

## THE HUMAN BEING – A BEING OF GRACE AND A DIALOGICAL STRUCTURE

**Associate PhD. Professor George Daniel PETROV,**  
“Ovidius” University of Constanta,  
ROMANIA  
Email: [petrovgeorgedaniel@gmail.com](mailto:petrovgeorgedaniel@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Today, perhaps more than ever, the definition of the human being as a being of grace with a dialogical structure is imperative, because of contemporary challenges that threaten the person with desacralization, reducing him or her from the crown of creation to a simple egocentric individual heading towards nowhere. The removal of man from the sacred, through society's increasingly ephemeral offerings, threatens the dignity of the human being as a graceful being capable of dialogue and communion with the Persons of the Holy Trinity, instead offering him material elements that can in no way satisfy man's aspiration to the absolute. If, after creation, the human soul spiritualized the body, raising it to the state of dialogue with God, today the soul is threatened with "materialization", in the sense of reducing human nature to the sensory.*

**Keywords:** *God; human being; grace; dialogical structure;*

### INTRODUCTION

Today's society, out of a desire to align itself with factors of various kinds, attempts a definition of the person that distorts the value and authenticity of human nature. Man becomes from a person a mere individual, focused on his own desires and aspirations, immersed in an increasingly accentuated egocentrism. For this reason, it is imperative that the human being be properly defined in terms of his or her true relationship to God, the Source of grace and the supreme goal towards which the crown of creation is striving.

The analysis of the Biblical references highlights the dual constitution of the human being, made up of a material body and a spiritual soul. The dichotomy of the human being is presented in the creation expressed in the book of Genesis, but it is not limited to this reference. It is also presented in Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.", but also in James 2:26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." All these testimonies define the human being in his or her dichotomy received through creation.

In the Holy Scriptures, the soul is often called spirit. Like the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Tradition clearly affirms the dichotomous aspect of human nature. God is the creator of man's body and soul, but man does not consist solely of body or solely of soul. Instead, man consists of both body and soul<sup>1</sup>. For man to be the living being described in the Biblical reference, it is imperative that the two elements that compose the nature of the human person exist simultaneously as a unitary whole, and what can be defined as death is precisely the temporary separation of the two elements.

<sup>1</sup> Saint Augustine, The Confessions, Book XI, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3296/3296-h/3296-h.htm>

## 1. DEFINING THE HUMAN INDIVIDUAL AS A BEING OF GRACE

### a) Theological dichotomy versus philosophical trichotomy

Since ancient times the world of philosophy has tried to decipher the mystery of the human being, and prominent representatives such as Plato and Plotinus sought in their analysis to insert the idea that man consists of three parts, which resulted in what we define as philosophical trichotomy. According to these leaders in the philosophical world, the human being has a body, a soul, and a spirit. The philosophy of the two thus defines the subject as having both an animal soul and a rational soul divided into two distinct parts: soul and spirit<sup>2</sup>.

This philosophy is still present today in the doctrine of some Protestant theologians, who argue for trichotomy in I Thessalonians 5:23: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Of course, this theme does not divide the human soul into several sections but highlights different functions of the spiritual nature such as "the power of the organic life and the power of the spiritual life"<sup>3</sup>.

The two elements that might seem distinct, soul and spirit, define the one spiritual element present in the nature of the human being, namely the principle of spirit. The dichotomy of human nature is clearly underlined in the Epistle to the Corinthians, where the Apostle says: "An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit" (I Cor. 7:34). This epistle also highlights the relationship between the Creator and the creature, the latter having the duty to bring glory to God through the two elements of his nature, that is, through body and soul. This is why St. Paul says: "Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:20).

Two aspects of this spiritual nature are reflected here; the lower aspect of vegetative, organic life, i.e., the soul, and the higher aspect of rational knowledge and will, i.e., the spirit. So, when he performs noetic functions (probing spiritual and rational heights), the human spiritual nature is called spirit, and when it relates to those of the body (to the maintenance of life) it is called soul.

The writings of the Holy Fathers often speak of the composition of human nature, but not in the trichotomy sense of philosophy. Even if they make a distinction between body, soul and spirit, their theology does not go beyond the meaning of Scripture, but only presents human nature as having a dichotomic composition, i.e., body and soul, while the other names actually define certain functions of the soul, or more precisely, two stages of perfection of the same spiritual principle, not two component elements of the spiritual nature in man. Although they make this distinction between the two subtle aspects or "wings" of the human soul, the Holy Scripture and the Fathers do not separate them into autonomous entities, but maintain the idea of unity, indivisibility, and indissolubility of the human soul, respecting the principle of the duality of man's nature: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Sometimes they define by spirit the principle of spiritual life in man (Gal. 5:16-17), that is, divine grace at work in the faithful man, for "The person without the Spirit

<sup>2</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, *Sensul creației. Încercare de îndreptățire a omului*, translated by Anca Oroveanu, Humanitas, București, 1992, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> \*\*\*, *Anthology of Greek patristic literature of the first centuries*, compiled by Prof. Vasile Ionescu and Prof. Nicolae Ștefănescu, textbook for seminarians and students of Theological Institutes, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., București, 1960, p. 89.

does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit" (I Cor. 2:14). The unity of the two components of the human being is complete, as by definition they form a single nature. This nature is rational, superior to the surrounding nature. "The insertion of the soul into the body is very intimate and therefore the human spiritual factor cannot be conceived for an instant as pure spirit."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the dichotomy of human nature is a mystery received as a gift from the Creator, and its greatness is clear from the fact that, in man, matter is united with the conscious and free spirit, man thus becoming a living being, the crown of all creation..

From the moment of his creation, the human spirit is a factor inserted into the world, while remaining distinct from nature, but being able to freely make use of nature. Man must therefore be understood "as incarnated spirit, as spirit with his ramifications in the body, or as body with its roots in the spirit"<sup>5</sup>. Patristic theology emphasizes the understanding function of the soul, therefore of the mind, through which the human being "intuitively knows God"<sup>6</sup>, and St. Simeon considers the knowledge of God as a "seeing", which is more than hearing<sup>7</sup>. The same idea is also supported by St Maximus the Confessor who emphasizes the mind as the spiritual power of the human person. Through purification, the mind can reach an advanced form of knowledge of God<sup>8</sup>.

Another Church Father, St. Gregory Palamas, debunks the heresies of his time, especially those of Varlaam, who claimed that only an abstract mind, totally detached from the human person, can know God. St. Gregory condemns the removal of the mind from human nature saying: "The greatest delusion and the source of all unbelief ... is to raise the mind not from carnal contemplation, but from the body itself, in order to make it meet up there with mental visions"<sup>9</sup>.

The encounter in spirit between the Uncreated and the creature does not imply, according to St. Gregory Palamas, the existence of a body emptied of sensations, but of a body purified of passions, which together with the soul can rise to the knowledge of God as far as is possible for the creature. But for this ascent of man to be possible, it is first imperative that the mind descends into the heart. Here the encounter with uncreated divine grace takes place. The human heart is the place where God writes His law by means of grace<sup>10</sup>.

For man to be alive, it is imperative not to alter his dichotomous structure. This structure is God's gift to the crown of His creation, and only through its constituent elements does man define himself as a dialogical being who can be in dialogue with his creator. The possibility of dialogue between God and man results precisely from the fact that He, the Creator, has inserted in the soul of man the necessary qualities of freedom, conscience, and reason. The purpose of the dialogue between the Divine and the human is to enable the

<sup>4</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, *Spirit și libertate*, translated by Stelian Lăcătuș, Paideia, București, 1996, p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev, *Spirit și libertate*, ..., p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> Alexandros Kalomiros, *Sfinții Părinți despre originile și destinul omului și al cosmosului*, translated by Fr. Prof. Ioan Ică, Deisis, Sibiu, 1998, p. 88.

<sup>7</sup> Saint Simeon Noul Teolog, *Discursuri teologice si etice. Scrieri I, S* translated by Fr. Ioan I. Ică jr., Deisis, Sibiu, 2005, p. 106.

<sup>8</sup> Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, in „P.S.B.” Colecțion, vol. 80, translated by Fr. Prof. Phd. D. Stăniloae, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., București, 1983, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Cuvânt despre isihăști*, în "Filocalia", vol. 7, translated by Dumitru Stăniloae, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., București, 1977, p. 397.

<sup>10</sup> Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Cuvânt despre isihăști...*, p. 396.

human being to be aware of and respond to the love given to him as a gift by God. Only by being aware of the love received can man experience love also horizontally, towards his fellow human beings.

### **b) The body - subjectivized matter, subject of the soul**

The dichotomy of human nature requires that there be a perfect mutual intertwining between the two parts. Only through this intertwining do the two component elements of the human being reach their full potential. The difference between the two elements that make up human nature is that the body, being matter, is inferior to the soul. The theologian Nicolai Berdyaev states that "the spirit shapes the body endlessly for the perception of the world as well as the reaction to it. Through the body, the spirit expresses its infinitely complex connection on the one hand with the higher spiritual order, and on the other hand with the world order, linking them together."<sup>11</sup>

Through the work that the soul performs in the body, its matter becomes subjectivized, actively participating in the work of the soul, becoming its subject. From this follows, among other things, the unique and unrepeatable character of the human being. This joint work of body and soul, a work in which the soul leads the body towards its ascent through virtue to the Creator, expresses the normality of the life ordained by God for man. In opposition to this is the situation in which the body threatens the soul with "materialization" in the sense that man, through misunderstood freedom, does not contemplate the spiritual, remaining limited to the sensory, to the materiality of the world. According to God's ordinance, because the essence of the soul is spiritual in nature, it must lead the body, "dictate to it and lead it towards the goals revealed by God"<sup>12</sup>.

The soul cannot be severed from the body, nor vice versa, without mortally affecting the whole human being. The unity of body and soul can be likened to the relationship between the form and the material of a statue: "You cannot change the form without shattering the marble"<sup>13</sup>. The importance of the unity of body and soul also derives from the purpose of the human person. By imitating the unique kenotic gesture of the Son, who "reveals his true Father for the first time in an open way"<sup>14</sup>, and reveals God to the extent of how much can the human nature understand, every Christian embarks on a personal kenosis in which he seeks a spiritual encounter with God, the only One who can give a coherent answer to all the perplexities of earthly life. This voluntary humbleness in the body - because it must be voluntarily taken responsibility for - returns to us as the fruit of a wise understanding of suffering and illness, weaving the divine-human bond (of love and living) for which we were built, on the one hand restoring the unspoiled image before sin but above all fulfilling it in eternal unity with the Incarnated Son of God. "The soul is a born being, a living, thinking being, which gives to the living, sensitive body the power of life and external perception, so far as it appears as existence to this sensitive nature"<sup>15</sup>.

It is necessary to point out that the act of creation, which begins with "heaven and earth" and ends with man, as a rational intermediary between the material world and the spiritual world, contains within itself the rationality of the divine Logos which formulates the

<sup>11</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, *Spirit și libertate...*, p. 92.

<sup>12</sup> Prof. Remus Rus, *Concepția despre om în marile religii*, Phd Thesis, în G.B., an XXXVII, 1978, nr. 7-8, p. 499.

<sup>13</sup> Alexis Carrel, *Omul, ființa necunoscută*, translated by Lia Busuioceanu, Tedit F.Z.H., București, 1998, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> Sfântul Grigorie de Nazianz, *A treia cuvântare teologică*, 2, Anastasia, București, 1993, p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> *Anthology of Greek patristic literature...*, p. 78.

structure of the rationality of creation. More than simply the source of this rationality, following man's fall into sin and his decadence, the Logos will manifest himself as the Saviour of the same Creation which he has verbalized. The divine Logos will be born in a material body and will offer man the path to deification as the only way accessible and in conformity with the rationality of creation: the actualization of the image through the likeness of God. According to the expression of the Holy Fathers, "nothing is new under the sun but the Incarnation of God". After the initial act of creation, as the time of the manifestation of the divine Logos in the outside world, there follows His work of restoring His original rationality to the world that had drifted away from it<sup>16</sup>.

### c) The fullness of the human being through divine uncreated grace

A correct anthropological expression cannot define the human being in the absence of grace. The absence of divine grace in man can only mean reducing the person to definitions with not enough meaning, to notions such as the individual. The dynamic character of human nature is given by the work of grace, without which man cannot be fully defined, lacking the correct relation of the creature to the Creator. Moreover, the very definition of man's existence can only be achieved by reference to uncreated divine grace. "It is only theoretically possible to distinguish between the human being and his grace. In concrete terms, the very existence of the human being implies its grace to be and to do something always to be and to show itself otherwise and otherwise"<sup>17</sup>.

One could say that the living nature is also good, in the sense that it unwittingly does good to man. For this purpose, God made it good for people. And people continue to add something to this goodness, but not having the power to give Him their own fundamentally good existence, show that the work of God's goodness for them continues. Goodness, as a good consciously directed outwardly has no place except in a person, like evil. Goodness is of the person for the person, like evil. That is why the unconscious good or evil emanating from inanimate existences also has the person as its ultimate starting point and is directed towards the person<sup>18</sup>.

The good of the world has as its ultimate starting point the goodness of a creator Subject, and the limited evil in the world, which cannot abolish it, comes from evil subjects, limited in power. Goodness and evil are relationships between people, and good and evil are the ways in which some people make their goodness or evil felt by others. In any case, no kind of existence can escape the necessity of good, even the selfish one, who understands it as exclusively for himself. The animal unconsciously tends towards the good in order to serve man, nature is helped by man in order to serve him and his fellow men better<sup>19</sup>.

But all tend towards good, not having it fully. God Himself having the total good, does not have the movement from tending towards the total good, as a being does. But it cannot be said He is good without His own will. Yet He is not good merely because He wants to. His existence and grace are one, but not in the sense that He has Himself as His origin, the being, but vice-versa. Thus, the Father has in Himself the Son also, who was born

<sup>16</sup> Pr. Prof. Ioan G. Coman, *Probleme de filosofie și literatură patristică*, IBMBOR, București, 1995, p. 67.

<sup>17</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. D. Stăniloae, *Studii de teologie dogmatică ortodoxă*, Ed. Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1991, p. 248.

<sup>18</sup> Pr. Ioan C. Teșu, *Omul Taina Teologică*, Christiana, București, 2002, p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> Marius Telea, *Antropologia Sfinților Părinți Capadocieni*, Emia, Hunedoara, 2005, p. 137.



not by grace, but neither contrary to grace. He has him through being, but in a being that also has grace in herself<sup>20</sup>.

We do not separate in the supreme existence the being from grace, and the being from goodness, in the sense that grace would simply produce the being, that is indifferent to goodness, for this would mean considering grace coming out of nothing, as Jacob Böhme thought. There must be an existence in order for it to be able to have will. In this sense we do not separate grace from being. But regarding the creatures, grace exists before their being. This grace belongs to someone else who exists and who has the power to bring something or someone else into being<sup>21</sup>. But along with the being, man has also received grace in this being, grace that moves in him to strengthen and lead his being towards spiritual growth from God. This is a growth out of goodness.

Inanimate creatures do not grow in goodness by their own grace. For they only grow biologically. And this happens because of the laws laid upon them without their will. Conscious flesh does not maintain its own being through grace, as it has neither given being to herself by herself, nor does it give it through her own grace. For grace itself involves the existence or being and can lead the latter to the source of its existence, according to the reason of its being. In this sense it can strengthen it and make it grow spiritually as what it is. Only in this sense can one speak of a definition of the being through the person. This means that the person can help fulfil the being as it is but can also deform it<sup>22</sup>.

Grace is the energy that sustains being. However, grace does not oblige the human person to give up the freedom given to him by God. Grace helps the human will to desire and fulfil what is necessary to bring the creature closer to the Creator. The free and fully conscious attraction of the human person towards God is man's response to the love he receives from God. This is how the human being is defined as fully free. She chooses to collaborate with uncreated divine grace and to move towards God in response to His love.

Kindness, love, like all values, have the person as their subject, in her relationship to other people. The person gives goodness and love a real existence. Human beings, in their relationship with each other, are the only ones who give support to goodness, love, joy, sadness. Their advancement towards goodness is equal to their advancement in unity. God wants them all united in Himself<sup>23</sup>.

It is also through grace that man works the things outside of his being. All have been created for man, and he can use them passively. Through grace, man works all things for the benefit of everyone, and in the absence of grace he can use them selfishly, negatively. So, based upon the freedom to cooperate with divine grace, man can work the good things with a purpose of advancing in God's love, or he can work, by excluding grace, in a selfish way, seeking the satisfaction of his own desires.

From what has been pointed out it follows that grace is given to man to work for the benefit of all. The manifestation of grace must therefore be achieved through a correct relationship of the human being to God and to his relationship with the world. The human person must also harmoniously satisfy the needs of all the components of his being, so as not to weaken or narrow the latter.

<sup>20</sup> Marius Telea, *Antropologia Sfinților Părinți...*, p. 139.

<sup>21</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. D. Stăniloae, *Natură și har în teologia bizantină*, în „Ortodoxia”, nr. 3, 1974, p. 198.

<sup>22</sup> Pr. Drd. Vasile Citirigă, *Transfigurarea creștinului prin lucrarea harului Sfântului Duh*, în S.T., an. XXXIV, 1982, nr. 5-6, p. 378.

<sup>23</sup> Pr. prof. Dr. Ilie Moldovan, *Iisus Hristos – principiul absolut al unității creștine*, în *Ortodoxia*, 1983, nr. 1, p. 98.

But it is also clear from this that the grace of the human being depends on the one hand on his specific being, and on the other hand it depends on him in the way he uses it. This fact was noted by St Gregory of Nazianz, who made a distinction between the subject who has a will and grace itself<sup>24</sup>. It is what St Maximus the Confessor and, on the basis of the theology developed by him, the Sixth Ecumenical Council offered, namely the basis for seeing in Christ one Person, but two wills: the divine and the human one<sup>25</sup>.

The belonging of grace to the human being, as a movement in the case of nature towards good or goodness, that is, towards God, and thus towards the growth of his being, is presented by St Maximus the Confessor in the following words, relying on other thinkers: 'Some of those have said that grace or the natural will is a power (faculty) desiring what is proper to nature. Naturally sustained by grace, the being desires to be and to move according to feeling and thinking, desiring after its natural and perfect existence. For nature was constituted as a self-willed entity, and all things pertain to its constitution, being bound as desire to the reason of existence, according to which it was made.'<sup>26</sup>

The human being is the fulfilment of a divine reason, of a meaning, pre-existent in the Logos of God. This fulfilled meaning is a unity between body and soul and the many functions of both. All want to function harmoniously in order to maintain the unity of the being and fulfil its desire for growth. In the grace of the human nature is manifested this tendency of all the components of the latter to increase harmoniously, for the harmonious increase of the human nature. Without it one cannot think naturally. When the movement of grace satisfies the tendencies of all the components of nature to maintain and increase harmoniously, this movement is in accordance with the reason of human nature<sup>27</sup>.

But just as human nature exists only in persons, so does grace exist only in them. For the life of the human nature unfolds towards growth in the changing relations between people, and in the need to respond to all kinds of ever-changing circumstances. But this variety of relationships between people and the circumstances in which they have to work makes it necessary to deliberate how to respond with grace to each circumstance and relationship imposed by it, by which the flesh is called to grow spiritually in goodness or towards God<sup>28</sup>.

By grace, the human nature of a person never breaks away from the nature of others even in apparent cases of falling away from grace, for a person cannot help having some interest in those whom he does not love or those whom he wants to exploit or whose praise his pride needs. Just as kindness can only take place between a person and another person, so hatred or pride involves the need of the hater and of the one that is arrogant with others whom he hates and whom he is arrogant with. It is a fact which also shows that the man is not created to perish. He wants to last forever even in his selfishness, and he wants to last forever with those whom he hates, despises or whose praise he still needs<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Sfântul Grigorie de Nazianz, Cuvântări teologice, translated by Fr. Ghe. Țălea și Nicolae Barbu, Herald, București, p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, Ambigua..., p. 128.

<sup>26</sup> Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, Scrieri și epistole hristologice și duhovnicești, în „P.S.B.”, vol. 82, translated by Fr. Prof. Phd. D. Stăniloae, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., București, 1990, p. 93.

<sup>27</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. D. Stăniloae, Natură și har..., p. 202.

<sup>28</sup> Sandu Frunză, Pentru o metafizică a persoanei implicată în teologia Părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae, în „Persoană și comuniune. Prinos de cinstitie Părintelui Profesor Academician Dumitru Stăniloae la împlinirea vârstei de 90 de ani”, Ed. Arhiepiscopiei Sibiu, Sibiu, 1993, p. 201.

<sup>29</sup> Anton Dumitriu, Homo universalis. Încercare asupra naturii realității umane, Eminescu, 1990, p. 99

Thus, in the grace that has become the reckoning, man is involved in his relationship with other people, a relationship in which people communicate to each other not mere ideas, but joys, pains, pities, helps, sorrows. It is only in people or in the relationships between them that the human being lives his life, growing up straight or crooked<sup>30</sup>.

#### **d) Freedom, the power of the nature of the human being and her collaboration with divine grace**

If the being can only exist in the human person, and if the person can freely use the powers of being by grace, this means that freedom itself relies upon the human being. Freedom is potentially given in the human being, as is speech. Both are actualized by the person. But the fact that they are actualized in persons also results in their variability. The human person is hypostatic word and hypostatic freedom through his being. The persons, who are nothing but the human being that is particular to each person, are all hypostases springing from words and acts of grace or deeds freely exchanged in the dialogue between them. By their very nature, people are thus shown to be subject to no uniform law<sup>31</sup>.

They remain within the framework of nature, but nature itself has in its unbreakable structure possibilities by which people can unite in themselves the created with the Creator and transfigure the created nature by the powers of the Creator, but they can also oppose it to Him and thereby weaken it. But what makes man capable of arbitrary choices and acts? Man shows that he does not explain himself by his very self, even by his arbitrary, unmotivated acts, ungrounded in the natural grace of existence. He decides on these acts out of opposition to a supreme force, which imposes a responsibility on him from a rational basis, from the basis of sustaining and increasing his human nature in existence<sup>32</sup>.

There is the possibility of an opposition that can be accentuated to the point of indifference to one's own existence. In such a choice, freedom is deeper than existence, or prior to it. However, man is driven in his decision for indeterminacy by opposition to the fact that he is and therefore to the Power that brought him into existence. On the other hand, since this abyss of absolute indeterminacy could not be chosen by man if he did not exist, namely as a human person, this freedom is nevertheless supported by existence, namely personal existence<sup>33</sup>. And since a person cannot exist without a human being, the freedom which appears to be absolutely indeterminate, or abysmal, is a freedom which has its basis in a being which the person has not given to himself, but which is created by God, which wishes to oppose the very existence given by God, and therefore God himself, without being able by this to nullify his existence as a work of God and as the basis of grace<sup>34</sup>.

God's freedom is absolute. But man's freedom, although it is God's supreme gift, can be misunderstood by the creature, man, by coming to the wrong conclusions from the premises of freedom. Thus, the human being, feeling free, and not having her freedom related to God, can choose the illusion that she is not determined by anything, not even by God. From this she can wrongly deduce that her existence does not originate from God, and life remains meaningless. There is also the danger that man, turning away from God for various transient satisfactions, may use his freedom to pursue his own desires. This is why it

<sup>30</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. D. Staniloae, *Natură și har...*, p. 202.

<sup>31</sup> Sandu Frunză, *Pentru o metafizică a persoanei...*, p. 202.

<sup>32</sup> Pr. Drd. Vasile Cîțirigă, *Transfigurarea creștinului...* p. 379.

<sup>33</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. D. Staniloae, *Natură și har...*, p. 203.

<sup>34</sup> Diac. Drd. V. Neacșu, *Constituția ființei umane și relația ei cu cosmosul din perspectiva îndumnezeirii acesteia - viziunea teologică a părintelui Stăniloae*, în „Revista Teologică”, serie nouă, anul XVIII, anul 2008, p. 146.



is imperative to relate the freedom of the human person correctly to the freedom of God. Without this relationship, man works practically against his own self.

Our will, however, is not one with God's will. They remain two separate wills. If there were a will identical to God's, it could not be wrong, it could not decide contrary to God's will; we could not feel dependent on God and accountable to Him. But it is good to fulfil God's will by our will, to appropriate his grace by our will. To want what God wants. For He wants what our wills normally want: to make ourselves happy in union with Him. It is another way in which our will for interpersonal unity and eternity meets interpersonal unity, God's eternity, another reflection of His abyss in us<sup>35</sup>. "Even if the grace of God is by nature saving, and the will of men is by nature saved (partaking of salvation), the grace which by nature moves and the will which by nature is saved can never be identical qualities, even if the purpose of both is one: the salvation of all and of each one individually, which God works and invites to, and the saints choose."<sup>36</sup>. And "in nothing else does evil consist except in the differentiation of our reckoning from the will of God"<sup>37</sup>.

## 2. THE HUMAN PERSON - DIALOGICAL STRUCTURE

The tendency towards the likeness of God was inscribed in the human being like a divine seal. "This was imprinted in his constitution by his creation as image of the Image. It is impossible for man to know this mystery"<sup>38</sup>. Being created in the Image of God, the human person possesses certain attributes which give her the necessary abilities to be in dialogical communion with the Creator. This freedom of communication is described "in the Holy Tradition as a spiritual endowment or rational power or spirit"<sup>39</sup>.

The entirety of the Scripture bears witness to the dialogical relationship between creature and Creator. This is evident in the many instances in which the chosen people addressed God through their representatives, and in the New Testament, through the incarnation of the Logos, the dialogical relationship is raised to the highest level, with man addressing directly to the incarnate Son of God, our brother according to his human nature assumed in his hypostasis.

The whole redemptive event of Christ can thus be interpreted as a comprehensive dialogue between God and man. Through His Incarnation, the kenotic emptying of His deity, the Word placed Himself on a level with man as His interlocutor, He takes him seriously and respects his freedom. He gives up His divine powers to make Himself accessible to man. This dialogical presence of Jesus is thus an expression of his being and his mission, in which the Father finally reveals himself in His own inner being<sup>40</sup>.

Thus, the dialogue becomes the hallmark of biblically grounded personal understanding of God: God is at His essence dialogical! The remaining question concerns how this dialogue is to be understood if it is to be an appropriate category for theologically

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<sup>35</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. D. Staniloae, *Natură și har...* p. 203.

<sup>36</sup> Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Scrieri și epistole hristologice și duhovnicești*, în „P.S.B.”, vol. 82, translated by Fr. Prof. Phd. D. Stăniloae, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., București, 1990, p. 94.

<sup>37</sup> Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Scrieri și epistole hristologice...* p. 95.

<sup>38</sup> Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Scrieri și epistole hristologice...* p. 73.

<sup>39</sup> Panayotis Nellas, *Omul, animal îndumnezeit, Perspective pentru antropologia ortodoxă*, ediția a II-a, translated by Fr. Ioan Ică Jr., Ed. Deisis, Sibiu, 1999, p. 60.

<sup>40</sup> Klaus Krämer, *Mission in dialogue*, în *Mission and Dialogue. Approaches to a Communicative Understanding of Mission*, Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth (Eds.), Verlag Herder GmbH, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2012, p. 9.

formulated religious truth. Dialogue between people is remarkable first of all for its discursiveness.

The continuous interaction between questions and answers, address and response, marks dialogue as a communication that takes place in the conditions of space and time at the horizon of historicity. Here we see the biggest difference between human communication and communication between Trinitarian Persons. Walter Kasper has pointed out that personalistic categories can only be applied by analogy to the Trinity. This means that every similarity has a greater difference corresponding to it: "In God not only unity, but also distinctiveness and thereby the counterpart is greater than in interpersonal relations between humans, the divine persons are not less dialogical, but infinitely more dialogical than the human persons. Divine persons not only take part in dialogue but are dialogue"<sup>41</sup>. While the parties to a human dialogue meet in a relationship based on mutuality and they constantly exchange roles during the dialogue, a relationship with the divine being cannot be considered a relationship between two separate persons standing opposite each other: the Persons who constitute a divine being are identical with the relationships. Thus, in the divine being, relationships are not something super-added to a person, as is the case with human beings. Rather, the relationship is the person herself.

"In its nature, the person exists only as a relationship. More precisely, the first person does not engender in the sense that the act of engendering a son is added to the complete person, but the person is the act of engendering, of giving, of transmitting. It is identical with this act of devotion. Thus, one could define the first person as self-giving in knowledge and fruitful love; not the giver, in whom the act of self-giving is found, but this self-giving, the pure reality of the act"<sup>42</sup>.

If divine persons are not primarily dialogical with one another (as human persons are), but in a much more fundamental and dialogical sense in themselves, this means addressing the basic relationships that make any authentic dialogue possible in the first place. The Father gives the son his whole being. His is thus the perfect devotion, the self-giving that shares the Other entirely without reserve and whose expression is perfect. By the fact that the Father communicates to the Son his whole being, the act of revelation is already rooted in the divine being herself. The Son receives the divine being from the Father. He is therefore the perfect reception.

Thus, the first basic movement of perfect devotion is matched by a second perfect and unreserved openness to the Other. From this relationship between Father and Son, the Holy Spirit emerges as embodied love: what happens between Father and Son is more than a give and take - it has an autonomous relational quality and in it lies a deep dynamism and creativity (the dynamic of love)<sup>43</sup>. This dialogical interpretation of intra-trinitarian relations has far-reaching consequences. As the term God designates the ultimate ground of reality, statements about the specific nature of this reality have direct relevance to the question of how human existence can be accessed. If this basic foundation is formulated dialogically in the above presented manner, the absolute dialogue perfected in the Trinitarian essence of God can be described in a sense as the transcendent condition of any authentic, real dialogue<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> W. Kasper, *Der Gott Jesu Christi*, Mainz, 1982, p. 352.

<sup>42</sup> W. Kasper, *Der Gott Jesu Christi...*, p. 353

<sup>43</sup> W. Kasper, *Der Gott Jesu Christi...* p. 356.

<sup>44</sup> Klaus Krämer, *Mission in dialogue...*, p. 10.

Man is a dialogical being because he is an iconic being. With the creation of man, the Logos changes his way of acting, as he did with the material world. There is a shift from the creation of the material world by the Word to the direct creation of man, thus creating a human person. By making man as a person, man becomes capable of conversing with God, being a logical being, created in the image of the Logos. The fact that he is in the image of the Logos is proved to us by the very constitution and by the rational work of man. Father Stăniloae, basing himself on our rational structure, states that, "our thought about reasonings brings out our quality of being logical beings after the Logos. Man, having an objective and subjective rationality, recognizes himself as having his source in the divine Logos, but he also permeates creation with his rationality."<sup>45</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the above it follows that the human person cannot be limited to a graceless existence outside the relationship of communion and dialogue with God. Being of paramount importance, the analysis of the human person aroused the interest of the most erudite men such as Plato, who, however, relying solely on rational deduction, could not penetrate the mystery of man. This is why philosophical theories such as trichotomy were dismantled by the truth of faith expressed by the Holy Fathers. The threat that today's society poses to the human person, whom the first wishes to remove from the sacred and anchor her only in materiality, is as real as it gets. For this reason, the dichotomous presentation of man is necessary, together with a correct understanding of his dichotomy, in the sense that the body is the subject of the soul and not vice versa. Only by correctly understanding this subjectification can one penetrate the mystery of the person, namely that of being 'in the Image of God'.

The fullness of the human being can only be defined from a theological perspective because of all the disciplines that analyse man, only the theological perspective presents him in his fullness as the crown of creation in full collaboration with uncreated divine grace. This collaboration, free and fully conscious, aims to present man in the most intimate relationship that can exist between God and creation, the human person being defined par excellence as a rational being, capable of communion and dialogue with the Creator. Without this particularly important valence of man, he would remain limited in his own rationality, which would never understand the supreme goal towards which he is striving, namely participation through grace in the love of the Holy Trinity.

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<sup>45</sup> Pr. Dr. Marin D. Ciulei, *Antropologie Patristică*, Sirona, Alexandria, 1999, p. 209.

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