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**INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON
THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIENCES & ARTS, RELIGION & EDUCATION**

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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	7
1. AMO UT SCIAM: THE FUNCTION OF LOVE IN THE PROCESS OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE LIGHT OF ST. BONAVENTURE’S PHILOSOPHY , Christopher DC. Francisco, La Consolacion University Philippines Catmon, Philippines.....	9
2. A NEW CONCEPT TO BE RECKONED WITH: NEUROTHEOLOGY , Prof. PhD. Alexandru-Corneliu Arion, Faculty of Orthodox Theology and Sciences of Education, “Valahia” University of Târgoviște, Romania.....	22
3. THE TOPOLOGICAL SPACE IN GOD’S MIND , Prof. PhD. Walter Gomide, Federal University of Mato Grosso., Department of Philosophy, Brazil.....	33
4. THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF DUMITRU STĂNILOAE , Prof. PhD. Gheorghe Angheliescu (a), Prof. PhD. Marin Bugiulescu(b), (a)Valahia University of Târgoviște, Romania, (b) Member of Dumitru Stăniloae Scientific and Interdisciplinary Research Center/ Valahia University, Târgoviște, Romania,.....	38
5. AESTHETICS OF GEOMETRY IN FOLK ART IN PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION , Prof. PhD. Loredana Muntean (a), Prof. PhD. Adina Vesa (b), a) University of Oradea, Romania, (b) University of Oradea, Romania,.....	45
6. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT , Prof. M.A. Verdes Victoria, Romania.....	51
7. THE STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SHAPING THEIR CHARACTER , PhD. Santi Elena-Ancuța (a) Santi Cosmin (b), “Valahia” University of Târgoviște, Romania.....	56
8. THE HOLY SCRIPTURE AS FOUNDATION OF THE ICON , PhD. Florin Vârlan, “Valahia” University of Târgoviște, Romania.....	67
8. “THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS”- A RECONCILING WITNESS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY , PhD. Diane C. Kessler Massachusetts Council of Churches (U.S.A.),	74
PRESENTATION OF MCDSARE	78

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MCDSARE: 2017
**EDITORIAL - International Multidisciplinary Scientific
Conference on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts,
Religion & Education**

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Abstract

In the context of the current international framework, *Ideas Forum International Academic and Scientific Association* - IFIASA Journals and Conferences joins the effort in bringing together researchers and scientists from all over the globe, facilitating the professional development and encouraging dialogue, creativity and exchange of ideas. The aim of IFIASA Conferences is to create and develop a scientific network, provide the framework for improving and shaping methodologies while continuously exchanging connections and establishing partnerships.

Keywords: IFIASA; Ideas Forum International Academic and Scientific Association; researchers, international scientific conference, transdisciplinarity; life; world;

INTRODUCTION

The 2nd edition of Ideas Forum International Academic and Scientific Association - IFIASA was an event with multidisciplinary character, whose general objective was to promote scientific excellence, encouraging original research.

Ideas Forum International Academic and Scientific Association IFIASA provides a platform for the latest scientific, theological, philosophical and moral-educational research, encouraging approaches from different areas and points of view. The aim of the IFIASA is to organize and promote scientific and educational activities in humanist and social sciences on an international level.

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The 2nd International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education, Theme of the Conference: Relationship between Man, World and Technique / 20-21 November, 2017, Targoviste, Romania, Volume 1/2017;

The 1st International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education, Theme of the Conference: Relationship between Man and Cosmos from Science and Religion perspectives / 10-11 May, 2016, Targoviste, Romania, Volume in Icoana Credintei.

The *International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conferences on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education - MCDSARE* in 2017 succeeded in gathering scholars, professors, theologians, philosophers, or people eager to align themselves with the trends of a knowledge-based society and the dialogue between science, art, religion and education.

The academic and scientific content presented in the *International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conferences on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education 2017* presents the opportunity to examine the altogether truth-claims found in academic spaces, as well as the methods laid out by every discipline and the meanings that derive from them. This is both the aim and the scientific mission of our IFIASA.



MCDSARE: 2017

International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education

AMO UT SCIAM: THE FUNCTION OF LOVE IN THE PROCESS OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE LIGHT OF ST. BONAVENTURE'S PHILOSOPHY

(An offshoot of the Augustinian Spirituality on the Primacy of Love)

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Abstract

This study aimed at probing the function of love in the process of knowledge in the light of St. Bonaventure's philosophy. To achieve this aim, the researcher have focused the study to the following questions: (a) What is the concept of love according to St. Bonaventure? (b) What is the process of knowledge? This study will use the qualitative-historical method. This study is qualitative because it deals with the non-numerical data in the form of philosophical texts. Also, it is historical in the sense of Schleiermacher and Dilthey's ideographical history which does not so much focused on ideas in themselves but also on the life experience that led to formulation of the idea. The results showed, on the one hand, that love refers to which seeks its genuineness to God. A man-to-God relationship. In the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, love is when a man has reached the contemplation with God. To love is to be united with the First and Supreme Principle through contemplation. Knowledge, on the other hand, knowledge is a judgment, therefore, is an action which causes the sensible species, received in a sensible way through the senses, to enter the intellectual faculty by a process of purification and abstraction. Hence, love is the unitive factor of knowledge that it cognates, and knowledge is the cognitive factor of love that it unites.

Keywords: Function of Love; Process of Knowledge; St. Bonaventure's Philosophy;

1. INTRODUCTION

In the works of St. Bonaventure, philosophy has always been a handmaid of theology. There should be a primacy of faith to that of reason (*credo ut intelligam*). And it is also corollary on the relation of love and knowledge – that love should be the first in order to know.

On one of the historical movements in the life of St. Bonaventure (1221-1274) is the intellectual movement when he began his new life in Paris during the thirteenth century.¹ Intellectual movement is the 'discovery' or the 'return' of Aristotle in the West which took the later years of St. Bonaventure.² Originally, Greek Christian thinkers of that time relied their philosophical endeavours more of the teachings of the Church (as long as it is true). In fact, St. Augustine was the most influential philosopher and theologian during that time. As Christopher Cullen says, "St. Augustine authorized Christians to take from the philosophers whatever they found true and to make it their own."³ The *De Doctrina Christiana* of St. Augustine (354-430) was considered as the proximate foundation and most influential teachings since twelfth century. Alexander of Hales, a professor of St. Bonaventure in the University of Paris, taught this Christian Doctrine to St. Bonaventure and this made a great influence to that of St. Bonaventure's philosophy.

However, after some times, this toleration began anew when the translations of the works of Aristotle has worn the whole time of the thirteenth century. Many Christians have followed Aristotelian teachings rather than of Christ. Consequently, there were groups of intellectuals which have been established and eventually resulted great issues in the life of the Church in whole Middle Ages. One of these are the Averroists.⁴ In this sense, the relation of philosophy and theology have been also affected. Philosophy has been seen as independent to theology. From the words Etienne Gilson, "St. Bonaventure thought of the problem of the possibility of philosophy separate from theology, did not arise: and all the philosophy he was ever to teach was from its first moment integrated in his theological synthesis."⁵

Love is always on the frontier of knowledge. It was manifested on the teachings of the Church since time immemorial. The philosophy of St. Bonaventure echoes the voices of the past especially of St. Augustine (*Credo ut Intelligam*). One must first believe in order to understand.

The problem of pure rationalistic approach of some thinkers ahead of St. Bonaventure was already enlightened since St. Bonaventure have fought it with his conferences and disputations. But as time passed by, when the modern period came which dominates the current issues of contemporary world, people are now on the other side of the coin of such philosophy and as if there is a 'return' of such rationalism. Love is now understood behind knowledge. Too much rationality reigns over man again.

¹Christopher M. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3. St. Bonaventure's 'new life' here pertains to his philosophical and theological study on Paris. He was originally from Bagnoregio, Italy.

²Ibid. For Cullen, he used the term 'discovery' because Aristotle's work was literally discovered when the time it was translated by some thinkers like Boethius. However, for Battista Mondin, he used the term 'return' because according to previous study of the researcher, Aristotle's work was taken by the Muslim thinkers (Averroes, Ibn Gabirol and the likes) who were from the Middle East. See Battista Mondin, *A History of Mediaeval Philosophy* (Bangalore: Theological Publications, 2010), 360. But whether it was a return or a discovery or both, this event brought a great impact on the life of St. Bonaventure especially on the later years of his life.

³Ibid, 4.

⁴"It is precisely this latter group of radical Aristotelians, followers of the strict reading of Aristotle by the Arab philosopher Averroes (1126 – 1198)." Ibid. Some of the things that Averroes insist is that "there is genuine causation in the created cosmos: natural causes produce their own effects and are not mere triggers for the exercise of the divine omnipotence." Anthony Kenny, *Mediaeval Philosophy: A New History of Western Philosophy Volume II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 48. He also reduced the role of natural causation. For him, there is no dichotomy of essence and existence on all beings. In other words, given the fact that there is no distinction between the essence and existence of God, it also follows that man, and other creatures' existence is his essence. In this sense, Averroes was so much cling himself to his belief that natural causes alone is the cause of its effects. Hence, God's work is not recognized, and just an illusion.

⁵Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of Bonaventure*, trans. Dom Illtyd Trethowan and Frank Sheed (New York: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), 9.

In the Encyclical Letter by the late Supreme Pontiff and now St. John Paul II, it says, the “modern philosophy clearly has a great merit of focusing attention upon man.”⁶ The attention is now the capacity of man to know, as if he or she would know everything without God. In this sense, no wonder why there are so many people desire to know truths of metaphysics while relying only on the physical intervention of things. Thomas Hobbes, one of the modern philosopher, have tried to claim that man is a nasty, bad, and live to survive. As stated, “He attempted to develop a comprehensive view of man from the mechanistic and materialistic base.”⁷ Man acts as robots. On one hand, If Hobbes is correct, this is to say that man’s capacity for God is insufficient. He is as if only a material being. In fact, how can be a material being have an access to something transcendent who is God? Though he is able to think, to reason out, and navigate, still, he is only limited in material things. On the other hand, this implicates that man’s interiority is just an illusion. The world sees no longer the spiritual dimension of every human being. But is it true? St. Bonaventure in his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, “we are not able to be raised above ourselves unless by means of a superior virtue raising us.”⁸ This is to say that man’s effort on attaining wisdom by merely relying himself on knowledge is insufficient. Man needs an aid which is superior to him – God. As Zachary Hayes would say, “The deepest meaning of all intellectual effort is to be found in the deepening of our sense of the mystery that is God, and increasing our love for God.”⁹

Now, in every ascent of the Soul into God, one is required to know himself because that is one of the process. He needs to pass the stage of seeing himself as an *Imago Dei*. Besides, under the light of the Divine Illumination, the love of man to God is being led and become more evident and concrete. St. Bonaventure would tell, “We are given light to discern the steps of the soul’s ascent to God. For we are so created that the material universe itself is a ladder by which we may ascend to God.”¹⁰

In this sense, the *epitome* of this research says that, the interiority of man can be considered as the ladder to ascend to God through knowing one’s self and from this point, he could eventually love God who is the creator of him. “Every good gifts and every perfect gifts is from above, coming down from the God of lights.”¹¹ And since man came from God, he would also turn back to God (*exitus et reditus*).

In order to arrive at the consideration of the First Principle, which is the most spiritual being and eternal and above us, we must pass through vestiges which are corporeal and temporal and outside us. ... Next, we must enter into our mind, which is the image of God, an image which is everlasting, spiritual, and within us. ... Finally, looking to the First Principle, we must go beyond to what is eternal, most spiritual and above us.¹²

Now, with the context aforementioned, the researcher wants to shed light on the following questions which he takes into consideration in this study. (a) What is the concept of love according to St. Bonaventure? (b) What is the process of knowledge? How does love function in the process of knowledge in the light of St. Bonaventure philosophy?

⁶John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (September 14, 1998), 5.

⁷Steven M. Cahn, ed., *Classics of Western Philosophy: Introduction to Thomas Hobbes* (U.S.A: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1995), 473-4.

⁸Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind to God*, trans. Philotheus Boehner (U.S.A: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 4. “Sed supra nos levare non possumus nisi per virtutem superiorem nos elevantem.”

⁹Introduction of Zachary Hayes to Bonaventure, “On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology.” in the *Works of Saint Bonaventure*, trans. F. Edward Coughlin, O.F.M. (New York: Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University, 1996), 8.

¹⁰Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind to God*, 5. “In hac oratione orando illuminatur ad cognoscendum divinae ascensionis gradus. Cum enim secundum statum conditionis nostrae ipsa rerum universitas sit scala ad ascendendum in Deum;...”

¹¹Bonaventure, *On the Reduction*, 37. “Omne datum optimum et omne donum petfectum desursum est, deseendens a Patre luminum...”

¹²Bonaventure, *Journey of the Mind to God*, 6.

2. METHODOLOGY

DESCRIPTION OF THE METHOD

This study will use the qualitative-historical method. This study is qualitative because it deals with the non-numerical data in the form of philosophical texts. Also, it is historical in the sense of Schleiermacher and Dilthey's ideographical history which does not so much focused on ideas in themselves but also on the life experience that led to formulation of the idea.¹³

However, this study will be limited on the English translation of St. Bonaventure's work since the researcher considers his inability of understanding Latin language perfectly and without flaws. However, the translation is authoritative because the texts provides proper notes coming from the original texts which will be indicated on citations. Nonetheless, on some points, the researcher will have verifications through comparison to see the credibility of English translations as part of his discussions.

GATHERING OF TEXTUAL DATA

The gathering of the data for this research will be conducted in selected libraries and archives such as Immaculate Conception Library, San Carlos Seminary Library, Rizal Library of Ateneo de Manila University, Miguel de Benavides Library of the University of Santo Tomas, Philippine Dominican Center of Institutional Studies, and St. Augustine Library of the Recoletos School of Theology, and Our Lady of Angels Seminary Library. A documentary structure guide, both textual and verbal, will be the instrument used in collecting data.

3. RESULTS

A. THE AUGUSTINIAN INFLUENCE ON ST. BONAVENTURE'S CONCEPT OF LOVE

St. Bonaventure, though many had influenced him, was considered as highly influenced by St. Augustine in the sense that St. Augustine's philosophical endeavours were the ones used by his teacher Alexander of Hales as means to shape his mind. Iliia Delio says, "the relation between master and student was an important one, for St. Bonaventure received from Alexander the substance of the tradition that would shape his own synthesis – especially the currents from St. Augustine, the Pseudo-Dionysius and the Victorines."¹⁴ In other words, St. Bonaventure has a debt to his teacher since he was being formed through these noble philosophers especially St. Augustine during that time. But how was St. Bonaventure influenced by St. Augustine?

The researcher believes that to answer the question is to first see how St. Bonaventure treats love. Love here does not pertain to something romantic which happens just on the level of man to man relationship. Rather, it refers to love which seeks its genuineness to God. In other words, it is man to God relationship. In the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, love is when a man has reached the contemplation with God. As St. Bonaventure says,

After our mind has beheld God outside itself through his vestiges and in his vestiges, within itself, through his image and in his image, and above itself through the similitude of the Divine Light shining above us and the Light itself, insofar as this is possible in our state as wayfarers and through the exercise of our mind, when finally in the sixth stage our mind reaches that point where it contemplates in the First and Supreme Principle.¹⁵

In other words, for St. Bonaventure, to love is to be united with the First and Supreme Principle through contemplation. Given that, what now is the notion of love according to St. Augustine in order to understand it more clearly?

¹³Emmanuel Batoon, *A Guide to Thesis Writing in Philosophy Part I: Proposal Writing*, (Manila: REJN Publishing, 2005) 61-2.

¹⁴Delio, 22.

¹⁵St. Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, 110-1. "postquam mens nostra contuita est Deum extra se per vestigia et in vestigiis, intra se per imaginem et in imagine, supra se per divinae lucis similitudinem super nos relucentem et in ipsa luce, secundum quod possibile est secundum statum viae et exercitium mentis nostrae; cum tantum in sexto gradu ad hoc pervenerit, ut speculetur in principio primo et summo et mediatore Dei et hominum, Iesu Christo."

Love (*Ordo Caritatis*) is basically the fulfilment of one's interiority. Love is already there, it is already actual. Once man has experienced it, it is so precious to him because it is the one that fulfils his thirst for God. St. Augustine says, "So what all that has been said amount to, while we have been dealing with things, is that *the fulfilment and the end of the law and of all the divine scriptures is love.*"¹⁶ It is a given fact that humans are busy of so many things in the world, especially on material things and pleasures that tempt in order for man to turn his back to God. But the main reason behind these things is that, 'man is thirsty of happiness.' For St. Augustine, as stated above, it is love which can only fulfill the emptiness on man's interiority and the very end of any laws and even the scriptures. Hence, in relation to St. Bonaventure's, there is a need to be united with the Divine through the creation simply because man is restless until his soul rests in communion with God.

However, in St. Bonaventure's notion of love, to love God is not easy. It cannot be attained very quickly because man has to undergo and pass the six steps which St. Bonaventure calls the "Six Steps of Illumination" which also symbolize the Six Wings of Seraph.¹⁷ First is *The Consideration of God through His Vestiges in the Universe*. Second is *The Consideration of God in His Vestiges in the Sense World*. Third is *The Consideration of the Image of God in the Natural Powers*. Fourth is *The Consideration of God and His Gifts of Grace*. Fifth is *The Consideration of the Divine Unity as Being*. And lastly, *The Consideration of The Most Blessed Trinity as Good*. Hence, if one wishes to attain contemplation with God, one must pass and consider these process. Given that, though it is not easy to undergo, the thing that matters most for St. Bonaventure is that man is capable of God especially to love.

From the view point of the composition of man, man is capable of loving because he is composed of body and soul. But this should not be understood as easy as that. For St. Bonaventure, since he was influenced by St. Augustine who speaks of man as souled body which means that man is more of a soul than the body, man is conceived to be a spiritual being. In other words, St. Bonaventure sees man as a rational soul as he says, "the body is disposed to receive the noblest form, the rational soul."¹⁸ Now, to understand the soul, is to first understand the body. But to understand the body is not to delimit its significant role to the rational soul.

The body has a great role to the universe because without the body, there would be no harmony at all. In the *Breviloquium*, it says, "the heavenly bodies influence the production of those things that are generated from the elements. Through their harmonizing influence on the contrary qualities, but far removed from an equal balance, they produce minerals, ... through a conciliation that truly achieves equal balance, they produce the human body."¹⁹ This means that, in the first place, the heavenly bodies in the universe influence not only the elements in the world but almost all creatures especially the human body because it is the one which can *truly* achieve harmony and balance in the universe. The human body is the one that *acts* depending on whatever the rational soul intends. In other words, without the body, there can be a possible harmony but it is insufficient.

Nevertheless, the rational soul, on the other hand, is the one that leads all sensible corporeal nature to its fulfilment. St. Bonaventure says, "Through a rational soul – which is form having existence, life, feeling and intelligence – every nature may be led back, as if in an intelligible circle, to its beginning, in

¹⁶Saint Augustine, "De Doctrina Christiana, Book I, 39." in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1996), 123.

¹⁷Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, 54. "Nam per senas alas illas recte intelligi possunt sex illuminationum suspensiones, quibus anima quasi quibusdam gradibus vel itineribus disponitur, ut transeat ad pacem per exstaticos excessus sapientiae christianae." In the translation of Ewert Cousins, the six wings or the six levels of illumination refers the symbol of the "Six Wings of the Seraph." But in the original text, there is no 'Seraph' therein.

¹⁸Bonaventure, "Breviloquium." trans. Dominic Monti, O.F.M. in *Bonaventure Texts in Translation Series*, ed. Robert Karris, O.F.M. (New York: Franciscan Institute Publication, 2005), 70.

¹⁹Ibid.

which it is perfected and beatified.”²⁰ He adds, “The human soul strives to its end through free will, by virtue of this freedom it excels every power of corporeal beings.”²¹ In this sense, the rational soul has the capacity to lead corporeal realities because of its freedom. Subsequently, the rational soul moves the body not towards something else but definitely towards the end because the rational soul is the form which is the principle of perfection just as St. Thomas Aquinas conceived it.

With this, the human body (as influenced by the heavenly bodies in the universe) and the human soul are both important for St. Bonaventure. On one hand, in the level of giving harmony in the universe, the human body is necessary because it is the one which acts. On the other hand, in the level of leading corporeal bodies to their perfection, the rational soul man is also needed. Hence, the two must interplay with each other for they are both necessary. This idea may explain why man is capable of loving God. Man can love God because in the first place he is composed of body and soul unlike any other creature which is definitely different from him. The human soul is not like the soul of plants for it pertains only to vegetative beings and sentient beings. Rather, it is rational. In this sense, one may see the relation of the body and soul. The soul is conceived here as the thinking factor and the body is the acting factor. If one is absent, the other one would find it difficult to show its role. Hence, by the mere fact that man is composed of body and soul, it tells that he is capable of loving God in action and mind. In other words, to love is to be human. Given that idea, there is a deeper reason why man is capable of God. And that is because of his being an *Imago Dei*.

B. THE ARISTOTELIAN INFLUENCE ON ST. BONAVENTURE’S CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE

Now, to deepen the argument on man’s capacity to know God (at a certain level), the researcher is hereby laying his argument. Though man cannot know without God, he still has the capacity to know because he is capable of thinking – as The Philosopher defines it, ‘man is a rational being’. To establish this point is to first see the influence of Aristotle on St. Bonaventure especially on his notion of man.

Many scholars know for a fact that Aristotle defines man in a scientific way since during the time of Aristotle, to be a scientist is to be a philosopher. Aristotle’s notion of man refers to his discussion on the soul. In his book (*De Anima*) *On the Soul*, he says, “Two characteristic marks have above all others been recognized as distinguishing that which has soul in it from that which has not: movement and sensation.”²² In other words, there are two characteristics of the soul namely - movement and sensation. On the one hand, this means that anything that is an agent of movement is the soul that is why it is also called as the principle of life. In this sense, life pertains to movement. As stated, “Life, that is, may mean thinking or perception or local movement and rest, or movement in the sense of nutrition, decay, and growth.”²³ The soul which is the principle of life also means perception. From this point of view, the researcher can claim that it is the power of the soul which pertains to the ability of man to think and perceive. Hence, man is capable of thinking simply because of the fact that he has a soul.

On the other hand, the soul is also a sensation. The Philosopher says, “Sensation, depends, as we have said, on a process of movement or affection from without, for it is held to be some sort of change of quality.”²⁴ Thus, the soul as the principle of movement is closely related to the soul as the principle of sensation. In this sense, the soul is dependent on the movement of the affection. But what is in the affection which the soul is dependent on? Aristotle answers, “The term “object of the sense” covers three kinds of objects, two kinds of which are, in our language, directly perceptible, while the remaining one is

²⁰ Bonaventure, “Breviloquium.” trans. Dominic Monti, O.F.M. in *Bonaventure Texts in Translation Series*, ed. Robert Karris, O.F.M. (New York: Franciscan Institute Publication, 2005), 70-1.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Aristotle, *De Anima*, 403b book I chapter 2., trans. J.A. Smith, in *The Images of Human: The Philosophy of Human Person in a Religious Context*, eds. Hunter Brown, Dennis L. Hudecki, Leonard A. Kennedy, and John J. Snyder (Illinois: Loyola Press, 1995), 56.

²³ Aristotle, “De Anima,” 59.

²⁴ Ibid., 60.

only incidentally perceptible.”²⁵ Thus, according to this statement, anything that is perceptible is the object of affection. The soul is dependent on the movement of affection, which is the object of affection, which in turn is something that is perceptible, something that can be perceived, or something that is sensible. Therefore, Aristotle says, “the soul is in a way all existing things; for existing things are either sensible or thinkable, and knowledge is in a way what is knowable, and sensation is in a way what is sensible.”²⁶ The soul is all existing things because in all things that moves, in all things that have life, there the soul is. These existing things are sensible which pertains to anything that is sensible. Besides, these are also thinkable, which pertains to anything that is knowable. In this sense, on the researcher’s claim on Aristotle’s influence on St. Bonaventure, is hereby affirmed. Man is indeed capable of thinking which leads him to know.

As what one may see on St. Bonaventure’s *The Soul’s Journey into God*, he says, “our mind has three principal perceptual orientation. (*aspectus*). The first is toward exterior material objects, and is the basis for its being designated as animal (*animalitas*) or sensual (*sensualitas*).”²⁷ Here, St. Bonaventure does not really deny the fact that man, like what Aristotle claims, is sensible and capable of knowing. Our mind sees the exterior corporals which pertain to anything that is sensible, visible, and knowable (e.g. plants, animals, place, and even his fellowmen). Consequently, the journey of the soul does not start with something transcendental very quickly. Rather, the starting point of the journey is – considering the vestiges of God in the universe.

Now, as has already been stated, the capability of man to think is insufficient for St. Bonaventure. Though the researcher has established the influence of Aristotle on St. Bonaventure, however, this must not be understood in an absolute sense because St. Bonaventure is still on the safeguard on the tendency of man to rationalism.²⁸ In this sense, Aristotle is “best seen not as a self-sufficient form of human knowledge but as a stage in the larger pattern of the spiritual journey of humanity into God.”²⁹ For this reason, St. Bonaventure believes that there is something beyond these things, man has to transcend himself to God because he has to be perfected and purified.

4. DISCUSSION

C. THE RELATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE

Knowledge and love are basically related to one another because if one is not present with the other, they will not be able achieve their ultimate goal or end. Moses Aaron Angeles, in his article *St. Bonaventure on God and Philosophy* claims that, “The knowledge of God is incomplete unless it is also founded on admiration and authentic love.”³⁰ In this sense, knowledge must lead one to love and love must lead one to know in order to achieve contemplation of God.

C.1. KNOWLEDGE AS THE COGNITIVE FACTOR OF LOVE

Now, knowledge here is set to be the cognitive factor of love. But how does it become like that? The researcher believes that to answer the question is to know first how St. Bonaventure conceives knowledge. Sometimes, knowledge connotes as perception. For instance, one may say that he or she

²⁵Ibid., 61.

²⁶Aristotle, “De Anima,” 67.

²⁷Bonaventure, *The Soul’s Journey into God*, 61. “Secundum hunc triplicem progressum mens nostra tres habet aspectus principales. Unus est ad corporalia exteriora, secundum quem vocatur animalitas seu sensualitas: alius intra se et in se, secundum quem dicitur spiritus; tertius supra se, secundum quem dicitur mens.”

²⁸Rationalism is what St. Bonaventure was fighting into simply because he believes that any scientific knowledge which Aristotle promotes during his time is insufficient to man’s search for the ultimate cause of things. There was a crucial controversy among intellectuals during the time of St. Bonaventure because it was also the time of rational knowledge and religious revelation. Please see for further readings. Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, 21.

²⁹Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, 48.

³⁰Angeles, 21.

possesses knowledge if he or has been able to perceive its object of knowledge. Concretely, knowledge is when one has seen, touched, smelled, and tasted a ballpen. However, this might lead one to the danger of relativism as well as the danger of limiting the knowledge because if knowledge is just on the level of perception, how about those which are beyond man's perception? How about those things that are perceived by the knower which others do not? How about the existence of God, angels, soul, and love? All these are perceivable and yet beyond the perception of man.

St. Bonaventure, in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, particularly on the second chapter which refers to the contemplation of God through the sensible worlds, explains his conception of knowledge as a progression of three hierarchical operations. It starts with *apprehension*. Then, it is followed by knowledge as *pleasure*, and lastly by knowledge as *judgment*.

In the first process, St. Bonaventure does not deny the fact that "there are five senses in man which are like five doors through which knowledge of all things which are in the sense world enters his soul."³¹ In the entrance of man into the contemplation of the Divine through the vestiges in the sense world, these five senses are the means of man in order for him to be able to make such apprehension. St. Bonaventure calls this five senses as *five doors* through which knowledge of all things which are in the sense world enters his soul. In these *five doors*, St. Bonaventure made a detailed presentation on how these doors work in human apprehension:

For through sight enter the sublime and luminous heavenly bodies and other colored objects; through touch, solid and terrestrial bodies; through three intermediate senses, intermediate objects; through taste, liquid, through hearing, sounds; and through smell, vapors which have something of humid nature, something of air, and something fiery or hot, as is deceived in the smoke from incense.³²

Now, in every apprehension of man, objects that are being apprehended are those objects which are outside or the exterior senses. These exterior objects are not apprehended through their substance but through their likeness which primarily pertains to the external characteristics of things. Example, things' beauty, sight, sweetness, smell, hearing, wholesomeness, touch.³³ All these characteristics, nonetheless, dwell in the idea of appropriation which leads to a deeper conception of knowledge by St. Bonaventure.

Knowledge as pleasure is understood here as suitable objects for apprehension. In the first idea, St. Bonaventure have discussed the fact that man uses his sense in order to apprehension external things. But now, in this second level of process, here lies man's apprehension of suitable objects. This means that when the object of knowledge is suitable for the apprehension, then it is called appropriation or pleasure. As stated above, knowledge is pleasure if the object known possesses beauty, sight, sweetness, smell, hearing, wholesomeness, and touch. Now, if it is pleasurable, then, it is called enjoyment. If it is enjoyable, then, it is called proportion. Proportionality, for St. Bonaventure, is the proportionality between the object known and the one whom the objects imitate – God. "And thus, through pleasure, exterior objects enter into the soul by their likeness."³⁴

After apprehension and pleasure, knowledge as judgment comes. In judgment, according to St. Bonaventure:

We determine not only whether something is white or black, because this pertains to a particular sense, not only whether it is wholesome or harmful, because this pertains to an interior sense, but we

³¹Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, 70. "Homo igitur, qui dicitur minor mundus, habet quinque sensus quasi quinque portas, per quas intrat cognitio omnium, quae sunt in mundo sensibili, in animam ipius."

³²Ibid. "Nam per visum intrant corpora sublimia et luminosa et cetera colorata, per tactum vero corpora solida et terrestria, per tres vero sensus intermedios intrant intermedia, ut per gustum aquea, per auditum aërea, per odoratum vaporabilia, quae aliquid habent de natura humida, aliquid de aërea, aliquid de ignea seu calida, sicut patet in fumo ex aromatibus resolutum."

³³Ibid., 71.

³⁴Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, 70. "Et sic totus iste mundus introire habet in animam humanam per portas sensuum."

judge also and give a reason of the pleasurable. In this judgment, we inquire into the reason of the pleasure which is experienced in the sense from the object.³⁵

In this sense, St. Bonaventure does not deny the fact that man does not only depend on the validity or the genuineness of objects in themselves. Rather, St. Bonaventure affirms the fact that man uses reason in order for him to be able to find the *proportion of harmony* because for him, a thing is reasonable when it has *proportion of harmony*. As stated, “We ask the reason why a thing is beautiful or pleasant or wholesome, and we find that the reason lies in the proportion of harmony.”³⁶ Now, knowledge as “judgment, therefore, is an action which causes the sensible species, received in a sensible way through the senses, to enter the intellective faculty by a process of purification and abstraction.”³⁷ This means that in the process of knowledge, man knows an object or a thing not only in the sense that man is the one knowing it alone, but rather, these sensible species enter into the intellective faculty of man because of judgment. Judgment, indeed, is an action which lifts up the reason behind things.

Now, knowledge is a cognitive factor of love since knowledge uses reason which does not take man away from his goal but the otherwise. As St. Bonaventure says, “Through this impression, it leads to its source, namely object to be known.”³⁸ This means that through knowledge, love would not only be seen as something that is only being apprehended, as well as something pleasurable, but it judges in order to see the reasons of things towards its source or goal. In this sense, knowledge makes love knowledgeable of what it should and should not go. Hence, knowledge leads love to see the ‘proportion of harmony’ which indicates whether the object is reasonable or not.

C.2. LOVE AS THE UNITIVE FACTOR OF KNOWLEDGE

The notion of love, however, was implicitly discussed by St. Bonaventure in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and in *The Triple Way*. In *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, love is conceived as the necessary means in order to attain contemplation of the Divine. According to St. Bonaventure, specifically on the prologue:

First, I invite the reader to the groans of prayer through Christ crucified, through whose blood we are cleansed from the filth of vice – so that he no believe that reading is sufficient without unction...knowledge without love...Therefore, man of God, first exercise yourself in remorse of conscience before you raise your eyes to the rays of Wisdom reflected in its mirrors, lest perhaps from gazing upon these rays you fall into darkness.³⁹

³⁵Ibid. “qua non solum diiudicatur, utrum hoc sit album, vel nigrum, quia hoc pertinet ad sensum particularem; non solum, utrum sit salubre, vel nocivum, quia hoc pertinet ad sensum interiorem; verum etiam, quia diiudicatur et ratio redditur, quare hoc delectat; et in hoc actu inquiritur de ratione delectationis, quae in sensu percipitur ab objecto.”

³⁵Ibid. “...cum quaeritur ratio pulcri, suavis et salubris: et invenitur quod haec est proportio aequalitatis..”

³⁷To understand more clearly the ‘*proportion of harmony*’, St. Bonaventure states as follows, “The basis of harmony is the same in the large and small objects; neither is it increased by size nor does it change or pass away as things pass away, nor is it altered by motion. It abstracts, therefore, from place, time, motion, and consequently is unchangeable, unlimited, endless and is completely spiritual.” Bonaventure, *The Soul’s Journey into God*, 72. “Ratio autem aequalitatis est eadem in magnis et parvis nec extenditur dimensionibus nec succedit seu transit cum transeuntibus nec motibus alteratur. Abstrahit igitur a loco, tempore et motu, ac per hoc est incommutabilis, incircumscribibilis et omnino spiritualis.”

³⁸Bonaventure, *The Soul’s Journey into God*, 72. “...per illam impressionem in suum principium, scilicet in obiectum cognoscendum,”

³⁹Ibid., 55-6. “Igitur ad gemitum orationis per Christum crucifixum, per cuius sanguinem purgamur a sordibus vitiorum, primum quidem lectorem invito, ne forte credat quod sibi sufficiat lectio sine unctione,.. scientia sine caritate... Exerce igitur te, homo Dei, prius ad stimulum conscientiae remordentem, antequam oculos eleves ad radios sapientiae in eius speculis relucentes, ne forte ex ipsa radiorum speculatione

In this sense, St. Bonaventure has a right assumption that man, due to his fall and the fact that he is a created being, is really incapable to attain God through his own rationalistic effort. That is why, man has to love, pray, be cleansed and purified in order for him to be able to be in communion with God. And that is also the reason why it was noted by St. Bonaventure in the prologue or in the beginning because man, unless he has this intellectual humility, can never be in the journey with God and tends to fall to the pit of darkness.

However, in *The Triple Way*, St. Bonaventure has laid down three hierarchical approaches on how man would be able to attain Wisdom. These three are called the *Purgative, Illuminative, and Perfective Union*. For St. Bonaventure, “Purgation leads us to peace, illumination to truth, and perfective union to love.”⁴⁰ In the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, it also says, “we are led by the hierarchical operations, that is, the purifying, illumining, and perfecting of human souls; and by the hierarchical revelations of the Sacred Scriptures.”⁴¹

First, in the *purgative way*, one is able to attain peace because St. Bonaventure preempts that after man has been able to win over his concupiscence and other illnesses due to sinful human nature, he would be cleansed and purified once again. In doing this, man has to first scrutinize his conscience and remember all his sins. According to St. Bonaventure, “This is how man should exercise himself in the use of the sting of conscience: he should first AROUSE it, then SHARPEN it, and, finally, DIRECT it. He must arouse it through remembrance of sin, sharpen it by considering human condition, and set it in the right direction by meditating on what is good.”⁴² After this, the soul is expected to see himself as negligent, as so much close to his concupiscence, and having malice.

Concerning *negligence*, a man must be careful to recall whether he has failed to guard his heart, make good use of his time, or act with the right purpose. These points require the greatest attention so that the heart may be safe, time well spent and a proper goal pursued in every deed... Now, as to *concupiscence*, a man must ask himself whether there is alive in him any uncontrollable desire, born of the senses, or of curiosity, or of worldly vanity; for these are the roots of all evil... Concerning *malice*, a man must know whether there are lives or ever lived in him in anger, envy, or acrimony, that make a soul evil... Thus, by means of a threefold search of memory, the sting of conscience shall be aroused and the soul taste the bitterness of remorse.⁴³

After having been able to pass this first stage, the result must be a clean conscience which brings man to be joyful and glad. As St. Bonaventure says, “From this, in turn, proceeds an inner joy that makes our spirit ready to rise aloft. And so, this first way originates in the sting of conscience, and terminates in a disposition of spiritual joy; it is pursued in pain but consummated by love.”⁴⁴

Secondly, in the *Illuminative way*, “Here a man must learn to use the beam of intelligence in this manner: first, he must hold it aloft to reveal the guilt remitted; then he must broaden its scope to include the favors he has received; lastly, he must turn it back to display the promised rewards.”⁴⁵ In this sense, man has to use himself in his meditation the beam of intelligence in order for him to see the guilt feeling due to his sins. And as he remembers this, this will eventually broaden if he would consider the favors or the graces which he has received and under this condition is to see also the fact that all things are rewarded.

Lastly, in the *Perfective Way*, St. Bonaventure conceives it as the highest way to really love God and attain wisdom. To act in this way are the following, first is the concentrated, then, fed, and then raised aloft. Concerning the first, man is no longer concentrated on the love of creatures but rather on the love which is only for God. “This we absolutely do: for there is no advantage in such love; if there were any, it

in graviorem incidas foveam tenebrarum.”

⁴⁰Bonaventure, *The Triple Way or Love Enkindled*, 63.

⁴¹Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, 92.

⁴²Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, 64.

⁴³Bonaventure, *The Triple Way or Love Enkindled*, 64-6.

⁴⁴Ibid., 68.

⁴⁵Ibid.

would not be substantial; and if it were substantial, it still would not be sufficient. Therefore, all love of creatures, without reservations must be rooted out of our hearts.”⁴⁶ Secondly, St. Bonaventure says that man’s heart should be fed toward the Spouse. And in doing this, “we consider love in reference to ourselves, to those in heaven, and in the Spouse Himself.”⁴⁷ Consequently, man would realize that through the love of the Spouse, whatever is lacking in him is given to him as well as all abundance of all goodness and also the supremely desirable presence of the Spouse. Lastly, this is where man would go beyond all these. He would raise above what is perceptible, imaginable and conceivable. It is the moment wherein man would really realize his “Beloved cannot be perceived through senses...imagination... and intellect... yet *He is all delight*.”⁴⁸

Hence, with all these three hierarchical ways in approaching or loving the Divine, these lead the intellective power of man to really unite himself with God. *In this sense, love becomes the unitive factor of knowledge because it unites everything along the process. In other words, if love would be cleansed, illumined and perfected in God, would eventually attain its end.*

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Having known the function of love in the process of knowledge in the light of exemplarism, this thesis concludes that the relation of knowledge and love lies on the very fact that man is a creature of God and so he can know and love God.

Thus, this research highlights the issue between philosophy and theology as appeared during the life of St. Bonaventure. Through this thesis, it gives solution to the problem of anthropocentrism in today’s situations. To the problem stated by St. John Paul II during his papacy, this thesis can be applied so that the modern man would not find himself as the focus human achievements. Meaning to say, any philosophical endeavours that man can do in his life must have a deep connection with God. Otherwise, man would fall into darkness. In this sense, philosophy must lead him to theology. Accordingly, philosophy is subordinated with theology. It must be a handmaid. However, it is necessary to theology because philosophy helps man to arrive at certainty. Because of man’s imperfection, he cannot easily understand transcendental things. Consequently, he must be lifted up. His man-ness should be perfected so that may have an access to perfection.

In like manner, this also concludes that it can be a firm foundation why man cannot know without God. In the first place, it is a given fact that man is a created being. Because of this, man tends to refuse God and becomes selfish. In the salvation history, man becomes wounded or infected when he deliberately refused God. Philosophically speaking, his mind becomes clouded and his concupiscence can easily be result to evil deeds. As a result, his capability to know becomes limited and leads to error. However, the existence of humankind does not end up with this darkness and chaos. Man’s triumph over ignorance and sin becomes possible. This happens when man really surrender himself to God and participate with His Light. This Light is the Divine Illumination. The Divine Illumination implies that God never abandons his creatures. God loves his people. In this sense, man can only know with the help of God. Hence, to love and know God becomes possible.

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⁴⁶Bonaventure, *The Triple Way or Love Enkindled*, 71.

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A NEW CONCEPT TO BE RECKONED WITH: NEUROTHEOLOGY

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Abstract

The present paper tackles one of the most significant expressions of the old conflict between science and religion, highlighted by the investigation at the crossroads of psychology, religion and spirituality, and neuroscience. Neurotheology is the study of correlations of neural phenomena with subjective experiences of spirituality and hypotheses to explain these phenomena. Partisans of this field claim that there is a neurological and evolutionary basis for subjective experiences traditionally categorized as spiritual or religious. However, writers committed to a materialist ontology and a reductive approach to the mind are arguing not only for neural correlates to spiritual experience but are intending to eliminate spirituality entirely by arguing that these experiences are caused by the brain in some manner. Underlining the “neuroscience of enlightenment”, the author analyzes aspects such as: the brain and enlightenment, prayer on the brain, neuroscience and religious experience, brain functions and theological topics. On functional MRI scans, people who meditate regularly are shown to have developed brains that are wired differently than the brains of people who don’t meditate. They are better able to remain calm and stress-free, live in peace, and practice compassion. What the researchers found is that the subjects who suffered of Alzheimer and Parkinson’s frontal lobes, parietal lobes, and limbic systems all showed similar heightened activity. Though the data has been interpreted by different people in different ways, what is clear is that prayer and meditation seem to have a unique biochemical effect on the brain. Neurotheology seeks to facilitate a dialogue between religion and science with the eventual goal of helping to integrate these perspectives around the nexus of neuropsychology.

Keywords: neurotheology; neuroscience; archetypes; enlightenment; prayer; brain; meditation;

1. INTRODUCTION

The turn of the new millennium has seen the emergence of “spiritual neuroscience”, a field of scientific investigation at the crossroads of psychology, religion and spirituality, and neuroscience. The main objective of this novel domain of research is to explore the neural underpinnings of *religious/spiritual/mystical* experiences (RSMs). These experiences relate to a fundamental dimension of human existence and are frequently reported across all cultures (D. Hay, 1990, p. 127). One of the basic assumptions of spiritual neuroscience is that RSMs are brain mediated, as are all other aspects of human experience. With respect to this issue, it is of paramount importance to fully appreciate that elucidating the neural substrates of these experiences does not diminish or depreciate their meaning and

value, and that the external reality of “God” can neither be confirmed nor disconfirmed by delineating the neural correlates of RSMs (J. Saver, J. Rabin, 1997, p. 499). Living such challenging times, in which supreme efforts have been done to reach at an integrative or holistic approach of reality, the underpinning question is of the type: *How can we achieve a unified understanding of the universe, which comprehends the physical, psychical, and spiritual dimensions of reality?* For that matter one can refer to the already old concept of «archetypes», as described in the psychological theories of C.G. Jung and his followers, one which provide the crucial link between the material and spiritual worlds. On the one hand, they are grounded in evolutionary neuropsychology; on the other, they are the objective constituents of the spiritual world. This might seem to reduce the spiritual realm to the “merely psychological,” or even to neural epiphenomena, but this is a misinterpretation of the theory, and that the gods (or God) are objectively real and crucially important for meaningful human life. (Bruce MacLennan, 2002, p. 1).

The current paper is an investigation into the field of *neurotheology*, a controversial domain which has attracted criticism from both the scientific and religious community and which is often quite divided amongst its own practitioners. Regretfully, but not too unexpectedly, science has got entangled with ideology, with proponents on all sides of the spectrum using findings from the laboratory in support of their own philosophical positions. There is a broader question which sets the frame and provides the context for the investigation into neurotheology and that is the question whether, and to what extent, we are ‘wired for spirituality’. In other words, are we, in any sense, somehow predisposed towards the spiritual? (Jimmy Kyriacou, 2016, p. 1)

2. WHAT IS NEUROTHEOLOGY?

Neurotheology, also known as ‘spiritual neuroscience’, and as the ‘neuroscience of religion’ is the study of correlations of neural phenomena with subjective experiences of spirituality and hypotheses to explain these phenomena. This contrasts with the psychology of religion which studies mental, rather than neural, states. Proponents of neurotheology claim that there is a neurological and evolutionary basis for subjective experiences traditionally categorized as spiritual or religious (David Biello, 2009; Craig Aaen-Stockdale, 2012, p. 521).

A number of distinctions are worth highlighting in this definition: Firstly, the term ‘neurotheology’ is often used interchangeably with the term ‘spiritual neuroscience’. Secondly, neurotheology studies *correlations* between neural phenomena, i.e. brain processes, with subjective experiences of spirituality. Thirdly, we have the claim that there is a neurological and evolutionary basis for these experiences. It is in this third area that most of the controversy arises. While the correlations are a matter of factual evidence, the claims for what the correlations imply are subject to debate. We also note that the term ‘spiritual experience’ remains rather unspecified at this point.

Aldous Huxley used, for the first time, the term “neurotheology”, in the utopian novel *Island* (1962). The discipline studies the cognitive neuroscience of religious experience and spirituality. The term is also sometimes used in a less scientific context or a philosophical context. Some of these uses, according to the mainstream scientific community, qualify as pseudoscience. Huxley used it mainly in a philosophical context. The use of the term *neurotheology* in published scientific work is currently uncommon. A search on the citation indexing service provided by Institute for Scientific Information returns five articles. Three of these are published in the journal *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science*, while two are published in *American Behavioral Scientist*. Work on the neural basis of spirituality has, however, occurred sporadically throughout the 20th century.

In an attempt to focus and clarify what was a growing interest in this field, in 1994 educator and businessman Laurence McKinney published the first book on the subject, entitled “*Neurotheology: Virtual Religion in the 21st Century*”, written for a popular audience but also promoted in the theological journal *Zygon* (L. McKinney, 1994, p. 24). According to McKinney, neurotheology sources the basis of religious inquiry in relatively recent developmental neurophysiology. In accordance with his theory, pre-frontal development, in humans, creates an illusion of chronological time as a fundamental part of normal adult cognition past the age of three. The inability of the adult brain to retrieve earlier images experienced by an infantile brain creates questions such as “where did I come from” and “where does it all go”, which McKinney suggests led to the creation of various religious explanations. The experience of death as a

peaceful regression into timelessness as the brain dies won praise from readers as varied as author Arthur C. Clarke, eminent theologian Harvey Cox, and the Dalai Lama and sparked a new interest in the field.

What Andrew Newberg and others discovered is “that intensely focused spiritual contemplation triggers an alteration in the activity of the brain that leads one to perceive transcendent religious experiences as solid, tangible reality. In other words, the sensation that Buddhists call *oneness with the universe*.” (Andrew Newberg; E. D'Aquili; V. Rause, 2002). The orientation area requires sensory input to do its calculus. “If you block sensory inputs to this region, as you do during the intense concentration of meditation, you prevent the brain from forming the distinction between self and not-self”, says Newberg. With no information from the senses arriving, the left orientation area cannot find any boundary between the self and the world. As a result, the brain seems to have no choice but to perceive the self as endless and intimately interwoven with everyone and everything. “The right orientation area, equally bereft of sensory data, defaults to a feeling of infinite space. The meditators feel that they have touched infinity.” (S. Begley, 2001). The radical Catholic theologian Eugen Drewermann developed a two-volume critique of traditional conceptions of God and the soul and a reinterpretation of religion (*Modern Neurology and the Question of God*) based on current neuroscientific research. (Eugen Drewermann, Eugen, 2006–2007). However, it has also been argued “that neurotheology should be conceived and practiced within a theological framework” (Wilfried Apfalter, 2009, p. 170). Furthermore, it has been suggested that creating a separate category for this kind of research is moot since conventional Behavioral and Social Neurosciences disciplines can handle any empirical investigation of this nature. (Dr. Milind Ovalekar, 2006). Notwithstanding, not everybody is open to the correlational study. Some scientists have called it ‘quasi-scientific’ and question the validity of the endeavor (J.S. Feit, 2003, p. 1). Similarly, while some religious believers have expressed suspicion of any attempts to probe the neurobiology of belief, thinking that it was somehow irreverent, others have appealed to it in support of claims for the existence of the soul (M. Beauregard and D. O’Leary, 2008). In addition, the Press, to a large extent, have had a field day in publicizing the various findings and claims in an often sensationalist manner. There is a great deal of potential for a balanced and sober approach to the field which tries to steer an authentic middle ground, allowing the facts to speak for themselves.

According to a reputed American journalist, *neurotheology* is stalking bigger a game than simply affirming that spiritual feelings leave neural footprints, too. By pinpointing the brain areas involved in spiritual experiences and tracing how such experiences arise, the scientists hope to learn whether anyone can have such experiences, and why spiritual experiences have the qualities they do (S. Begley, 2001).

These are noble and worthwhile questions; if we can understand how spiritual experiences take place then our spiritual lives would be enhanced and our practices of spiritual formation vastly enriched. Few, surely, could argue with such a treasure. The issue, however, is not so simple. In his review of the book, *The Spiritual Brain* – by Mario Beauregard and Denyse O’Leary –, Dr. Bryan Appleyard, the British author, has stated: “Neuroscience is a combat zone. It is here, in the human brain, that the final conflict between materialism and, to invent a word, soulism is being fought. For materialists, the outcome is not in doubt. Our minds, ourselves, our awareness are merely the outcome of the electrical activity of the few pounds of hyperconnected matter between our ears. All claims to the contrary are wishful thinking or superstitious remnants” (B. Appleyard, 2007,p.1). Thus we come to the crux of the controversy surrounding neurotheology: writers committed to a materialist ontology and a reductive approach to the mind are arguing not only for neural correlates to spiritual experience but are intending to eliminate spirituality entirely by arguing that these experiences are *caused* by the brain in some manner. Candidates for this causal mechanism vary from evolutionary adaptations to genetic mechanisms, brain modules or circuits of various descriptions, temporal lobe discharges related to temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE) etc. But, clearly, these writers have made an unjustified leap from correlation to causation. Some religious believers have made the opposite mistake; pointing out that none of these arguments is sufficient to explain spirituality, they want to argue that the only sufficient explanation, therefore, is that these neural phenomena must be pointing to an authentic source of the experiences, namely God and/or the soul (a vision imparted by most of theologians and also by many scientist).

The challenge for both extremes is pointed out by science writer George Johnson: “In the neurological search for the spiritual, there is no shortage of data. But pile it as high as you like, and you're

left staring across the same divide. Depending on your predisposition, you can interpret all these experiments in two different ways. The believers take them as scientific evidence for the reality of their visions, while the atheists claim more proof that God is all in your head” (Johnson, 2007, p. 1).

3. THE ARCHETYPES AND THE GODS

The archetypes are much bigger than individual people, and therefore no person can completely fulfill an archetype. It is normal to project an archetype onto a person (such as projecting the Mother archetype onto your personal mother), but with maturity we retract the projections, and differentiate the real person from the idealized archetype. Nevertheless, the unfulfilled potential of the archetype remains, and we are left with a longing for the idealized figures they represent. Further, the archetypes call for complete *actualization* (for that is their biological function), and urge us to seek them. Likewise, the sum total of the archetypes, the Self, seeks actualization of the genomic potential of the species in the life of the individual, which gives rise to the drive for fulfillment that C. G. Jung called *individuation*.

Once the projections are withdrawn, we realize that the archetypes exist independently of the concrete individuals that may manifest them; or, in other words, we may say that the archetypal structures exist in the genotype independently of the individuals that trigger their innate releasing mechanisms. That is, the archetypes are autonomous; they exist independently of human psyches in the same sense that the human genotype exists independently of individual humans. (Bruce MacLennan, 2002, p. 7). It is well known that the archetypes correspond to the gods of various pantheons, and that mythology often encodes archetypal relationships. We will take the identity of god and archetype for granted, and focus on the question of whether the gods are real or “merely psychological.” According to common scientific standards, we may say that the archetypes (the gods) are objectively real phenomena if and only if they are 1. *empirical*, 2. *stable*, and 3. *public*.

Thus, *firstly*, the archetypes are empirical phenomena in the primary sense of those words because they manifest as appearances (Greek, *phainomena*) that arise in experience (Grk., *empeiria*). The archetypes themselves are not directly experienceable, because they reside as potential perceptual-behavioral structures in the unconscious. However, we experience their effects when they actualize in consciousness, and from these empirical effects we can infer the archetypal structures causing them, which does not make them any less real. “The existence of the instincts can no more be proved than the existence of the archetypes, so long as they do not manifest themselves concretely” (C.G. Jung, 8, 1967-78, p. 155). That these experiences need not have external referents, that is, corresponding physical phenomena external to the observer, does not negate their empirical validity. Psychology must take them as givens (Lat., *data*), for its subject matter is the psyche and whatever appears to it (*phainomena*). All sciences, from physics to sociology, are grounded in the experiences (“observations”) of an individual psyche. *Secondly*, the archetypes are *stable* phenomena, another criterion of objective reality. From the earliest recorded mythologies, to the cosmologies of surviving traditional cultures, to the dreams and fantasies of contemporary people, we find the same archetypes recurring across time and place. Indeed, it was this observation that first led Jung to hypothesize the existence of archetypes (Bruce MacLennan, 2002, p. 7). *Thirdly*, the foregoing also shows that the archetypes are *public* phenomena; that is, when suitably trained observers investigate the unconscious, they reach consistent conclusions about its archetypal structure. Therefore the archetypes are empirical, stable, and public, which are the accepted scientific standards for the objective reality of a class of phenomena. Hence, one can infer, the archetypes – the gods – are real.

But it’s worthwhile to say a little more about the manner of existence of the archetypes, about their *ontological* status. Fortunately, we have some analogous situations to guide us, for if, as has been argued, the archetypes are the psychological aspect of phylogenetically-defined perceptual-behavioral structures, then the archetypes are functions of the human genotype, which is a mathematical pattern. Therefore the archetypes exist in the same way as other mathematical patterns, as (Platonic) forms or Ideas independent of their physical embodiment. They are formal, not material.

The archetypes are a source of meaning because they integrate individual lives into the greater patterns of humanity and the universe; they give transpersonal meaning and significance to situations and relationships in human life. From an ethological perspective humans are primed, through innate releasing

mechanisms, to respond in characteristic ways to the corresponding releasers (Hornblower & Spawforth, 1996). When we are in an archetypal situation, we are under the influence or compulsion of a god. That is, we are drawn into the narrative of a phylogenetic “script” (which does not imply, of course, that we have no control over the situation); we may feel like we are living a myth (as, indeed, we are).

There are two poles to the archetypal relation: the experiencing ego and the “other” towards which the perceptual-behavioral “script” is directed. The entire relationship is divinely (archetypally) guided, and each pole may be experienced as inspired by a god. The ego may experience itself as “possessed” by a divinity, whose intentions may conflict with the ego’s. Similarly, the “other” (often a person) may be perceived as divine, numinous, magical, or radiant. For example, the beloved is experienced as a god or goddess: “first there come upon him a shuddering and a measure of that awe which the vision inspired, and the reverence as at the sight of a god, and but for fear of being deemed a very madman he would offer sacrifice to his beloved, as to a holy image of deity”. (Plato, *Phaedrus* 251a).

Of course, the beloved is not a god or goddess. People are not archetypes, and the practical difficulties of treating them as such are well known. In psychological terms, we should withdraw the projection; although the archetypal relation is authentic, we cannot forget that an archetype cannot be manifested completely by an individual; the archetype may touch a human, but it is superhuman and resides elsewhere (Bruce MacLennan, 2002, p. 10).

It is even more dangerous to confuse oneself with a deity, the ancient sin of *hybris*, the psychological condition of ego inflation. “Possession” by a divinity is not necessarily a bad thing (who would reject the divine madness of love?) – another word for it is inspiration (Grk., *entheos*, “having the god within”) – but it is crucial to be consciously aware of what is taking place (an archetypal actualization), nor should one abandon the “ethical orientation” of the ego.

4. THE NEUROSCIENCE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Coming back to the main point of our paper, i.e. the nexus between science and theology or religious life, a question arises: Can neuroscience deliver on the promises presented by religion: freedom from suffering, violence, scarcity, and disease? In other words, can this science of nervous system and brain deliver us into a life where health, peace, and abundance reign? The pledges of the world’s religions are so universal that it’s likely the longing for joy, inner peace, and well-being are hardwired into the human brain and have become a social instinct as powerful as the drive to procreate. The Bible, the Koran, and Buddhist and Hindu scriptures all teach that we can be delivered into a paradisiacal state, whether after death, at the end of time, following many reincarnations, or as a result of personal effort and merit. This state of liberation is called grace or Heaven by Christian religions, Paradise by Muslims, while Eastern traditions refer to it as awakening or enlightenment, using various terms such as *samādhi*, *mukti*, *bodhi*, *satori*, and *nirvana*. But what if grace, *samādhi*, and enlightenment are really based in biological science? What if they are states of higher order and complexity created by programmable circuits in the brain? What if these circuits could make it possible to attain lifelong joy, inner peace, health, and well-being now, in this physical world, and not in some distant future or afterlife?

4.1. The brain and the enlightenment

So with all this expanded brain power, what are we striving for? In the East, enlightenment has traditionally been associated with qualities such as generosity, compassion, peaceful acceptance, and an experience of oneness with all creation. In the fiercely individualistic West, our rather vague notion of enlightenment suggests an acceptance of the world as it is, or of discovering how we can change it for the better. Enlightenment for us also implies the common longing for novelty, exploration, and creativity, as personified by the explorers who venture into space. (David Perlmutter & Alberto Villoldo, 2011, 34)

If we take the Eastern qualities of enlightenment out of their religious context and place them in the realm of biological science, we find that they are attributes associated with the activation of the prefrontal cortex, the newest part of the human brain. On functional MRI scans (Magnetic resonance imaging), people who meditate regularly are shown to have developed brains that are wired differently than the brains of people who don’t meditate. They are better able to remain calm and stress-free, live in peace, and practice compassion. Curiously, their prefrontal cortex is the most active region in their brain

during the states they describe as samādhi, or enlightenment. For instance, in Lamaism or Tibetan Buddhism, Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama (the current one), describes enlightenment as “a state of freedom not only from the counterproductive emotions that drive the process of cyclic existence, but also from the predispositions established in the mind by those afflictive emotions” (Dalai Lama, 2009, p. 88). Thus, he is suggesting that enlightenment is a state of freedom from destructive emotions and from the limiting beliefs and repetitive behaviors created by these emotions.

Generosity and compassion arise only when the prefrontal cortex is able to throttle back the more prehistoric regions of the brain. Yet, for the prefrontal cortex to create functional pathways for joy and peace, the entire body and brain need to be healthy, fed with the proper nutrients, and trained with an inner discipline. We must heal our bodies and minds to empower the prefrontal cortex—the new brain, which is biologically programmable for bliss, extraordinary longevity, peace, and regeneration. For too long, this brain region has been kept offline, silenced by the same forces—scarcity, violence, and trauma—from which it promises to deliver us. (David Perlmutter & Alberto Villoldo, 2011, p. 35)

Once this new region in the brain is brought online, brain synergy is possible. Synergy means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Engineers are familiar with how synergy operates. The tensile strength of stainless steel, for example, is nearly ten times greater than the tensile strength of iron, even though stainless steel is basically iron with a minute amount of carbon added to it. Both carbon and iron, by themselves, are brittle and flake easily. Yet, when combined, they make an extraordinarily strong material.

Brain synergy signifies a neurocomputer whose circuits are all turned on, tuned in, and operating collaboratively, each region attending to its functions—much as the heart attends to circulating blood while the lungs attend to respiration—creating a system that cannot be defined or even described by its component parts.

Beginning in the 1990s, some neuroscientists turned their attention to Buddhist meditation as a subject of research. Meditation has proven to be a congenial subject of research because it is largely stationary, predictable, and has a base of willing test subjects. The primary concern of this research has been to link meditative states with heightened or lowered activity in specific regions of the brain. Research done by Eugene D’Aquili and Andrew Newberg (1999) has shown that such meditation consistently correlates with heightened activity in some areas of the brain (the prefrontal cortex, for instance) and lowered activity in others (most specifically areas in the parietal lobes associated with spatial orientation). D’Aquili and Newberg theorize that it is the alteration of these brain states that leads to the particular experiences (e.g., a sense of unity and a loss of distinction between self and other) that meditation is traditionally said to give rise to.

4.2. Prayer on the Brain: Neurotheology

As technological progress becomes more and more pronounced in virtually every area of life, many scientists have found new ways to use these advances to explore some profound questions about the intersection of the physical and the divine. One area of research that has recently emerged is the discipline of neurotheology.

Neurotheology, as defined by Dr. Andrew Newberg, is “an integration of neuroscience with religion” (Eugene D’Aquili & Andrew B. Newberg, 1999, p. 3). A neuroscience expert from the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Newberg has been using brain scan technology to learn more about electrical activity in the brain during religious or meditative experiences. Although the field is relatively new, scientists have been asking questions about the brain’s role in religious belief for decades. As understanding of the structure and function of the brain has continued to develop, new theories have emerged. Some ideas have been discredited or ruled incomplete, while some areas of study, like neurotheology, have grown and yielded interesting results.

One of the more interesting studies involved Buddhist monks, Franciscan nuns, and Pentecostal Christians. The same scanning technology used to explore the causes of Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease was directed towards their prayer and meditation practices. What the researchers found is that the subjects’ frontal lobes, parietal lobes, and limbic systems all showed similar heightened activity. Though the data has been interpreted by different people in different ways, what is clear is that prayer and meditation seem to have a unique biochemical effect on the brain. Scientists like Dr. Newberg have been

using such data to create a fuller picture of the neurological landscape when a person enters a religiously sensitive mindset.

The most important underlying question is a matter of perspective: were humans physiologically programmed to pray? Or is the brain activity simply evidence that, for those who believe in a divine being, prayer is “all in their head”? The most recent research doesn’t answer this question, of course, but it does move the conversation into new territory.

The goal for Dr. Newberg and many of his colleagues is “to find ways in which both science and religion or spirituality can be enhanced by the other rather than diminished or attacked.” (Eugene D’Aquili & Andrew B. Newberg, 1999, p. 14). Now that these exciting new studies have demonstrated clearly that prayer and meditation make the brain work in a unique way, there is an opportunity to begin a new dialogue between science and spirituality.

Neurotheology represents the chance to ask new questions and evaluate spirituality from a scientific perspective, and researchers like Dr. Newberg are fully embracing the endless possibilities this new area of study unlocks. The hope, as always, is that a deeper understanding about how the brain works can help inform similarly deep questions about what it means to be human.

For Christians and other devotees, prayer is just one of the many ways to practice living in the power of the spirit. This new neurological data being gathered probably won’t fundamentally change the beliefs of the faithful, but it might lead to a greater understanding of and respect for the scientific components of religious life among all people in every culture.

Revolving round the topic, there is a concept that clerics like Bishop Stephen Sykes give some credence as well: could there be such a thing as a talent for religion? St. Sykes does, though, see a great difference between a ‘sensed presence’ and a genuine religious experience. Scientists like Andrew Newberg want to see just what does happen during moments of faith. He worked with Buddhist, Michael Baime, to study the brain during meditation. By injecting radioactive tracers into Michael’s bloodstream as he reached the height of a meditative trance, Newberg could use a brain scanner to image the brain at a religious climax.

The blood-flow patterns showed that the temporal lobes were certainly involved but also that the brain’s parietal lobes appeared almost completely to shut down. The parietal lobes give us our sense of time and place. Without them, we may lose our sense of self. The adherents to many of the world’s faiths regard a sense of personal insignificance and oneness with a deity as something to strive for. Newberg’s work suggests a neurological basis for what religion tries to generate. (Horizon, *God on the Brain*, 2014)

4.3. Neuroscience and religious experience

A recent area of neuroscientific exploration has been the nature of religious experience itself and its possible roots in the brain. There has been a long tradition of scientific speculation on the nature of religious experience. For much of its history, when neuroscience has on rare occasion turned its attention to the topic of religious experience, the tendency has been to associate it with one or another form of mental illness. William James, for instance, chided medical materialists (as he called them) for attempting to reduce religious experience to mental illness. One early favorite candidate has been temporal lobe epilepsy, which has been known to produce in some individuals profound religious experiences prior to the onset of seizures. The Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky is probably the most famous example of this phenomenon. Knowledge of such instances has been used by some neuroscientists (Robert Persinger in 1987, for example) as a general explanation for religious experience. Research by V. S. Ramachandran (Ramachandran and Blakeslee, 1998) has shown this to be unlikely, however, as religious individuals with no epilepsy seem to respond differently in tests using religious imagery than individuals with temporal lobe epilepsy (V.S. Ramachandran, 1998, p. 198).

There are deep divides as to how to interpret such research. Some argue that studies that correlate brain states with religious experiences show that these religious experiences are not real, i.e., religious experiences are nothing but a form of brain dysfunction or even mental illness with no basis in any kind of higher reality. On this account, religious experience is necessarily illusory in character, and such research can be taken as evidence for a more general reductive account of religion. D’Aquili and Newberg, however, have argued that their research shows that religious experience is part of the normal functioning of the brain and should not be characterized as a form of mental illness, as has often been the

case in psychology. They also argue that the implications of such research are not reductive. Rather, they claim, it should be admitted that the realities such brain states reveal are just as real as those of ordinary experience, and so one should not be privileged over the other (Eugene D'Aquili & Andrew B. Newberg, 1999, p. 164).

Some important limitations of these studies should be noted. To date, the studies done have been small, involving few subjects, thus raising the probability of error or variant results in further trials. In addition, it is important to note that meditational practices vary from tradition to tradition, and what holds true for one form of meditational practice may not hold true for all. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to suppose that religious experiences arising from meditation can simply and straightforwardly be used as a model for explaining all religious experiences. Religious experience is diverse and complex, and there are likely multiple factors involved (Gregory R. Peterson, 2005, p. 6487).

One of the criticisms of neurotheology is that the field focuses too much on individual religious experiences, particularly the mystical ones, people have and that it does not take into account the other aspects of religions. For neurotheology to achieve its full potential as a field of study, it is important for any investigator to understand the complexity and diversity of experiences that are religious or spiritual. In other words, religion is much more than just the experiences that individuals can have, especially the strong mystical experiences that are not common. Religions typically have many different rituals, holidays, and cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that all can be evaluated from a neuropsychological perspective. Even issues such as forgiveness, love, or altruism can be considered from a neuropsychological perspective to gain better insight into how and when such feelings and behaviors take place. It is this ability to explore the neuropsychological basis of such concepts that can ultimately be a strength of neurotheology (Andrew B. Newberg, 2005, p. 6493).

The emotional elements of religion are also an important aspect of neurotheological analysis because a variety of emotions are fundamental to religions and religious experience. The autonomic nervous system (in conjunction with the hypothalamus) that regulates basic body functions, such as heart rate, blood pressure, and hormones, and the limbic system that regulates basic emotional responses can produce a wide variety of complex feelings. Religious concepts pertaining to love, joy, envy, or awe are likely associated with concomitant changes in these components of the nervous system. Neurotheology seeks to study the relationship between the nervous-system structures and such elements of religions and religious experiences (Michael Gazzaniga, 2000, p. 76).

Neurotheology may also have a special status because neurology is universal in the sense that all human beings have brains that function in a similar manner. The challenge for future neurotheological development is to evaluate the similarities and differences among individual brain functions, as well as the phenomenological differences both within and across religious traditions. It has also been argued that neurotheology may provide a basis for a metatheology and even a megatheology. A metatheology comprises both the general principles describing, and implicitly the rules for constructing, any concrete theological system (Harold Koenig, Michael McCullough, and David Larson, 2001, p. 245). A metatheology must evaluate how and why foundational, creation, and soteriological myths are formed; how and why such myths are elaborated into complex theological systems; and how and why the basic myths and certain aspects of their theological elaborations are objectified in the motor behavior of ceremonial ritual. A megatheology, on the other hand, should contain content of such a universal nature that it could be adopted by most, if not all, of the world's great religions as a basic element without any serious violation of their essential doctrines. Since brain function is universal and necessarily has an impact on how human beings understand and practice religion, a fully developed neurotheology may provide a basis for a megatheology (Andrew B. Newberg, 2005, p. 6494).

4.4. Brain functions and theological topics

The brain, especially the right hemisphere, has the ability to perceive holistic concepts such that we perceive and understand wholeness in things rather than particular details. For example, we might understand all the cells and organs to comprise the whole human body. From a religious or spiritual perspective, we might understand a concept of absolute oneness as pertaining to God. Furthermore, the holistic process in the brain allows for the expansion of any religious belief or doctrine to apply to the totality of reality, including other people, other cultures, animals, and even other planets and galaxies. In

fact, as human knowledge of the extent of the universe has expanded, the notion of God has incorporated this expanding sense of the totality of the universe. The holistic function pushes us to contemplate that whatever new reaches of the universe astronomers can find, God must be there. No matter how small and unpredictable a subatomic particle might be, God must be there, too (Eugene D'Aquili & Andrew Newberg, 1999, p. 77).

In the most general sense, the quantitative processes of the brain help to produce mathematics and a variety of quantitative-like comparisons about objects in the world. The quantitative function clearly both underlies and supports much of science and the scientific method. Science essentially is based upon a mathematical description of the universe. In terms of philosophical and theological implications, the quantitative function appears to have heavily influenced the ideas of philosophers such as Pythagoras who often used mathematical concepts such as geometry to help explain the nature of God and the universe. (A. Sayadmansour, 2014, p. 53)

Also, the binary processes of the brain enable us to set apart two opposing concepts. This ability is critical for theology since the opposites that can be set apart include those of good and evil, justice and injustice, and man and God among many more (AR. Damasio, 2000, p. 175). Many of these polarities or dichotomies are encountered throughout religious texts of all religions. Much of the purpose of religions is to solve the psychological and existential problems created by these opposites. Theology, then, must evaluate the myth structures and determine where the opposites are and how well the problems presented by these opposites are solved by the doctrines of a particular religion such as Christianity, Judaism or Islam. The ability of the brain to perceive causality is also crucial to theology. When the causal processes of the brain are applied to all of reality, it forces the question of what is the ultimate cause of all things (Brandt, Clément, & Manning, 2010, p. 308). This eventually leads to the classic notion of St. Thomas Aquinas's "Uncaused First Cause" as an argument for God's existence. For monotheistic religions, the foundational doctrines posit that God is the uncaused cause of all things. However, this very question of how something can be uncaused is a most perplexing problem for human thought. In fact, theologians, philosophers, and scientists have tangled with causality as integral to understanding the universe and God. Aristotelian philosophy postulated four aspects of causality i.e. efficient causality, material causality, formal causality, and final causality. The question of causality thus became applied to God to determine how, in fact, God could cause the universe (John Hick, 2010, p. 60).

Two other important brain functions are related to the ability to support willful or purposeful behaviors and the ability to orient our self within the world. Neuroscientifically, the willful function is regarded to arise, in large part, from the frontal lobes (L.O. McKinney, 1994, p. 48). There is evidence that frontal lobe activity is involved in executive functions such as planning, coordinating movement and behavior, initiating and producing language. Evidence has also shown the frontal lobes to become activated when an individual performs a meditation or prayer practice in which there is intense concentration on the particular practice (D. Fontana, 2003, p. 147).

Another area in which neurotheology could provide important scientific information is in understanding the link between spirituality and health (Harold Koenig, Michael McCullough, and David Larson, 2001, p. 254). A growing number of studies have shown positive, and sometimes negative, effects on various components of mental and physical health (R. Carter, 2004, p. 46). Such effects include an improvement in depression and anxiety, enhanced immune system, and reduced overall mortality associated with individuals who are more religious. On the other hand, research has also shown that those individuals engaged in religious struggle, or who have a negative view of God or religion, can experience increased stress, anxiety, and health problems (M. King, P. Speck & A. Thomas, 1999, p. 1298). Research into the brain's responses to positive and negative influences of religion might be of great value in furthering our understanding of the relationship between spirituality and health.

5. CONCLUSION

One of the most important goals of cognitive neuroscience is to better understand how human beings think about and interact with our environment. In particular, this relates to our perception and response to the external reality that the brain continuously presents to our deep consciousness (L. Miller,

2018). Neurotheology is in the unique position to be able to explore epistemological questions that arise from neuroscience and theology. Thus, integrating religious and scientific perspectives might provide the foundation upon which scholars from a variety of disciplines can address some of the greatest questions facing humanity. As an emerging field of study, neurotheology has the potential to offer a great deal to our understanding of the human mind, consciousness, scientific discovery, spiritual experience, and theological discourse. In particular, there are many potentially rich areas to consider in the context of Christianity and other main religions of the world.

Overall, neurotheology seeks to facilitate a dialogue between religion and science with the eventual goal of helping to integrate these perspectives around the nexus of neuropsychology. That neuropsychology provides some universal perspective on human behavior and thought that can also be utilized in an approach to the study of religions and theology lies at the heart of neurotheology. Furthermore neurotheology seeks to integrate theoretical development, empirical studies, and philosophical and theological interpretation. Neurotheology as a field of study thus holds many opportunities for expansion and may play a critical role in future theological and religious study (Andrew Newberg, Eugene d'Aquili, and Vince P. Rause, 2002, p. 214-215).

It should be added that neurotheological scholarship must tread carefully upon these topics and attempt to develop clear, yet novel methods of inquiry. All results of neurotheological scholarship must be viewed and interpreted cautiously and within the context of existing doctrine, beliefs, and theology. However, if neurotheology is ultimately successful in its goals, its integrative approach has the potential to revolutionize our understanding of the universe and our place within it (A. Sayadmansour, 2014, p. 55). Better understanding of human mind, its biology and neurocircuitry has the potential to solve man-made problems. It can even create a bridge between the empirical science of neurology with the intangibility and sensitivities of theology.

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THE TOPOLOGICAL SPACE IN GOD'S MIND

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Abstract

In this article, I try to develop my thesis presented in the first volume of the IJTPS, according to which the possible worlds constitute "points" in the Mind of God. From this infinity of points which are possible worlds, the Divine Logos chooses the best of possible worlds - according to the Leibzian thesis -, and this chosen possible world must pass, through the action of the Divine Logos (the metaphysical causation), from the status of dimensionless point to the mathematical continuum that structure the physical-mathematical World. However, before being recognized as a mathematical structure capable of being the background of the physical phenomena, the mathematical continuum that emerges from the best possible world passes through its stage of pure topological space situated in the Divine Logos, and it is this topological and metaphysical situation that will be covered here in this article.

Keywords: topological and metaphysical situation; God's Mind; thinking; creativity;

1. INTRODUCTION

In my paper published in the first volume of **IJTPS**¹ (Vol 1, NO 1/2017), I present the thesis that in the mind of God - the Divine Logos - there is a continuum of possible worlds, and these worlds are like points in God's infinite consciousness.

Now, in this new issue of the aforementioned journal, I intend to advance this thesis a bit and develop some mathematical and theological elements that will allow us to speak of the passage or update of the notion of possible worlds for a continuum of points which is the topological structure from which the physical world, in its mathematical architecture, will then appear as a form of phenomenological determination of this founding topological space: the topological continuum of points, from a metaphysical causation, is successively determined as metric, vector, normed, and other space, until it reaches its formal final real world or corporeal, according to denomination of the physicist and philosopher of the American science Wolfgang Smith².

¹ <https://ijtps.com/en/NO-1-YEAR-I-NOVEMBER-2017/>

² See SMITH, W. *The Quantum Enigma. Finding the Hidden Key*. Sophia Perennis, Hillsdale NY: 2005.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Let us begin, then, with the thesis defended in the first volume of the IJTPS that a possible world is an infinite sequence of monads

$$W = \langle w_j \rangle,$$

such that $j \in \mathbb{N}$.

By the theory of measures, we can infer that a possible world has measure zero, that is, it has the dimension of a point; and by the Cantorian theory of sets, it is concluded that in the mind of God - or in the Divine Logos - the quantity of possible worlds is equal to the continuum c , being

$$c = 2^{\aleph_0},$$

where \aleph_0 is Cantor's first transfinite cardinal which expresses the size of infinite enumerable sets, that is, sets that admit a bijective correspondence with natural numbers - in other words, \aleph_0 , the *aleph-zero*, expresses the cardinal number of all sets that are the same size as the natural numbers.

From this continuum of possible worlds in the Mind of God, continuum which we shall call Π , the Divine Logos chooses a particular possible world, say Δ , from which the real or corporeal world will be constructed; the world Δ is the founding atom of all known reality, whether in its physical-mathematical or concrete

The criteria that lead the Logos to choose Δ to the detriment of other possible worlds are inscrutable to human intelligence. On this, the maximum that can be said is that the Logos opts for Δ because this world is the best of possible worlds, and such a criterion of choice, already asserted by Leibniz in the eighteenth century³, passes through considerations and reasonings inaccessible to the intelligence of Man, since they occur in the depths of the Mind of God.

Moreover, although the Logos knows why it is the best possible world, that is, although there are divine reasons to take Δ as the best of the possible worlds, and not just any other world, it must be emphasized that the choice of Δ made by the Logos is absolutely free: The mind of God is not impelled or deterministically forced to choose Δ as the best of the worlds, once the logical reasons for it have been decanted into the mind of the Creator; It chooses Δ not only for rational or logical reasons, but also for Love to the World that will come from Δ , and that act of Love, in the Creator, takes place in a radically and absolutely free way.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In order to give a mathematical picture for choosing the best of possible worlds, let us use the notion of epsilon operator ϵ , introduced in Mathematical Logic by the German mathematician David Hilbert.⁴

Usually, the interpretation given to the expression:

$$\Phi^0 (\epsilon \Phi (x))$$

is the following:

³ See LEIBNIZ, G, *Theodicy. Essays on the Goodness of God the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*. IN: <http://www.philvaz.com/apologetics/LeibnizBestPossibleWorldTheodicy.pdf>

⁴ see ACKERMANN, W., 1924, 'Begründung des "tertium non datur" mittels der Hilbertschen Theorie der Widerspruchsfreiheit', *Mathematische Annalen*, 93: 1-36.

In any domain of objects O , the operator ε "takes" the objects that satisfy the propositional function $\Phi(x)$, if there are such objects. If there are no such objects, then the operator ε "randomly" takes any object from O .

From the notion of epsilon operator, the mathematical presentation of the choice of Δ as the best of possible worlds occurs as follows:

$$\Omega^{\Pi}(\varepsilon \Omega(x)) = \Delta,$$

where " $\Omega^{\Pi}(\varepsilon \Omega(x))$ " is interpreted as the best of the possible worlds in Π .

The metaphysical causality⁵ involved in the above expression is as follows:

$$\Pi \succcurlyeq_{(\varepsilon \Omega(x))} \Delta,$$

which states that the possible world Δ was caused metaphysically by Π , from de $(\varepsilon \Omega(x))$.

Having at Its disposal the possible world Δ , the Divine Logos operates the passage from this one-pointed world to the state of a continuum of points that will form the set-theoretic basis for the transition to the topological continuum which is the first expression., in the mind of God, of the structured and mathematically Physical World. So we can go from the possible world:

$$\Delta = \langle \delta_j \rangle,$$

such that $j \in \mathbb{N}$, to the *continuum* D , the continuum of the physical-mathematical World, as follows:

$$2^{\Delta} = D.$$

The metaphysical causation implied in the above equality is as follows

$$\Delta \succcurlyeq_{2^{\Delta}} D$$

Since the cardinality of Δ is equal with \aleph_0 , we have:

$$\text{Card } 2^{\Delta} = \text{Card } D = c,$$

such that c the cardinal of the continuum – namely, $c = 2^{\aleph_0}$.

But D is an amorphous continuum, without any structure. We can not even speak of the parts of D , for the set of its parts, including the empty part, has not yet appeared in this metaphysical causation which originated in the appearance of the Divine Logos. For continuum D to be shown as a set with some internal differentiation structure, we need the hyper-set D' of the parts of D , defined as follows

$$D' = \wp(D) = \{z / z \subset D\},$$

such that " $z \subset D$ " is equivalent to:

$$\text{for all } x, \text{ if } x \in z, \text{ then } x \in D.$$

In other words, " $z \subset D$ " is satisfied by all subsets of D .

As it is known from set theory, the cardinality of $\wp(D) = D'$ is equal to 2^c , where D' is therefore a larger set than the continuum D . In fact, D is the basis from which D' emerges by through a metaphysical causality propitiated by the operation $\wp(D)$, that is:

⁵On Metaphysical Causality, see my article "The Divine Logos and Possible Worlds", IN: International Journal of Theology, Philosophy and Science, Vol 1, No 1/2017, p.75

$$\mathbf{D} \supseteq_{\wp(\mathbf{D})} \mathbf{D}'.$$

From the hyper-set \mathbf{D}' , we can return to the set \mathbf{D} , such that in this passage from \mathbf{D}' to \mathbf{D} , there is the first determination of \mathbf{D} as a space itself, a space in which are located regions that are interrelated by neighborhood and proximity relations. In other words, we can generate a topological space in \mathbf{D} from a topology τ defined in \mathbf{D} .

In general, a topology τ in a set \mathbf{X} is a collection of parts of \mathbf{X} that have the following properties⁶:

- 1) \emptyset (the empty set) and \mathbf{X} belong to τ ;
- 2) If A_i, A_j belong to τ , then $A_i \cap A_j$ belong to τ ;
- 3) If $A_1, A_2, A_3, \dots, A_k, \dots$ belong to τ , then $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup A_3 \cup \dots \cup A_k \cup \dots$ belong to τ

A topological space, thus, is a pair $\langle \mathbf{X}, \tau \rangle$ where \mathbf{X} is a set and τ is a topology at \mathbf{X} .

We can consider a topological space as the first properly spatial manifestation of a set, a rather abstract manifestation that does not fit into intuitive representations: it is, as it were, a purely conceptual space, in which its points, so to speak, are elements belonging to sets, the *open sets* of the topological space.

Thus, in the Divine Logos, we can glimpse that the first and most fundamental presence of a space in the sense of a differentiated set of regions that interconnect and compose to form larger and wider regions occurs when the mind of God returns to \mathbf{D} by means of a topology τ that generates, from $\mathbf{D}' = \wp(\mathbf{D})$, the topological space $\langle \tau, \mathbf{D} \rangle$ whose properties, by immediate instantiation of the above defining postulates of a general topological space $\langle \mathbf{X}, \tau \rangle$, are following:

- 1) \emptyset and \mathbf{D} belong to τ ;
- 2) If B_i and B_j belong to τ , then $B_i \cap B_j$ belong to τ ;
- 3) Se $B_1, B_2, B_3, \dots, B_k, \dots$ pertencem a τ , then $B_1 \cup B_2 \cup B_3 \cup \dots \cup B_k \cup \dots$ belong to τ

The metaphysical causality involved in the appearance of \mathbf{D} as a topological space $\langle \tau, \mathbf{D} \rangle$ is as follows:

$$\wp(\mathbf{D}) \supseteq_{\tau} \langle \tau, \mathbf{D} \rangle$$

$\mathbf{D} = \langle \tau, \mathbf{D} \rangle$ is in the mind of God as the set of all possible regions that will give rise to the physical-mathematical world. In a way, the physical-mathematical World is potentially given in the structure of $\langle \tau, \mathbf{D} \rangle$.

4. CONCLUSION

In this topological space, each postulate from 1) to 3) has a metaphysical significance broader than mere mathematical analysis of its meanings could detract from. In reality, in its entirety, what is said metaphysically by postulates 1) to 3) is this: *everything is in the space of the Divine Logos*.

In 1), for example, we have the assertion that Being full of reality, represented by \mathbf{D} , as well as relative not Being, which is purely potential (here represented by the empty set) are in the space contained in the Logos.

In 2), we have that any ontological regions, as well as their boundaries and intersections, are also in the space of the Divine Logos.

⁶ On topological space, see NIER, F & IFTMIE, D. *Introduction à la Topologie. License de Mathématiques*. Université des Rennes 1.

Finally, in 3), there is the thesis that regions of manifestation of reality, even if taken in infinite numbers, once considered together, are also in the space of the Logos. In sum, postulates 1) to 3), read theologically and metaphysically, clearly state: reality, seen as a set of ontological regions, is entirely situated in the space of the *Consciousness of the Creator*.

This reality that is in the space of the Divine Mind must pass through more determinations until arriving at the physical-mathematical World. But such a passage will be theme for forthcoming articles and will not be addressed for the time being.

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**THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF DUMITRU
STĂNILOAE**

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Abstract

This article presents the anthropological concept of Dumitru Stăniloae, priest, professor of theology and 20th century Romanian thinker, who delineated a new scientific direction on man and the world, by his iconic, patristic visions, starting from the Greek philosophy and having at its heart the status of the human being and nature. The anthropology of Professor Dumitru Stăniloae represents a rediscovery of the patristic theology but especially a pondering on the dialogue between religion and science cultivated in the academic area today. The core of Dumitru Stăniloae's thinking is man as image of the divinity, for this reason, his anthropology is full of spiritual meaning. The progress (evolution) in man's relation with nature is an authentic knowing rationality, the same with the progress in the knowledge of the sense of human existence, simultaneous to deification or transfiguration. The main anthropological ideas this study relies on show that man is a personal being opened to the communion with God, with the world and with his fellows, and the universe created by God represents a very artistic work of love and especially a reality of language, communication and knowledge.

Keywords: Christian; anthropology; Dumitru Stăniloae; man; world; knowledge;

INTRODUCTION

Professor Dumitru Stăniloae by his work has achieved a contemporary patristic synthesis, in which the teaching of faith lived on the liturgical-ecclesial level and the mystic experience intertwine and support each other, so his thinking is centred on the active level of the spiritual life. Stăniloae's approach of anthropology from the perspective of patristics by the works: *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului / Jesus Christ or Man's Restoration* (1943) and *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu / The Immortal Image of God* (1986), was correlated to the mystic experience rendered in the book *Ascetica și mistica ortodoxă /*

Orthodox Asceticism and Mysticism (1993), but without giving up on the dogmatic dimension included in the three volumes of *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă / Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1978, 1981), all having a direct applicability in the cultic, liturgical area of Christianity, defined in the book *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia ortodoxă / Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Spirituality* (1986).

In the general sense, anthropology as a science about man includes the information related to the human essence, to the human phenomenon, to its relation with the whole Universe and with God. Man is seen from the perspective of the divine reflection, in which are active the forces of the transcendental reality. Anthropology, according to the Christian teaching, presents the person, the human specific and human nature.

2. CONTEMPORARY PATRISTICS - THE THINKING SPECIFIC OF STĂNILOAE'S ANTHROPOLOGY

The theology specific of Dumitru Stăniloae is amplified in point of sense and degree by the implications of the person in the inexhaustible love discovered in the framework of the community, in the grace-filled relation with God, with the fellows but also with the world. And if we refer this relation to the transcendental realities, from which any Christian thought must naturally start, then we understand that Stăniloae is the promoter of a gnoseological optimism involving transfiguration, man's deification and the sanctification of creation.

The discipline Christian Anthropology takes into consideration not just the revelation accomplished by Christ, but also the teaching on man's genesis, because man represents the microcosm comprising in itself all the components of the Universe, and the teaching on responsibility and ransom. As fundamental elements of the Orthodox anthropology's structure, one can highlight three concepts: the divine origin and ontological unity of humanity; the human person as unique subject, created in God's image to acquire full resemblance with God; the full restoration of the human nature and the recapitulation of the human specific in and by Jesus Christ. In the Orthodox theology, the anthropological problem has been in the permanent attention of the dogmatic supporters of great professional value. The methodology applied in anthropological research by the great Romanian thinker is initiated by the exegesis concerning the divine and human person passed through the filter of tradition and patristics correlated to modern philosophy (Augustine Casiday, 2005, 368).

In the Christian anthropological conception, man is a being created especially by God, who has the conscience of personal value and of time, and the time and the space limited by the materiality in which man lives open the full relations to which man is called in the eternity. Man lives in time, in the world, like a traveller, having the conscience of eternity and advancing to it, because the implications of the divine image that man carries (Genesis 1:26-27) are correlative with the likeness with God, which means pre-tasting and advancing through time into the state of eternity.

The image with its theological and anthropological implications is the foundation of the person as ontological given, reflecting the dignity, kingly condition and personal value of man, and his role, namely that of being apt for the special relation with God. Oliver Clement in his work *Questions sur l'homme / Questions on Man*, goes over the formal limits of those who approached this topic often, and advances towards the unavoidable psychological area in which man struggles to understand his ontological meanings and senses. The drama we are often struggling in, willy-nilly, is rendered by the French thinker as follows: "*The mankind we are observing and which we ourselves are part of, seems to be a broken mankind. Broken is, first of all, in each one of us, our «self», which is a theatre of shadows, of neurotic characters that we do not control but which rather control us. Our faculties are also broken and their hierarchy reversed...*" (Olivier Clement, 1972, 12).

In the modern anthropological conceptions, man is defined rather from a biological, psychological and sociological perspective, yet this is limitative and reductive to biological elements. The anthropology in the work of Professor Dumitru Stăniloae is much vaster, being centred around the concept of person and personality. The theological concept of person supposes liberty in relation to nature, alterity. The person is free from any determination. The human hypostasis cannot accomplish itself in perfection by its own will, in order to renounce itself and offer itself to other persons. The patristic theology affirms that

each person is revealed by enhypostatizing and, for this reason, the hypostasis involves the person, which it concretely relates to nature, but also to its properties, to relationality, to a certain state, showing how one is. Although identical from a Christian perspective, between person and hypostasis there is no perfect synonymy, yet one must mention that the person is the very hypostasis of the being. Stăniloae sees the pluri-hypostatic state of the human nature, which he defines wonderfully: *“The hypostasis can be understood neither emptied of nature, nor outside relation. Hypostases are nature in the concrete existence and in the form of the relations among them, nature in the dynamics of the internal relations realized under its pluri-hypostatic form. The hypostasis is an I referred to a you of the same nature. Only in this way can one experience endless relations of knowledge and of responsibility. And only in this way does nature really exist. Only under the form of hypostasis is the human nature also able to realize the endless relation with an absolute You. The human hypostasis, with the really subsistent human nature cannot truly develop without the relation with the personal absolute, without the responsibility to it.”*(Dumitru Stăniloae, 1978, 424). Stăniloae’s patristic thinking actually represents the theological synthesis anchored in the optimistic-realistic conception specific of the Orthodoxy, in which the transcendental, scholastic and abstract intellectualism specific of the western thinking is not an argumentative force because the basis is the living revelation expressed by the mystical and hesychastic experience realized in the liturgical-community domain of the ecclesial area.

So, the new conception of Stăniloae abundantly supported with patristic texts, puts into dialogue the traditionalist Orthodox position, with the modern western approaches based on the human forces (humanism, enlightenment), but in the centre of the approach is the deified human being, maximally represented by Christ, the Man-God. Starting from Christ and going through the ecclesial and mystical space, Stăniloae defines man and the world, with fineness and delicacy revealed in a concentric spiral of knowledge.

3. MAN AS A PERSON OPEN TO COMMUNION

Regarding the world genesis and the connections between man and his fellows and the surrounding nature in which man lives, Stăniloae highlights that the human person cannot be conceived outside the cosmic nature, that the cosmic nature is the same for all the human hypostases, although each person understands it in a certain vision, lives it in a personal manner and complementarily with the others. The productive activity, coordinated based on reason, represents a main quality that determines the existence of communion among men. The union among people, hypostases/persons is the natural result of their common nature, which is open to communion, without which *“the persons would remain closed in their own identity, which would turn into ipseity, and so they would find themselves isolated in their alterity”*(Jean Claude-Larchet, 2013, 356). The ontology of the human nature is not related to the concept of person, which does not depend on the biological nature but on the relation with the divinity. The holistic anthropological approach of Father Stăniloae allowed a conceptual delimitation of the person related to nature, but as interdependent and at the same time distinct reality, with no confounding. For this reason, the person is *“a way of being of nature”* (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1993, 111).

In an ontological sense, with no person or hypostasis there is no being or nature and viceversa, with the mention that the person or hypostasis is the reason of existence of the being. Mankind is not since always (since eternity), because if it were so it would not evolve towards an absolute. Overcoming the monologue and moving on to a dialogue *“man holds a superior position in relation to the world by the conscience by which he discovers its senses and by his freedom to organize it in different ways, often alternative. The world has man as his goal, but not by itself, but by a subject that treats man as a subject, using it, above it”*(Dumitru Stăniloae, 1943, 29). The world was created for man, so that he may use it in relation to God, in order to bring to perfection his relations with the divinity. For man, the world is an environment of love, but the soul is satisfied to the full only by the communion with the personal God. Stăniloae shows that the structure of the physical nature and that of the human nature offers a space always open for exerting human freedom. The human person understands again and again new alternatives of the things not just by reason, by new combinations and uses of them, but also by the thoughts and sensations that are always new, realized in his time by the contact with them and by the

permanent and modified connections. The communication and expression are highlighted as concretized by a continually enriched language, to which man is called.

Concretely, the holistic conception developed by Stăniloae, which defines man as a person is opposed to the individualist philosophies seeing man as an autonomous, self-sufficient individual, limited by everything that surrounds him, the self-sufficiency specific of postmodernism. Man as a person is intention to another, the self always has in view a you, the natural impulse of communion and the intentionality to the other is part of the human nature and is personalized by the hypostasis of each one in turn. The person appears, therefore, as tension towards communion, its reason has an ALTER EGO character, from which necessarily spring: 1. the relation that I have with a you and with a he, and 2. the relation I with I, as potential dual nature, duality that appears as complete and incomplete, and also the relation with an inner YOU – namely GOD. All these are generated by the quality of God's image in man. Thus, ontology is founded on the divine image, an iconic, not biological, one, because man has been created out of nothing, by God's breath of life, according to the divine model and called to attain the likeness of his Prototype. The feature of man's immortality remains until he becomes willing to know, and even more, until he lives in his conscience the divine presence, because he has something new to know and research: *"until he has reached a consciece of the connection with the infinite God, not in the monotony of an essence submitted to the same laws, but in connection with the One Who makes Himself known in ever newer depths."*(Dumitru Stăniloae,1987,10). The superiority of man to the nature of the things surrounding him is highlighted by Father Stăniloae by the consideration that man is in a continual dialogue with the divinity that created this nature of things. The relation of man with God continually determines different alternatives of the relation between man and the world. Man understands and succeeds by developing his conscience to apply responsibility making true the best connections with the world for the spiritual growth of his own self and of his fellows. In relation to nature, man brings solutions corresponding to the given moment, sometimes even unpredictable, getting to introduce a certain liberty available to him in nature.

4. THE WORLD, AN ACT OF LOVE - REALITY OF COMMUNION & KNOWLEDGE

God's creation is not just a simple world, that the Creator has brought into being, but represents the expression of an overflowing love, in Stăniloae's work. The world is created by God to mirror in it God's brilliance. It is a work of the divine love because "God is love" (1 John 4:8). God shows himself in the world as intentional manifestation, in full agreement with His liberty. His existence is free of any external or internal need, because *"He is the One Who Is", being perfect communion and love, overflowing outside His Being by the creation of the world and of the rational beings. The world as God's act is an environment of communion and knowledge, is a language communicating and expressing God's will and love. "Truly wonderful and sublime is the world with everything that is included in it. It is true, God did not create it to make Himself perfect, to make His internal life perfect, which otherwise would not have been perfect without the world; the creation was not a natural necessity for His Divine Being... The world is not an accident... This whole world is, according to its content, eternal"* (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1992, 27). The created world is a very artistic product, it reflects the entire divine wisdom, harmony and love in which all the things created support one another and all of them are supported in God, in all of them burning the reason of the Trinitarian love, manifested in communion, in coexistence. For this reason, matter is shapable energy, a concretization of God's will, it is the result of God's personal work, and remains at work as reason - logos - by which the divine work is shown. Matter cannot be understood without the Spirit that organized it and mysteriously pervades it, namely the Logos. Any created thing has its "logos" springing from the divine Logos, which gives the created world not just its order, but also its ontological reality. In essence, the world, the whole creation represents the means by which the Creator communicates with man, who is its material and spiritual axis.

The world appears for man as a means of spiritual growth realized by the relation of communion and love, the world does not represent for man an asset in itself to which he needs to stop, but "the environment" in which God is present, for man to be able to contemplate Him immediately. The divine

reason overflows outside His Being, creating the world out of love, because the perfect reason, if it stays in itself, cannot manifest its love, and if it cannot do this, that means it is not perfect. Love is a quality having to do with the person, and a person is turned to good value in relation to another conscious and free person, to whom he shares his whole being living in symphony without them being melted into one. Dumitru Stăniloae presents, in the description of the world as God's work, the factors actualizing the multiple and alternative virtualities as follows: (1) the union between body and soul; (2) the body is inner to the spirit (non-objectiveness of the body); (3) modellability of the images of the divine reasons, as realization of the world, or as their being brought into existence; (4) the world as work of the divine freedom. According to the Christian doctrine, with no soul, man would be limited to the automatic repetition of some monotonous cycles, narrower or larger, being considered that only the soul is able, by its liberty, to go beyond repetition and implicitly beyond nature, and that work, as feature of the human being (rational being), has an overwhelming influence in the transformation of nature. In man's body, reason gets to retain a well-delineated complexity, a situation determined by the power and richness of the soul that is in him. Simultaneously, the reason of the soul is actualized in the work on the body, in a great subtlety and fineness. The act of modelling of the divine images corresponds with the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, which is why this action permanently preserves in its essence this dependence on the supreme creating subject. Moreover, it is mentioned that *"man puts on the world the seal of the spiritual level of each step of his ascent, or the world is lifted in man to his spiritual level"* (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1978, 370).

The world has a contingent structure, and this assures the presence of human freedom in its framework and it can be coordinated towards increasingly uplifting states, a situation outlining the work of a free creator. Since the moment of his creation by God, man is the being characterized by reason, will and liberty, by responsibility for his acts; he is a person that, by his activity and communion with God, with his fellows and with the world, acquires personality. The total personality in Christianity is Jesus Christ, and, according to His model, all the saints. If in the human person is concretized the ontology of nature, of the species man is part of, in the personality of the saints is comprised man's activity in time, seen as state of communion and love that gives it the dimension of eternity. Man's eternity is always involved in his contrasting, omnilateral unity, in the infinite mobilization to performance and perfection. The human being is, according to the opinion of Father Stăniloae, a unity that *"that can become a unity of contraries, out of which some fight to dominate or even to exclude the others... man is realized integrally by continually going beyond his former achievements horizontally towards the world and his fellows and vertically towards the personal Absolute, for which he thirsts"* (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1978, 37). True knowledge starts with self knowledge and attains the likeness of God by virtue and good deeds, because man will be like his Creator not by wearing gold-embroidered clothes, but doing good deeds, collaborating with Grace freely, never losing any opportunity, due to the rational power planted intrinsically in the soul, in the image, which makes deification possible, as a state in which the image of the true man is shown - the gnostic - the Saint.

Man is a personal and unique subject, created in God's image to achieve God's likeness (Genesis 1: 26). The quality of image is man's personal centre, his natural given by which the relation of man with God is realized. In man's relation with God, aware and voluntary, is impressed the image of the divinity in the humanity. Man's likeness with God makes it tend to the absolute. The certainty of this relation is presented by Dumitru Stăniloae in a visionary framework, as follows: *"deification is man's perfection by God, given that there is no other way for him to reach perfection. Sin has belittled and enchained, as in a bad magic, the powers of the human nature. We do not know exactly in all their magnitude the powers our nature is capable of. Envy, worries, hate paralyze its impetus. The love we have for someone or that someone has for us, the trust that we are given or that we give whenever we get out of our sinful selfishness, unchain in us powers that we intuit, just as the kiss of Prince Charming awakens Sleeping Beauty from the paralysis of an unnatural sleep"* (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1993, 337). Communion can develop the image into likeness, can reveal the person but especially the personality. Authentic communion is developed and made perfect by means of an attention focused on the other fellows (people) and on the world as realization of the divinity. Man's tendency to encompass perfection is truly

accomplished “*only when desired as ontological answer to his demand, therefore admitting his need to give himself and to demand from another in answer his devotion*”(Dumitru Stăniloae, 1987, 106).

The development of the human nature (its perfection) depends on the variety and diversity of the hypostases by which man is substantiated. The endless (infinite) evolution of man is amplified by knowledge and responsibility, in his relations with an infinitely varied definition has maintained and multiplied the hypostases of human nature. Liberty is paradoxical for the human being, it helps man look for and find perfection, and, by this, God, or inversely, it can also drive man away from his Creator. “*The human person is the highest creation, only because God puts in it the possibility of love and of refusing it*”(Dumitru Stăniloae, 1978, 414). Father Stăniloae concludes in his vast anthropological characterization that the human being represents the hypostasis of the whole Cosmos, man participating to its knowledge, development and perfection. The Earth finds its hypostatic personality in man and by man. All the world follows the human being, because it is meant for man (the Anthroposphere).

Man has the possibility to check himself as a master of the Universe in reality, each person can be in all the space and all the time after himself, possessing all the Universe as a body of his. “*Maybe in this power given to man, namely of being present in a certain degree in the entire space, is anticipated a spiritual presence of man in the entire universe, in the future life*”(Dumitru Stăniloae, 1987,1).The deification that man tends to by the nature of reason and of the spirit that he possesses brings him from the created things to the uncreated ones, on the level of the divine energies.

5. CONCLUSION

The concept of holistic anthropology promoted by Dumitru Stăniloae is a mainly personalistic one, yet elucidated by means of Christ, God’s Son, Who by the embodiment has a person made up of the divine nature and of the human nature. Seen from this perspective, man as a person is one that has to take into account the rationality of his own nature but also of the world, has to maintain his own will and liberty in the Creator’s (God’s) good will, Who attracts and maintains him in love and communion, all these being in fact implications of the divine image in the human nature.

The icon of the anthropological concept specific of Stăniloae’s thinking, which fully defines the notion of person of man with the mission to become personality (state of holiness), is summed up in the following theological, logical and philosophical arguments:

- man is a personal-rational being meant for deification;
- man is a personal being open to the communion with God, the world and his fellows;
- man is generally a unitary yet also extremely complex being;
- man is like one that cannot be comprehended;
- man can increase in the knowledge that his self is an inexhaustible mystery, determined by an absolute mystery;
- man has the quality of hypostasis, of person made up of spirit and body, and is able to know the world and God;
- man has an existence uniting in it two contrasts: mystery and sense;
- man gives birth in himself to uniqueness as a person, but also to community of nature with others;
- man, giving himself to another, has the power to remain unmistakable in himself;
- man has as eternal importance in his person the uniqueness, but also the specific communication imposed by his conscience;
- man has the mark of a transitory and a personality of the moments lived and acts achieved;
- man represents the unity between creature and transitory (passive and dynamic);
- man represents the guarantee of the union between liberty and responsibility;
- the fundamental paradox of the human person is its inexhaustible, yet finite character;
- the human person thirsts for an endless ascent to perfection;
- the human person lives as connected to the present moment, yet comprising the past and tending to a limitless future;
- the human person has a certain unity and complexity defining it;

- the human person has something definite and something indefinite;
- the human person is not an emanation of a blind essence and submitted to implacable laws;
- the human person is referred to time but also to the eternity;
- the human person has a temporal and eternal character;
- the human person has an excellent structural unity and a great power of comprising reality, a situation that cannot be explained without the absolute One in Whom all things are contained and Who created and supports all things in unity;
- the human persons have as destination the desire of conscious and progressive union - with no confounding -, realized by the union with Christ.

All this scientific approach on Dumitru Stăniloae's anthropology, and the arguments brought in favour of this significant theme, which the philosophical thinking cultivated with predilection during the modern period, fully shows that his work is a new milestone regarding the concepts of person and personality, yet not depriving them of their ontological character.

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AESTHETICS OF GEOMETRY IN FOLK ART IN PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

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Abstract

In the title of this article there are associated terms that apparently relate to various fields of interest: aesthetics, geometry, folklore and education. The concern for approaching a theme such as Aesthetics of Geometry in Folk Art in Primary School Education stems from current professional practice, from the desire to find answers where they are not sufficiently sought - in the essence of the human being.

The present paper is structured on three parts preceded by the introduction. In the first part there are synthesized some ideas regarding the presence of the elements of geometry in the folk motifs, in the songs and dances specific to the folklore of the children. The second part details some features of popular aesthetics of intrinsic and extrinsic value. The third part describes how the geometry and folk art can be intertwined in the didactic approach both in order to optimize students' school performances and to educate them as authenticity-oriented individuals.

Keywords: aesthetics of geometry; aesthetic of folk art; folk motifs; folk dance; primary school education;

1. INTRODUCTION

In a deeply-digitalised world, learning has new dimensions both in a broad and in psycho-pedagogical sense. The objective world, as an inexhaustible source of information, simultaneously fulfills the role of purpose, environment and resource for learning. One of the challenges we face in today's education is to maintain a balance between the objective universe and the inner world. We ask ourselves, therefore, what is necessary to learn, what is the purpose and by what means, so that the fundamental traits of the human being are not changed in an unwanted, irreversible way.

In the formal education, responses are synthesized in the curricula, an important vector of education. We know, for example, how many hours of mathematics are allocated weekly for the development of logic-mathematical skills, how many hours are allocated for the development of communication skills, how many hours are allocated for the study of arts, movement, etc. Even if apparently the fields of study are well delimited, the didactic process is often interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary.

2. GEOMETRY IN FOLK ART

The community of mathematicians around the world has an ever-increasing desire to popularize the beauty of mathematics, to make the study accessible, one of the proposed ways being based on the various forms of art.

From the multitude of studies conducted in this respect, we present one held in 2012 at the Department of Mathematics of the University of Southern California. It highlights the close relationship between math and the world of dance, despite the appearances that characterize the first field as a complicated and eternal source of frustration, while placing the second sphere of activity in the area of entertainment, of good mood. The authors of the study demonstrate that geometry is present in individual dance, in pairs or groups in all its forms: lines, geometric figures, in a continuous movement. In conclusion, the integrated approach of the two areas can facilitate their study, increasing both the level of knowledge and the level of satisfaction. (Wasilewska, 2012)

Without pretending to exclusively refer for the first time to the relationship between geometry, visual arts, music, dance, folk tradition and education, in this article, we invite the reader to reflect about some ideas that could generate creative approaches to the teaching. Based on the scientific researches presented in the specialty literature, on some empirical researches, based primarily on spontaneous observation, respectively on experience in working with students from our faculty and, implicitly, with primary school students, we underline some ways of intuitive learning of the basics of geometry through visual arts, music and dance specific to children's folklore.

a. Geometric motifs in folk art

An interesting starting point for the study of popular motifs in relation to geometry is the image below. Figure 1 shows that in the writing of each figure, a number of angles equal to the quantitative significance of the graph illustrated number can be used.

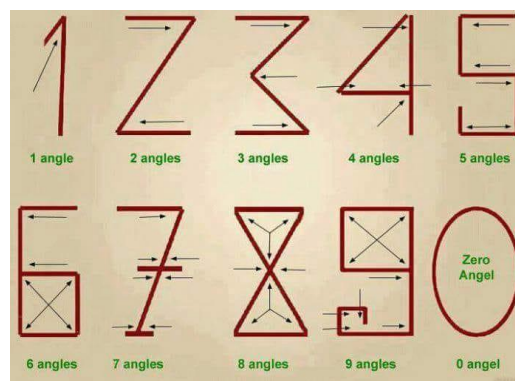


Figure no. 1, *Numbers and angles* (Hanson, 2018)

Figure 2 refers to the popular geometric motifs that we find on the various traditional art products. No matter what ethnic-folkloric area we are talking about, fabrics, ceramic vessels, wooden objects, etc. are richly ornamented with specific motifs.



Figure no. 2, *Popular geometric motif* (Stănescu-Bătrînescu, 1978, p.44-2)

As can be seen in the Figure 2, there is a rhythm and a periodicity of the popular motif. The inner dynamics of the folk motif can be noticed both in its microstructure and in the overall picture of the ornamented artistic product. The microstructure of geometric popular motifs is the result of the ingenious combination of geometric figures so that the aesthetic value of the image obtained counts more than the correctness of their assembling. The chosen chromaticity certainly contributes to the achievement of the artistic image, but only to the extent that it emphasizes the popular motive joints as a result of the juxtaposition and/ or partial overlapping of geometric figures of different dimensions.

b. Morphology of songs and dances from children's folklore

Popular songs from the children's repertoire have a balanced and clear structure. Most of these are written in the simple two-step measure and have rhythmic structures made up of half-time and one-time durations (see Figure 3).



Figure no. 3, *Specific rhythmic structure for children's folklore songs*

Children's songs have their specific rhythm, different from adult's folk songs. The rhythm is shaped more in relation to the idea of movement than in relation to the syllabic structures of words. Here are some characteristics of the rhythmic system specific to the songs from the folklore of the children which support the theory underlying the present work:

- there can be noticed inconsistencies between the metric accents and those of the speech (for example, the song in figure 2, where the word *mămăruță* (ladybug), acquires an emphasis on the syllable I, although in speech, the emphasis is on the 3rd syllable);
- consists of rhythmic structures grouped two by two, variables as length (verses with or without refrain);
- most frequently, the beginning of the rhythmic series is with emphasis.

These features are reflected in folk dances for children both in dance steps and choreography. The dance steps are simple and relate to the binary formulas of the songs, so they are often grouped two by two, left and right, back and forth. The specific choreography of popular folk dances for children is most often thought of in the form of a circle, alternating with one or two lines, depending on the number of dancers and the space in which they are dancing. By learning dance steps and choreography, children can understand the elementary space relations, interior-exterior, left-right etc.

3. AESTHETICS OF FOLK ART

Whether cult or popular, art has its own laws, principles, means, elements of language. The aesthetics of folk culture is complex and difficult to define in few words. The very meaning of the term *culture* has, over time, undergone a series of modifications, depending on the socio-historical context in which it was formulated. In the context of this paper, among the innumerable definitions of culture, we mention a definition by A. Bondrea, who makes the following statement: *Culture is a prolongation of nature and a new dimension of the universe.* (approx. quote) (Bondrea, 1981p. 79)

Cultural value can only exist when there is knowing too. Authentic culture is created, capitalized and transmitted from generation to generation through various means. Referring to Michelangelo's statements that *a man who does not build his own tools will not make his own sculpture*, we can point out that the folk culture preserves everything that is specific to life in an area, at a certain time.

The aesthetics of popular culture can be seen in the very dynamics of our existence. Synthetic and analytical at the same time, folk art has a special symbolism. As R. Guénon states, *Symbolism is generally based on the correspondences that exist between different orders of reality. ... This correspondence is the true foundation of symbolism, and therefore the laws of a lower domain can always be considered to symbolize superior realities where they have their profound reason that is at the same time their principle and purpose.* (approx. quote) (Guénon, 1997, p. 311) Extrapolating this idea, we can see that folk art illustrates the correspondence between the collective and individual life experience and the fundamental human values of each person.

The products of folk art preserve not only the individual and collective aesthetic experiences but also the phenomena of their understanding. Their aesthetics are defined by reference to shape, signs, ornamental, specific, chromatic, motives. According to L. Ionescu, *the dominant impression generated by Romanian folk art is one of harmony and freshness and has its source in the synthesis of the forms of objects and in the geometry, sometimes almost modern, of the traditional decoration and, obviously, in the colors chosen by the ancestral creators.* (approx. quote) (Ionescu, 2013)

Folk motifs result from the joining of flat geometric figures: lines (straight, curved, broken), circles, semicircles, diamonds, squares, etc. invested with deep aesthetic significance. The ancestral artisan does not describe his woven, embroidered motifs on objects created using geometry-specific terms, but speaks of *water waves* (curved lines), *wolf teeth* (the broken line in zigzag), *sun* (circle), *cross*, *star*, *wheel*, *rosette*, etc.

In the case of music, in order to determine the authenticity and aesthetic value of folk creation, we are referring to the preservation or alteration of the axiological criteria along the temporal evolution, namely the consonance between form and content, the role in a certain context and expressiveness. In this regard, we bring to attention A. Leahu's assertion that *The admirable "opening" of some of the folkloric structures whose stylistic matrix, made for centuries to perpetual recreation of the variants, offers exactly the fully-fledged model of collective sensitivity and its multiple possibilities for development.* (approx. quote) (Leahu, in Coord. Rădulescu, 2007, p. 35)

The transposition of the above-mentioned ideas in education ensures the perpetuation of these aesthetic values, keeping them eternal through a common, clever and ingenious action of all.

4. THE AESTHETICS OF FOLK ART GEOMETRY IN THE EDUCATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

According to the school curriculum for Mathematics and Environmental Exploration, the children learn intuitively the basic geometric figures in the readiness, first and second grades, while, in the third and fourth grade, they learn how to operate with these notions. In school textbooks for the study of mathematics and in classroom practice, the universe for the intuition of basic geometry elements is reduced to images and objects in the proximity of students (table, closet, chair, table, shelf, etc.). Without minimizing this way of working, we propose that planar geometry elements be approached with children through the art or folk art.

A first argument in this respect is the theoretical material outlined in the first two parts of this article.

A second consideration that causes us to opt for the study of mathematics through arts is the special relationship between children and all forms of art. Expression of children through image, sound, movement happens beyond words, unconstrained. When children enjoy what they do, they develop an open attitude towards learning. That is why the study of any field, so of mathematics, more precisely of geometry through arts, is not only more pleasant but also more efficient. Didactic activities based on the intuition of plane geometric figures and the solving of some creative assembling operations by exploiting

folk motifs and/ or popular dances contribute to a better understanding of mathematical notions in order to develop children's logical and spatial thinking.

The third reason underlying the idea of studying planar geometry in the primary cycle in relation to folk art is that, thus, popular creation can be understood and valued by students from a different perspective. The folk motifs, songs and dances from children's folklore remain not only popular folk art items with which children sometimes come into contact exclusively with artistic education, but acquire the quality of inherent legacies that are defining the shaping of national identity.

As a result, we propose a guiding model of mathematical activity through arts that has as main purpose the understanding and deepening of basic geometric figures.

- Read and analyze the folk fairy tale *The magic shirt* written by P. Crăciun (Crăciun, 2013, p. 5-14). In this fairy tale, the romanian traditional shirt sewn by a poor girl for three years, is the magical element that leads the emperor's son to find the choice of his heart.

- The class is divided into groups of four children (both boys and girls);

- It is stated that the boys will be initiated in geometry, and the girls will create the folk motifs for the *magic shirts*;

- Boys, helped by teammates, will identify in the classroom, in the given time, as many known geometry figures as possible;

- Valorizing the geometric figures gathered by the boys in the team, the girls will create the most beautiful popular motifs to be embroidered on the *magic shirt*;

- Every team is asked to think about an appropriate choreography for the children's folklore song *Drag mi-e jocul românesc*, to illustrate the story;

- The artistic activity of the children is assessed;

- Fix the theoretical notions.

Such activity cannot be limited to 50 minutes, so it falls into the category of inter-transdisciplinary workshops. We believe that such an approach to the study of mathematics can be characterized as dynamic, flexible, attractive and efficient.

5. CONCLUSION

The mirroring of the syncretism of folk arts in didactic art is not only an exigency of contemporary education, but also a goal of it.

Applying geometry in the creation and ornamentation of artisan objects, as well as in traditional music and folk dance, helps students understand that math can be an appropriate tool for organizing and embellishing the space we live in.

Folk art is the product of individual and collective ideas, experiences and values that reflect the national identity of each individual.

At present, education is truly effective when it succeeds in transgressing any field in complete freedom, without altering its specificity and diminishing its intrinsic value.

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THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explain the role of education individual development and progress and to explain the dynamic relationships among these concepts. The education aims at forming a personality in accordance with the objective requirements of the society, but also of the individual. Like any social phenomenon, education has implicitly a historical character. It has evolved with society, evolving and changing according to the transformations that take place within the society. The relationship between education and society in a healthy way explain the highly dynamic structure of education process.

Keywords: education; personality; development; man; knowledge;

INTRODUCTION

The education aims at forming a personality in accordance with the objective requirements of the society, but also of the individual. Like any social phenomenon, education has implicitly a historical character. It has evolved with society, evolving and changing according to the transformations that take place within the society. Etymologically, the word education comes from the Latin “*educō, -āre*”, a process meaning to take care, to nurture, to lead man, using adequate methods, towards a target meant to give him personality. Education appeared along with man, being fundamental for him, because only by it the human person becomes a personality, accomplishes himself. Education is a priority that generally involves the process of care in relation to the proper training of man in accordance with the ecclesial rules. Family, School, Church and society are the main factors, but also the environment in which the process of training and education of the young starts. Each of these channels present risks and advantages, generating positive outcomes or failures. A transparent and objective analysis of these results could potentially lead to an effective model of education for young people (M. Bugiulescu, 2017, p. 59).

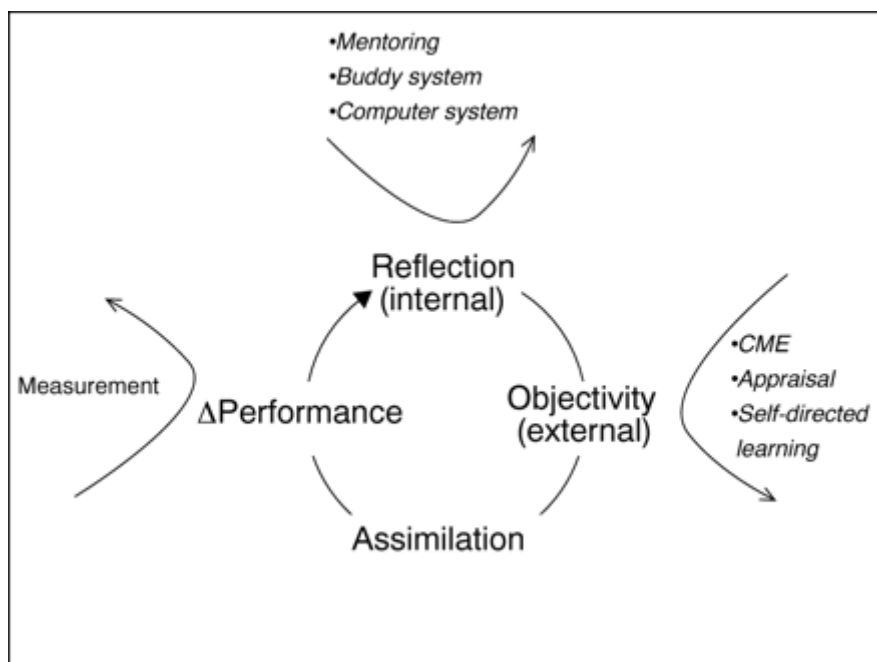
In the past, education related only to a stage in human life, due to the slow rhythm of development of society. But even under these conditions, the great personalities of mankind have insisted on the idea that education is necessary to exert on the individual throughout his life. Seneca, for example, believes that "the elders must learn," Comenius claims that "for every man life is a school, from cradle to tomb",

and Nicolae Iorga states that "learned is the man who learns constantly on dancing and constantly learns others". Thus, permanent education becomes a necessity of contemporary society, representing a theoretical and actionable principle that tries to order a reality specific to our century.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The most important criterion that imposes and justifies permanent education is the social factor sketched by accelerating change, dynamism, mobility of the professions, the evolution of science, increasing leisure time, the crisis of relational and life patterns, and increasing the degree of democratization of social life. The ultimate goal of permanent education is to maintain and improve the quality of life and progress. One of the specialists on education, Jaques Hallak (1990), stated that "education is a human right, since it leads to individual creativity, increases the participation to the economic, social, cultural activity in the society, contributing this way to the process of human development".

"Personal development too can be seen as a cycle or spiral (fig 2). The similarity with education is striking. Both are entered through a process of internal analysis, reflection, and questioning.¹⁰ In the same way that the learner uses this step to take responsibility for any change in knowledge base, in personal development the individual gives authority for the changes that will occur in performance and attitude. Personal development can be encouraged and assisted, but because it has the potential to alter self perception and outlook, those who would facilitate the process in others need to do so within ethical constraints" (Mark Taylor).



More recently, the need for education is also imposed by a number of individual factors such as the need for a dynamic integration of man into society, the increased level of individual aspirations, the feeling of personal dignity, the need for confidence in the future and progress.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Thus, education as a personality modeling process, conducted by family, school, society, aims at educating the educator for education. Self-education points out that the man is not an inert product of

external or internal forces. The human being is largely the result of his own will. Training for education is done through the whole educational process. Starting with years of living, the foundations are based on the formation of self-service, hygienic-sanitary, civilized behavioral and school-related skills in the family.

It can be said that education that precedes self-education offers the young direction of becoming, shapes the skills and skills indispensable to an independent character and cultivates self-confidence. Education prepares self-education in a double sense: it provides a "launch base", through the system of knowledge, skills and skills stimulates the continuing need of education, improvement. The purpose of the school, of professional activity is to provoke in the consciousness of the educated, the need for education. According to A. Töfler (1995) „we are living a moment in which the whole power structure that kept the world together is falling apart and a new power structure is being born, affecting the human society on every level, and this power structure is knowledge”.

Only a complete engagement in the work of the personality is able to become the driving force that brings quantitative and qualitative progress in the educational process. "Each educational institution establishes relationships throughout mutual interactions. Education, as a phenomenon, is both a social foundation and a process occurring in the society. If established a prior and hierarchical sequence, society can be regarded as the objective and the education can be considered as the indispensable means of this objective. In this respect, to research into the functional relationship between education and society and its other institutions is of great importance for community development.."(Türkkahraman, 2012, 38-39).

4. RESEARCH METHODS

1. Education-Society Relationship

Education is a component of socio-human existence, thus being an ongoing process, an inherently inherent in this existence. Education can be conceived, in a broader sense, as a meeting between the individual and society and the whole of the social life can be marked by this permanent exchange.

Through its human character, education is a conscious activity according to predetermined finality, so it has a deliberate sense of purpose. Depending on these finalizations, the values to be transmitted are selected, the methods and means most appropriate to achieve the transmission are chosen, and an appropriate organization of the activity is chosen in order to obtain the expected result. "Teachers appreciate the implementation of the personal development subject in the core curriculum of the Romanian education system and they also recommend a higher number of teaching hours for this subject. As a result of the exploratory study, we find out that most of the teaching staff have not been trained for teaching this subject, that's why we need to inform about this training need. Another conclusion refers to the teachers 'need to cooperate with experts in this field for a better understanding and approach of students' personality "(Herman Ramona Iulia, 2015, 564).

In history, education has developed with society and has acted as a factor of progress, conveying material and spiritual values over the centuries. The most precious value that education has created as an element of culture is man, human personality, being a condition of human existence, a vital necessity for the development of society, ensuring a continuous link between generations and in all social spheres. In general, education is determined by the economic basis of society, it develops and changes with it. Transformations that take place in the economic and social life cause changes in education, it adapts to the new social conditions created. A profound understanding of the relationship between society and education can be achieved only from the thesis that social is a result of people's interaction and cohabitation. Within our education, we appear to be social action that mediates and diversifies the relationship between man and society, thus favoring the development of man through society and society through people. "The future knowledgeable workers and service providers need to be given the chance to go to a knowledge-based work activity, to be able at any point in their life to continue their education, to make a professional orientation and re-orientation at any moment, according to the demands of the labor market" (P. Drucker, 1999, 177).

Consequently, the education of man and the social transformations he accomplishes are in a relationship of reciprocity, in the sense that the educated man, acting on the society, parallel to the transformation, transforms himself, a result which, in turn, will have repercussions on society again.

2. Functions of education in society

In society, education has three major functions:

- Selecting and transmitting values from society to individual; such a transfer of values is also achieved through other social activities and activities. The selection and transmission of values from society to individual, as a function of education, implies that the two operations are carried out on the basis of pedagogical principles and according to certain psychic particularities. As society evolves, the rhythm of accumulation of values is increasingly intense, the reason why the principles of selection and transmission are continually being restructured. The two operations are in a reciprocal dependence, because a proper selection will positively affect the transmission, as a rationalization of it will have positive repercussions on the selection.

- Conscious development of the biopsychic potential of man. As social action, education targets a man conceived as a whole, as a biopsychosocial being. Consequently, she is always dependent on certain biopsychic particularities, while pursuing their development. This function is achievable based on the foundation of the educational action and the valorization of the psychological discoveries. Through this function, education responds to individual needs and by their intent to social needs.

- Preparing man for active integration into social life. Because education has the task of preparing man as an active element of social life, as a work force as a subject of social life, we can state that through this function, education meets needs that society to raise them up to people as elements of social life and through the intermingling of individual needs.

3. The Role of Education in Contemporary Society

It is obvious that, with the rapid evolution of society and implicitly of education and knowledge, many of today's knowledge and practices will be outdated, obsolete tomorrow. It is to be expected that in a period marked by so many technological changes and the emergence of new forms of organization of education and work, specific competencies will also become rapidly overcome. "Contemporary society is characterized by radical changes which take place not only in science, technique or culture but also inside human brain. It has already been proven that children think faster than their one hundred years ago fellows. The accelerated thinking comes along with performance and progress not only in science and technology but also in the creative thinking inside human brain" (Claudia Vlaicu, Ramona Neacsu, 2018, 79). The need for updating, education and lifelong learning will be on the rise. But what is most important is that the knowledge and action needs of society and its members will be different from what they have been up to now. The future creates ever higher demands.

5. CONCLUSION

Education is a particular type of human action or intervention targeting a fundamental category of pedagogy. Plato defined education as "the art of forming good habits or develop skills Native virtue of those who have them." Aristotle in his "Politics", believes that "education should be an object of public oversight, and not private." Johann Amos Comenius, in his "Didactica magna", considered at birth, nature endows child only "seed science of morality and religiosity", they become the property of every man only through education. That in his view, education is a stimulating activity of these "seeds" and thus driving the process of humanization, man "cannot become educated man unless "Education is a particular type of human action, intervention or direction, a fundamental category of pedagogy."

Plato defined education as "the art of forming good skills or developing native skills for virtue of those who have it." Aristotle, in his paper "Politics," said that "education must be an object of public oversight, and not private". Johann Amos Comenius, in the "Didactica magna" work, considers at birth that nature only endows the child with "the seeds of science, morality and religiosity," they become a good of every man only through education. It follows that, in its conception, education is an activity to stimulate these "seeds", and implicitly, to lead the process of humanization, man "cannot become man unless he is educated."

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THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SHAPING THEIR CHARACTER

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Abstract

The students' religious education was and still is a controversial issue in Romania. Although our country is mainly orthodox, having powerful traditions, culture and spirituality, with an applied bi-millenary faith, there are opinions against the necessity to perform religious education in schools, opinions based on unfounded and inconsistent reasoning. Religious education is beneficial, as it helps the child become a responsible, balanced, optimistic adult, having a healthy vision of life, with multiple psychological and spiritual advantages, as well as an open, tolerant and receptive attitude towards the needs of others and willing to help. Religious education shares authentic values, such as kindness, altruism, moderation, love for our fellow human beings, faith, hope, and it takes man closer to our Creator, which, at difficult times is a real landmark, a powerful inner support. The diagnosis of our current society shows the promotion of fake heroes and values, the loss of self, the alienation and isolation of people, the adoption of a selfish and individualistic behavior, and lack of care for our fellow human beings, excessive technology, and defective communication. To help these generations of students develop, it is necessary for them to receive a healthy education, aiming both at their soul and their mind, based on acquiring knowledge, but also on shaping personalities with ethical and moral principles and a kind character. Religious education in schools helps students with parables, models of behavior, authentic axiological landmarks that are absolutely necessary during this period, when characters are shaped. The present study aims at achieving an investigating on the way students perceive religious education and its impact on shaping their character, especially at the beginning of teenage when temptations, immaturity and the changes they go through make them vulnerable and prone to wrong choices, which can sometimes have negative consequences for the rest of their lives.

Keywords: religious education; character; values; students;

1. INTRODUCTION

Family and school are the main partners of the educational process and must contribute to forming and shaping a child's character from an early age. Family, by means of the attitudes and models promoted has the essential role to share fundamental human values with the child (love, respect, honesty, altruism, kindness, tolerance), as, before starting school the child must receive the education 'of the 7 years at home' – so much appreciated and rare nowadays. School, by means of dedicated and professional teachers, must promote and develop the child's beautiful character, to expose the child to examples of moral behavior, to authentic and immortal values.

One cannot shape characters instantly, at a certain moment, but gradually and an important part in this process belongs to the educational activities taking place in schools starting with early ages. During early childhood, the child's personality is shaped under the influence of affective and motivational coordinates of adults, by means of imitation and examples.

In forming positive character traits, one can identify several significant moments:

- adopting clear moral representations and notions;
- transforming moral notions into moral convictions, moral attitudes and feelings;
- by practice, moral feelings and attitudes are turned into moral skills and habits set into positive character traits.

Religious education accomplished through the contents of the school subject called *Religion*, aims at shaping the students' characters by valuing the positive behavioral models and by a permanent reference to the absolute human and divine values.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Forming characters is a complex process starting in the first years of life and taking place, especially during school time.

Character is the relational-value side of personality, the system of stable and specific individual attitudes, with a moral significance that defines a person as a member of society (Cocan, 2007, p. 151). A. Cosmovici considers character to be the structure expressing the hierarchy of a person's essential reasons, and the possibility to turn to fact the decisions taken according to these (Cosmovici, Iacob, 2008, p. 61). In ordinary language, character describes those features that are specific to our way of being, of behaving, our convictions, attitudes and a person's moral profile.

In a general sense, the term character designates a multitude of psychological relations reflected in a person's relations towards his/her fellow human beings and the values that guide a person's life. Character is mainly shaped throughout our childhood and teenage under the influence of our family, of the educational, cultural and social environment, of our group of friends, as well as of the promoted values. Character reflects a person's system of values and can be viewed as a dimension of the self, one that is responsible for the ethical behavior, reason for which it is considered to represent a person's psycho-moral profile, having a significant part in an efficient coexistence and adjustment to society. The structure of character comprises stable attitudes and those character traits that are specific to a certain person.

Character is a structure of personality determined by the interaction of three components. V. Negovan (2006) identifies:

- the cognitive component – represented by a person's basic knowledge related to right and wrong and by the rational and creative processes necessary to operate with this knowledge in taking correct moral decisions;
- the affective and volition component – represented by the value system offering criteria to make moral judgments;
- the conative or behavioral component – applying attitude in a person's behavior (for instance: the value of 'right' without its corresponding attitude, but the correct attitude, as well, without the value of 'right' is not the expression of a shaped character.

M. Golu (2009) considers that in the structure of character one can find affective elements (emotions, feelings), motivational elements (interests, needs, ideals), cognitive elements (representations,

concepts, judgments) and volition elements (features, traits), related to a person's social existence and mediating a person's relations with his/her fellow human beings and with society as a whole. The percentage of the four types of components in the character structure varies from person to person, and that can represent a criterion of typological classification – for instance: the structure of a character with prevailing personal motivation will have as character trait selfishness, and this will be more developed than altruism.

Character is reflected in a person's attitude towards the world and towards himself/herself:

1. attitude towards himself/herself (dignity, modesty, pride, feelings of culpability and superiority/inferiority);
2. attitude towards others and towards society (respect, honesty, sincerity, correctness, altruism, patriotism);
3. attitude towards activity (implication, diligence, cooperation).

Of these three categories, one can derive several attitudes, leading to defining general human values:

Attitudes	⇒	Values
Attitude towards God	⇒	religiousness
Attitude towards people	⇒	humanism (kindness, altruism, respect, tolerance)
Attitude towards society	⇒	democracy (by: implication, decision, responsibility, mutual esteem and respect)
Attitude towards country	⇒	patriotism (ethnic and/or local)
Attitude towards family	⇒	Family attachment
Attitude towards self	⇒	dignity, esteem, self respect
Attitude towards work	⇒	diligence, cooperation, mutual assistance
Attitude towards values (as working products)	⇒	Care for the national and international heritage, care for the community and the private property.

(Cocan, 2007, p. 152).

According to the positive/negative polarity, character can be dominated by certain antagonist character traits: kindness-meanness, diligence-laziness, honesty-lie, altruism-selfishness, seriousness-lack of seriousness, modesty-pride, and courage-cowardice. Values are determined when attitudes correspond to the social and ethical standards.

M. Zlate (1999), after developing Paul Popescu-Neveanu's conception, refers to the model of character balance regarding the polarization of character traits. He states that at birth character is in stage zero of its development, but that it will evolve towards one pole or the other during its evolution; all pairs of traits are present in each of us, and according to how they are shaped, the positive or the negative pole of the character trait in question will prevail.

This perspective regarding character development contributes to setting a character typology: '*a person of good character*' = a person with prevailing positive traits and '*a person of bad character*' = a person with prevailing negative traits.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study aims at emphasizing teenage students' perception towards religious education, the way they understand and apply theoretical concepts and notions in real life contexts. The results were gathered by applying a questionnaire with several possible answers on a 5-step Likert scale (to a very large extent / to a large extent / to a moderate extent / to a small extent / not at all).

The sample was made up of 52 theoretical high school students (28 girls and 24 boys) of grades 9th and 10th attending religious education classes.

4. RESULTS

Figure 1 illustrates the students' perceptions regarding the usefulness of notions and knowledge acquired during Religion classes for real life. A significant percentage of the students (53, 8%) considers that the theoretical knowledge and the skills developed during Religion classes will be very useful in real life, at certain moments of their existence, which indicated a powerful correlation between the contents of this school subject and real life issues or contexts. This is a very important fact, as these results overcome the criticism regarding several school subjects and referring to their lack of practical, applied character. The connections to real life are indispensable as students need to understand the usefulness of theoretical notions, regardless of the field.

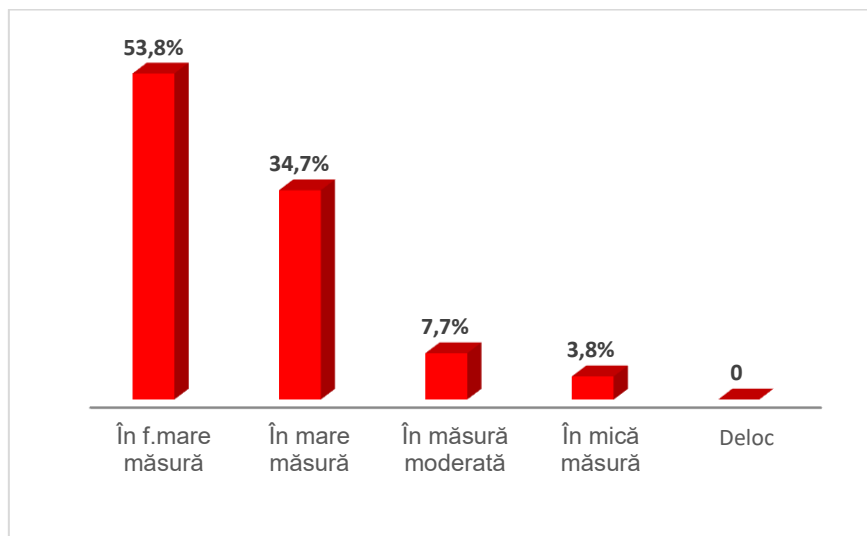


Fig. 1. The students' perceptions regarding the usefulness of notions and knowledge acquired during Religion classes for real life

Figure 2 represents the students' perceptions regarding the role of Religion classes in the process of self discovery and personal development. One can notice the fact that a percentage of 38, 4% of the students considers elements of religious education taught in school to be useful to a great extent for the process of discovering themselves, knowing their cognitive and affective abilities, their motivational resources and skills, measuring their potential, as well as during the process of developing inner, evolution resources. Self awareness and personal development are the key to a successful life. Those students who can value their skills, abilities and competences efficiently can easily overcome challenges and obstacles, rely on their own and are motivated to exceed their limits.

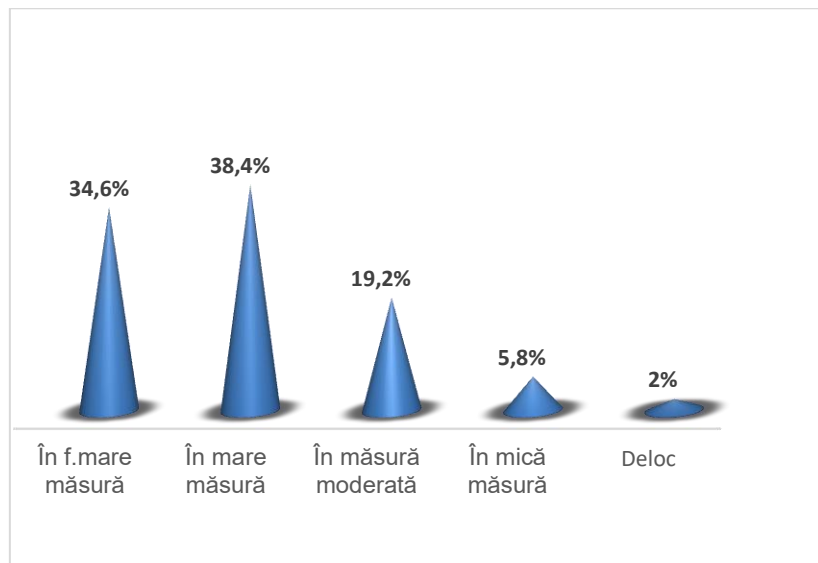


Fig. 2. The students' perception regarding the role of Religion classes in the process of self awareness and personal development

The parables and stories in the lives of saints used during Religion classes are authentic models of attitude and behavior for the students, especially during teenage, a time when a person needs authentic, healthy landmarks to refer to, different from those highly promoted in all the groups they attend. Teenagers need positive alternatives for the fake values abounding in cyberspace, media and other channels of our present society they have access to. This is the only way allowing them to choose between right and wrong, moral and immoral and to form authentic principles and value to guide their lives with. The Religion class contributes to reducing the negative effects of our contemporary identity and focus crisis, as it displays examples of kindness, holiness and human coexistence.

In figure 3 one can notice that students value, to a great extent (50%), the fact that during Religion classes they met behavioral models to apply in the current society. This is very important for their moral character that is in the process of shaping itself and for building a positive vision on life.

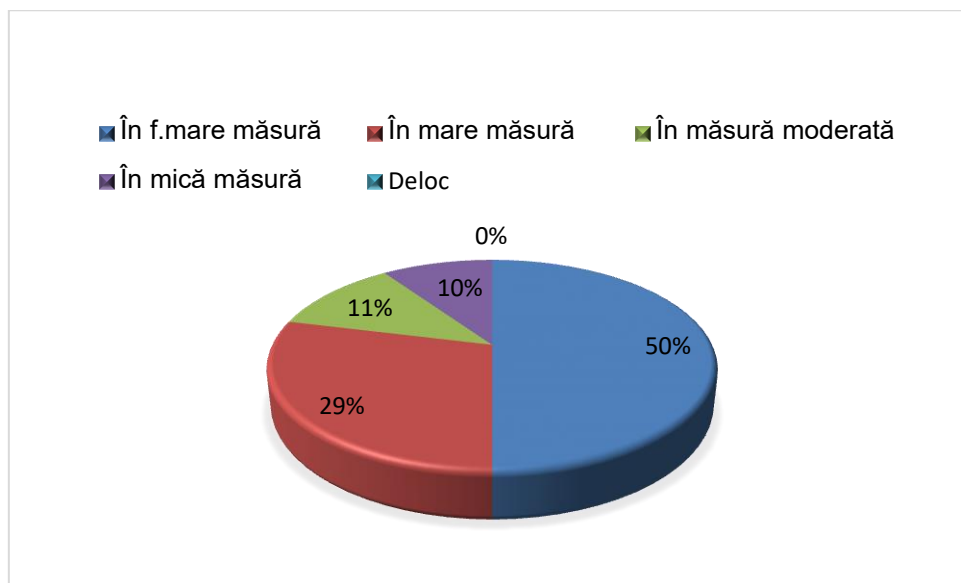


Fig. 3. The students' perception referring to the extent to which parables and stories of the lives of saints can be behavioral model to apply nowadays

5. CONCLUSION

Religious education is a necessary process for every society aiming at a better future for its people. Morality, principles, faith, authentic values are the pillars supporting the development of a balanced, physically, psychologically and spiritually healthy society. School has a main part in this process, especially now when family declines the responsibility of educating children. In the past the '7 years at home' meant the base of children's education, and family played its part of educational agent, acknowledging the importance of transmitting permanent principles and values. Nowadays this part is assumed by a small number of families, as they expect school to foster the entire process of shaping the children's personalities, and school cannot support this complex and difficult endeavor on its own. The advantages of performing religious education starting with early ages are multiple and undisputable.

Only by means of a real, functional partnership among school, family, Church, cultural institutions and media one can achieve a safe and positive environment to accomplish a harmonious development of the young generation. And religious education cannot and must not be left aside this context.

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THE CRITICAL ROLE OF ART FOR MEANINGFUL MORAL ACTION

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Abstract

In the late 18th century, Friedrich Schiller made a case for the importance of art in the individual and for society at large. His argument is made poetically, is devoid of scientific evidence, and is tailored for its 18th century audience. Schiller shows how art has the power to unify society and balance the individual, inspiring action for the apathetic and encouraging rationality in the over-zealous ideologue. Today, our fractured society suffers from both lazy cynicism and emotional fanaticism. In this paper, I attempt to update Schiller's project, showing its relevance today by supporting it with further philosophical argument and contemporary science. Scientific developments in the fields of moral psychology and neuroscience made long after Schiller's life have added credibility to his ideas about the importance of art and how it interacts with human nature. Nearly everyone recognizes the need for unification in our fractured society, and I hope to make the case that art may be the very thing that makes this possible.

Keywords: Friedrich Schiller; Art; Ethics; Moral Psychology; Neuroscience; Antonio Damasio;

INTRODUCTION

In his 1795 essay *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* Friedrich Schiller complains that "utility is the great idol of the age" (Schiller, Friedrich. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. 1795,26). He was concerned that society had begun to focus exclusively on those pursuits that are quantifiable at the expense of those that are less so - like art. Over the course of the essay, which is really a book-sized collection of letters addressed to his new patron, he makes a heartfelt and convincing case for the importance of art in society.

This trend that Schiller was concerned with seems as present as ever in our modern society. Today, there is a clear value placed on those skills which most directly affect the 'bottom line' and art is certainly not considered to be one of these. Today, in our age of information overload, ideological political pundits, fake news, deceiving headlines, and a well-publicized "divided" society, art may be the most promising remedy for our problems. It should be more evident today than ever that a more intense barrage of "facts" and "news" is insufficient to inspire sensible action and cohesion amongst the population. There seems to be something missing amongst the modern clutter. We have more talking points than we could have ever dreamed of but we seem to be either completely unable to muster the

energy to act meaningfully or we are so passionately devoted to our dogmatic ideological positions that we are irrational, blindly rejecting the perspective of the other half the world. Information is good, but its acquisition does not necessarily entail meaningful action, for that an additional ingredient is required. Art is essential for individuals and society as a whole. It speaks to and energizes our emotional capacities which are a necessary component for rational, meaningful, and moral action. This is the argument that Schiller made in 1795. This argument, that art is essential for meaningful action in individuals and society as a whole is deeply relevant to our modern world and is supported by personal experience, philosophy, modern neuroscience, and moral psychology.

2. IS - OUGHT GAP

As an undergrad I took a class that focused almost exclusively on Hurricane Katrina. We learned about the faulty construction of the levees, the life and death triage decisions healthcare professionals had to make at hospitals without electrical power, the delayed governmental response, the cutthroat behavior of insurance companies in the aftermath, and the massive attempt to gentrify (or as one politician put it “clean up”) the area after it had been effectively wiped out by the hurricane. There was a clear intellectual recognition of the disturbing nature of these events when I was studying them. I knew that the lack of preparation for the event was irresponsible and that the experience of the victims must have been horrible. I would have gotten all of these questions right if they were posed to me on a multiple choice test, but there was still something missing. My knowledge of these facts and information about the disaster lacked a certain emotional resonance and I remained largely unmoved by them. This state that my class left me in was in no way useless, the new knowledge that I acquired left me with a better understanding of the world, but I was not motivated to take action.

One year after the class, I heard a four-minute poem, “Left,” by Nikki Finney. It was written from the perspective of a survivor and upon hearing it the real emotional truth of the disaster hit me. I felt like I ‘got it’ for the first time. This new understanding is harder to articulate, I did not learn any new tangible facts per se, but I was left with the sense that I could finally begin to empathize with those who had experienced the disaster. Prior to this emotional apprehension of the dilemma, I was apathetic and emotionally disengaged. My understanding was removed and scholarly. I could tell you about what happened and act upset but I did not really care. Disengaged and unconcerned people armed with information have never been those that have made a difference in our world. Insofar as art can convert them into engaged and concerned people with information, it is very valuable indeed.

Many people can relate to the feeling of having ample information but being unable to make a decision. The everyday experiences of people across the world would seem to support the idea that some emotional impetus is required for any kind of meaningful decision. Philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists have been making this claim since at least Aristotle, who stressed the importance of an emotional appeal (pathos) in persuasive speech. David Hume’s “is - ought gap” is an assertion of the categorical divide between fact and feeling. His claim is that there is a fundamental difference between statements about the empirical facts of the world, ‘is’ claims, and moral statements about what we as humans ‘ought’ to do. He contended that no amount of ‘is’ claims, or factual information, is sufficient to infer a claim of the ‘ought’ variety. In order to make a moral judgement, a person’s sentiment must intervene. Only with the force of sentiment may any ‘ought’ claim be made (Hume, 1738).

3. JONATHAN HAIDT’S SOCIAL INTUITIONIST MODEL

More recently, the psychologist Jonathan Haidt developed a theory of moral decision called the Social Intuitionist Model, or SIM. The SIM claims that when confronted with a moral dilemma, we are initially struck with an intuition that informs our initial judgement. It is not until after this initial intuitional judgement that we begin to reason about our conclusion. In this way, our reasoning acts like a lawyer, rationally arguing for a predetermined position. For Haidt, it is possible for our reasoning to loop back and influence our intuition in such a way that it changes our conclusion. Nevertheless, intuition or sentiment is a necessary component in the process of making moral judgements (Haidt, Jonathan 2001). Haidt supports his theory by describing the phenomenon of “moral dumbfounding,” a situation where

people hold moral positions that they have trouble justifying rationally. To illustrate this phenomenon, Haidt presents a scenario where a brother and sister have sex. They are on vacation from college and use two forms of birth control, they enjoy the experience and believe that it brings them closer, but decide to never repeat it and keep it as a special secret. Most people are immediately repulsed by the story and are quick to judge it as wrong. However, when people are asked to describe the rationale behind their judgement, they often cite risks of inbreeding and psychological harm to the siblings. When they are reminded that these problems do not apply to this situation, they sometimes conjure up even less relevant rationale or they simply admit they have ‘no good reason, it’s just wrong.’ This case seems to suggest that an “anti-incest intuition” is what is really at the heart of the subjects’ judgement of this case. It seems to follow that in a world where a “pro-incest intuition” was more common, people would have the opposite feelings about this case (Bjorklund, Fredrik, and Jonathan Haidt 2000).

4. ANTONIO DAMASIO'S CASE STUDY OF ‘ELLIOT’

There is a famous case in neuroscience that involves a standup family man and father named Elliot who developed a brain tumor that necessitated a removal of a significant amount of his brain tissue. When Elliot awoke from surgery, he was suddenly incapable of making decisions. Even the most mundane dilemmas (what to eat, what to wear) debilitated Elliot. He understood the rational elements of his various predicaments perfectly, but was unable to move himself to make a choice. He could even discuss complex political affairs and when presented with hypothetical scenarios about the lives of others, could prescribe a course of action that would lead one to happiness. Tragically though, he was unable to apply his sound reasoning to his own life. He fell victim to investment scams and went bankrupt, he was unable to hold a steady job, he cheated on his wife and after she divorced him he married a prostitute.

The Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio studied Elliot’s case in detail and concluded that the tissue he lost in his surgery was directly responsible for Elliot’s total collapse. While removing his tumor, Elliot’s surgeons essentially severed the connection between his limbic system (the emotional center of the brain) and his frontal lobes (the rational center of his brain). This left Elliot's ability to reason and to feel intact but made it impossible for these two capacities to influence each other. This lack of internal communication debilitated Elliot to the point where he was not functioning as a person. He is evidence that without a healthy interplay of reason and emotion we seem to lose our humanity, meaningful human action depends on both (Damasio, Antonio R. 1995). Hume, Haidt, and Elliot all support the idea that reason alone is insufficient for coherent human behavior. Hume claims that moral decision-making is simply impossible without sentiment. Haidt suggests that moral decisions necessarily involve an emotional intuition which further reasoning can better inform. Elliot shows that a person without a healthy line of discourse between his reason and emotion is unable to function and becomes a slave to impulse. All meaningful decisions humans make involve both emotion and reason. Without both of these components working properly or to an appropriate degree, we are out of balance and unable to function properly. This is essentially the claim that Schiller makes when he says that only when both components of a person are active is a person’s “humanity established.” (Schiller. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 96). In this situation, “they both lose their sanction, and the opposition of two necessities gives rise to freedom” (Schiller. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, 96). Freedom and true human flourishing is found in a place where both of these forces are working in harmony.

5. STEM INVESTMENT IN THE MODERN WORLD

Today, more than ever there is a premium being placed on the acquisition of skills that are quantifiable and belong to the rational sphere. This is evident in the emphasis being placed on and the resources being poured into STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields. It is believed by many that the proficiency of our population in these fields is the key to advancing technologically and maintaining our country’s position as a dominating world power. Between 1987 and 2007, over 200 acts of legislation containing the term “science education” were introduced to congress. Federal investment in STEM fields is estimated to be between \$2.8 and \$3.4 Billion annually (Gonzalez, Heather and Jeffrey J. Kuenzi. 2012, 3). As our interest in STEM fields has been increasing, our interest in art has been decreasing. Studies show that American attendance of live art events has been steadily declining. In 1992

over 40% of Americans reported attending a live art event, by 2012 that number had fallen to 30% (Silber, Bohne, and Tim Triplett.2015). Federal funding for art education is estimated at \$250 million/year, less than 10% of STEM investment (Gonzalez and Kuenzi. 2012). It is commonly known that when schools need to make financial cuts, it is often art programs that are the first to go. Ironically, in the Congressional Research Service report that advocates for further investment in STEM and contains the statistics referenced in this paper, there is a quote by George Washington, presumably included to make the point that an emphasis on science education has been a national priority from day one: “Nor am I less persuaded that you will agree with me in opinion that there is nothing which can better deserve your patronage than the promotion of science *and literature*” (Gonzalez, Heather and Jeffrey J. Kuenzi. 2012, 1). It seems that Schiller and Washington alike recognized that balance is important, advocating for both science and literature.

6. CONCLUSION

In the case of Elliot, it was made clear that an inability for our emotional and rational capacities to interact in a healthy interplay results in an incoherent life that is subjected to irrational whims of emotion and biology. While there is no overwhelming force controlling Elliot, he certainly does not possess a satisfying freedom. There are not many people in our society with disconnected frontal lobes, but there are many who seem to suffer from an abundance of emotional motivation. This phenomenon is especially evident during election season. People emphatically cling to their ideological positions and selectively filter information that threatens their emotionally charged ideas. When people are intentionally ignoring information, the prescription for their dysfunction cannot be more information. Schiller stresses that art, with the ability to convey beauty and drive people toward a balanced and ideal state, is not evangelical rather, “it interferes with no business either of reflection or resolution, it confers on both merely the capacity, but determines nothing concerning the use of this capacity” (Schiller. On the Aesthetic Education of Man, 108.). It does not attempt to provide the consumer with clear conclusions like most politically charged TV shows and websites, but rather it inspires the consumer to be a more complete, free, and harmonious person - to make their own choice. It is unlikely that the overzealous ideologue can be moved to a more humble state through reasoning alone. It is hard to imagine any sort of traditional conversation or news article really penetrating their firm disposition. It is easier to imagine, however, that in the midst of an honest reading of Camus’ *The Stranger* this person could be deeply softened when she reads, “I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world.”

The fanatic ruled by emotion seems to have the opposite problem that I had following my academic Hurricane Katrina class. In my case, apathy was the problem. However, like the fanatic, I would not have benefitted from any additional information. It took a beautiful poem to finally drive me to connect a sufficient emotional feeling to the information I already knew about Katrina. Humankind has consistently suffered from a lack of a true understanding of the plights of those who belong to different social groups. Artists like Tupac, Banksy, and Beyonce are particularly concerned with inspiring feeling in society that will lead to positive change. Each of these artists, and many more, recognize that the most effective way of spreading their message is through the medium of art. They understand that simply leaving ideas in our heads is ultimately unsatisfying. As humans, we feel a need to actually see our thoughts and passions realized in the world, we strive for them to come to fruition. Not only is Tupac doing this when he creates music, but he is inspiring others to do the same. The apathetic person is in need of inspiration to put into action their stagnant ideas, art can give them this energy. When we are presented with an idea through the medium of art, we do not just come to know it, we feel it. This total apprehension of a thing is necessary for us as people to both feel complete and harmonious within ourselves and to take any meaningful action that can better the world.

Friedrich Schiller was a poet and his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* could rightly be considered a work of art. He relies on no scientific theories or studies to develop his position. His message is conveyed with a healthy balance of passionate language and rational argument. This combination proves to be effective for communicating the importance of art in a powerful and timeless way. Today, our society feels like it is fracturing and fragmenting, forming deep valleys between its

pieces. Many people are uninterested in gaining a well-rounded and wise understanding of our world, while many others feel hopeless and apathetic. Art has the capability to be a unifying force for society. It has a way of conforming its effect to the needs of the individuals that experience it. It energizes the apathetic, calms the overzealous, and brings into harmony both the individual and the society as a whole.

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THE HOLY SCRIPTURE AS FOUNDATION OF THE ICON

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Abstract

The Gospel, this great news, reveals God to the world Incarnated as Jesus Christ – true God and true Man. The Apostles, the witnesses to and the beneficiaries of this revelation, confessed that „...which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have gazed upon and touched with our own hands – this is the Word of life... we proclaim to you” (I John 1, 1-2). The content of the new-testament writings is therefore based on the authors’ personal experience or, at most, on exact sources, and aims to use words as to introduce readers into the atmosphere of grace experimented by the disciples so that they themselves become witnesses to and proclaimers of true Life, „in Him was life and that life was the light of all mankind” (I John 1, 2-3). Therefore, the interdependence between word and image, between Gospel and icon is created. The Apostles saw the Saviour „face to face”; we absorb His words from the Holy Books and we feel as if addressed to us and, through these words, we feel the presence of One who speaks them. Similar to icons, the words render the Person present and also lead towards that closeness to This One and that dialogue of the prayer.

Keywords: Holy Scripture; gospel; Saviour; apostles; icon;

1. INTRODUCTION

In the history of the Orthodox Church, icons have played an important part in relation to the catechization and religious instruction. The religious painting depicts the Bible in colours, colours by which the illiterate have come in contact with the learning on salvation, whereas nowadays they teach those who no longer have time to read. „The iconography is a form of the Holy Scripture”, Archbishop Lazăr Puhalo says. „This is nothing else than the Bible, the accurate interpretation of the Bible, through colours and mosaics”¹.

Throughout times, improvement of pictorial styles and iconographic registers enabled painting of the Holy Scripture on the church walls and often these walls are fully covered by frescos. Each corner,

¹ Archbishop Lazăr Puhalo, *The Ikon as Scripture*, translation by Marian Rădulescu, Theosis Publishing House, Oradea, 2009, p. 12.

each nook of the churches used to be covered in bible representations and the iconography became thus another means by which the Holy Scripture unveiled itself. In fact, one gradually reaches the stage when religious paintings imprint bible ideas and forms in the onlooker's eyes².

The Greek word „eikon" from which the term „icon" originates means „alikehood", „face", „representation". Christians started using icons as early as the first century AD. In the first two centuries, Christians had a primitive form of art which used forms such as „the dove" (symbol of Christ's peace), „the fish", and „the shepherd" (symbols of Christ), as well as the „peacock" (symbol of the resurrection). Moreover, it seems that, as early as the first century AD, the Christians used representations of the events in the Holy Scripture to embellish their tombs; pictorial representations of Christ's life, possibly going back to the first part of the second century, were discovered in catacombs in Rome and Alexandria.

These proofs demonstrate that the iconographic images came to life as early as the first centuries of our Christian life. The historian Eusebius of Caesarea (+ 339) wrote in his *Church History* that he saw the icons of the Saviour and the Apostles Peter and Paul which had been kept until his lifetime³. We notice that, in time, despite all opposition from those who condemned them, the icons came into prominence in the cult of the Church and the faces painted on them still keep the same beauty which awakes the souls of the Christians.

As there is a close relation between the icons, of the one hand, and the divine cult and the Christians' devotion, of the other hand, the icons became part of the Church's life and tradition, in line with the possibility and the needs of each and every era, and they have always expressed the teachings promoted by the Church. Therefore, during persecution times, the iconography was symbolic and allegoric. It was in the catacombs that the few Christians confessed their faith through symbols (fish, anchor, lamb, vineyard, deer etc.) or the monogram of Christ the Saviour (also known as the sign *XP*), as well as *A* and *Q* and the cross. The catacombs also hosted representations of bible scenes which, though lacking a stylised form and being less artistic, brought their contribution and strengthened Christians' faith in God Almighty, making Christians courageous before the persecutors.

Later on Emperor Constantine the Great gave Church its freedom and this was the time when the representations through symbols and allegories were no longer sufficient. This is the reason why representations of the Saviour's activity, Virgin Mary's life, Apostles' activity or acts of martyrdom found their own place in the cult. Every century the number and the diversity of the iconographic representations increase, and the iconography becomes progressively more mature and stylised.

2. REVELATION THROUGH WORD AND IMAGE

God communicates to us through things in the world and through people as if He communicated through some words or, better said, some echoes of His words. The Old Testament forbade the image in favour of the word; however, the New Testament restores the image as means towards discovering God through embodiment of the Son of God. From a soteriological perspective, icon painting has the same status and is, to the same extent, as mandatory as written conveyance of the Gospel.

Both the word and the image become therefore yet again means of communication and sharing, which, once accepted at sensory level, enlighten the mind of the person intercepting them. The holy image goes back to the very beginnings of Christianity and is one of the main ways towards spreading and preaching the Holy Scripture. The image as language or, better said, as embodiment of the Holy Scripture words, developed gradually, at the same time as the Church did and while the Church was laying down their dogmas. This explains why the Church initially talked to Christians using a language that was more accessible and more appropriate than the direct image which they were not prepared to receive.

² I. D. Ștefănescu, *Iconography of the Byzantine Art and Romanian Feudal Painting*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1973, p. 50.

³ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, Book VII, XVIII, 4, translation by Priest Prof. T. Bodogae, Publishing House of the Bible and Orthodox Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1987, p. 288.

In its activities, the Church was a language of symbols of which meanings were revealed to catechumens while they were preparing for the Christian Baptism. At the beginning, Christianity manifested itself on a small scale and had to cope with numerous issues springing from the society which found it difficult to surpass old conceptions, which originated both in Judaism and in the ancient Greek and Roman tradition. This was the case of images of which acceptance met, on the one hand, with interdictions of the Old Testament on representation of God, all the more so as Christian communities were surrounded by paganism and the unfortunate experience of pagan idolatry made the early Christians avoid any forms of artistic manifestation which could have contaminated their religion, and, on the other hand, with the shortage of an appropriate artistic language to properly represent the face of Christ. Moreover, in those times, the dogma of the Incarnation, which would have offered the reason, the certitude and even the duty to represent the face of Christ, had not yet been developed.

It is worth noting that, as father Dumitru Stăniloae pointed out, the Old Testament Law forbade worshiping of idols, yet admitted the presence of symbols, images or even objects placed in direct connection with God, in other words sanctified objects. This idea leads to the affirmation that the symbols of the old law „provide knowledge about God; however, this is limited, obscure, as God Himself appears in these symbols only as shadows. God will completely reveal Himself in Christ, in Whom God comes in full closeness and light”⁴.

The first Christians used above all bible symbols. In addition to the rare explicit images of Christ, there is a multitude of symbolic representations. Among the ones using the human form we firstly see the image of the Good Shepherd (see Figure 1), which existed as early as the first century. It is inspired from the bible texts, where the world is depicted as a flock of which shepherd is God, as it is Jesus Christ the Saviour Himself Who said: „I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10, 11) and „and I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15, 24).



(Fig. 1
– Jesus Christ –Good Shepherd – mosaic of the 5th century, Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna)

⁴ Priest Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Symbol as Anticipation and Foundation of the Possibility of the Icon*, in magazine „Theological Studies”, No. 7 – 8/1957, p. 429.

By adopting this image, Christianity confers it a precise meaning: The Good Shepherd – God Incarnate – takes the lost sheep, namely the degenerated human nature, and unifies it to His godlike glory⁵.

In the art of the catacombs, the lamb represented the Christians, the souls redeemed by Jesus Christ, according to the words spoken to Peter: „Feed my lambs” (John 21, 15) and the image of the Good Shepherd with the lamb over His shoulders. The lamb also represents Jesus Christ as depicted by John the Baptist: „look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1, 29). Later on, when the image of the God Shepherd is accompanied by the new Saviour, the oriental type, having with beard and wearing a kingly costume, the lamb continues its symbolism, yet it no longer is the mystical lamb, „the lamb which sacrifices itself and is sacrificed”, but an apocalyptic figure (see Fig. 2).



(Fig. 2)

In 313 the Roman Empire becomes Christian and in 330 Constantine the Great founds the new capital of the empire, Constantinople. Christianity comes out of the catacombs, „conquers” both the Roman Empire and the Near Eastern countries and expands rapidly. This change in the life of the 4th-century Church marks not only an era when Christian faith was victorious but also the start of a development in all aspects. After this *golden era* of the Church, of great importance was the reign of Justinian I, which may rightfully be considered as the apogee of the art in the Byzantine period. Among the religious buildings owed to this great emperor, Procopius of Caesarea enumerates churches such as *Holy Apostles* in Constantinople, *San Vitale* in Ravenna, *Saint Demetrius* in Thessaloniki.

San Vitale Church is garlanded with famous mosaics, of which the most popular represent Justinian and Theodora. The fame of Justinian I is associated to the large church Hagia Sophia of Constantinople, the capital of the empire, where „the genius of Rome and the Orient comes together as

⁵ Archimandrite Sofian Boghiu, *The Face of the Saviour in Iconography*, Bizantina Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, p. 40.

one in the most surprising ensemble”⁶. Hagia Sophia or the Great Church of the Orthodoxy was designated to be „the pantheon of the Byzantine art”. Constructed between 532 and 537, it was destined to surpass the great Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem. Upon completion of works, the emperor visited the masterpiece and is said to have exclaimed: „Oh Solomon, I have surpassed thee”. Of an impressive size (77m long, 72 wide, 65 high), this church is made of the best and most expensive materials: multicolour marble, cedar wood, gold, silver, ivory, gems, porphyry, oriental purple velvet fabric, Persian and Arabian carpets. Hagia Sophia fascinated all people who saw it. Procopius of Caesarea wrote in amazement: „Whenever one goes to this church to pray, one understands immediately that this work has been fashioned not by human power or skill, but by the influence of God”⁷.

This is the moment when we witness a time of Christianity being spread through art, not to small groups, but to masses of Christians. This is why the Church Fathers attach special importance to the pedagogical role of the art. Saint Gregorian the Theologian, bishop of Nazianzus and patriarch of Constantinople, explains how important the image is: „Images are used in holy churches so that the illiterate can at least read on walls what is impossible for them to read in books”⁸, and Saint Basil the Great ascribes painting a power of persuasion which exceeds the power of his own words. The icon is a genuine declaration of faith, of a profound dogmatic nature. Once again the Church uses iconography and therefore art to both preach and fight heresy. „The representation of the human face of God on icons serves in putting shame on the heretics who claim that He turned into man only in people’s imagination, never in reality”⁹ wrote Saint Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, to bishop iconoclast Tomas.

Art represents an essential dimension of the Orthodoxy of all times. Art is a means to teach and, in consideration of the responsibility assumed, the church will be carefully watching its evolution. The Church Fathers will therefore try to use canons as to both enrich and protect the Christian art against infiltrations of pagan origin. In 692, on the occasion of the 6th ecumenical synod of Trulan, the Church formulates for the first time a basic principle on the content and the nature of the sacred art as means of teaching faith. Thus canon 82 specifies: „In some pictures of the venerable icons, a lamb is painted to which the Precursor points his finger, which is received as a type of grace, indicating beforehand through the Law, our true lamb, Christ our God. Embracing therefore the ancient types and shadows as symbols of the truth, and patterns given to the Church, we prefer grace and truth, receiving it as the fulfilment of the Law. In order therefore that „that which is perfect” may be delineated to the eyes of all, at least in coloured expression, we decree that the figure in human form of the lamb who takes away the sin of the world, Christ our God, be henceforth exhibited in images, instead of the ancient lamb, so that all may understand by means of it the depth of the humiliation of the Word of God, and that we may recall to our memory His conversation in the flesh, His passion and salutary death, and His redemption which was wrought for the whole world”¹⁰.

The realistic representation of Christ constitutes a proof of His Incarnation. The ecumenical synod speaks of Messiah’s symbols and figments of imagination as of an outdated stage in the life of the Church. The synod decided to replace the symbols of the Old Testament as well as the symbols of the first Christian centuries with the direct representation of what they prefigured, calling for disclosure of their meaning. Through Incarnation, the image in those figments of imagination becomes reality. Ancient symbols are removed just because now there is a direct image, in relation to which all these seem to be reminiscences of a „Judaic immaturity”. They end up being even negative, to the extent to which we diminish the paramount significance of the direct image and its meaning.

⁶ I. D. Ștefănescu, *cited works*, p. 57.

⁷ Iustina Andreescu, *Short History of the Byzantine Painting*, apud. <http://www.catacombeleortodoxiei.ro/index.php/artaortodoxa>

⁸ Paul Evdochimov, *The Art of the Icon. A Theology of Beauty*, translation by Grigore and Petru Moga, Sofia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014, p. 188.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 188.

¹⁰ Can. 82 of synod II Trulan, apud Priest Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *From Creation to Incarnation of Word and from Symbol to Icon*, in magazine „Voice of the Church”, No. 12/1957, p. 862.

In the 8th and 9th centuries the cult of the icons will go through a big crisis caused by the *iconoclastic movement*. Due to this phenomenon many worshippers of the holy icons were persecuted as they tried to defend icons and showed them as the fruit of the authentic faith which they expressed, wanted and preached. Ever since then the holy icons have been continuously kept in our Church¹¹. To honour the victory of the icons cult over the iconoclastic movement, Empress Theodora instituted the *Holiday of the Orthodoxy* on March 11, 1843. People celebrate it even nowadays, on the first Sunday of the Easter Lent, by a procession of icons, in remembrance of all those who fought and sacrificed in persecution times: martyred saints, patriarchs, bishops, emperors, monks. The peacetime which followed in the life of the Church contributed to the big and rapid development of the sacred art. This is the time when the edifices on Mount Athos and other religious masterpieces in Cappadocia or Constantinople stand out.

3. CONCLUSION

Both the word and the icon are means towards discovering God, towards communicating, supporting and experiencing faith and thus instruments of the Christian mission to teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Saviour, our God Incarnate. In its mission the Church uses the word, the image, better said the image accompanies the word, and together they lead to finding the Truth: „God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (I Tim. 3, 16).

The Apostles witnessed the earthly life of Christ; they saw Him „face to face” (according to Corinthians 13, 12) and could stand by his tortured and crucified body. They wrote down all their experiences so that future generations may know and experience them in their turn. They were able to listen to His words directly; we only hear them while reading their writings. Therefore, the same word, bet it spoken or read, may produce the same effect, irrespective of how the receptor receives it (by listening to or reading it). This explains why another name for the icon is the *Gospel in images*. Saint Basil the Great teaches us by saying:” What a word communicates through hearing is what art shows silently through an image”¹².

Ever since its beginnings, the Church has obviously appealed, besides the word, i.e. the verbal language, to the means of the pictorial (artistic) language, as to express its entire theology „in colours”. Being all in the service of God, the word and the icon, the preaching of the Gospel and the iconography, the Gospel word and the icon language, are closely related and convey the same Truth: the truth of God’s presence in the world.

¹¹ Priest Prof. Ioan Rămureanu, *Universal Church History*, vol. I, Publishing House of the Bible and Orthodox Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1992, p. 264.

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“THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS”- A RECONCILING WITNESS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Abstract

One of the results of the Ecumenical Movement is growing awareness of the potential of martyrs, saints, and sanctified people - all those we understand in Christian cross-confessional friendship - as witnesses to the vision of reconciling the Church into a reconciled world. The significance of martyrdom was captured in a 1978 text from the Bangalore World Council of Churches meeting. In an essay on martyrdom for the Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, Rowan D. Crews Jr. reported that "by pretending Primary Church martyrs and some of the later Christian Christians as" the common property of all Christians, "many Churches were involved in - a process of mutual recognition of martyrs, this necessitating an ecumenical anthology of both the martyrs in the early Church and later. "This work, begun in 1978, was continued later.

Keywords: Ecumenical Movement; martyrs; saints; Church;

INTRODUCTION

On December 26, 1999 on the feast of St. Stephen, a new „Chapel of Martyrs” was consecrated by Church of Sweden Bishop Jonas Jonson in the Cathedral of Strangnas, together with the Roman Catholic Bishop of Stockholm. The spirit of the chapel is one of unity. It provides a welcoming space for all Christians to pray and reflect in the company of women and men who suffered and died as witnesses to their faith. Plaques on either side of the altar list the names of forty twentieth century martyrs. Some have been recognized officially. Others live in the collective consciousness of the faithful. The martyrs come from different continents, cultures, and Christian traditions. At the time the chapel was consecrated, Bishop Jonson was the co-moderator of the Joint Working Group which is responsible for fostering the relationship between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. For many years he had been engaged in the quest for Christian unity, an impulse of churches in response to the prayer of our Lord „that they may all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:21) It is not surprising, then, that Bishop Jonson was inspired to create this chapel with a reconciling intention.

A chapel in Canterbury Cathedral has a similar aim. Among the Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant martyrs acknowledged are Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Oscar Romero. Westminster Abbey in London includes statues of twentieth-century martyrs on its west front.

These are three visible signs of a growing convergence in understanding Christian martyrs as belonging to the whole people of God.

When I entered the Chapel of Martyrs, the experience opened my eyes to this spiritual fruit of the movement to heal divisions among Christians and our churches—namely, the way that Christian martyrs can draw us to Christ, and through Christ, toward each other. As Christians become more familiar with the spiritual gifts of each other's traditions, we are reclaiming those gifts in ways that bring us and our churches closer together. When Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I and Pope Paul VI met in Rome in 1967, they voiced this link between the witness of martyrs and the ecumenical mandate. „We hear.. the cry of the blood of the apostles Peter and Paul, and the voice of the church of the catacombs and of the martyrs of the Coliseum, inviting us to use every possible means to bring to completion the work we have begun—that of the perfect healing of Christ's divided church—not only that the will of the Lord should be accomplished, but that the world may see shining forth what is, according to our creed, the primary property of the church—its unity.”^[i] These religious leaders were clear about the strong link between martyrdom, reconciliation, and Christian witness.

Before walking into the Chapel in Strangnas, I had not given much thought to the power of exemplary martyrs as a potential force for spiritual edification and Christian unity. I come from a Reformed tradition. Protestants have tended to be nervous about a popular piety that could de-emphasize the role of Christ as the sole mediator between humanity and God. Yet the Scriptures provide abundant reminders of the attractive power of holy living and dying, beginning with Christ himself. Jesus said „unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” (John 12:24-25 NRSV) The Letter to the Hebrews encourages us, „since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...” (Heb. 12:1-2a NRSV) I have seen from my own experience what a source of inspiration these witnesses can be. The „I have a dream” speech of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., made before his martyrdom during the civil rights struggles of the 1960's in the United States, stirs me to speak up in support of racial justice, ^[ii] Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, reminds me of the importance of witnessing to principle in the face of institutionalized evil. The influence of these twentieth century martyrs transcends the categories of tradition that sometimes bind and separate. These witnesses nurture all of us in the faith. And in this way, they remind Christians of the real though incomplete communion we share through our baptism.

One of the fruits of the ecumenical movement is a growing awareness of the potential of martyrs, saints, and holy people—those whom we have encountered in trans-confessional Christian friendship—as witnesses to the vision of a reconciled church in a reconciled world. The significance of martyrdom was explored in a 1978 text from a World Council of Churches Faith and Order meeting in Bangalore. In an essay on Martyrdom for the Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, Rowan D. Crews, Jr. reports that „Claiming the martyrs of the early church and certain great Christian witnesses of later history as 'the common property of all Christians', the statement notes that many churches are already involved in the process of a mutual recognition of the martyrs and calls for an ecumenical anthology of both early and modern accounts of martyrdom.” ^[iii] The good work envisioned in 1978 has continued.

Pope John Paul II gave fresh impetus to this impulse in this encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* („That All May Be One”), issued in 1995. The second paragraph of the encyclical calls attention to the witness of martyrs as a force for unity. The text asserts that „The courageous witness of so many martyrs of our century, including members of churches and ecclesial communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church, gives new vigor to the [Second Vatican] council's call and reminds us of our duty to listen to and put into practice its exhortation. These brothers and sisters of ours, united in the selfless offering of their lives for the kingdom of God, are the most powerful proof that every factor of division can be transcended and overcome in the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel.” ^[iv] In an eloquent testimony about the essential nature of the quest to heal divisions among the churches, Pope John Paul II says that „This unity.. is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ's mission. Nor is it some secondary attribute of the community of his disciples. Rather, it belongs to the very essence of this

community. God wills the church because he wills unity, and unity is an expression of the whole depth of his agape.” [v] In an effort to give visible witness to this idea, on May 7 in the Jubilee Year 2000 the Pope held an „Ecumenical Commemoration of Witnesses to the Faith in the Twentieth Century” in the Colosseum, a site of martyrdom in the early Church of Rome, [vi] Representatives of other churches and ecclesial communities from a variety of nations were invited to participate in the service of evening prayer marking the occasion.

The most recent initiative to explore ways that the witness of martyrs can be a force for unity was held at the Monastery of Bose in the fall of 2008. The Feast of All Saints appropriately occurred during the symposium. According to the message of the meeting, „The aims behind this project were: to recognize each other's witnesses of faith, when this is not mutually exclusive; to find ways of commemorating witnesses from various traditions at ecumenical meetings; to develop or recover the commemoration of witnesses in churches that do not have such a practice; to work towards a common ecumenical martyrology.”[vii]

As the participants in the Bose meeting recognized, when one wades into the history of Christian martyrdom, one quickly realizes that the circumstances of martyrdom in some situations have an underside that must be surfaced and addressed as a step toward reconciliation among churches. Over the centuries, many Christians have been martyred in inter-confessional acts of violence, thus fueling the flames of acrimony between Christians. The Bose message says „We began to see that what and who we remember can keep us apart, but our common remembering draws us together. This act of remembering can serve as an act of confession that opens before us a way of reclaiming together past witnesses. Repentance and forgiveness for past acts of inter-confessional violence are more likely to occur when we reflect together on those who in dying forgave their persecutors.” [viii] Ut Unum Sint also acknowledges the need for a „purification of past memories.” [ix] A common exploration of painful memories offers Christians an opportunity to acknowledge past wrongs, repent for sins committed, seek forgiveness, and transcend the past in keeping with the reconciling spirit of the Gospel.

This process is not easy. It requires „speaking the truth in love,” so that „we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.” (Eph. 4:15-16 NRSV) In this way, an exploration of a common martyrology offers the possibility for churches to grow together through costly obedience to the reconciling essence of the Gospel.

The Bose message makes a distinction between martyrs and „heroes of the faith”. The former are persons „who suffered violent death for their faith—a death freely accepted for Christ's sake but not sought out as an end in itself.” Christians also have been inspired by „Heroes of the faith.” These are living witnesses—people „who witnessed to Christ throughout their lives but did not meet violent death..”[x] The scriptures speak of such witnesses as saints, „members of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19). These are persons who participate in the holiness of God in remarkable ways. A popular hymn among Protestants, written in the nineteenth century, is titled „For All the Saints.” The fourth verse reads, „O Blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine; Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine. Alleluia!”[xi] In this sense, all are called to holiness through our baptism. The saints show us the way. Their holiness in imitation of Christ shines through especially clearly, inviting us to emulate them in an ongoing conversion of heart.

We also should not underestimate the importance of interpersonal encounters as a transforming means for God to do God's reconciling work through us. The Rev. David W.A. Taylor, former General Secretary of the Consultation on Church Union in the United States, observed that „few if any have gained an ecumenical view of the church and the world on their own. Someone spoke or taught or acted in such a manner as to open up the wider spiritual and ecclesial horizon.” [xii] We have much to learn from these holy encounters.

The Bose symposium acknowledges that churches continue to differ in particular matters („the intercession of the saints, canonization, veneration of saintly relics, and the practice of indulgences.” [xiii]). Yet Christians are united in being attracted to examples of holy living from all our traditions. These saints are accessible because of the way that they have evidenced holiness in their very humanity.

Despite the diversity in practices of piety, one of the gifts of the ecumenical movement has been to make more visible persons who have been stellar examples of holy living to Christians of all traditions.

CONCLUSION

Martyrs, saints, and living witnesses— we have a unity in our diversity in this dimension of our spiritual life. Their experiences nurture and inform us in our relationships in church and society. A daily reading of the newspaper, with examples of heart-wrenching conflicts all over the world, reconfirms the need of Christians to be witnesses to the healing, reconciling power of the Gospel in our own lives, in the life of our churches, for the sake of the world.

The Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism says that „There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart.” [xiv] We seek guidance for holy living wherever we can find it. We are inspired by writings from all Christian spiritual traditions. We are enriched by stories of singular commitment and devotion. „So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;” (2 Cor. 5:17-18 NRSV) All have the potential to refresh and rededicate us to the Great Commission to be witnesses „to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Thanks be to God!

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