the guide.

The aid was to come from General Paul Teodorescu (1888-1981), from 1938, the head of the Ministry of Air and Marine. General Paul Teodorescu was about to tell the context in which he came to Dintr-un Lemn Monastery to his doctor, I. Ciucă. The doctor was brought on pilgrimage at the Holy place from the summer of 1932 when he was 11 years old. The general knew him in 1938 when great works were being done at the monastery. In the biographical notes left to the monastery, Dr. I. Ciucă writes that General Paul Teodorescu told him: “One day I was invited by Queen Mary at the Palace. To his surprise, she did not discuss any professional issue, she only asked for his opinion on a series of historical monuments. At the end of the meeting, seeming to have remembered something, she asked him if he knew the Oltenian monasteries. He confessed that he did not know all of them, and the Queen continued:

‘There is a monastery in Vâlcea County, which is called Dintr-un Lemn, with a beautiful legend, studied and published by Odobescu in his short story, *Mrs. Chiajna*.’

Intimidated, he replied that he did not know the monastery and did not even hear of it. Instead he knows Odobescu’s short story, *Mrs. Chiajna*. The Queen told him that in one of her trips to several monasteries in Oltenia she accidentally came across this monastery, which is actually isolated.

‘General, when you go through Oltenia, visit this monastery. I’d love you to tell me your impressions at a new meeting. As I know you a man of faith, seek to speak with the abbess of the monastery. She is a nun who has a great charm and a mystery and great intelligence. What destiny may have hidden it in this corner of the forest?’

I remember that the general continued his confession.

I left the queen puzzled, not understanding why she was sending me to this monastery I had not heard of, where the queen had met a nun who had impressed her. I was having a difficult month at the time. Leaving the palace, I told myself that in the meanwhile I would ask my collaborators for complete information about the monastery and, if possible, from the Cults, all that was known about this abbess. After about ten days I had on my desk information about the Monastery from the Historical Monuments Commission and from the Patriarchy a note sent by the Ministry of Religious Affairs regarding the abbess Paisia Vasilescu (...) I decided to interrupt my program and I went there the next day with my aide. When I arrived in the courtyard of the monastery, I was impressed by the main building, the Brancovan Palace, which had numerous large cracks from the top to the foundations and was held at its inclination to the princely church by about ten big and strong pillars.”²

In the *Chronicles of Dintr-un Lemn Monastery since its Reparations in the Year of its Salvation 1939*, inscribed in the *Golden Book of the Monastery*, made by the artist Cecilia Lita Botez, the buildings were recorded as such. The head buildings: “had a fallen roof and such big cracks in the walls that a human foot could walk in. Everyone in the room looked horrified when they saw the hall vaults collapsed and propped-up with wooden poles, some of the walls down to the floor, the ceilings fallen and you could see the sky.”³

About the state in which he found the monastery in 1938 General Paul Teodorescu brought testimonies in a document he addressed on February 8, 1977, to the Archdiocese of Râmnic and Severin: “We found this settlement, a historical monument, in a pitiful ruin, starting with to the stables to the Lord’s House, with destroyed roofs housing only hundreds of crows. Deeply impressed by the depressing image that surrounded the palace and at the hot prayer of the nuns to help them not to allow the historic place to perish, we establish the following: the restoration, the exterior and interior reconstructions, as well as a three-room arrangement and a proper hall for the monastery’s museum. The building from foundation of three multi-room buildings and three bathrooms for travelers, using in particular the volunteer work of soldiers and officers in the Aeronautics and Marine, of which almost half were craftsmen.”⁴

The very difficult situation of the monastery is also described by the architect Anastasescu, the head of Oltenia Regional Office of the Historical Monuments Commission, on October 17, 1938, in an address to the president of the respective institution: “The incomes are a small part, in this monastery, of the enormous expenses they have to bear, for the following reasons.” Out of the 46 nuns “who have to be fed,” only 18 receive wages, most of the population was aged, many nuns were powerless for various duties. The architect concludes that at Dintr-un Lemn Monastery “there was a higher

consumer than the productive element.” The expert concluded that “the monastery is unable to come with financial help to restore the premises, but only with their work and arms.”⁵

The project of General Paul Teodorescu at Dintr-un Lemn Monastery first started with the overall assessment of the monastic complex, the setting of the objectives for renewal and modernization, the improvement of the living conditions of the community and the settlement of the Holy place on a special place with a unique role which opened a new page in the chronicle of the Romanian Army’s collaboration with the Romanian Orthodox Church. In the *Memoirs* he left to posterity he stresses that he was always “deeply grateful to the Church for its important role in the development of the Country,” a fact that prompted him to propose to support the institution “up to the end of his life.”⁶

After obtaining the necessary approvals from the authorities for the performance of the works, General Paul Teodorescu brought to Dintr-un Lemn Monastery masons, carpenters, painters, stonemasons and workers from Aviation and Marine, but also from “Michael the Brave” Guard Regiment, as he states and in the *Memoirs*.⁷ Some of the soldiers were accommodated in the monastery, others with the more well-off families from the village of Frâncești, with the care of the mayor Alexandru Măciuceanu, of the school head and the church priest in the locality. We find out from a report on the activity of the Holy Monastery signed by Paisia Vasilescu that in the years 1935-1948 from the Forests of Sevestreni wood was sold in the years 1938-1939 worth 267440 lei. Of the sum, expenses were incurred “with the food for the military and civilian workers on the occasion of the restoration that took place at this Holy Monastery in the years 1938-1940.” The 100 military and civilian soldiers needed additional food, the ration of the unit was insufficient, so that “the monastery improved its food with polenta, cooked food from vegetables, meat, occasionally milk.”⁸

The expenses made from the proceeds of the sale of the wood were not discharged by Office of the Monasteries on the grounds that they had incurred unforeseen costs. Ultimately, the financial situation cleared up. Various works in the monastery attracted villagers and students. The children, for example, gathered under the supervision of their teachers, stones from the Otăsău River used to pave the monastery’s courtyard.

The funds for the materials and the payment of some works came from the Ministry of Air and Marine. Paul Teodorescu allocated 134,000 lei out of his strong sense of devotion “for the places of worship where the flame of our saving faith burns forever,”⁹ from donations made by different people and businesses. General Paul Teodorescu himself donated money from his salary. “Solvig” company, which produced military supplies, gave 20,000 lei. Another 20,000 lei was received from C. Tășulescu, who made accessories for the army. 20,000 lei was received from “Vulcan” Workshops,

and I. Stănescu company, which produced military uniforms, subscribed with 5,000 lei. "Scherg" paid for works and invoices worth 88,746 lei. Retired Air Force Commander A. Petrovici made available to General Paul Teodorescu a wagon with various materials: concrete, sashes and skylights, a cooler, 3,000 bricks, electrical materials and tools. 37 toolkits were received from Leo Mihailovici.

In a note made on July 12, 1977 in the *Pilgrims' Book of Impressions*, Admiral Horia Macellariu, states that in 1940, as Secretary General of the Ministry of Air and Navy, God "made me willing to allocate and approve funds for repairs and maintenance."¹⁰

From the correspondence carried by Mother Paisia Vasilescu with the Command and Materials Department of the Ministry of Air and Marine, it is revealed that in 1938 there were works worth 255,861 lei, in 1939 - 605,531 lei and in 1940 - 42,060 lei.¹¹

The works began on August 18, 1938. All the monastery's compartments were restored. At the Brancovan Palace there were connections with iron bars, all the cracks were filled, and the chimneys of the new terracotta stoves were taken out of the roof, plasters were made, the refectory was enlarged, the sashes were changed, a drain bathroom was installed, the electricity produced by a special plant was introduced and the floors and beams were replaced. The shingle and the roofing were restored. The main works were received on April 20, 1939 by I.L. Anastasescu, costing 60.667 lei.

At the bell tower, cells and stables, the roofs were restored. In the nuns' bedroom area there was a bathroom and a washer with running water and drainage. The cells were repaired through masonry and carpentry, the windows and doors were changed. Window shutters were set. Works were also done at the cell in front of the stone church. The storehouse was raised. The stable was repaired from the ground. There were stone floors over which planks with drainage through the tubes were mounted. The kitchen was enlarged and fitted with two plaster and terracotta hobs, with drainage space. A four-room house with a hall room in the middle of it, stood at the entrance in the first yard on the right of the gate. The closure wall was made, linking it to the old one, and gates were mounted. The wells were repaired. The outer yard was enclosed with fences and wire, including the cemetery. The alley from the entrance to the monastery was cobbled and separated with tiles. At the entrance to the monastic complex was mounted an oak door, and on the alley that starts from here and up to the first enclosure crying willows were planted, at the idea of General Paul Teodorescu, and in the first yard a conifer that could be molded by trimming.

A phone was installed. Pavements were made around all the buildings. There were two large stairs, one at the bell tower and the other at the Brancovan Palace. Locks were built so that the water of the Otăsău would

no longer flood the garden, the yard and the cellars. In the large church there was a new tile stove, and in the wooden church the brick floor was replaced.

General Paul Teodorescu made donations of household items: table and chairs, sofas for all living quarters in the Brancovan Palace, a cupboard for the dishes, a smaller chest of drawers and two tables for the refectory, a telephone, two boxes with medicines.

Before the end of the rebuilding that took place in November 1939, General Paul Teodorescu initiated the spiritual bonding of the monastery with two categories of armed forces, the Navy and Aviation. On 24 October 1939, in his capacity as Minister of Air and Navy, General Paul Teodorescu addressed the President of the Historical Monuments Commission in a letter in which he expressed his wish and arguments that Dintr-un Lemn Monastery became a prayer place for pilots and sailors: "The Ministry of Air and Navy from a sense of devotion to the places where the flame of our saving faith always burns repaired the princely establishment, with the churches, the cells and all the settlements of Dintr-un Lemn Monastery in Vâlcea County.

In the desire to continue in the future to take care of the maintenance of this monastery and the desire to have a place of prayer for aviators and sailors whose life is so dangerous, I would be pleased to ask you, Mr President, to suggest the idea that Dintr-un Lemn Monastery was declared the Monastery of the Aviators and Sailors.

If I took the liberty of making this proposal is to have the legal opportunity to enter in the budget of the Ministry of Air and Navy an annual sum to serve to preserve this beautiful historical monument."¹²

Through the Secretary of the Air and Navy, Rear Admiral Al. Gheorghiu, the leadership of the Holy Monastery was notified at the beginning of December 1939 that "following the intervention of the Minister of Air and Marine, General adjutant Paul Teodorescu, along with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Committee of Historical Monuments, it was approved that Dintr-un Lemn Monastery was the aviators and sailors' monastery (...), we kindly ask that religious services at the monastery also include prayers for aviators and sailors."¹³

On December 11, 1939 Mother Paisia Vasilescu noted in an address: "We have taken note and with great care the names of our sailors and aviators will be mentioned at the Holy Mass."¹⁴

Following the approval of the Commission for Historical Monuments, the Metropolitan Church of Oltenia, Banat and Severin submitted an official statement signed by Archbishop Lieutenant Irineu:

"Dear devout Mother,

Since this Holy Monastery was restored by the Ministry of Air and Navy, it is made known to you that we have agreed to say prayers here for

the rest of the souls of the heroes, of the aviators and sailors, as well for guarding the ones alive.

With Holy blessings!”

In this context, Nifon Criveanu, the Metropolitan of Oltenia “offered the monastery as a resting place for the sick and convalescents of the two military arms”¹⁵ and until he retired in 1945, he held yearly religious services naming the sailors and aviators.

On December 21, 1939, the Ministry of Air and Navy sent the monastery “The list of the dead aviators and sailors for prayer for the rest of their souls.”¹⁶

In the *Chronicles of Dintr-un Lemn Monastery since its Restoration in the Year of its Salvation 1939*, the *Golden Book*, are included all those who had given money and other donations and contributed to the monument’s saving by works of restoration and erection of new buildings in one word RENEWAL, which defined the project made in the years 1938-1939 at Dintr-un Lemn Monastery. The craftsmen, the community of mothers headed by Paisia Vasilescu, the four priests and a deacon, as well as two grooms, a cowherd and a caretaker and children were written down.

In order to inform the pilgrims and visitors about the special mission assumed by the monastery, with the consent of Mother Abbess Paisia Vasilescu and of the Archdiocese of Râmnic, General Paul Teodorescu completed the project. Visitors who will look carefully at the space above the gate at the entrance will admire a composition made by Cecilia Lita Botez, a painter, sent by General Paul Teodorescu about which, on completion of the painting, the abbess informed on October 7, 1940 the Historical Monuments Commission: “At the gate of the entrance in the courtyard outside the monastery were painted two icons by Mrs. Captain Botez. One represents the Mother of God with a boat in her hand, depicting the Patron of the Navy, and another - Saint Prophet Elijah - the Patron of Aviation, with the inscription ‘For those that go to the sea and in the air, we pray to God’.”¹⁷

He ordered the creation and laying on the belfry wall of two symbols specific to the Navy and the Aviation, an anchor and an eagle with the wings spread holding a globe and two plates in its claw with the following content:

“Dintr-un lemn Monastery / prayer place / for aviators and sailors // with God’s help / and human endeavor / this construction was restored / with its cells / and all the other buildings / by the Ministry of Air / and Sea in 1938-1939 / not to leave the holy place / in the hands of ruin / but keep it for the glory of God.”

General Paul Teodorescu had two cardboard boxes placed on shelves in the bell tower with the names of the aviators and sailors fallen on duty, and also of those alive. Those who were written on the panels were also in the prayer list.

In the monastery's chronology an event meant to highlight for pilgrims, more visibly, the role of the Holy place related to Prayers and Remembrance of sailors and aviators, occurred in 1974, due to General Paul Teodorescu. After the detention period, the honorable founder resumed his ties with the monastery, the Râmnic Diocese and the Patriarchate. With the support of the two institutions, he assured his existence by making paper bags. He came to the monastery bringing small gifts and money to the nuns and villagers, participating in various works in the monastery, especially after re-gaining his pension on January 1, 1967.

As the cardboard pictures with the Navy and Aviation personalities and heroes had deteriorated, he was concerned with their recovery. On the occasion of a visit made to the monastery together with the scientist Henri Coandă (1886-1972) and Radu Irimescu, a former state aviation officer and subsequently Minister of the Air and Navy in Octavian Goga's government (28 December 1937 - 9 February 1938), the three found, as the general tells us, "happy the idea of remembering the heroes and those who contributed, in various forms, to the progress of their arms, while at the same time considering their inscription, in this case, by restoring the old tables, which were resistant, not on cardboard as they appeared originally."¹⁸

The marble plates were made from the money sent by Radu Irimescu from the US and the income of General Paul Teodorescu. The names inscribed were established following consultations with Aviation and Navy personalities, former collaborators, war veterans of war. Thus, the sailors' plate was made and inscribed by Admiral Horia Macellariu. Towards the end of 1974 the plates were mounted. General Paul Teodorescu addressed the authorities to approve the holding of a ceremony at Dintr-un Lemn Monastery on the occasion of the discovery of the plates. Finally, the Head of the Historic Monuments replied by an address that the unveiling of the plates "did not involve a special ceremony," a position whereby the institution did not want pilgrimage activities.¹⁹

On the plate of Aviation heroes and personalities, in the upper register, the following inscription was written: "The sacrifice of the brave people of Romanian Aviation: inventors, engineers, technicians, pilots, civilians and soldiers, from soldier to general and minister, from 1906 to 1940, the year of restoration of this princely monastery by the Ministry of Air and Navy, with the pious thought of honoring their names here, at the foundation of the great Christian ruler Matei Basarab, for the feast of St. Elijah, the aviators' protector." The aviators' plate lists the personalities on a chronological basis, in four sections.

Section one: *National and World Pioneers 1906-1911* comprises 24 personalities among whom the pilgrims notice well-known names, such as Traian Vuia, Aurel Vlaicu, Henri Coandă, Gogu Constantinescu and others.

Section two: *Creators of Military Aviation 1911-1916* lists 24 military aviators among which the name of Elena Caragiani is to be remarked.

Section three: *Aviators from the War of the Great Union 1916-1919* inscribe 40 names including Horia Hulubei and Radu Irimescu.

Section four: *The 1919-1940 Modern Aviation Creators* includes 68 names, including Elie Carafali, the aviators Smaranda Brăescu, Irina Burnaia, Ioana Cantacuzino, Valeria Ionescu, Maria Drăgescu, Marina Știrbei, the great aviators Gheorghe Bancilescu, Băzu Cantacuzino, Max Mandescu and General Paul Teodorescu. A total of 156 names representative for Aviation were registered on plate.

The sailors' plate states in the top register: "For those following the example of the Moldavian mountaineers and horsemen, for those toughened in the sea school and who contributed, through their courage, sacrifice and knowledge to the reputation and rise of the Romanian Navy. These inscriptions of eternal evocation were placed for the memory of those from the beginning of the navy until 1940, the restoration year by the Ministry of Air and Navy of this princely monastery, the secular foundation of the great Christian ruler Matei Basarab, mentioned on the day of Holy Mary, the protector of those who float on the water." The enumeration of the names was made on the same chronological criterion, in three sections:

Section I: *The Founders of the Navy Fighters for its Independence 1859-1877*. There are 24 Navy officers listed starting with Anton Barbieri and ending with Vasile Urseanu. Section II encompasses *Mariners from 1878-1913, 1913 Company, the Great Union War, 1916-1919*, with 60 names. Section III: *Contemporary Sailors 1919-1940* include 72 names. In total, the sailors' plate has 156 names. Summing up the two plates, the Memorial of Dintr-un Lemn Monastery comprises 312 Aviation and Marine reference names from the established chronological range.

In the Memoir of February 8, 1977 addressed to the Diocese of Râmnic and Argeș, General Paul Teodorescu rightly underlined that "the maintenance of the plates in question is a symbol and a wonderful means of education and an incentive for future generations." At the same time, he expressed his wish to His Eminence Bishop Gafton that the monastery was "dedicated as a praying, PLACE for the remembering, and meditation for aviators and sailors, with all that has been done so far and with everything aviators and sailors of good faith want to achieve further, in order to maintain the tradition and strengthen the ties, both with the Great Princely Creation and with the ancestral soil"²⁰ (Sic).

2019 is the year when Dintr-un Lemn Monastery celebrated 80 years since the monastic community had been praying for the Aviation and Navy, and the soldiers and reservists of the two arms have been present in the Holy place for worship and support.

“General Paul Teodorescu” Research Center for the Cooperation of the Orthodox Church with the Romanian Army prepared in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Râmnic, the Academy of Scientists in Romania and in partnership with the Romanian National Military Archives, with the permanent care of the His Eminence Varsanufie, a program of activities carried out during June 2019.

At the request of the monastery’s abbess, Emanuela Oprea, the Air Forces Staff and the Naval Forces Staff renovated the monuments they had placed in the garden of the monastery.

On Friday, June 28, 2019, the National Symposium “The Church and the Army – Traditions of Cooperation”, 8th edition, took place in the Joseph Bishop Hall of the “House of Saint Hierarch Calinic”.

In the word of blessing titled *“‘General Paul Teodorescu’ Research Center of the Cooperation of the Orthodox Church with the Romanian Army - Missionary Landmark in Today’s World”*²¹ addressed to the participants in the scientific manifestation, the His Eminence Varsanufie pointed out that in the present context “the cooperation of the Orthodox Church with the Romanian Army is not only a desideratum but a stringent necessity, a duty to be fulfilled by the two institutions, and the 80th anniversary of the consecration of Dintr-un Lemn Monastery as a place of prayer and worship for aviators and mariners, reinforces the belief that in the light of tradition, the activity of the Romanian Armed Forces is being carried out to defend the life and dignity of the people, but also to promote faith and defend the ancestral Church.”²²

Researchers representing the Orthodox Church, the academic and university environment, the National Archives of Romania, the Romanian National Military Archives, “Queen Maria” National Heritage Association, museums, the pre-university education in Bucharest, Constanța, Cluj, Iași, Pitești, Galați, Râmnicu Vâlcea, Buzău, Sibiu and Mediaș presented papers. The program of the first day ended with the presentation of the journal *Mission*, issue VI / 2019 (306 p.). Being dedicated to the 80th anniversary of Dintr-un Lemn Monastery as a prayer place for aviators and mariners, the *Mission* periodical summarizes the messages of the Chiefs of the Air Forces and the Naval Forces, General-Major Dr. Viorel Pană and Vice-Admiral Dr. Alexandru Mârșu.

On Saturday, June 29, 2019, at Dintr-un Lemn Monastery in the presence of the representatives of the General Staff of the Defense, the

Chiefs of the Air Forces and the Naval Forces, of “Michael the Brave” 30th Guard Brigade, of the monastic community, of the participants in the National Symposium, “The Church and the Army - Traditions of Cooperation”, 8th edition, of numerous pilgrims and media representatives, the commemorative plaque set up was unveiled. The ceremony began with the opening by His Eminence Varsanufie and continued with the speeches of Prof. Dr. Valentin Ciorbea and Vice-Admiral Dr. Alexandru Mârșu, who emphasized the importance of the historical moment. The His Eminence Varsanufie and the group of priests held, after the unveiling of the plaque, the sanctification service.

“This commemorative plaque has been set up on the occasion of the feast of Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, in the year of our salvation 2019, by the care of his Eminence Varsanufie, Archbishop of Râmnic, Mr. Corneliu Postu, Brigade General, Director of Major Defense Staff, of Mr. Viorel Pană, Air Fleet General, Chief of Staff of The Air Forces, of Dr. Alexandru Mârșu, Chief of Staff of The Naval Forces, Bogdan Cernat, Brigade General, Commander of “Michael the Brave” 30th Guard Brigade, of Dr. Valentin Ciorbea, university professor, director of “General Paul Teodorescu” Research Center of the Cooperation between the Orthodox Church and the Romanian Army, on the occasion of 80 years since Dintr-un Lemn Monastery became the place of prayers for mariners and aviators, at the initiative of the new benefactor, general Paul Teodorescu.”

All those present went to General Paul Teodorescu’s tomb where the soldiers of “Michael the Brave” 30th Guard Brigade were ready. After saluting the present personalities, the commemoration service was held by His Eminence Varsanufie, the group of priests and church singers. At the end of the service there were brought wreaths to the tomb of General Paul Teodorescu from the Major Staff of the Air Forces and Naval Forces, and “Michael the Brave” 30th Guard Brigade.

The present personalities descended from the wooden church to the Brancovan Palace, where in the memorial room of General Paul Teodorescu the *Chronicle of June 29, 2019* recorded the reading by His Eminence Varsanufie and signing of the Charter given to the posterity in remembrance of the historical moment. The document was made on goatskin, the drawings and inscriptions, true works of art, were made with much talent by Mrs. Ana-Maria Zară.

The document was signed by the His Eminence Varsanufie, Vice-Admiral Dr. Alexandru Mârșu, General-Major Dr. Viorel Pană, Brigade General Corneliu Postu, Chief of Defense, Brigade-General Bogdan Cernat and Prof. Dr. Valentin Ciorbea.

CHARTER

We, Varsanufie, Archbishop of Râmnic, together with Brigade General Corneliu Postu, Chief of Defense Staff, with the Air Fleet General Dr. Viorel Pană - Chief of Staff of the Air Forces, with Vice-Admiral Dr. Alexandu Mârșu - Chief of Staff of the Naval Forces, with the Brigade General Bogdan Cernat - Commander of "Michael the Brave" 30th Guard Brigade and with Prof. Dr. Valentin Ciorbea - Director of "General Paul Teodorescu" Research Center for the Cooperation of the Orthodox Church with the Romanian Army, today, on Saturday, June 29, 2019, on the day of the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul and on the completion of eight decades since Paul Teodorescu, former Minister of Air and Marine, consecrated the Holy Dintr-un Lemn Monastery as a place of prayer and worship for the aviators and sailors of Great Romania, and we have struggled to place in luminous honor and sanctify this sign to victory, which will rekindle our ideals, lead us in the fulfillment of the missions entrusted towards the preservation of the righteous faith and the attainment of salvation, which will protect us everywhere in battle, in the air, on water and on land for the defense of the land of the country, and of the ancestral faith.

SO HELP US GOD!

As a guarantee of the efforts of all the servants of the Church and of the Romanian Army to preserve the truth, faith and unity of the Romanians everywhere, we fulfill this noble holy duty, by sealing under this Charter, to the eternal remembrance of those who over the past have contributed by their sacrifice and prayers to the renewal of the Holy Dintr-un Lemn Monastery: servants, benefactors and founders of this Holy place, as follows:

+ VARSANUFIE, ARCHBISHOP OF RÂMNIC

Corneliu Postu, Brigade General, Chief of Defense Staff

Dr. Viorel Pană, Air Force General, Chief of Staff of the Air Forces

Dr. Alexandru Mârșu, Viceadmiral, Chief of Staff of the Naval Forces

Bogdan Cernat, Brigade General, Commander of "Michael the Brave" 30th Guard Brigade

Dr. Valentin Ciorbea, University Professor, Director of "General Paul Teodorescu" Research Center for the Cooperation of the Orthodox Church with the Romanian Army

After this moment, the His Eminence Varsanufie, on the basis of the prerogatives conferred to him by the Statute for the Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church, “having faith in the fruitful work done in the service of the Church of the Nation as a sign of Our appreciation and blessing,” issued Episcopal Medal Crosses and offered them to Mr. Corneliu Postu, Alexandru Mârșu, Viorel Pană, Bogdan Cernat and Valentin Ciorbea, as the highest distinction of the Archdiocese of Râmnic, “The Cross of Râmnic.”

Vice-Admiral Dr. Alexandru Mârșu granted, on the basis of his prerogatives to His Eminence Varsanufie, the Emblem of Honor of the Naval Forces as a token of appreciation and respect for the blessing and care of the cooperation between the Archdiocese and the Romanian Naval Forces. The signing of the text transcribed in the *Golden Book of Dintr-un Lemn Monastery* by the four personalities present followed.

NOTES:

- ¹ This study has been selected from the volume Valentin Ciorbea, *Mănăstirea Dintr-un Lemn – Un complex monahal unic în România. Monografie istorică/ Dintr-un Lemn Monastery – A Unique Monastic Complex in Romania. Historical Monograph*. Traducere în engleză Nicoleta Stanca. Cuvânt înainte Ion I. Solcanu. București: Editura Academiei Oamenilor de Știință. 2020. 444 pp.
- ² Alexandru Ciucă, *Note biografice*. Manuscris al Mănăstirii Dintr-un Lemn.
- ³ *Cartea de aur a Mănăstirii Dintr-un Lemn*.
- ⁴ Memoriu adresat, la 8 februarie 1977, Episcopiei Râmnicului și Argeșului, în *Generalul adjutant Paul (Pavel) Teodorescu (1888-1981). Vocația creativității. 125 de ani de la naștere* (coord. Prof. univ. dr. Valentin Ciorbea, P.S. dr. Emilian Lovișteanu, comandor dr. Marian Moșneagu, Editura Ex Ponto, 2013, p. 392).
- ⁵ Arhiva Institutului Național al Patrimoniului (A.I.N.P.), *loc. cit.*, f. 87.
- ⁶ *Generalul adjutant Paul (Pavel) Teodorescu (1888-1981)*, p. 127.
- ⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 249.
- ⁸ Arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Râmnicului (A.A.R.), Mănăstirea Dintr-un Lemn, anii 1935-1938, inventariat – 250 (nenumărat).
- ⁹ Apud Ioan Oprea, *Monumentele istorice din România*, p. 387.
- ¹⁰ Arhiva Mănăstirii Dintr-un Lemn (A.M.D.L.), *Caiet de impresii*, 1977 (nenumărat).
- ¹¹ Ion Giurcă, *Generalul Paul Teodorescu și marea ctitorie voievodală de la Frâncești*, în „Misiunea”, anul I, nr. 1, 2014, p. 22-23.
- ¹² A.I.N.P., Fond Comisia Monumentelor Istorice, Mănăstirea Dintr-un Lemn, f. 100.
- ¹³ A.M.D.L., Dosar I A5, cu diversa corespondență administrativă, 2 ianuarie 1939 - 30 decembrie 1939, f. 70.

- ¹⁴ Valentin Ciorbea, *Rolul Mănăstirii Dintr-un Lemn în conlucrarea Armatei României cu Biserica Ortodoxă. Proiectul generalului Paul (Pavel) Teodorescu 1938-1977*, în „Misiunea”, anul I, nr. 1, 2014, p. 15.
- ¹⁵ *General adjutant Paul Teodorescu*, p. 249.
- ¹⁶ A.M.D.L., Dosar I, A5, cu diversa corespondență administrativă, 2 ianuarie 1939 – 30 decembrie 1939, f. 70.
- ¹⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 102.
- ¹⁸ *General adjutant Paul (Pavel) Teodorescu*, p. 297.
- ¹⁹ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ „Misiunea”, anul VI, nr. (1) 6, 2019, p. 1.
- ²² *Ibidem*.

Fr. André Scrima's activity from France reflected in Securitate dossiers

Abstract: Important personality of the Romanian Orthodox Theology from the 20th century, Fr. André Scrima is a theologian intensely investigated nowadays. Many of his ideas are emphasized and his contribution in the ecumenical field or regarding the dialogue between Orthodox and Catholic Churches is often refereed. Noticing his relevance for the cultural and theological field in our time we have decided to present here the way how his activity from France is reflected in the archives of the former „Securitate”. Using the dossiers dedicated to him and the notes wrote by different informers together with their resolutions, we will try here to see which were the main aspects that interested the surveillance machine, how they have perceived him and what where their intentions in his case. We will therefore present different notes written shortly after his departure from Romania, some from the 7th decade of the aforementioned century, but also one of his letter to Fr. Benedict Ghiuș intercepted by the state organs, that contains among others a detailed description of the way how he saw France, of the places visited and of the people that he met there. Also in the appendix there will be published *in extenso* the most relevant documents concerning the investigated topic.

Keywords: C. J. Dumont, Istina, Paris, ecumenism, Ion Cușa, exile.

Introduction

Father André Scrima was for sure one of the important Orthodox personalities of the twentieth century. The fact that today, more than two decades after his death, there are still articles published, studies and monographs dedicated to his work and his message¹ and there are conferences, workshops and other manifestations speaking about his

Iuliu-Marius Morariu (protosyncell Maxim), PhD „Babeș-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Angelicum Pontifical University, Rome, Italy, Pretoria University, Pretoria, South Africa, „Saint George” Diocesan Cathedral from Saint-Hubert, Quebec, Canada

heritage says a lot about the prodigiousness of his work and about the actuality of his message.

Noticing these aspects, one could ask what new can be said about his work and activity? This question will be at least partially answered in the present research. We will try here to see how his activity from France is reflected in the former Securitate Archives. As all important Romanians of the Romanian exile, Fr. Scrima was also under surveillance. Thus, in the archives there can be found today three dossiers dedicated to him and his activity in Romania, previously to his departure and outside it.² We will use in the presentation mostly one of it³, that was only partially presented by us in previous articles, as the main source. We will focus on both the time when he was in France (shortly after his departure from Romania, after his arrival from Benares, but also in other moments of his life) and we will also accompany the investigation with a few of the most important documents. The research will be a qualitative one, a case-study that aims to illustrate both the mechanisms used by the Securitate in the surveillance and the understanding that its representatives had on the life and work of the Romanian theologian who was an important voice of the Romanian exile during the communist period.

Fr. André Scrima's activity from France reflected in Securitate dossiers

The first contact of Fr. Scrima with France will take place shortly after his departure from Romania. Securitate will be informed about this fact and sources like „Costică” will write a long note on October 20, 1957 about this.⁴ As expected, it will not be the visit that will interest the Bucharest official, nor the places where he was, but what he did. They will monitorize the people who he will meet, his public appearance and his writings from this period. Among the notes dedicated to his first stay one will offer a long chronicle of an interview he accorded to Olivier Clement⁵. Later, translations of the text and summaries of the main ideas found there, with an accent on the social and the political aspects emphasised, rather than on the theological ones, will be also added to the dossier⁶.

The surveillance authorities will also intercept the correspondence that he sent from or about France. Among the most representative documents from this category that must be mentioned is a letter that he sends from Benares on August 6, 1957 to the Archimandrite Benedict Ghiuș.⁷ Here, the Romanian theologian gives a complex description of his travels, in an attempt to share his enthusiasm and impressions to the one who was his mentor and his former abbot. Among the visited places, Taizé or Paris represent important stops. Scrima speaks about what he found there,

impressed by the ecumenical openness and the way how the rule of Saint Benedict can be applied in an ecumenical context. Speaking about Paris, he emphasizes in rather poetical lines his impressions and complains about the fact that due to his schedule and the tasks that he was asked to accomplish, he did not have enough time to visit it:

And then came Paris. Like Switzerland and like absolutely every place and country I've been through, France has meant a lot to me. You remember my favourite adage about inner travel: it wasn't a fear, it was a premonition. I now understand that the inner itinerary is the one that passes through people and therefore through history. Not the one that goes through landscape and geography. Paris was supposed to be for me the encounter - the most authentic and delicious - with Catholicism, as I could not have it anywhere else. The city remained, I can not say unknown, but from the beginning I didn't even notice the spring triumphantly entering the city. I did not visit the Louvre (it was shown to me from afar one day by two SJ monks who were accompanying me on my way). I did not see the Picasso retrospective. It was a song in a new interpretation. On top of that, I didn't even notice the Arabian fireworks overflowing one evening over the Seine to greet an imperious procession. I went to the National Library once to work, I forgot to tell you that in Switzerland I was offered a contract, which I signed with a German house in Göttingen, republishing "Protestantische Real Enzyklopädie and which asked me to collaborate with an article on some issues of spirituality. I handed in the article ahead of time (here it is done differently.) So, almost as an irony, I did not see Paris, although I lived in it and met its people. But on my way, it remained one of the significant and more blessed stops"⁸.

Then, he will emphasize the contacts he had with Catholics, he will describe the atmosphere from *Istina* centre, its director C. J. Dumont⁹, but also the crisis that at the moment was affecting the Catholic Church¹⁰ or the personal history of some of Fr. Ghiuș' friends from there. Securitate will be aware of all this information. Its agents will intercept his correspondence and will read it, in an attempt to see if there is any political polarisation of its author, or if he is interested in political matters.

Later on, in the seventh decade of the 20th century, when Fr. Scrima will come again to France, they will start a new series of notes about the time that he spent there. Therefore, on March 6, 1969, there will be a note mentioning his relationships with Ioan Cușă¹¹, with His Beatitude the Patriarch Justinian and also other aspects defining his daily life. The information will be followed by a complex resolution¹², where there were requested measures like the definition of his relationships with people like

the aforementioned ones, or Romanian theological personalities like Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Alexandru Mironescu, Alexandru Elian, Teodor M. Popescu, all of them known personalities of the Romanian cultural space, in order to see the nature of their relationships with Fr. Scrima, or the attempt to attract him to a potential cooperation with the repressive organs. It is interesting why such a resolution was needed since on the 16th of September 1968, therefore almost 6 months earlier, the institution was informed about his financial status, his meetings with Fr. Stăniloae, his relationships with Cușa and his activity¹³.

On December 12, 1968 the source „Narcisa” will make aware the Romanian Securitate of the fact that Fr. Scrima travelled to USSR and about his intention to become the bishop of the Romanian community.¹⁴ His refusal to be elected as a bishop and his hostile attitude regarding communism will rise the anger of the authorities from Bucharest.

Still, they will be aware of his intellectual prestige, the influence that he had on religious leaders and the attempts to bring together Orthodoxy and Catholicism that he will make. There are notes like the one from June 22, 1968 written by the source „Văleanu I.”,¹⁵ which is most probably written by a theologian who was close to the Archimandrite, fact which explains the calm and rather favourable tone adopted, the one signed by the source „Petroniu”, dated October 19, 1967¹⁶ that contains a brief review of his life and activity in France and other spaces, or the one from June 12, 1967 that presents the meeting of the rector N. Nicolaescu of the Romanian Orthodox Theological Institute in Bucharest with Fr. André Scrima in Paris. All of them can be read below in the appendix.

In conclusion, we can say that the Securitate was interested in Fr. Scrima’s work in Paris and France in general. They tried to find out what he was thinking, what he was writing, how he saw the Communist Romania and the Romanian Orthodox Church from there and if he might become a collaborator of the regime. At the same time, they were aware of the relationships that he had, the relevance of his work in the ecumenical field and were even worried by the potential impact of his words.

APPENDIX

I.

6. 03. 1969. Bucharest. Informative note about Fr. Andrei Scrima and his activity in Paris.

D. G. I. E DIRECTION VII

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March 6, 1969

NOTE

ANDREI SCRIMA. He lived for a long time at the "ISTINA" study centre. After moving the centre to rue de la Slaciere (new construction) it can be harder to find. He lives more at CUȘA ION. He travels a lot through the Orient, especially. In fact, he intended to settle in a monastery in this region.

He is said to have been a representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople at the Second Vatican Council. In any case, it is a well-trained element.

Good relations and trustworthy man of P. F. Patriarch of Romania. Correspondence and oral messages. It seems that thanks to P. F. Patriarch he changed his mind about GHEORGHIU. Cold, antagonistic relationships with him.

His intentions, plans and the people who help him travel so often are unknown.

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item 548

A. C. N. S. A. S., *Fond Andrei Scrima*, Dossier no. 2601, f. 11.

State Security Council

DGIE/722

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25. VII. 1968.

II.

1. 08. 1968- 1. 08. 1969. Bucharest. Rezolution in „SONY” case, regarding the measures that should be taken against Fr. Andrei Scrima and against his activity

APPROVED
Major (illegible signature)

MEASURE PLAN
in the case of “SONY” for the period 1. VIII. 1968-1. VII. 1969

The analysis of the data we have about “SONY” shows that this case must be worked on actively and carefully, either to determine the opportunity and the possibility of attracting it to collaboration, or (if this is not feasible) to know as much as possible detailed the hostile activity he carries out against our Country and to counter it.

In order to achieve the above goal, it is proposed to pay attention to the following tasks for a first stage:

- knowledge of his present activity and related to it the nature of his relations with the Vatican, with the French and West German authorities and possibly the C.I.A.;

- the purpose of his repeated trips to Israel, Rome and Freiburg (R.F.G.);

- establishing his true sources of income since, without having any public office and without doing business, he has a good financial situation;

- determining the nature of his connections with PAUL MIRON and CUȘA ION, the intentions and purpose in which these three elements, directly or through intermediaries, seek to contact Romanian intellectuals (writers, teachers), who travel to France and R.F.G.;

- establishing its true sources of income since, without having any public office and without doing business, it has a good financial situation;

- determining the nature of his connections with PAUL¹⁷ MIRON and CUȘA ION, the intentions and purpose in which these three elements, directly or through intermediaries, seek to contact Romanian intellectuals (writers, teachers), who travel to France and R.F.G.;

- knowing the nature of the connections and relations they have with elements from the leadership of the Romanian Patriarchate;

- establishing his close relations with the country and how he keeps in touch with them;

- knowing the degree of affection he has for his relatives in the country and the feelings he has for our country today;

In order to achieve the above objectives, the following measures must be taken in the following period:

1) Training and directing “Petroniu”, “Ionatan” and “Stamate” informants, and

Deadline: the whole period

2) The study of the possibilities to use in this action some elements (priests, intellectuals) on the line of the Direction I that go also to France or R.F.G. and the enterprise with them, according to their possibilities, of some informative combinations.

Deadline: 30. XII. 1968

3) As “SONY” wishes to contact an official of the Romanian Embassy in order to collaborate with writers in the country in the magazine “PRODROMOS”, it will act to contact him by an undercover officer.

Deadline: 30. I. 1969

4) Carrying out checks at Directorate I on the following: prof. MIRONESCU, D. STĂNILOAE, T. M. POPESCU, AL. ELIAN and the nun ACHILINA CROITORU: These elements in the country have been on good terms with SONY, and he is currently interested in their situation. Depending on the result of the checks, the possibilities of acting on SONY through some of the above people will be studied.

Deadline: 30. III. 1969

5) intercepting SONY’s correspondence with people in the country.

Deadline: 15 VIII 1968

6) Studying the possibilities that SONY has in the direction of supporting the Romanian Orthodox Church from fugitives and if it would be interested in taking over its leadership. The aversion that SONY has towards V. BOLDEANU will be exploited in the realization of this measure.

Deadline: 30. V. 1969

7) Studying the possibility of installing equipment at his home in Paris¹⁸.

Deadline: 30. I. 1969

8) Given his tendency to enter into relationships with various women, an attempt will be made to place an informant from the country or abroad in its guise.

Deadline: 30. VI. 1969

Head of office
illegible signature

A. C. N. S. A. S., *Fond Andrei Scrima*, Dossier no. 2601, f. 12-14.

III.

10. 12. 1968. Bucharest „Narcisa” source informs about the fact that Scrima travelled to the USSR

1815/E
10. 12. 1968 23.55

NARCISA
Urgent

“E”

In a small circle of Romanian emigrants from Paris, it is discussed that the emigrant ANDREI SCRIMA's made a secret trip to the USSR during this year.

In connection with this, the comments made seek to clarify the recent attitude of ANDREI Scrima, who on the one hand intensifies his activity in the Romanian emigration, especially on the cultural line, around the magazine “PRODROMOS”, and on the other side avoids taking hostile open and categorical anti-communist attitudes in general or those opposed to the government of the Republic of Romania in particular.

As a result, Mămăligă Leonid and Virgil Ierunca release hypotheses according to which Andrei Scrima is the man of the Soviets. At the same time, in the comments made, they renew the suspicions that circulated in emigration in the past years that Andrei Scrima intensified his activity on the emigration line in order to become an Orthodox bishop and to take over the leadership of emigration, it is considered that the basis of his activity Andrei Scrima, who is known as a very intelligent element, must have a plan and does not rule out the possibility that his plan may be Soviet-inspired.

The source follows.
ss. Andreescu

22.998

A. C. N. S. A. S., *Fond Andrei Scrima*, Dossier no. 2601, f. 15.

IV.

06. 09. 1968. Bucharest. Note to the Council of State Security about Andrei Scrima and his situation

CASSIFIED

STATE SECURITY COUNCIL
D. G. I. E. DIR. -A / 21

single copy
6 sept. 1968

NOTE

ANDREI SCRIMA, settled in Paris, changed his address this year and lives with ION CUȘA, where the boarding is free for him. At the end of April this year he was in Constantinople, where he had meetings with the two patriarchs ATENAGORAS and JUSTINIAN of Romania. On the occasion of this meeting, both patriarchs wanted to make him bishop, but ANDREI SCRIMA refused. "To get rid of their insistence," he moved from the patriarchal palace to a hotel. After the meeting in Constantinople, he came to Freiburg in R.F.G. to meet with the source. He spent a total of 10 days in Freiburg where he had daily meetings with the source and then with the priest DUMITRU STĂNILOAE, a professor at the Theological Institute, who gave two lectures on theology and especially on Romanian Orthodoxy and the ecumenical movement. STĂNILOAE had a good influence on him, in the sense that he showed him that he had to support the Romanian cultural and spiritual interests and also the interests of the Romanian church to which, however, his soul belongs. He then accused him of refusing to become a bishop. The source remarked that ANDREI SCRIMA, with all the special qualities he has, is afraid of responsibility. With the source, he discussed at length the issues of world politics, politics and foreign orientation of Romania, then about the orientation and improvement of the magazine "Prodromos", to which he asked the insistent source to collaborate. The source then discussed with SCRIMA about the opportunity of PAUL MIRON's visit to the country and in the end convinced SCRIMA to agree to this visit. He then returned to Paris, from where he left for Vienna, where he participated in the visit of Patriarch JUSTINIAN and with the cardinal KONIG separately and together. After Vienna, Scrima returned to Paris, sent by the patriarch to Paris, to negotiate matters related to the Romanian church there. From Paris he left again for Constantinople and there Scrima retreated for some time to his monastery in Lebanon.

From all these places ANDREI SCRIMA wrote regularly to the source. The withdrawal to the Lebanese monastery is also due to the fact that during this period he has great financial difficulties, being indebted to CUȘA

with a lot of money. CUȘA is the one who mainly subsidizes it. In addition to this source, SCRIMA also receives small sums from a Theological Academy in France, where he is a professor and vice-president, and from the Catholic organization "Deutsche Caritas Verband". Also, a year ago, he received from America the amount of \$ 2000 that was sent to him in Paris, for the courses that he had to take at Harvard University, an amount that he also spent. That's why he'll probably have to go to America for these courses early next year.

dactilo: P. E.

two files

A. C. N. S. A. S., *Fond Andrei Scrima*, Dossier no. 2601, f. 16-17.

V.

22. 06. 1968. „Casa 6 Martie” (probably Bucharest).

Informative note of „Văleanu I.” source about Fr. Scrima, his visits in France and Germany, his cultural influence and his attitude about the Romanian Orthodox Church

- Mr. Șerbănoiu I
- „Văleanu I.”
- house „6th of March”
- 14th of June 1968¹⁹

131/SI/ - 22th of June 1968

CLASSIFIED

copy no. 2

NOTE

The source informs you that while he was in Freiburg (FRG) he came to visit him and listen to the conference of Fr. ANDREI SCRIMA from Paris. Before leaving the source in FRG, GHIUȘ Benedict told the source that if he goes to Paris he will bring with him to the source conference SCRIMA, BOLDEANU, bishop TEOFIL, but GHIUȘ did not went to Paris and ANDREI SCRIMA came alone, knowing probably from the patriarch about the departure of the source to the FRG. ANDREI SCRIMA stayed in Freiburg for about a week, during which time he met 3-4 times, at the hotel where the source lived and at PAUL MIRON, at home. The source mentions

that he was in a friendly relationship with ANDREI SCRIMA until his departure from the country.

From the discussions with SCRIMA, the source noted that he has the most frequent residence in Paris, being a professor at the University of Selehuar. In addition, he collaborates with several publications, participates in many ecumenical dialogues, and is a member of many theological associations. He stays in a monastery in Lebanon for about three months a year, which he founded and publishes spiritual literature for in Arabic. He is close to Patriarch ATHENAGORAS and the high Catholic circles in Rome, even the popes. From the discussions with him, as well as with other people, the source found that ANDREI SCRIMA is well known and appreciated by the high theological and ecclesiastical Catholic circles and even by some Protestants and Orthodox.

Talking to him about the country and his plans for the future, he said that he does not think much about returning to the country, that he feels better in the more refined atmosphere of France and that his main desire is to retire to the monastery in Lebanon in a life of contemplative loneliness.

He considers that our country and our church, through too insistent praises for what they achieve, do not prove too high a level of civilization and spirituality, that they still have much to do until they reach the level of France.

ANDREI SCRIMA was generally considered in the discussions, he did not prove hostile to socialism, he showed great sympathy for today's students in France and Germany and he considers that de GAULLE has no understanding for this new spirit.

He did not launch attacks on the regime in our country, only that the Romanian Church be more spiritual, less cold and numb.

ANDREI SCRIMA expressed the opinion that our church should be less rigid than the Roman Catholic Church, that is, not to first ask for the renunciation of the papal primacy and then to accept the dialogue with it, because even during the dialogue it could achieve much. He is against the Greek-Catholicism, which tightens relations between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church and knows that there are many conservative circles in the Roman Catholic Church as well, but in general Catholicism is no longer what it used to be.

SCRIMA was in Munich during this time where he spoke with the American leaders of the "Free Europe" station and with its Romanian employees. There he was accused of working against the union because she was persecuted. SCRIMA said that the union serves the cause of the churches and it would be good if "Free Europe no longer supports it".

He also noticed a general disagreement attitude against the "nationalist" atmosphere in Romania. SCRIMA is of the opinion that

Romania will have to be more careful in this regard, as this can bring many dangers.

„I. Valeanu”

N. B.

The note was provided by the informant as a result of the assignments received on the occasion of his departure to the R. F. of Germany.

I had known in advance about ANDREI SCRIMA's intentions to travel to the FRG to meet with the informant.

ANDREI SCRIMA is known for his hostile position abroad, towards our country, having dubious concerns.

The informant was in close relations with ANDREI SCRIMA and on this basis, he will be able to be used next to him in the future, if the informative-operative needs will impose this.

I propose that the note in copy be sent to the Directorate-General for Internal Intelligence for operation.

The informant was given the task to maintain contact with ANDREI SCRIMA, through letters and other possibilities and we are thinking of using these relations for operational purposes.

Mr. illegible

A. C. N. S. A. S., *Fond Andrei Scrima*, Dossier no. 2601, f. 18-20.

VI.

- 722 -

CLASSIFIED

unique copy
Oct. 19 1967

NOTE

ANDREI SCRIMA is currently the most interesting character in all Romanian emigration from abroad. He studied medicine and philosophy in the country and became a monk in 1946. He was a librarian at the Patriarchate and a protégé of Patriarch JUSTINIAN. In 1956 he went to India to study Sanskrit and remained abroad. He is currently Archimandrite and Special Envoy of Patriarch ATENAGORAS (Ecumenical Patriarch based in Constantinople) for ecumenical issues at the Holy See. SCRIMA became a French citizen and has his permanent residence in Paris at the Center de Recherches Istina, based in Boulogne sur Seine, Boul d'AUTEUIL 25. He is an active supporter of Gallic politics and an admirer of General DE GAULE.

He has been actively involved in the Vatican's debates and work in recent years regarding the reforms of the Roman Catholic Church. He also played the most important role in bringing the two churches closer together: Orthodox and Catholic. It is even said that he is the occult initiator of this action and the main factor of those carried out so far in this field. SCRIMA speaks fluently and gives lectures and conferences in the following languages: French, English, German, Italian, Latin, Greek, in Belgium, France and Spain with the great prelates of the Catholic Church (cardinals, archbishops and bishops). He also has extensive and strong ties to writers, journalists, and cultural figures in France and the United States. He is due to leave for America this fall to attend Harvard University. Last year he was invited to UNESCO to hold a conference on ecumenical issues. The paper then appeared in volume and SCRIMA also provided the source with a copy. Last year, he had a meeting in Geneva with Patriarch JUSTINIAN. In the last year, SCRIMA has been passionate about the problems of Romanian politics, which he discussed at length with the source in Paris. The source saw him regularly two or three times a week during his stay in Paris. During these meetings, which ION CUȘA, often called by Scrima, often attended, the source noticed and verified that SCRIMA is the inspiration for the current policy of the legionary group that is separated from HORIA SIMA in Paris. The source believes that he is also the inspiration for the contact actions with the young Romanian writers who came to Paris, which this group practices. SCRIMA ANDREI is following with great interest the foreign policy actions taken by Romania and would like a contact with the Romanian authorities, but not directly, with party people, but through the "category" that he considers interesting, of those who were against communist regime during the so-called "Stalinist" period and who now agree with the country's political evolution. He considers that the source is also part of this category and that is why he probably pays a lot of attention. But if the source agrees to discuss and gets along very well (as he himself states), instead he does not accept at all the discussion provoked by ANANIA, his ex-friend, now sent to the United States. This is mainly due to the fact that ANANIA is no longer approved by the patriarch and has been sent to America over his head.

- SCRIMA is willing to support abroad the actions of the Romanian language that suit it and especially those that are carried out along the lines of the current foreign policy of Romania, on the line of the great national interests of the country and on the line of promoting abroad the authentic Romanian cultural values.

He has a broader sense of understanding, which he tries to impress on the whole group. Therefore, he finds himself in some conflict with VIRGIL IERUNCA, whose refractory to any contact or recognition of Romanian positions, he deeply dislikes. SCRIMA would like, first of all, a first step to be through the "PRODRAMOS" magazine, in the pages of which Romanian

writers from both variants will meet, i.e. from the country and from the refuge, and this magazine will be able to have circulation in Romania as well. SCRIMA has an extremely lively intelligence and is passionate about the great and unexpected political combinations of reconciliations - considered impossible (as it was thought about the two branches of the churches). He has confessed to the source countless times that he regrets that the source does not have a position that allows him to deal with it. He also complained to the source about the inadequate quality of the cultural staff of the Romanian embassy in Paris and the one who permanently represents Romania at UNESCO.

„PETRONIU”

dactilo Papp E.
1 copy

A. C. N. S. A. S., *Fond Andrei Scrima*, Dossier no. 2601, f. 52-54.

VII.

12. 06. 1967. Bucharest. Note about the meeting of N. Nicolaescu, the rector of the Romanian Orthodox Theological Institute in Bucharest with Fr. André Scrima in Paris

21

NOTE

Arhim. ANDREI SCRIMA, whom the rector N. NICOLAESCU met in Paris on the occasion of his participation in the ecumenical meeting of the Christian Confessions for Peace (May 19-30, 1927²⁰) and who lives with the Dominican Fr. C. UMONT and Fr. Greek-Catholic GOIA from the Istina Center for Catholic Research and Publications in Paris, said:

- The Romanian Patriarchate would make a great mistake of tact and prestige if it accepted under its jurisdiction the so-called Orthodox Bishop Jean of S. Denis (KOWALEWSKI), whom so far everyone has renounced, because he is a complete adventurer compromise.

- Metropolitan JUSTIN MOISESCU is seen by the ecclesiastical circles in the West as a servile agent of the communist government and as a hierarch who starts drinking Whiskey at 9 o'clock in the morning, who has his clothes lined brightly with bright red and who makes everyone feel that he is not honest in what he says. A. SCRIMA admires, instead, the tactics of

Metropolitan NICODIM, who managed to bring together and reconcile the three Russian church factions in the West.

- A. SCRIMA disapproves of the hostile attitude of Fr. V. BOLDEANU to the patriarch JUSTINIAN and the Romanian Patriarchy, as well as to the bishop TEOFIL IONESCU, saying about them that they serve the prestige of the Romanian name in France. He also criticizes Fr. HEITZ from R.F.G. who often visits Romania, saying that is also compromised in moral and ecclesiastical terms.

- A. SCRIMA also criticizes V. ANANIA's attitude and activity in America, saying that "he expected something completely different from him". Rector N. NICOLAESCU reminded him that in 1964, he warmly praised V. ANANIA - when he was in prison and wondered why he was criticizing him now. A. SCRIMA replied that he should not appear to TRIFA, but see only those left with the bishopric of Detroit.

- A. SCRIMA claims that only due to the lack of objective and up-to-date information, the Romanian Patriarchate opposes the beginning of the dialogue with the Vatican, assures that Pope "Paul VI, has beautiful feelings towards the Romanian Orthodox Church and Patriarch JUSTINIAN" in the future, Patriarch JUSTINIAN to establish direct links with Pope PAUL VI, not through small and horizonless intermediaries, as before. A. SCRIMA also said that he misses returning to Romania, but it is not the time yet. He boasts that "he has remained on the main line, that he has never attacked the political and church leadership in Romania, and that his role is of a completely different level and order: to ensure permanent contact between Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI and to thus facilitating the restoration of the unity between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, for which C. DUMONT from Istina has been militating for a long time. I emphasize that, this time, A. SCRIMA spoke more respectfully than in 1964, in Rhodes, about the state leadership and the social order in Romania, adding that the new papal encyclical "Populorum progresio," which gave many Catholics something to think about, will pave the way for an agreement with the representatives of socialism and communism," although the fight against atheism remains inscribed in the future: forever, in the major obligations of all Christians". He accuses Metropolitan JUSTIN MOISESCU and the Russian hierarchs of completely abdicating this missionary obligation.

A. SCRIMA was closely interested in the health, employment and activity of teachers D. STĂNILOAE, T. M. POPESCU and AL. ELIAN; by the nun ACHILINA from the Patriarchal Palace, by the vicar-bishop ANTIM NICA, saying that he considers them true servants of Romanian Orthodoxy and sincere supporters of the patriarch JUSTINIAN. About the Romanian Chapel in Paris, he says that he was not interested in any way because "he kept away from such minor quarrels", because he sees the future of Christianity only in a union with Rome and under the aegis of the pope.

When Rector NICOLAESCU reminded V. CRISTEA of his propaganda against the Romanian Orthodox Church, he claimed that this was a minor case, that it had no resonance among Catholics and that it could not be a pretext against the beginning of the dialogue between Romanian Orthodox Church and Vatican. A. Scrima also informed that an Orthodox monk from Lebanon wants to come to Romania to learn church painting.”

27 VI 1967

s. m.

for compliance Major illegible signature

A. C. N. S. A. S., *Fond Andrei Scrima*, Dossier no. 2601, f. 52-54.

NOTES:

¹ See for example: Ioan Alexandru Tofan, *Omul lăuntric. André Scrima și fizionomia experienței spirituale*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2019; Ioan Alexandru Tofan, *André Scrima, un „gentleman creștin”. Portret biografic*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2021; Iuliu-Marius Morariu, “Ecumenism and Communism in the Romanian Context: Fr. Andre Scrima in the Archives of the Securitate”, in *Religions* 12 (2021), no. 9, p. 719; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090719>; Iuliu-Marius Morariu, „Elements of Father Andrei Scrima’s Ecumenical Activity as Reflected in File No. 0005468 from the ‘Securitate’ Archives”, in *Review of Ecumenical Studies*, 12 (2020), issue 3, pp. 497-511; Teodor Baconsky, *Turn înclinat. Fragmente de arheologie profetică*, Editura Curtea Veche, București, 2007, pp. 240-244; Teodor Baconsky, *Ispita binelui. Eseuri despre urbanitatea credinței*, Editura Anastasia, București, 1999, pp. 158-159.

² Namely: ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. I; ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, file no. 0005468, vol. II; ACNSAS, *Fond SIE*, file no. 2601.

³ This one will be: ACNSAS, *Fond SIE*, file no. 2601.

⁴ Scrima Andrei arrived almost a year ago in India, after contacting the bishop of Malta and staying in Switzerland, Italy and then in Paris.

He asked to have sent to him four volumes from *Philokalia* translated by the priest Stăniloae Dumitru. Priest Stăniloae Dumitru brought from Sibiu these collections of philokalies, where he has them stored. The Patriarch would have wanted Stăniloae Dumitru to make twenty copies available to him, but Stăniloae Dumitru informed him that he had no more, which is not true.

Scrima Andrei arrived abroad, has given interviews similar to the one from the French magazine *La reforme* and other English, German, etc. magazines.

⁵ The article written by Andrei Scrima and published by Olivier Clement in French is entitled “The Romanian Orthodox Church or the miracle of the incessant prayer.” It is a kind of interview, sprinkled with quotes from the words of Patriarch Justinian, and the contents is, in short, the following:

- The Romanian Orthodox Church has kept, under communism, a relatively privileged and middle situation of superiority to those available to the Russian church in the Soviet Union;
- within the Romanian Patriarchate, the network of ecclesiastical schools has remained almost intact (10 seminaries and 2 higher theological institutes) and now depends only on the church, which pays special attention to it;
- The Romanian Orthodox Church currently has 5 publishing houses and regularly publishes 3 patriarchal magazines and 5 metropolitan magazines, all able to compete with the best theological publications in the West;
- The Church has recently (?) received the right to teach high school religious education in the state schools and lives somewhat under a regime approved by the state, which helps in material relations;
- This privileged situation is explained by the exceptional personality of Patriarch Justinian, an old friend of Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, whom he hid from the police (?) during the repression of a strike;
- Patriarch Justinian, perfectly loyal to the state, has from the beginning put the activity of the Church above any policy;
- “In the thinking that guides the cultural and economic life of the present Romanian state, none of the ideas that constitute the overall vision of any religion and even more of the Christian religion of Orthodox confession, can be found,” and yet, each remaining in his position and maintaining the hope of a peaceful triumph, “an atmosphere of peace and respect characterizes the relationship between the state and the church” (quoted from a speech by Patriarch Justinian). ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, dossier no. 0005468, vol. I, f. 55.

⁶ ACNSAS, *Fond informativ*, dossier no. 0005468, vol. I, f. 352.

⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 353-364.

⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 354.

⁹ C. J. Dumont (1923-2001) was an important historian and clergyman of the 20th century, who was also the director of the Catholic Centre *Istina* from Paris, known for its openness to the ecumenical dialogue. For more information about his life and activity, see also: <https://alleanzacattolica.org/jean-dumont-1923-2001/>, accessed 22. 08. 2021 and <https://journals.openedition.org/dominicains/1228>, accessed 21. 08. 2021.

¹⁰ „The Catholic Church is obviously going through a crisis that I would also briefly frame in the 3 points above: but it is a recognized crisis, consciously assumed. The critical moment returns formally to the same old confluence between the new situation of the Church (living community of believers) and the rigid, sometimes intractable, leadership of the Vatican. (Personally, I have the impression that this rigidity is not without a benefit for the quality of new realities: it requires a control, a selection, a period of verification and maturation, which prevents fantasy,

improvisation, imposture, in Romanian said nonsense, which is always our sweet temptation to spiritual life). Here, a French prelate said to me one day: Aue voulez-vous mon cher, it seemed last year that the Almighty had decided to get rid of the current pope, but then he changed his mind." *Ibidem*, f. 355.

¹¹ Ioan Cuşa (1925-1981), Romanian of Macedonian origins who was an important personality of the Romanian exile in France and the owner of „Ethnos” publishing house. For more information about his life and activity and about his relationships with the Romanians in exile, see: http://artl.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/cultural_9_pag-29-30-ioan-cusa-a-n.pdf, accessed 11. 05. 2022.

¹² See the second document from the appendix of the article.

¹³ A. C. N. S. A. S., *Fond Andrei Scrima*, dossier no. 2601, f. 16-17.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 15.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 18-20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 52-54.

¹⁷ Initially spelled „Radu” and later corrected.

¹⁸ Manuscript marginal note: „Negative!”

¹⁹ Handwritten „Scrima”.

²⁰ Misspelled. In reality it was 1967.

BOOK REVIEWS

Literature to be explored: Gabriele Eckart's novel *Vogtland Voices*

Gabriele Eckart, *Vogtlandstimmen, Roman*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, Germany, 2021, 285 pp. (German)

“What do you do”, Mr. K. was asked,
“when you love someone?”
“I’ll make a design for him,” said Mr. K.,
“and make sure that he looks like him.”
“Who? The draft?”
“No”, said Mr. K., “the person.”
(Brecht, stories from Mr. Keuner)

The author of the novel *Vogtlandstimmen* has a typical biography of many immigrants, who found a way to escape their homeland in the Soviet block before the Fall of the Wall 1989 and build a new life in the United States. Gabriele Eckart was born in Falkenstein, Vogtland, then in the Eastern part of divided Germany, in 1954. She studied philosophy at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin from 1972 to 1976, completing her studies with the state examination. The essence of such studies under communist rule was brainwashing through Marxism/Leninism and its tools of indoctrination and party propaganda. (I had the same experience with my studies of cultural sciences.) The regime expected after four years of such exercise ideological conformity in their alumni. As we know, it did not work too well in the case of Eckart. At the end of the 1970th someone showed me two volumes of poetry and a volume of travel reports, written by her. The poems impressed me immediately, because of their enthusiastic devotion to classical roots. Eckart seemed to be a non-conventional voice, not in tune with the official aesthetics. The texts projected creative nonconformity. Traditional images of the world, systems of vision and thought, which seemed to organize the material of a chaotic reality and thus transfigured it, were dismantled from new perspectives and put together into a language inspired by Hölderlin, Rilke and Borchert. Her next publication was to be a collection of interviews she had conducted 1980/81 with people at VEB Havelobst Werder, a large apple orchard kolkhoz type enterprise, established by the communist party's youth organization. Excerpts did appear, I

remember, in East German literary magazines in 1983 and 1984, but soon the regime prevented the publication of the entire text, rumors said, that it contained numerous critical passages on the systemic failures in the state. The book *This is how I see the matter*, therefore, only appeared in a West German edition in 1984. That was the turning point in Eckart's affiliation with or usefulness for the authorities. The Party and the State Security (Stasi) made her life miserable. In 1987 Eckart used a visit to the Frankfurt Book Fair to move to the West. In 1988 she emigrated to the USA, where she continued her studies in Spanish and German literature. In 1993 she received her MA at the University of Texas at San Antonio, and in 1993 her PhD from the University of Minnesota. Since 1999 she has been teaching at the Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardou, where she retired in 2021. Her academic publications on East German literature and comparative literature (Cervantes in German-language literature) are well respected. But since her arrival on American soil, she was also able to continue in addition her creative writing (reports, poetry, stories), published in US and German magazines, anthologies and as books, some translated into Russian and Japanese. Since the end of the communist rule in the Eastern part of Germany and most of Middle and Eastern Europe Eckart participates with her work in the intellectual and artistic coming to terms with the past. Her own experiences guide her observations and descriptions. In this novel, too, one notices very clearly that Eckart reports on her own life, broken down fictionally. But what is it actually about? How do the images touch our memory of the past? Eckart's narrative is challenging: "Times and places ... are confused in memory" (p. 77).

This dialect-tinged text is set in the present day in the Vogtland region in Germany. Six voices tell a family story from different perspectives and reflect the time during and after World War II, that of the communist regime in the Eastern part of the country and the events after the fall of the Wall in 1989. Special thematic focuses are everyday life with reference to the late Middle Ages, the nationalization of small family businesses in 1972 in East Germany, the re-privatization of these companies after German reunification and the reign of the state security (Stasi) of the communist regime. The novel also contains ordinary human aspects, especially problems of older people, inheritance disputes and keeping pets. (The sixth voice is a cat – Katz – wondering about the human order.) The reader observes a kind of everyday kaleidoscope of many different concerns, worries, interests and the like, which people in a smaller community talk about. Brecht describes such method or approach as the making of plausible images:

"Mostly made from the old ones, the existing ones,
they seem wrong, but they are not. It was you."¹

Since Brecht most of us agree that if, on the one hand, people are dependent on social, political and economic constraints, then, on the other hand, they are also able to change them by changing their behavior and thus the circumstances. If the world is to be changed, the world must be represented as changeable. The social contradictions can be recognized and identified in order to resolve them. True. But Eckart's voices demonstrate, that such needs may be still just hopes for the Vogtland today. The sentence: "Like a film, life flickers by" (p. 96) hits the situation very well. Eckart is alert and aware to be careful with conclusions.

As one critique, Albrecht Claassen, underlines: "It ends with the GDR reality being vividly brought to mind without Eckart presenting a systematic political analysis. So, it's not a novel, not an autobiography, but maybe something like a biographical memoria. At the same time, very concrete impressions from everyday life dominate, again and again specifically small normal moments, with which the author, observing very closely, puts us in normal situations in which conversations arise, situations are thoroughly discussed, facts are dealt with, all of which in turn serves to bring out the Vogtland flavor."²

That "Vogtland flavor" refers to the dialect spoken in that region between Bayreuth and Hof in the southwest (i.e. northeastern Bavaria or Franconia) and Zwickau in the northeast and borders precisely on Czechia in the southeast. The dialect is brilliantly used in Eckart's text to demask the socio-political context. The reader is encouraged to "fabulate" (Brecht) with variants of "social gestus" (Brecht). Remembering the voices of the regime the texts transform into dialectical counter-drafts. They combine affront and example, criticism and program. The Nazi & Communist past determines unisono the fragility of the voices from the author's native Vogtland, the uncertainty of the attitudes opens the readers' ears *for a new way of seeing things*. For me poisonous voices of the dictatorship echo through the realism of many "plausible images" from today. The author does not only not avoid the alienation effects which come with the use of the homely dialect, she invites to explore them. What comes to mind are the regime's autocratic and hierarchical power structures, centralized control of all areas of life, and a bureaucratic apparatus for suppressing individual citizens.

Eckart does not provide a direct image diagnosis, or at most only like in parabolic mirrors that elevate the real to the point of recognizability. The episodes/snapshots offer models of dialectical reality, experimental models with which social processes and human types of behavior are rationalized to the point of transparency, so that one can analytically arrive at a difficult truth. Eckart sums it up: "How fast life can change. From the good to the bad; from the bad to the good. Back and forth and back again" (p. 72).

The challenge of this novel is, that it invites the readers with their own historical skills and concepts of comprehension, analysis of sources,

perspectives to participate in listening to the voices. But in their emotional memory are stories stored too, which may be provoked to interfere and decode the explanation and communication within the seemingly unassailable dialect. Is there something hidden? What about memory gaps? How long does trauma bonding last? But more than 30 years after the end of the second German dictatorship the inquisitive nature of coping with the past has changed to a path to include reconciliation. One understands, that the time, where the truth has been obfuscated for decades is over. There is never just one truth. We each carry our own distinct memories, and they often contradict each other. When I read the texts the first time I heard and saw all over the ghosts of the past, a second and third reading opened my recollection to the contradictory nature of the characters and their changeability. I began to appreciate the beauty of the seductive dialect and Eckart's highly artistic use of it to "fabulate": spinning her yarns. Eckart succeeds to make the reader recognizing and accepting the character's contradictions. The voices began to live up to the design.

But still congratulations to the publisher for choosing a kind of poisonous color for the cover picture, because neither the fungus nor the people should be regarded as non-poisonous, even if the mushroom is edible and the people seem to be kind and harmless. The underlying question is, what has changed? As long as there is not yet an answer (can there ever be an answer?), we need this combination of memory and historicization, tinged with desires for justification, condemnation, reconciliation. One has to be careful, when one loves, forgives, closes chapters of history, but there is also Hope with unseen qualities of trust for the people.

Eckart proved again what a wonderful observant storyteller she is and that difficult truths can be addressed without tunnel view.

NOTES:

¹ Bertold Brecht, *Werke*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1979, Vol. 7, p. 56.

² Albrecht Classen, "Book review. Gabriele Eckart. Vogtland voices," in *Glossen*, May 2021.

HEINZ-UWE HAUS

Remembering and Historicizing East Germany's Everyday Life: About Two Eyewitnesses' Close-Ups

Richard Zipser, *Memoirs of Life in East Germany: Snapshots*, BookBaby Publishing, Pennsauken Township, NJ, 2022, 259 pp.

Augusto Bordato, *DDR. Ricordando la Germania dell'Est. Remembering East Germany*, Contrasto, Rome, 2015, 116 pp.

*Whilst the reality of life under socialist rule
severely undermined official socialist propaganda during the GDR,
the tables have now turned,
and instead today's official image of socialism
undermines the reality East Germans remember.*
(Anna Saunders¹)

Since years a flood of memoirs about the communist regime, which had been created by the Soviet Union four years after the end of the Second World War of its Occupation Zone in Germany, has reached the English speaking reader. But only few do not ignore the basic fact, that the so called „German Democratic Republic, commonly referred to as East Germany, was neither democratic nor a republic, it was a repressive dictatorship,”² as Richard Zipser reminds us in an epigraph on the cover of his newest book *Memoirs of Life in East Germany: Snapshots*. Most of the publications about the so-called „GDR” have a revisionistic gestus and choose their sources like MSNBC their interview partners. Only few present first hand experience, but are driven by strong opinions about the misgivings of the capitalist society. An armada of college lecturers can hardly cover their frustration, that with the 1989 Peaceful Revolution in Middle and Eastern Europe the time of their socialist utopia ended. Their goal is not research or documentation of history, but the infiltration of the subject with their ideology. Seemingly benign practices of „objectivity” are grassing.

Hester Vaizey's book *Born in the GDR: Living in the Shadow of the Wall*.³ for example is such typical propagandistic product. An ally in spirit praises her „attempts to dispel what she calls the polarized view of the GDR, where the former East German state is painted as either an idyll worthy of nostalgia, or an oppressive regime whose citizens withered under constant

surveillance and suppression of free thought. Vaizey's book argues that the truth is far more nuanced, and her reporting reveals that many former East German citizens have complicated feelings for their erstwhile country, as well as for the new regime that replaced it.⁴ This viewpoint is widely used by the new and old „GDR-specialists” in academia. The agreed talking points are repeated like a mantra: “years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, some ex-East Germans still harbor resentment because their country was absorbed into West Germany with no regard for the GDR's morals or traditions, a resentment compounded by high unemployment rates and smaller social safety nets than those available under the GDR. Vaizey's book is a compelling portrayal of a citizenry's memories of a disappeared country, memories that are often far more nuanced than outsiders can imagine”.⁵ And last but not least, in good propagandist manner she found one, who „remembers his former life in the GDR fondly.”⁶

Zipser's *Memories of Life in East Germany: Snapshots*, comprised of 58 short prose texts, focus on his own experiences while traveling and doing research during the 1960s, 70s and 80s. „It is as if we are in a picture gallery. Before us (...) pieces which, like the snapshots of a skilled photographer capture telling moments, people, and experiences.”⁷ The *gestus* is impressionistic in nature, presenting the author's highly personal and admittedly somewhat subjective glimpses of events as seen through the lens of his mind's eye which—despite the passage of many years—seems still focusable. Each of the vignettes that comprise this collection is a moment in time the author recalls and captures in words, hence snapshots only a few Westerners were able to experience so intensely. The book is a companion piece to his documentary memoir, *Remembering East Germany*, published 2014 in German and 2021 in English, which is based largely on the 396-page file the East German secret police (Stasi) compiled on him between 1973 and 1988. (See my review in *Lumina Lina*, Nr. 2, 2022, pp. 127-130.) *Snapshots* reflect the unique perspective of an American who, as an outsider, gained unusual insider knowledge of that totalitarian society. The episodes document the chilling Cold War days and speak for themselves.

Zipser's work reminds me of another equal important and honest document about life behind the Iron Curtain in Germany: evocative photos by Augusto Bordato that portray those heady days before the collapse of the Wall.

While working as an interpreter at the Italian embassy in East Berlin for ten years, Bordato documented the daily triumphs and monotonies of life in East Germany. In 2004 he published a collection of his work entitled *DDR, Remembering East Germany* (Contrasto, 2015, 116 pp.).⁸ The photographs, taken with a classic Leica film camera, focus on the last two years of the regime: parades, war ruins, beach vacations, lines at the local store, and finally the opening of the Wall. The grainy black and white shots woo us

with their familiarity and their humanness, enhanced by a remarkably rich tonal range. Vera Carothers comments: „The book is intended as an act of historical remembering, according to Massimo Nava’s introduction to the book. Nava says that Bordato revisits a past „we’ve all too rapidly forgotten,” and reveals “aspects of daily life distant in time and still largely unknown.” He points out that it is a past that has been lost or purposely forgotten by a generation of Germans since the fall of the Wall. For Nava, Bordato’s book restores this cancelled memory of a “life in black and white... that no longer seems to belong to anyone.”⁹

In reality, however, the book shows us the limit of our ability to recuperate the past. In “remembering” the DDR, Bordato reinvents it at the same time, adding substantial text alongside the pictures that intellectualizes and changes the past he once experienced. Carothers underlines rightly: „The text (with captions in Italian and English on each page) prevent us from experiencing the photos as fragments of reality. We see the images as Bordato sees them now, with twenty-five years of hindsight.”¹⁰ No doubt, the same dialectic functions for Zipser’s „remembering”. As a native „in-and outsider” of the life under communist rule in this part of Germany myself, I know the context and its challenges only too well.

What a pleasure to discover two authors’ narratives, an American and an Italian, with such open-minded and unique perspectives about life in the 1989 vanished dictatorship.

NOTES:

¹ Anna Saunders, in George Patakos, *Musealization of the Past*, Nicosia 2019, p. 34.

² Epigraph at the cover of Richard A. Zipser, *Memories of life in East Germany: Snapshot*, BookBaby Publishing, Pennsauken Township, NJ, 2022, 259 pp.

³ Hester Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, Oxford University Press, 320 pp.

⁴ In *Christian Monitor*, January 7, 2015.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Bonnie Arden Robb, Afterword, in *Memoirs of Life in East Germany: Snapshots*, p. 251.

⁸ Augusto Bordato, *DDR: Remembering East Germany*, Contrasto, 2015, 116 pp.

⁹ Vera Carothers, in: <https://www.lensculture.com/articles/contrasto-books-historicalremembering-looking-back-at-east-germany>.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

The Role of the Church in the European Union

Lucian N. Leuștean, *The Ecumenical Movement and the Making of the European Community*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, 304 pp.

An important voice in contemporary scholarship, Lucian N. Leuștean, who is presently a Reader in Politics and International Relations at Aston University, England, has already published a number of books that are relevant for his field of research. Among them: *Religion and Political Power in Romania, 1947-65*, Palgrave Mac Millan, London, 2008, and, as editor/co-editor, *Religion and Forced Displacement in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2022, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2021, *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, Routledge, London, 2014 and *Religion, Politics and Law in the European Union*, Routledge, London, 2010.

In *The Ecumenical Movement and the Making of the European Community*, published in 2014 at Oxford University Press, he speaks about the way how religion contributed to the making of the European Community. Presenting experiences like the execution of Adam von Trott zu Solz in Plötzensee Prison (p. 1) at the border between politics and religion, he manages to emphasize how important the role of the Churches was in different matters of the contemporary international situation. Therefore, he emphasizes the activity of organisms like the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) (p. 1 et passim), the Ecumenical Commission on European Cooperation (1950-1953), the Committee on the Christian Responsibility for European Cooperation (1953-1966), and the Christian Study Group for European Unity (1966-1974, p. 15), showing that „by bringing together European technocrats and churchmen it had an impact on the religious mobilisation of post-war Europe vis-à-vis the process of European cooperation” (p. 15).

He also speaks about the „Ecumenical Group in Brussels (EGB)” that was officially opened on February 1962 (p. 112) and was considered as having three main responsibilities, namely: „to promote concrete action regarding religious education in the European schools and the construction of an Ecumenical Chapel in Brussels; and to act as a ‘spokesman of the churches’ in direct contact with European officials” (p. 113). The agents

therefore militated for aspects related to education, tried to get in contact with European officials and to help in the process of achieving unity.

As a direct consequence the European Catholic Centre hosted pastoral work among Eurocrats and their families (p. 115), there were four priests in charge of religious education in the European School in Brussels and the intention of the Catholic Church to establish a papal nuncio (p. 115). At the same time the ecumenical bodies strengthened their relationships and showed interest in European affairs by identifying officials with a religious interest in places like Paris, Geneva and Brussels (p. 118). The aforementioned CCREC will become therefore a useful tool for churches. It militated for a common market, it helped overcome some crises during the Cold War and later, on November 19 and 20, 1966, at Institut Néerlandais in Paris, brought together Eurocrats and representatives of the different organisms and worked on stringent problems, choosing also „to have a new title, the Christian Study Group for European Unity (CSGEU)” (p. 127).

Segmented into five major parts, the first one dedicated to the relationships between the ecumenical movement and the Schuman plan (pp. 19-56), the second one to the relationships between Protestantism and the European Institutions between 1954 and 1964 (pp. 57-90), the third one to the relationships between Roman Catholicism and the European Communities between 1958 and 1964 (pp. 91-111), the 4th one to the relationships between the Ecumenical Movement and the European Community (1964-1968, pp. 112-135) and the last one to Catholic-Protestant relations and the *finality* of the European Integration (1968-1979, pp. 136-176) and accompanied by a rich list of appendices (pp. 205-260) such as the biographies of the main personalities that had an important word to say in the presented topics, the book reveals itself to be a worthwhile contribution to the understanding of the complex dynamics of the relationships between different churches and the making of the European Union.

Rich in previously unpublished information and bringing into attention a topic that has not until now been investigated by contemporary research, Lucian N. Leuștean's book *The Ecumenical Movement and the Making of the European Community* is a contribution that should for sure be taken into account both by theologians interested in the ecumenical field and in the way how Christianity contributed to contemporary geopolitics, but also by historians, sociologists or philosophers who are interested in finding more about a topic with inter-disciplinary relevance and to create bridges between different domains of research.

Symposium

Topics of the Symposia held every year in the first weekend in December, between 1993-2017. Starting with the 2019 issue the journal *Symposium* is no longer a thematic publication.

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