



<https://doi.org/10.26520/mcfsare.2019.3.23-32>

MCDSARE: 2019

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

CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN PHILOSOPHY AND IN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

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Motto: „Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
(John 8: 32)

Abstract

Freedom is an original and existential attribute of man. Christianity asserts that every man, as a person, has freedom in nature, since it is an image of God. Even Hegel had argued that the principle of freedom was born along with Christianity. From a philosophical point of view, there are two mutually exclusive visions: that of free will and of determinism. If the first one postulates that man is able to choose and to act according to the dictates of his own will, the other affirms that all events, including human actions, are predetermined. In Christianity, there is an extraneous reality but through which man's natural strength and deeds are supported continuously: that is the divine grace. Freedom by which God exalted man is freedom as a state, not only as an attribute of an approach of choice accompanied by indecision's anxieties; it is freedom based on knowledge of good when that good belongs appropriately to the human person and to God as well. "If you abide in my word, then you are truly my disciples. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." (John 8, 31-32). The authentic freedom of human personality is revealed only in the divine Revelation, which reaches its climax in the Incarnation of the divine Logos. The ancient world did not know the personal freedom; it used to know only public freedom. The various philosophical concepts on freedom, but also other various ways of manifesting freedom over the time, have only proved their precarious and ephemeral character..

Keywords: freedom; nature; person; free will; determinism; divine grace; truth.;

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the concepts that characterizes and defines the modern world is undoubtedly that of freedom. The man of nowadays has become a slave to sin, falsehood and illusion. However, the original freedom of the human being has not been totally annulled. Therefore, the concept of freedom itself being misunderstood, the ideal of freedom to which man tends is not the one revealed, but one invented by man.



Freedom is an original and existential attribute of man. This means that freedom is a giving from the beginning. But man does not have absolute freedom nor is it given to him, once and for all, from his inception as a being. That is why we can say that man has only availability to freedom, which he must cultivate through his own strenuous effort.

Over time, each ideology claimed to defend and promote freedom, but also defined it differently. The significance of a classic conservative on freedom differs from that of a traditional liberal, for example. Christianity affirms that every human, as a person, possesses freedom in his nature. Also, Christianity was the first to look at each person as to God's image (icon). Thus, for Christianity, freedom is by no means a foreign term. One of the great philosophers of the modern age, G.W.F. Hegel, stated that the principle of freedom was born along with Christianity. (Hegel, 1997, p. 173) Due to the "image of God" in him, man goes beyond earthly life and tends infinitely to get into a personal union with the Archetype. He is called to live theocentrically, and if he rejects God through free consent, he refuses and destroys himself. Therefore, in order for man to preserve this original giving, that is to say, the divine "image", there must be, between him and God, a continuous communion, a living relationship in which not only God but also man should be active. True freedom is the freely accepted bondage of the good, the love of another, and the benevolent obligation to the good of the neighbor, of God who asks us to serve the good of others and our true good. Because only under the conditions of true freedom there is true ministry. There is also the "bondage" of love, which is at the same time true freedom.

I. THE PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUE OF FREEDOM

In the theoretical debate on the problems of freedom, several types of solutions have been proposed in the history of philosophical thinking.

1) A first interpretation is the one of freedom-spontaneity (J.S. Mill, 1996, p. 67). It is present at thinkers who identify freedom in unique, unrepeatable acts, stemming from vital or emotional impulses, evaded from external constraints. It is the so-called freedom-whim/caprice, the freedom of the good-liked, so much commented by the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941): "The feeling of freedom is inter-grown within our very essence to such an extent that neither the efforts nor the most severe analyzes would destroy it." (Henri Bergson, 1992, p. 49)

Analyzing the phenomenon of freedom, Bergson defines the conditions of a free act as follows:

"The act is free only when it is produced by the deep self as a whole. It is generated by the qualitative multiplicity of the pure duration, which contains within it the whole past of the self in its unity" (Ramona Elena Bujor, 2008, p. 178)

After examining several situations, the French philosopher concludes that only if we live in pure duration and not in space-time, we are able to perform a free act, which means that only under these circumstances we can make a decision from the depths of our whole being. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson's doctoral dissertation, he emphasized the importance of regarding time as an inner state of pure duration rather than as a measured quantity, its customary conception.

Freedom in Bergson's conception is portrayed with two essential attributes: spontaneity and originality. First, freedom is spontaneity. Man is free if his action is not constituted through weighing up of reasons, but comes directly from the intimate development of consciousness. The philosopher distinguishes on different degrees of freedom. An act appears the more freely, the better its roots go deeper and grows out of rich series of intimate duration. Man frees himself the more perfectly, the better his acts expresses and pulls their power out of the richer and deeper layers of his soul. "Freedom is not at all reduced to sensitive spontaneity". (Clara Dan, 1996, p. 74)

For man – a pensive being – the free act represents a synthesis of feelings and ideas. Freedom does not exclude reason, but includes it and it constitutes that as an essential part of its ripe fruit, according to Bergson's philosophy. As per originality in the quality of attribute of freedom, Bergson so characterizes it: "We are free when our acts emanate from our entire personality when expressing it and when they have that indefinable similarity to that we sometimes find between the opera and the artist" (Henri Bergson, 1998, 144 sq). Free is the man who cancels within his self all that he has been able to borrow and all that is imposing, all the automatisms and conventions that limit him, in order to pass to the center of his being. Thus characterizing freedom, the philosopher concludes: "Free acts are rare." (Henri Bergson, 1998, p. 190).

2) A second way of interpretation is freedom-indifference. We find it anticipated by the Stoics and resumed in the 13th century in Duns Scott's formula: "liberum arbitrium indifferentiae" (Paul M. Cohen, 1997, p. 103). The Stoics discuss a notion of freedom that is rather more moral than metaphysical. This sense of freedom involves 'the power to live as you will' (Cicero, Stoic Paradoxes 5, 34). To the essential question of all time: how far goes the freedom of action of men and what are their limits?, the Stoics respond: because the world is rational, divine, human freedom must exist; man is able to maintain the contact between his inner fire and the one that animates the universe and obey cosmic reason. Freedom and obedience coincide in free adhesion to supreme good. We find on several occasions, in varying forms and with different accents, this scheme of thinking to the greatest philosophers. Because freedom does not amount to an arbitrary choice. At the limit, it consists in recognizing a perfect necessity and in obeying it. (Jeanne Hersch, 1993, p. 70)

3) The third interpretation of the concept of freedom treats liberty, including as an existential freedom. It is a dominating of extensive analyzes carried out by thinkers with heterogeneous spiritual formation but who, by and large, can be subsumed up to one of the most significant currents of contemporary philosophy: existentialism. The starting point of the existentialist conception of freedom is man, with his features, his life experiences. The man in the conception of existentialist philosophers becomes an emotionally tense being and with a complete, global composition.

Thus, for existentialism, freedom becomes an "ontological giving", a constitutive and inalienable structure of man, centered on the lived experience of the human being. What positively has existentialism, even in the form represented by Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre, is the recognition of man as freedom, therefore, as a spirit. But the thesis that man as existence, as freedom "does not imply any essence, does not imply any prior nature, that certain values and obligations are not contained in freedom, cannot be supported" (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1956, pp. 343-344) from the Christian point of view.

According to existentialist opinions, man opens before God the ways of good and creation, with a view to rehabilitating himself. The struggle between spirit and matter, between good and evil is given on an unstable background that is not ready-at-hand, but is a state of tension with a pronounced tragic character. Only the contact with God, who means truth and love, eternity, can save the man (Martin Heidegger, 2006, pp. 66-70).

In our age, Sartre would say:

If God exists, then man, as freedom, no longer exists, and if freedom exists, then God does not exist. Here the soul is conceived as totally outwardly to God, and God as totally outward of the soul, the relationship between them being thought of as a relationship of strength (Jeanne Hersch, 1993, pp. 86-87).

However, in Christian theology, at Augustine, for example, we meet the very opposite: God is within the soul; He is interior intimo meo, meaning more inward than my innermost self. God is more central to me than I am myself. He's more at the center of my own self than I could ever be myself. The moment for the believer God becomes more inwardly than his own self, the alleged conflict between liberties loses any meaning: what God wants, what I want. On the contrary, what God wants is more inward than what, for the moment, I thought I wanted (Jeanne Hersch, 1993, p. 87).

Sartre is an existentialist atheist, that is to say, he rejects the existence of God and considers that man receives his existence from his parents and that its "appearance" is an accident. The fact that there is no transcendence makes it impossible for someone to prescribe to man an essence; thus Sartre emphasizes that man is ontologically free, that he gives himself an essence. Therefore, according to the French philosopher, "existence precedes the essence, essence which is characterized by human acts." (Jean Paul Sartre, 2000, p. 261)

4) The fourth interpretation of freedom is freedom of action. Freedom no longer appears as an original faculty, belonging equally to all men, but as a privilege of the one who freed himself from external constraints and inner servitudes (i.e. ignorance, blind passion, instinctive impulses, and prejudices), being able to freely realize the conscious tendency to the accomplishment of the assumed goals.

Freedom is choice, and by that it always has a moral quality. "There is freedom only in the act, in choice, and so liberty is bound to color in good or bad." (George Remete, 2005, p. 57). As "Spirit and Freedom" (Nikolai Berdiaev), man is the one being who can decide: for good or for evil. Thus, freedom means understanding and conforming to nature, to the spirit as the essence and purpose of being.

“Man must prove to himself the whole activity of the spirit, the entire intensity, so to fulfill what God expects from him. God, through the work of grace, helps man, who has lost his freedom by falling into sin, in order to save himself, to overcome sin. God expects from man a free answer to His call, the reciprocity of love and creative cooperation in the victory over the darkness of non-being.” (Nikolai Berdiaev, 1996, p. 253).

Generalizing, there are two seemingly opposite philosophical concepts: free-will and determinism. If the former postulates that man is able to choose and act according to the dictates of his own will, the other asserts – sometimes trenchantly – that all events, including human actions, are predetermined. From here there are perplexities for both the religious skeptic and the theologian. We are, on the one hand, forced to admit that on many occasions in everyday life we are free agents, able to do certain things or abstain from them, depending only on our choice. On the other hand, sciences – and here we are particularly interested in the humanistic ones – seem to have as a presumption, and as an implication of their results, the idea that such alternatives do not exist and that everything, including human behavior, happen in reality with absolute inevitability. (Antony Flew, 1999, p. 199).

This fundamental concept of freedom has various evaluations also in the socio-political field, which is intrinsically linked to the philosophical and ethical one. By and large, political freedom consists in the absence of external constraints. “The free man – writes Helvetius – is one who is not in chains, is neither imprisoned nor terrorized, like a slave, for fear of punishment”. (Antony Flew, 1999, p. 200). No one is free in all respects. Someone might be free in a certain respect but lacks the ability or desire to exercise that freedom, or be unfree, but still content with his or her lack of freedom. As the word “freedom” sounds pleasant to many (while authoritarian spirits hate its reality) and because political freedom is indeed, like peace, essentially negative, some praise positive, true freedom, the effective promotion of a favorite line of conduct, and not the freedom to do or not to do a certain thing.

Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor pointed out the preconditions on which political freedom is built:

“We will succeed in convincing them that they will not be able to truly become free unless they voluntarily renounce their freedom in our favor and when they will obey us completely. ... Oh, we will even allow them to sin, knowing them as faint of heart and nerveless, and, in their turn, they will love us like children.” (F.M. Dostoevski, 2011)

„The great Inquisitor is going to prove that Satan is right, that people are infantile, that the purpose of their own lives must be induced from the outside. They do not need their freedom. Having that, it is bothering them. Because the need for freedom belongs to the few and the chosen, it would follow that Jesus' doctrine is one of the elite, not-crowd-loving and oblivious to their only real need: the need for bread.” (Gabriel Liiceanu, in: Dostoevski, 2011). True freedom is not experienced in a worldly political regime, but it is lived through its change or metamorphosis and through its transcendence, because freedom belongs to the Kingdom of God (Corneliu-Dragoș Bălan, 2006, p. 166).

II. THE THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

Within the two religious hemispheres (Eastern and Western), human freedom is a rather elusive concept, too few are the religions that deal with it and give it the right of citadel. All the more so since when we use the word “religion” we make an invitation to the terminological rigor, for the Latin etymon „relego,-āre” (to link, to unite) – accepted by most scholars of the religious phenomenon – indicates the restoration the relationship between man and God in a personal relationship, that is, between two people. This is why for Oriental people, for example, the idea of a God-Person is a vulgar one or, at least, inferior, inconceivable. And in some oriental religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, etc., there does not exist or operate at the human plane the reality of God, appealing to substitutes or surrogates, in the person of teachers or gurus who promote the concept of “liberation“.

That is why the obsession of liberation in this religious hemisphere is a philosophy or therapeutic practice (i.e. Buddhism), in contiguity with Greek philosophy or, later, Nietzschean, but not a religion. In their turn, Muslims who practice faith in a God-person have one day per year, the feast called “the night of prayer,” when Allah descends from the seventh heaven to listen to their prayers. (Alexei Galiț, 2009, pp. 244-245). Within this religion, man is not conceived as a friend of God, as is found in the Christian model, in which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, becomes Son of Man and brother with all humanity, who fulfills his commandments.

Of course, philosophically speaking, everyone is free to have a personal definition of freedom. The surrealist Salvador Dali, for example, was of the opinion that “to be free you have to be a little multimillionaire”, or Friedrich Nietzsche, for whom freedom is the power to say “no!” (apud Alexei Galit, 2009, p. 245). Others claim that being free means owning everything you want, whenever you want. But, on the other hand, an old Greek saying warns: “when gods want to punish man, they send him whatever he wants.” (Savatie Baştovoi, 2008)

The condition of freedom proposed by Christianity does not imply either the meditation techniques of the yogis or of Oriental liberation (Buddhist, Hindu or Taoist), nor the money of Salvador Dali. For the Christian, the words of the Savior are more than an exhortation; they are the very essence of the human condition, disenthralled (freed) by sin: “You will know the truth, and the Truth will set you free” (John 8:32). For, built in the image of God, man has imprinted upon himself the calling and the freedom to be born with the will of the Spirit and to be like Him through living. Because of the presence of divine grace in the intimacy of the human nature, the powers and natural works of man and his movement consistent with His eternal reason are sustained by the divine grace incessantly.

The theological concept of freedom is the concept of God's trinitarian history: God constantly wants the freedom of his creation. God is the inexhaustible freedom of His creatures. So, to will what God wants is to be ourselves, to will the strengthening of our nature for eternity in God. Therefore, freedom is given us to choose what leads to the growth of our nature. And what truly promotes our nature is its harmony with God, its archetype, and with the will of God, who wants man to reach eternal happy existence. (Corneliu-Dragoş Bălan, 2006, p. 170)

Ascetic theology proposes first and foremost that man renounce his own will, that he free himself from any constraint that comes from the sphere of nature. For precisely in this renunciation of the will of nature is the freedom, which belongs to the person; it frees human person from any individual and natural limitation and makes it “universal”, extended to infinite, “all-encompassing”. Finally, the truly free person tends to encompass all the human nature, according to the model of the Divine Person, that contains the entire Trinitarian life, for Christianity, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, is “an imitation of the nature of God” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 46, 244 C) and the supreme goal of the saints is not only “to unite with the Holy Trinity, but to express it and imitate it in themselves”. (St. Maximus the Confessor, 1983, p. 148)

Man is free, because he is the image of divine freedom and therefore has the power to choose. St. Maximus the Confessor believes that the very need to choose (St. Maximus the Confessor, 91, 16 B) is an imperfection: free will is more a lack rather than independence; it is the inevitable consequence of the fall; from the intuitive, as it was, the will becomes discursive, whereas the perfect one immediately follows the good; he is beyond choice. (Louis Lavelle, 1991, 428) Our spirit of discerning chooses between several possibilities to realize the truth. But almost all of them always define freedom by choice, or, in its highest form, it is “an activity that creates its own reasons, and they do nowise stand it.” (Louis Lavelle, 1948, pp. 155-156)

The human person is achieving in freedom; it freely opens to the grace that secretly endures every soul without somehow constraining it. “Spirit does not generate any will that opposes it. He does not transform, by virtue of deification, but only the one who wants” (St. Maximus the Confessor, 1994, 45). The grace of the Holy Spirit does not carry out any charisma, without the faculty and power proportional to each. The man oscillates every moment between the essence of his own realization and the return to the nothingness from where he was brought into existence, between “emptying” or “fulfilling” himself: this is the great and noble risk of any existence as well the highest tension of hope. “Divine power is able to uncover hope where there is no hope and a path where the impossible appears.” (Teofan Mada, 71)

It is a locus communis in theology to say that the power and wisdom of God were before the existence of man, and that every man carries in him a “guiding image,” that is, his own wisdom, being a living foreshadowing of God. Man must decipher himself this divine foreshadowing of him and ought to freely “conquer” his own meaning, building his destiny. Thus, existence is a tension towards his own truth, which must be discovered and lived: “I know the truth only when it becomes to life in me,” said the existentialist philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (Paul Evdokimov, 1996, p. 80). There is no static perfection in life, no possible repetition; strictly speaking, there is never a precedent, but an eternal beginning of always unique facts, “never twice”, because they are mine. Each morning of human life emerges as

“morning” of the creation of the world, a pure divine plan, and the faith I carry in every moment leads me to a new spring, to what is worthy of desiring and absolutely untainted.

The connection with the transcendent is not expressed in terms of the heteronomy of Immanuel Kant, precisely because there is no “hetero” in the theonomy. He who has a close connection with God receives the revelation from within him, for he perceives the conjoining of the Word: “I call you no more servants, but call you friends” (John 15:15). On the contrary, any autonomy “encapsulates” the man closed in himself. In the ascetic sphere, St. Anthony the Great highlights the three wills that are confronting one another in man: 1. that of God, who works inwardly and saves, and this means the theonomy to which man adheres freely through an absolute synergy, and he appropriates it; 2. that of man, which, without being inevitably vicious, is changeable and problematic, and that means autonomy; Finally, 3. the demonic will, alien to man, and this is heteronomy. (Saint Anthony the Great, 1992, pp. 18 sq.)

The freedom wherewith God has honored man is freedom as a state and not only as an attribute of an approach of choice naturally accompanied by the anxieties of indecision; is freedom based on the knowledge of good, when good belongs to the human person as well as to God. “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8: 31-32). There is no freedom outside the consciousness of truth, and the Truth is the Son: “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36). But what is to be reckoned with and understood as a depth of the secret of liberty is that man takes part in the eternal freedom of God not in the «*posse non peccare*» of the primordial state, but only in the «*non posse peccare*» of grace and glory. This is freedom towards good, and so freedom comes to its divine truth by love.

If freedom is but a mere obedience that fits within the divine act and does nothing but reproduces and copies, in this case, to be free, in the form of divine freedom, does no longer mean anything. But, as St. Maximus says, “man was created by the Holy Spirit according to liberty, and the power to determine himself” (St. Maximus the Confessor, 1983, 167 sq.). Above the ethics of slaves and mercenaries, the Gospel sets the ethics of God's friends (Nikolai Berdiaeff, 1935).

Berdiaev notes that the traditional principle of free will, far from raising man, diminishes him, for it cannot create anything for its intercession, but only to accept or reject whatever is proposed from outside. It could even establish a paradox that has played a significant role in the history of religious ideas: free will, always being ahead of the cruel necessities to make a choice imposed on it from outside and from “above”, had enslaved and oppressed man. That is why true freedom comes only through grace, and man is free when he is not obliged to choose. Under this report, there is a truth at Luther, though he did not state it correctly. N. Hartmann, who argued that the teleological point of view in ethics leads to the denial of man's moral freedom and to the assertion of necessity, was right, although he did not completely overcome this point of view, in his doctrine of ideal values. (Nikolai Berdiaeff, 1935, p. 109).

Christian freedom is based on the new ontology of grace, which is revealed in Christ. What God offers from the beginning as a gift, man, in turn, cultivates through a Christocentric life, through which he is raised in the Church to the quality of a pneumatic ontological nature. For the Church is the space for the development of true freedom.

There are, however, in the Holy Scriptures a few passages that are taken as grounds for those who support either the predestination conception or a serious limitation of the man's call to freedom. We will stop on two of them, which are for many a true stumbling block.

Thus, the first, which engages the theme of choice and alternative, is that from the very creation reference, embodied in the divine commandment: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Gen. 2, 16-17). Many interpreted the commandment of God in the sense of forbidding knowledge, although this attribute is constitutional to man, taking on his own faculty of thought, intrinsically linked to the primordial giving, which is the divine image of man. That is why we cannot accept the idea of God proposing the agnostic dimension, since knowledge is a divine gift. In this sense, we have a strong scriptural argument, from which we can see how knowledge is a gift – one out of the seven – of the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord – and he will delight in the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11: 2-3).

In fact, the words of our Savior from the Gospel of John are more than apodictic: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17, 3), because knowing Him means, implicitly, to know the entire creation, His own realization, since “through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” (John 1: 3). Therefore, it is not the fact of banning knowledge, but of stopping ambiguous knowledge. But we must also insist on the original significance of the term “knowledge”, for it has suffered a true deterioration over time. Thus, the Scripture gives it the meaning of union: “And Adam knew Eve, his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain/Seth” (Gen. 4:1; 25). So, the natural sense of knowledge is union with the good, because only with good and truth one can have communion into existence. The Holy Fathers arguably note that “he who sees the good, the truth, is brighter than the one who is to choose.” (Părintele Galeriu, Andrei Pleșu, Gabriel Liiceanu, Sorin Dumitrecu, 1991, pp. 91-92)

St. John of Damascus teaches that when God commanded to Adam to taste all the trees of heaven, only not that of the knowledge of good and evil, lest they die, He wanted to say:

“Ascend, through all creatures, to Me, the Maker, and reap from all one fruit, Me, the true life. All things bear your life, and make the fellowship with Me the strength of your existence! In this way you will be immortal. [...] It is therefore impossible to stay incorruptible for the one who commune with sensitive food.” (St. John of Damascus, 1993, p. 58)

But what God has forbidden to man was precisely the inner tearing, the ambiguity. And one must not ignore a capital fact, namely that related to good and bad: when these two alternatives appear, the halving, and the loss of unity occur immediately. (Galeriu et alii, 1991, p. 93). Knowledge, affirms the same well-known Romanian theologian, Father Galeriu, is discernment, but not necessarily between good and evil, but between distincts, as it is in the Godhead, in what there is communication, advice, because it is Trinity, so a unity of distincts. Therefore, it is necessary to understand deeply the truth that man is called to be free, this aspect getting clear in the creational grid, by the very fact that he is created by a Trinity of Free Persons; and person is but “spirit and freedom”. „Freedom”, argues the renowned Russian religious thinker, Nikolai Berdiaev, “is the only solution to the theodicy problem. The problem of evil is the problem of freedom. If we do not understand freedom, the irrational fact of the existence of evil in the world cannot be understood.” (Galeriu et alii, 1991, pp. 199 sq.). God, therefore, Trinity of People, reveals to us as spirit, love and freedom and creates the whole creation in love and freedom.

The second scriptural point in question is the parable of those invited to the supper in the gospel of Luke (14: 16-24). In particular, the Emperor's command words: “compel/force them to come in, that my house may be filled.” (14, 23), seem incomprehensible to the absolute liberty of man, namely that of accepting or not Jesus Christ and to desire or not the Messianic Kingdom founded by Him.

Noting that there are still places at the feast, the Master orders to the servants, as they go out into the streets and to fences, to “compel” those whom meet to enter the dinner. “To compel” means “to force someone to do something, to constrain”. But the verb also has the connotation of “determining,” “convincing,” “relenting.” The latter is the real meaning out here, that is of bringing the most serious arguments wherewith mentally persuade, sentimentally relent and to bring into action the will of the one “who believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing he might have life through His name” (John 20: 31).

This commandment was addressed to the Holy Apostles by Christ before His ascension to heaven as a true missionary testament: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matth 28:19-20). The Lord's command obliges all the followers of the Apostles to address with competence and persuasion the present generation in order to be able to participate at the great feast of the Christian faith. In support of this, we argue that the command: “compel them to enter” does not imply an obligation, nor does imply the establishment of an inquisition that would constrain someone by repressive means, as unfortunately happened in the Western Middle Ages. For the Savior proclaims, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matth. 16:24). And whenever he would heal a sufferer, he firstly asks him/her, “Do you want to be healthy?” Or “What do you want me to do?”, which proves that He does not harm the personality, the integrity and the freedom of the human being through His Calling. Through solid argumentation, convincing speech and authentic Christian living, man must “compel” the mind and the soul to recognize the existence of God and His Kingdom; to determine his will to want and to work in order to gain the

citizenship of Heaven. (Leon Arion, 2013, p. 396). In fact, it translates in terms of apostolic work: “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” (1 Corinth. 9:22).

From a theological or dogmatic point of view, we must avoid any confusion between the psychological term of “will” and the metaphysical term of “freedom.” Freedom is the metaphysical foundation of the will. The will is also related to nature, it is subject to immediate needs and purposes. Freedom depends on spirit, on person. When freedom reaches its peak, it desires, freely, only the truth and the good. In its future fullness, when it takes on the image of divine freedom, then good and truth will fully correspond to its desire; this shows that truth is the act of freedom. (Evdokimov, 1996, pp. 80-81)

This is the supreme meaning of the paradoxical identification, at the celebrated Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (†1855), of subjectivity and truth, and which shows that truth is the act of freedom. For Kierkegaard, man, as a spirit that has its foundation in God, must be fulfilled by faith. However, when faith fails to root man in God, the disease of death arises i.e. despair. He distinguishes three fundamental types of despair: the despair of one who is not aware that he has a self; the despair of the one who does not want to be himself; the despair of the one who wants to be himself. From this analysis, Kierkegaard will deduce the “scandal of Christianity”: every man feels scandalized by this religion, because the Christian view of man is so extraordinary, so elated such that only the thought that it might be true frightens us. Christianity, concludes the Danish thinker, is a religion too noble for an ignoble being as man! (Søren Kierkegaard, 1998, p. 145)

CONCLUSION

The problem of freedom, an essential condition of human nature, is such a thorny one, with “philosophical volutes” that, most of the times, gets frozen in aporia, because, through an exercise of autonomous thought – however developed –, man cannot harmonize his existential state with the most precious gift of freedom. From here, the agnostic or atheistic revolt or cries of despair of J.P. Sartre, E. Cioran or Fr. Nietzsche, who see in freedom simply a burden. Hence, it is doubtless that the contemporary, secularized man feels God as an enemy of freedom. In the Hegelian-Marxist dialectic we have the reference between Master and slave; Freud talks about the “sadistic Father” complex that incites to parricide; for Nietzsche, God is the “celestial spy” whose gaze embarrasses and reifies. The usual idea of the divine omnipotence and omniscience turns history into a puppet theater. Or, as a philosopher put it: “The drama is written until the last act and no actor can change it as little as possible.” Only God is free within this determinism and, therefore, He alone seems guilty of the existence of evil. “If God exists, I am free no more; if I am free God does not exist.” This is the atheistic syllogism spoken through the anarchist Bakunin or that of Jean-Paul Sartre. (Evdokimov, 1993, pp. 143-144). Even if we do not justify it, we can understand this reaction because the idea of God has suffered, throughout history, a frightening deviation. The terrible Old Testament’ Judge sacrifices his Son to chill out his anger; he is omnipotent, he manifests himself through rogueries and miracles; he is omniscient, he foresees and orchestrates the whole of existence through his historical interventions of a “providential” nature. But, according to Shakespeare, history seems to be “a fairy tale told by an idiot”. (Evdokimov, 1993, p. 144)

The true freedom of the human personality is revealed only in the frame of the divine revelation, which knows its climax in the Incarnation of the Divine Logos. The ancient world had not known personal freedom, but only public freedom. The different philosophical conceptions of freedom, but also different modes of manifestation over the time of it, have proved their precarious and ephemeral character only.

Man freely adheres to God. St. Maximus the Confessor develops the idea that our extension to God is peculiar to us, though it is accomplished through the Holy Spirit. Romanian great theologian Dumitru Stăniloae puts it so eloquently: “The Spirit is not mastered of any will of domination. He does not want to rule over any person, but he desires to free that from everything that limits and rules her so that she can activate all her powers, advancing in the infinity of divine life, in free and loving dialogue with Christ.” (D. Stăniloae, 1978, pp. 315-316)

If Christ achieved through His work of salvation, objectively the personalization of the human nature, and created the conditions that every human, in an actual manner, assert himself as a person, the Church – in relation to the whole world – is the space for the full manifestation of man.

The human person, in its horizontal dimension, is capable of encompassing all that is human; it is truly a person, prosopon, only through this unlimited openness of its being. But its hypostatic foundation is in the vertical dimension, in its theandric structure: “That Christ be formed in you” (Gal. 4:19), and man grows up to reaching “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephes. 4:13), only in this completely new creation, which develops in itself. The subject of freedom and of every form of knowledge is therefore never merely the man, but man as a member of the integrated Body in Christ, proving conspicuously that the nature of human consciousness is not at all individual, schismatically isolated, but a Catholic and theandric one. (Evdokimov, 1996, p. 83)

True freedom is the freely accepted “bondage of good”, of another's love, of love for another, of benevolent obligation to neighbor's love, to love of God, Who requires us to serve the good of others and our true good, for only in true freedom it is the real ministry. (D. Stăniloae, 1956, pp. 316-317). In preserving this freedom, which is equivalent with the bondage to God, the One who truly sets us free, St. Peter the Apostle urges us, by his famous exhortation: “Live as free people, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.” (I Peter 2:16).

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