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THEORY, HISTORY AND LITERARY CRITICISM

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Proper Monitoring and Parenting of the Girl Child in Nigerian Stand-up Comedy

Idowu James Adekunle*

Abstract:

Stand-up comedy is an oral dramatic performance that is commonly enacted by a solo-performer or a duet before a live audience. Some existing literatures examined it largely from humour and entertainment to the neglect of its deeper societal values. Therefore, this paper investigates its new trend in gender discourse through its oral structural form by discussing the social responsibility of mothers on proper monitoring and parenting of the girl child. Besides, it also investigates the linguistic devices employed by the selected female comedian to reveal the roles of female comedians as the gatekeepers and conscience of society. Five digital video discs of live performance recordings of Helen Paul, a Nigerian female comedian, were purposively selected. The selected live recordings were based on the informing sociological realities and choice of satiric mode. The paper employed Schechner's Performance, Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic theories were used to analyse the informing sociological realities and choice of satiric mode. The data were subjected to performance and literary analysis.

Keywords: the girl child, stand-up comedy, female comedian, proper monitoring and parenting, performance

Introduction

Stand-up comedy, as a sub-genre of comedy, is a relatively new form of stage performance the topicality of which engages the society in all areas of human endeavours. Attempt to explicate its primary purpose gave rise to different definitions. The chief role of stand-up comedy is to create an amusing atmosphere of laughter, where the target audience can ease off their bottled-up tension (Adekunle, 2017: 28). Norrick (2003: 1344) explains that laughter is used to ratify and evaluate the degree of the success of a performance. Harbidge (2011: 128) states that stand-up comedy is a live performance that explores a comedian-audience relationship and intra-audience communication dynamism through a pleasurable medium that would appropriately gratify to a point of laughter. He uses the mode of laughter's gratification to possibly explore the moments of laughter and non-laughter in the recorded live comedy of

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Steven-Martin. While shedding more light, Schwarz (2010: 9) reveals that stand-up comedy is a young genre of humour, which serves a kind of pause-filler, similar to Medieval English drama-filler, such as slapstick and farce called the interludes, to entertain the audience, while waiting for famous bands, or theatre groups, who are expected to perform the event the audience has come for.

Laughter and humour are two essential factors in the performance of stand-up comedy. Allen (1998: 195) asserts while quoting Richard Pryor that, when a stand-up performer is apprehensive and shows a little fear and doubt because he is not getting any laughs, the audience's terrifying presence will eat him up. This is also true of indigenous story teller-performers. He states further that, the sense of fear possessed by the performer is like being in confrontation with a wild animal. Allen's opinion buttresses the point that stand-up comedians must have the mastery and creativity which is the fundamental nature of comedic practice to be successful, or be a good actor, in life. Grunner (1978: 1) declares that without laughter everyday living becomes drab and lifeless, and that life would seem difficult for humans. To avoid this drabness, he suggests that a sense of humour is generally considered as a person's most admirable attribute.

Based on the above, Nwankwo (2014: 10) says that humour is central to stand-up comedy because the primary aim of comedians is to provoke laughter in the audience. He states further that studies on humour are essential factors to the understanding of how laughter is generated both in stand-up comedy and every other situation that induces mirth. Therefore, stand-up comedians must have the mastery of performing art that easily provokes the audience to laughter in a way that heightens a mutual interaction between them and their audience. Frankly Ajaye (2002: 10) opines that to be a professional stand-up comedian, one needs to be funny on demand regardless of one's emotional state. In support of this assertion, he identifies some elements that assist the comedians in performing their roles and easily provoke laughter from the audience. He identifies the following points of view, true thoughts, honesty, delivery, timing, stage presence, concentration, visuals, smooth, audio effects, and vocal characterizations as fundamental to the success or otherwise of the stand-up performer (Adekunle, 2017: 69-70).

In the above, all existing literatures largely examine stand-up comedy from humour and entertainment to the neglect of its deeper societal values. Therefore, this paper investigates its new trend in gender discourse through its oral structural form by discussing the social responsibility of mothers in proper monitoring and parenting of girl child. Besides, it also investigates the linguistic devices employed by the

selected female comedian to reveal the roles of female comedians as the gatekeepers and conscience of society.

Performativity of Motherhood in Childcare of the Girl Child

Helen Paul Bamisile, one of the most outstanding Nigerian female stand-up comedians, sarcastically lampoons juvenile delinquency, and, at the same time, stresses the need for proper childcare in Nigeria. In her performances, she often assumes the character of a child in her costume and conversational technique to convey her messages in a comical way that elicits laughter from her audience. Because of her conversational technique, she is known to be called “Tatafo”. Tatafo is a witty and pesky kid who talks about social issues in a humorous way that provokes her target audience into laughter. Helen’s quirky sense of humour, quizzical expression, petite stature, spontaneity, and unique conversational tone completely make her sound like a child on the stage, among other performers. Helen Paul’s comedy techniques are obvious in *Helen Paul Tease, Dame Patience @ Agenda for Girl Child Education, 2014*. *Helen Paul Tease, Dame Patience @ Agenda for Girl Child Education, 2014* goes thus:

Mummy, see! What men have done to me? [*Showing her protuberant pregnancy to Ex-President’s wife, Patience Dame Jonathan, and the audience*] I know the condition is not permanent. Mummy, mummy, fine girl no pimple, “Girl Child”, mummy, are you a girl child? You are a mummy child. Eh! You see when I was sitting down there, I look at all the women in the house, I said God, I thank God for all these women and I pray in Jesus ‘name that all these women will enjoy it to the end of life. Because there is this story that I heard, a very emotional story. I say let me come and tell you before I tell you mummy’s favorite joke. Two friends, two women, fine women, very rich women, they didn’t have a child, and they have to start searching. They searched and searched and finally, someone took them to a place where they will get a child. When they got there, the man said to them: “if you must have a child as a woman, you will first go mad before you have a child”. One of the women said: “no I can’t go mad. For what? Why? Because of a baby? Because of a child? Oh no, Damn! Oh no, I can’t do that!” The second mummy (says): “Please sir, anything it will take to have a child I want to have, but I want a girl that will take care of me. Sir, please, help me, anyway!” The man said: “you will go mad”. The second woman replied: “I will go mad, but at least I will leave something behind. I will leave a generation behind, let me go mad oh, I want a child”. And the Baba said: “if that be it I will work on it.” You kan, [*the man now talking to the first woman*] the first woman replied: “I can’t go mad, no! I can’t! Madness on the street! Oh, damn!” So, Baba said: if that is the case carry your damn and go, the one that is ready to go mad should... [*Baba makes a gesture with his hand*]. After a while, Baba said: “you that is ready to mad, go, you will have a child”. And she left. After some months, she started. She got pregnant, after years, two, three years. She had children like two, three. Then the friend Olu Oyinbo [*a been-to, referring to the first woman*], the Oyinbo came back [*said to the second woman that:*] “You haven’t gone mad; you still fine, you even look prettier”. The second woman replied: “I have been waiting for the madness to come. Firstborn, second born, third born, madness has

not come". The first woman replied: "We have to go back to the herbalist. Please take me back". So, both of them went back [to the herbalist]. At Baba's place [the herbalist], the second woman said: "Baba, you said I will go mad if I want to have a child. My friend said she can't, but, now, she wants a child, she can be lucky". Baba said that you have been mad. You don't know that you have been mad. She said to Baba: "I have never been mad sir", Baba replied: "I say you have been mad". She said, Oh? Baba replied: "Was there any time in the middle of the night somebody woke you up? She said: "no". Baba: "when the child cried did she tell you to wake up?" She said: "no". Baba: "didn't you wake up by yourself". She said: "Yes, I woke up." Baba: "Is that not madness? Baba: on your own, the child is just crying jeje [gentle] [exclamation] not asking for your breast milk, you carry it, take, take, is that not madness?" She said: "Yes sir", The Baba continues: "When you are pregnant, for some periods, don't you do pou!pou!pou! [means vomiting around as a pregnant woman] for no reason, is that not madness?" She said: "Eh, I was feeling bitter". Baba: "You have gone mad" The first woman said: "Oh, I am sorry. I didn't know that was the madness he is talking about". The Baba: "My dear, is too late, you cannot be mad again, "When you see somebody beating your child as a mother [you say]: "In your life, if you try touch Bilike again, I will deal with you, I am telling you, I will deal with you. You touch my child I will deal with you". Is that not madness? On inter-house sports day, you will go there in the sun they would drive all parents, oya, come and run for your children, on the march get set, without a gift, except plastics, is that not madness? But we are gaining the madness today. Mummy Patience.... (Appendix, NG4.b).

In the performance above, Helen Paul humorously and creatively employs an oral narrative technique of the African storytelling method comically to unfold her message to her audience in a lively and excitable atmosphere. She intentionally uses this comedic narrative technique to draw the attention of her target audience to pressing issues, especially to her chief guest, Mrs. Dame Patience Jonathan, the wife of the Ex-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who was in attendance, just like the African court jesters called the attention of kings to pressing issues in the society in the ancient past, through their oral performances (Ajayi, 1982; Adeleke, 2001; Adeleke, 2004; Adekunle, 2009; 2014; 2017). For example, "Mummy, see! What men have done to me" is symbolically used to draw the attention of the Ex-First Lady, Dame Patience Jonathan, to something crucial and, at the same time, elicit laughter from the audience. Again, "mummy, mummy, fine girl no pimple," "mummy are you a girl child?" and "you are a mummy child" are paradoxically used to create an excitable atmosphere for her performance. "Fine girl no pimple" and "mummy's favorite joke "are a form of eulogy and hyperbolic technique applied to arrest the attention of Mrs. Dame Patience Jonathan to a pressing issue. "Mummy, are you a girl child?" is used as "an interrogative gesture" to enquire or extract a salient fact or information from her chief guest, while "you are a mummy child" is an oxymoron employed for emphasis to indicate that, that same

little girl is the “future mummy”. “Mummy” represents “an adult or elderly caring mother” and “child” means “an innocent kid”. Therefore, mummy child means an innocent mother who is completely immature in all her dealings. Helen applies this method to bring the wife of the Ex-President into a psycho-physical level of a girl child. She wants her to feel what every girl child passes through in Nigeria, especially among the downtrodden ones.

In the same vein, Helen Paul is drawing the attention of the First Lady to the pressing social problem of children who are sexually abused, impregnated, and made mothers before due time, “Mummy, see! What men have done to me”. Also, Helen employs a praying method to involve all the womenfolk in her performance “Eh! You see when I was sitting down there, I look at all the women in the house, I said God, I thank God for all these women and I pray in Jesus ‘name that all these women will enjoy it to the end of life”. This is an “empathetic statement” used to create an emotional support for women. She uses this device to show sympathy on the suffering that every woman goes through during child-rearing periods. This is why she says that, “I pray in Jesus ‘name that all these women will enjoy it to the end of life”. The wish of every mother is to reap the fruits of their labours after labouring so much for their children. “I pray” and “will enjoy it” are emotional statements and “end of life”, a nominal tone, are applied by Helen Paul to gain access to the emotional life of the womenfolk. She employs this technique to call the attention of the women to sensitive issues that pertain to the well-being of their children.

Furthermore, “I say let me come and tell you before I tell you mummy’s favorite joke” is a comic expression used to keep the audience in “suspense”. “Before I tell you mummy’s favorite joke” shows that the message yet untold is “a tale of mystery and suspense”. Also, “Two friends, two women, fine women, very rich women, they didn’t have a child, and they have to start searching” are emotional statements that reveal the psychological trauma that every woman of childbearing age passes through when they have a delay in childbearing. This means that “fine women (beauty) and “very rich women (riches)” cannot be quantified with “childbearing”. In African society, no matter how beautiful or handsome or great and wealthy a man or woman is, without a child, such a person is seen as a sheer failure. Their physical achievements amount to nothing. The person’s life is seen as a wasted life. This is why Pearson, Larsson, Fauveau, and Standley (2016: 65) aver that “the birth of a new baby is a natural process and an important and joyful social event both for the individual family and the wider community”. Childbearing is an important factor in African society. Also, “they searched and searched” metaphorically displays the “chronic

agony” and “the rigours” women go through when seeking the fruits of the womb (babies).

Again, in a quest for a baby, a man takes the two women to an herbalist (a native doctor) for a feasible solution. When they get to the native doctor, the only condition he gives them, is that, they have to be mad before they can have a child or conceive “when they got there, the man said to them: if you must have a child as a woman, you will first go mad before you have a child”. “Mad” is used as a metaphor. It is used here to symbolise the physical and mental sacrifices that women must pay and agonies they must pass through before they can conceive and when nursing their babies. “Childbearing” and “nursing” are great tasks that every woman must prepare for. Pearson, Larsson, Fauveau and Standley (2016: 72) state that “it is important to clarify that promoting birth preparedness and good home care practice for mothers and newborns are great factors”.

In addition, the first woman who is sophisticated, and more enlightened than the latter refuses to undergo those stresses that every woman must undergo, “One of the women said: “no I can’t go mad. For what? Why? Because of a baby? Because of a child? Oh no, Damn! Oh no, I can’t do that!” The expressions above show that the first woman does not understand the metaphor of “madness” employed by the Baba, the herbalist. This is the reason the woman uses angry interrogative and exclamatory expressions, like “For what?” “Why?” “Because of a baby?” “Because of a child? and “Oh no, Damn!” as a counter-repressive therapy against fears. She is a representation of people who are easily overwhelmed by the pressure and adversities of life. These are people who are often believed that persecutions, trials, and adversities of life are untold hardships that everyone should avoid at all costs. They are the people that cannot stand the test of time, because they believe that their conditions are completely terrible and harsh. Apart from this, “someone” in the above excerpt connotatively means somebody that is passionately concerned about other persons’ problems or challenges. One who always has keen interests in people’s well-being. In Africa, especially in Nigeria, such persons are not far-fetched from people that are passing through difficulties.

On the other hand, the second woman cries out to the Baba, the herbalist, for assistance: “the second mummy (says): “Please sir, anything it will take to have a child I want to have, but I want a girl that will take care of me. Sir, please, help me, anyway!” Here, “But I want a girl that will take care of me” is a sarcastic statement used to create “gender equality” as a revolutionary vanguard against the chauvinistic opinions of the patriarchal society. In Africa, society believes that male children are better than female children (Adekunle, 2009). The females are seen as

domestic property and as a baby-producing factory. Helen Paul employs this comedic technique to show that female children are more important and caring than male children. This is the reason Helen Paul uses this comic platform to relegate the patriarchal society to the background.

Again, the comic expressions show that the responsibility of becoming “a mother” is not a child’s play. It should be well planned and organised. The second woman is so determined that no challenge or threat could deter her from having a child. This is the reason she says: “Please sir, anything it will take to have a child”. She is seriously determined to have a child at all costs: “Sir, please, help me, anyway! I will go mad, but at least I will leave something behind. I will leave a generation behind, let me go mad oh, I want a child”. After a while, the second woman got pregnant, gave birth to children, looking prettier and healthier than the way she was in the past. Her friend, the first woman, saw all that has happened to her friend, the second woman. She was marvelled that her friend had not gone mad as predicted by the herbalist; rather she had given birth to three children, “after some months, she started. She got pregnant, after years, two, three years. She had children like two, three”. The second woman is much concerned about her welfare. She takes her friend back to the Baba, the herbalist, pleading for mercy on her behalf. She pleads that Baba should have compassion for her friend, the first woman: “Baba, you said I will go mad if I want to have a child. My friend said she can’t, but, now, she wants a child, she can be lucky”. She wants the Baba to pray for her to give birth as she has done, but the Baba refuses flatly to assist. The first woman said: “Oh, I am sorry. I didn’t know that was the madness he is talking about” Baba said: “my dear is too late, you cannot be mad again”.

The excerpts above show that “patience”, “endurance” and sacrifices” are virtues of necessity that every woman must have. This is the reason Oluwaremi (2006: 28) states that “you cannot become better if you are not ready to be made bitter”. The excerpts are “figurative connotations or narratives” that simply show the character of women in their marital homes who are in dire need of children. Oluwaremi (2006) explains further that life is full of challenges. Everybody is faced with one challenge or the other, but our reciprocating attitude differs. Whether it is a personal challenge, general challenge, painful challenge, mental challenges, spiritual challenge, or moral challenge, its objective is to make a champion out of you. So, watch your attitude, for your attitude determines your altitudes (28).

Proper Monitoring and Parenting of the Girl Child

Similarly, the use of interrogative gestures, as a metaphoric language, by the stand-up comedian is to display agonies that women go

through when nursing their children. Such expressions are: “I say you have been mad”, “was there any time in the middle of the night somebody woke you up?” “When the child cried did she tell you to wake up”, “didn’t you wake up by yourself”, “Is that not madness?”, “on your own the child is just crying jeje [*gentle*] [*exclamation*] not asking for your breast milk, you carry it, take, take, is that not madness?”, “When you are pregnant for some periods, don’t you do pou! pou! pou! [*means vomiting around everywhere as a pregnant woman*] for no reason, is that not madness?” Here, the comedian purposely uses the narrative technique to lampoon women who are completely careless and not ready to play their parental roles on their children. They are meant to protect and care for their children. Oluwaremi (2006: 87) states that God in his wisdom has designed that every destiny is prepared and directed by some hands. Prominent among the hands is the parental hand. This is the hand in which we find ourselves on our arrival on the earth. It is in this hand that destiny is kept and shaped. British Columbia (2009: 3) also avers that, “finding the right care arrangement for your child is one of the most important decisions you will make as a parent”. It states further that the quality of the relationship between children and their care providers is also a major factor in assessing children quality care. People who genuinely enjoy children make them feel secure, giving individual attention and provide a rich environment, for play and learning are meant to be provided by parents and good care providers. The two critics see childcare as a sole responsibility of parents, especially their mothers.

On adequate security and moral impact on children, hear Helen Paul:

You know we are talking about “thing” SECURITY FOR GIRL CHLID I discover that the way mothers train their children as I said before is very important. My mummy came one day, and said “Helen!” I said, “Ma”, “Helen!” I said, “Ma”, “Helen!” I said, “Ma”. You know how you mothers behave. “How many times did I call you? I said, “three times.” She said, “Look, as a girl, there are some things you should not do. Never you let a man lap you?” I said, “yes ma”, “Never, you climb a tree?” I said, “yes ma”. But One day, I was coming back from school I forgot. Me and my friend we went to climb the tree. We went to pluck mangoes, they were very sweet. So, we were eating our mangoes. They were very sweet. My mummy now saw me. She said, “Helen” I said, “ma”. She said, “you have killed me.” I said, “Sorry mummy”. She said: “haven’t I told you not to climb the tree again! Oh! God, help me with this child!” I said, “Sorry ma”. She said, “shut up! Sorry for your father, haven’t I told you not to climb the tree again! I said, “Mummy, I will not climb it again.” She said, “Don’t you know that as you are climbing the tree the boys will be looking at your pant? I said, “No, ma, I removed it before climbing the tree” (Appendix, NG4.b).

In the excerpt above, parents are expected to protect their children by giving them maximum security. Children are meant to be protected from external forces that are injurious to their social well-being. Helen Paul's mother wants maximum security and, at the same time, wants to instill moral sensibility into her daughter. This is why Helen Paul, the performer, begins with "You know we are talking about "thing" SECURITY FOR GIRL CHLD. I discover that the way mothers train their children as I said before is very important". As a signal to caution, the mother calls her daughter three times: "My mummy came one day, and said "Helen!" I said, "Ma." "Helen!" I said, "Ma". "Helen!" I said, "Ma." You know how you mothers behave. How times did I call you? I said three times". Here, the "calls" are highly symbolic and, at the same time, serve as a metaphor used to create a deep thinking sensibility, as a precautionary warning sign against impending doom. The style of tonality of the call is often employed by Yoruba elders of Nigeria in West Africa to call somebody to order who has erred or about to err from the social order. Besides, the word "never" connotatively means do not make any attempt that will contradict the warning signal or the laid down rules.

The mother uses the warning signal to educate her daughter on how the "Girl Child" should relate with her male counterparts "She said, "Look, as a girl, there are some things you should not do. Never you let a man lap you?" I said, "Yes ma", "Never you climb a tree?" I said, "Yes, ma". This is a form of sex education that every child must know. Lapping the girl child by man can result in sexual assault. Apart from this, through lapping, men can lure the girl child into sexual immorality. Besides, "She said, "Don't you know that as you are climbing the tree the boys will be looking at your pant?" is a way of educating the girl child against any sexual assault. This is to say mothers must equip their daughters with certain information that guarantees their safety from any form of sexual molestations. This is why Ward (2007: 6) explains that "all violence against children is preventable and no violence against children is implicit is the fact that this violence must stop". Ward goes further to say that virtually all forms of violence are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequalities and that the violation of the rights of children is closely linked to the status of women (2006: 6). She believes that one of the prominent ways of solving this problem is through sex education as a form of prevention. This means that women have major roles to play in their children's education.

In the excerpt above, through the use of exclamatory remarks, Helen Paul reveals her mother's displeasure with her behaviour when she flouts her mother's instructions, "My mummy now saw me. She said, "Helen", I said, "Ma". She said You have killed me. I said, "Sorry mummy". She said, "Haven't I told you not to climb the tree again! and Oh! God, help

me with this child!”. “Tree again!” and “Oh! God, help me with this child!” are exclamatorily used to show displeasure. Helen replies to her mother by creating sarcastic expressions that provoke her audience into laughter. “She said, “Don’t you know that as you are climbing the tree the boys will be looking at your pant?” I said, “No, ma, I removed it before climbing the tree”. She uses these sarcastic expressions to lampoon women and young girls who are fond of dressing without putting on underwear. This lack of putting on underwear reveals some certain private parts of their bodies that can provoke men to sexual assault against women as aforementioned above.

Conclusion

In the above, the study examines social values of standup comedy besides its humorous practices and entertainment. It reveals the sociological significance by looking at the roles of mothers in proper monitoring and parenting of the girl child. Also, it investigates the linguistic devices employed by the selected female stand-up comedian to reveal the roles of female comedians as the gatekeepers and conscience of society. This means that standup comedy is a veritable tool in critiquing societal foibles and, at the same, serves as a medium of social enlightenment.

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The Writer's Racial Paradox: August Wilson, Choosing the Black Route

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Abstract:

Two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, critically acclaimed African-American playwright, August Wilson was one of the 20th century's foremost writers who highlighted the struggles of the African-American community. A victim of racial discrimination himself, Wilson was terrified as a child as he experienced traumatic episodes of racism in school. Not only was he kicked out of school for being the only African American, but he was also threatened and abused to the point of being physically assaulted. It was these experiences that deeply marked young Wilson, so much so that he began to express his feelings through his writings. One of the first African-American men to achieve success on Broadway, Wilson was instrumental in shaping the African-American movement and highlighting their plight in the eyes of people around the world. For Wilson, the African-American community had, has and will always have a different view of life, because that view was built from a very different past from the white community, and that past affects to the present the way the black acts, his decision-making, his interaction with others, something that in his opinion was never accepted by the white community.

Keywords: African-American community, discrimination, identity, race theatre, Wilson August

Introduction: The Playwright's Portrait

There is a wealth of information regarding the biography of Angus Wilson and his bi-racial family background. Frederick August Kittle was born in 1945. His father, Frederick August Kittle Sr., was a German immigrant who worked as a baker, while his mother, Daisy Wilson, was a black American cleaning woman. This mixed origin and the multi-racial neighborhood he grew up in – mostly Italian immigrants, Jews, and African Americans – definitely shaped his personality.

Wilson started writing poems, but he eventually settled to drama and in 1968 we find him in Pittsburgh as one of the founders of the Black Horizons Theatre. His first plays, *Recycling* (1973), *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills* (1977), *Fullerton Street* (1980), and *Jitney* (1982) were performed in minor theatres and community centers. Only in the late 1970s when he moved to St. Paul where he wrote several plays which he

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submitted to the National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center. In 1984 *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* was accepted and produced on the Broadway, and it has been a great success ever since.

August Wilson intends to give a voice to the oppressed groups. He aims to enrich African-American history with valuable themes and aspects. Not only does he try to turn drama into a history book for black Americans to make them think deeply about their past and present lives, but he also uses this as a way to think about their future and dreams. In his early life, Wilson had to work hard to help his family, compromising six children living in the racial ghetto in Pittsburg. It was an environment characterized by slavery and racism in all forms that affected his previous writings. In portraying the various themes of abuse, exploitation and racism in his work, he was in fact part of his experience both as a young man and later, starting in the white suburb where he lived and he faces radical racism and ends up in school. These harsh conditions made her drop out of school and go to self-study in history and literature. His main concerns in this regard were his involvement in the Black Power Movement. He wanted to help people better understand black people in a multicultural society. In order to create works that describe longer periods in the lives of African Americans, he used a strategy that made each piece represent a decade, as a historical circle from the first decade of the twentieth century to the 1980s, focusing on the cultural aspects of color differences that govern his society.

The Four B's

As it is complex to determine precisely the influences or inspirations of an author, Wilson himself identifies the Blues, Romare Bearden, Amiri Baraka and Jorge Luís Borges as his main influences, something that is referred to in the criticism of his work as "The four B's":

My influences have been what I call my four *Bs* – the primary one being the blues, then Borges, Baraka, and Bearden. From Borges, those wonderful gaucho stories from which I learned that you can be specific as to a time and place and culture and still have the work resonate with the universal themes of love, honor, duty, betrayal, etcetera. From Amiri Baraka I learned that all art is political, though I don't write political plays. That's not what I'm about. From Romare Bearden I learned that the fullness and richness of everyday ritual life can be rendered without compromise or sentimentality (Plimpton and Lyons: 74).

In addition to these, the more or less conscious influence of all the African-American authors that he read in his youth, when he instructed himself by spending his days in the library, or even during his times of political activism, stands out: Langston Hughes, James Baldwin or Ed Bullins, or the work developed by W.E.B. Du Bois and Alan Locke.

Anthony Borges (1899-1986) is an Argentinian poet whose way of resonating universal feelings such as love, duty, betrayal or even honor in his short stories specific to a unique time and place inspired his approach creator of Wilson. Amiri Baraka (born 1934) is an African-American playwright whose plays had political aims for the social recognition of the African-American community. Bearden (1911-1988), an African-American painter, is equally concerned with the unity within the black community, and with painting, seeks to reconstruct his fragmented identity of African and inevitably American heritages. According to Harry J. Elam Jr, “[Wilson’s] creation of his twentieth century cycle [...] happens within a confluence of artistic creation that includes visual, literary, and dramatic texts” (Elam Jr., 9). Thus, Wilson places at the top of what feeds his work these three characters, these three B’s and more than anything, a music: the blues.

In his personal education and training as an artist, Wilson recognizes the influence of other artists on his work and especially the impact of the quintessential black musical genre – the blues. Due to the uniqueness of his education, Wilson had access to written material, not present in a conventional education for an individual of his time and ethnicity, as mentioned above. Later, African American writers of the 1960s representing black national culturalism, would influence the formation of Wilson’s political beliefs as well as the definition of his “voice” as a playwright.

Although in his work he does not identify with Amiri Baraka’s revolutionary theater, Wilson recognizes his influence at a time in his life as a poet, as well as his social and political importance at the time. Defending one’s culture is of utmost importance to the author and his work. Apart from Baraka, Wilson recognizes in James Baldwin another of his greatest influences. Wilson defends the integrity of African American culture, demanding recognition of its specificity and value as a support of a community, a commonality with Baldwin. Finally, Jorge Luís Borges, the Argentine writer, is also indicated by Wilson as one of the two most relevant influences, in the conceptualization of the characters and in the mode of disposition of the action.

Romare Bearden, whom the author identifies, along with the blues, as another of his most influential influences, plastically portrays the African American culture that Wilson advocates so much. Wilson says that the first time he saw such a work, he recognized in it the work he would like to develop with his writing – a reliable portrayal of African American culture. Some of Bearden’s works directly influenced the author’s plays, either as a source of inspiration or as a source of images / pictures inserted in the plays themselves.

In the same extensive interview, Wilson adds two more influences: the playwright Ed Bullins for his “uncompromising honesty and creating rich and memorable characters” and the novelist and essayist James Baldwin for his call for a “profound articulation of the black tradition”, which he defined as “that field of manners and rituals of intercourse that can sustain a man once he’s left his father’s house” (*Ibidem*).

The Writing Process

From the moment he decided that he was going to write a cycle of plays, one about each decade of the twentieth century, Wilson had before him a wealth of ideas and themes that he could deal with, a fact that helped him a lot, not facing any blockade, as it happens to many writers.

Wilson starts his work, usually based on an idea that comes to him, as he himself reveals in a New York Times article “How to Write a Play Like August Wilson”: “I start – generally I have an idea of something I want to say – but I start with a line of dialogue. I have no idea half the time who’s speaking or what they are saying. I’ll start with the line, and the more dialogue I write, the better I get to know the characters” (Wilson, 1991: 1). Wilson develops the pieces through the dialogue of his characters, from pieces of conversation, talking to the characters himself: “Whenever you get stuck you ask them [the characters] a question” (*Ibidem*) – letting ideas flow to the rhythm of the dialogue between them. Wilson transposes his experiences to the text, having confessed to enjoying writing in bars and cafes, a habit he acquired at the beginning of his writing career. The author writes on pieces of paper, napkins, in his pad, picking up pieces of conversation, recording ideas that came up at the moment for later use in the writing of his texts. In addition, Wilson draws ideas and inspiration from the blues and their experiences. Wilson uses Bearden’s method – collages – only applied to a different type of art. When Wilson sits down to write, the main process is to “glue” the fragments of conversations, ideas, stories or short episodes, historical events, and symbols that he wants to be present in that text. For Wilson, this is one of the most important steps in writing a play – establishing connections between everything that came together. During this “collage” process, Wilson experimented with connections, making changes whenever necessary, changing characters, adding characters, moving excerpts of dialogue, rearranging the material. As a unifying element, Wilson is always aware of the culture of his community and its rituals, ways of living, acting. Wilson claims to always have in mind something that James Baldwin defined as: “that field of manners and ritual intercourse that will sustain a man once he’s left his father’s house” (in Wilson, 1991: 1). After writing a first draft of the work, Wilson revises it several times, rewriting, cutting, inserting

excerpts of dialogue, repositioning episodes. Wilson pays attention to details, subjecting the text to rigorous scrutiny. The author focuses on the details, rewriting in order to clarify the character of a character, or reinforcing its importance in the play. He improves on a theme that he wants to see better portrayed in the text. During the development of his pieces, they undergo a more or less profound revision process, until the author is satisfied with the text. Not being a clear and linear process, for the author it is the one that most effectively works. Not having a classical background, dedicated to the study of dramaturgy, he works by natural instinct, free from traditional canons, following his own logic. Joan Herrington explains:

[such a trial-and-error approach to composition] is the natural and inevitable expression of an instinctual artist whose initial conception is not linear: certain stories and events must be included, but not in any specific order. Actions need not necessarily precede or follow one another. He builds his dramas piece by piece, experimenting with effect (Herrington, 1998: 7).

In addition to this revision work, Wilson, during the period of rehearsing the production of his pieces, still revises the text, solving small problems / aspects that he considers necessary.

The process of reviewing and rewriting the texts is something that Wilson learned in his stints at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. Wilson sent manuscripts to the National Playwrights Conference several times before being selected to participate. The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Playwrights Conference is organized annually with the aim of working with emerging playwrights in support of the development of American theater. Playwrights send their works to the O'Neill Theater Center, which are then subjected to a selection process. The selected ones are worked on during the Conference, but a month earlier a Pre-Conference takes place, where the selected playwrights read their plays to an audience made up of the playwrights and directors who will participate in the Conference. After this reading, the plays are discussed and each selected playwright is assigned a director and a playwright (recognized in the theatrical milieu). Selected artists have the opportunity to see their texts read, worked on and at a later stage, represented. During that period, the selected ones work with professionals from different areas related to the theater. In addition to a director and a playwright, each young playwright is assigned a team made up of actors and technicians from the areas involved in the production of a play. The team works on the text to later present two representations, two days apart, to an audience made up of the artists present at the Conference and its staff, visitors connected to the theater and the public. After the second performance, Conference participants get together to carry out a critical analysis of the pieces. The team that

worked on each piece, presents their work, the problems they encountered and the solutions adopted. Wilson saw his first play accepted in 1982 – *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*. At Conference Wilson, he worked with playwright Michael Feingold and director Lloyd Richards who helped him mature as a playwright. His relationship with Lloyd Richards crossed professional boundaries. Richards became a father figure for Wilson:

Wilson: [...] Everything is going to be all right. Pop knows what he’s doing.

Shannon: I know you said “Pop” jokingly, but do you have a paternal relationship with him?

Wilson: Oh, without question, without question. I think so. Yeah. I have certainly grown up without a father, and he [Lloyd Richards] is about twenty-five years older than me. So, yeah, I defer to him in that regard (Shannon, 2003: 216, 217).

Their partnership allowed them to do long-term work and Richards staged six of the pieces in the Wilson cycle. With the work developed at the Conference, Wilson became aware of all the dimensions that the production of a piece has. Wilson, as a writer, composed the text, without having the notion of certain more practical aspects, such as the passage from one scene to another, or for example the problems of lighting technology. Another aspect improved during this period was the technique of rewriting. Wilson was already rewriting the texts, but in a less methodical way, dealing only with small details. At the Conference, Wilson learned the importance of the text review process:

The important thing I learned was to rewrite. Not just patchworking here and fixing there, but exactly what the word means – re-writing. When you write you know where you want to go – you know what a scene, a particular speech is supposed to accomplish. Then I discovered that it’s possible to go back and rewrite this speech, to find another way to say it (in Savran: 293).

Right at the Pre-Conference, Wilson considers the audience’s reaction to the text important, carefully studying that reaction, and then proceeding to revise the text. During the work at the Conference and later in the production of his pieces Wilson listens to suggestions from those involved, accepting them or not, according to his assessment of the situation.

Later, Wilson follows the rehearsals of the productions of his pieces, later rewriting what he deems necessary. Wilson feels the need to “listen”, analyzing instinctively what he hears, looking for the participation of the artists with whom he works. Some critics suggest that Wilson makes too many changes, in order to meet a model of greater commercial success, a fact that is worth his success on Broadway. However, Wilson states that during rehearsal periods: “[...] changes are

minor [...]. Rehearsals were more cutting and adding to shape it, as opposed to major rewriting” (297), considering that it does “a major rewriting before the O’Neill Conference and then after the two-day staged readings” (297). Wilson admits that there are small details that only seeing the scenes on stage, he realizes that they do not work, something that sitting at home writing could not find out. Thus, for the author, the text revision process goes through several phases, having the last place during the rehearsals, when viewing his work on stage. In *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, Wilson followed the rehearsals of the productions of the pieces until it reached Broadway, when the final text of the piece was defined, this being the normal process in the development of his works. The author deals with the text within a collaborative process. His text is the starting point for the production of a piece, the work developed afterwards being a mere refinement of the text, the product of his observation of the essays and representations and the feedback he gathers from the team. However, it is a fact that until reaching Broadway, Wilson submits his texts to extensive revisions, such as *The Piano Lesson*, whose ending was changed after a year and a half of representations.

“You never transcend who you are”

In a conversation with Bill Moyers in 1988, August Wilson – who had won the Pulitzer Prize for *Fences* one year before – explained his racial status:

BILL MOYERS: A paradox for August Wilson, at least for me – if I can be personal for a minute – is you had a white father.

AUGUST WILSON: I did, yes.

BILL MOYERS: And yet you chose the black route, the black culture.

AUGUST WILSON: Because the cultural environment of my life was black. As I grew up, I learned black culture at my mother’s knee, so to speak.

BILL MOYERS: You didn’t make a conscious choice? I’m going to choose black.

AUGUST WILSON: No. That’s who I always have been. The cultural environment of my life has always been – the forces that have shaped me, the nurturing, the learning, have all be black ideas about the world (Moyers, 2017: np).

During the interview, Wilson refers to the universality of the play, which is about what he calls “the commonalities of culture”: even if it is about the black experience, the reader will find such universal topics as “father-son conflict, husband-wife, you have whatever” (*Ibidem*). When Moyers asked him if he doesn’t ever grow weary of “thinking black, writing black, being asked questions about blackness”, the writer answered without any hesitation: “You never transcend who you are” (*Ibidem*).

August Wilson wrote his cycle of plays on the life of the American black community in the nineteenth century under the conditions

summarized above. According to Wilson, the history of the United States has been written throughout this time, but the role of African Americans in it has been concealed, calling itself the responsibility of writing and rewriting the history of the African American people in the United States, giving it due importance. In an interview with Kim Powers, Wilson reveals that after discovering his goal – writing a play cycle, one about each decade of the twentieth century, his work took a new direction:

... to focus upon what I felt were the most important issues confronting black Americans for that decade, so ultimately they could stand as a record of black experience over the past hundred years presented in the form of dramatic literature. What you end up with is a kind of review, or re-examining, of history (Bryer and Harting, 2006: 5).

History, Wilson considered, had long been written from a unilaterally and racially biased standpoint, with European roots, highlighting the viewpoint of a white sectarianism that scrutinized and categorized black communities. However impartial a historian may believe, he cannot in fact transcend his subjectivity and cultural circumstances. Considering the past of the United States, and its history being grounded on an exclusively white perspective, the role of the large black community was represented in this necessary bias, subject to its prejudices and discriminatory beliefs. As a slave, the black community had a role to play in conventional society – free labor. The physical strength of the thousands of slaves living on American soil contributed to the country's development, enriching the owners while neglecting the suffering and human condition of the slaves, understood as inferior, animalistic beings. The black community had suffered superhumanly to find its place in the enlarged society, as the overwhelming racial prejudice of the politically powerful community had long denied them that place. The question of the impartiality of historians has always been questioned throughout the ages: Plum recognizes in Wilson's work a challenge to the written and accepted version of US history:

Wilson's dramaturgy challenges the secondary position of African Americans in American history by contextualizing black cultural experiences and, in turn, creating an opportunity for the black community to examine and define itself. Rather than writing history in the traditional sense, Wilson "rights" American history, altering our perception of reality to give status to what American history has denied the status of "real" (Plum, 1993: 562).

For Wilson, the black community has had, has, and will always have a different view of life, as this view was built on a very different past

from that of the white community, and this past affects to the present the way blacks act, your decision making, your interacting with others, something that in your opinion has never been accepted by the white community. For Wilson, the black community has its own identity, the result of a story, a different path:

We are Africans who have been in America since the seventeenth century. We are Americans. But first of all, we are Africans (...) we have a culture that's separate and distinct from the mainstream white American culture. We have different philosophical ideas, different ways of responding to the world, different ideas, different ideas and attitudes, different values, different ideas about style and linguistics, different aesthetics – even the way we bury our dead is different (Bryer and Hartig: 68-69).

The white community's rejection of African American cultural manifestations has galvanized discriminatory attitudes, something the author himself has experienced throughout his life. For the author, the cultural differences between the black and white communities were crucial, as was the need for these differences to be respected.

This identity construction cannot be suppressed indefinitely. Individuals are influenced by their surroundings, the family representing the first circle of identity formation. This is widening ever more outward circles of community, defining identity: the neighborhood, the community, the city, the nation, following the growth of a person, contributing to the formation of that person's identity.

Wilson refers to the memory of blood (O'Meally, 1998: 566), not in its biological essence, but as a metaphor for the transmission of cultural values within the family and community: from generation to generation, indissoluble by the present, the product of a whole. of common experiences, generating conditioning feelings of life and the way to live it. Your characters will struggle with this past and how to best deal with it. In Wilson's view, when the past is forgotten, identity is lost. For the author, knowledge of history is a way of knowing the present and making conscious decisions in the future. Elam stresses Wilson's notion of blood memory: "(...) a metaphor for his central idea of reimagining history and for appreciating how the African and African American past is implicated in the present" (Elam, 2004: xviii). However, in his plays, Wilson does not adopt a comprehensive strategy of all social groups within the black community.

His plays refer to groups of blacks struggling to survive in the adverse world of white majority society, where their rights are denied, but it does not mention, for example, the black middle class, living unobtrusively, except in their last play *Radio Golf*. For Wilson, the black middle class succeeded in forgetting its past and its origins, that is,

denying its African heritage, adapting and acting as individuals in the white community. In an interview with Bill Moyers, Wilson explains: “[They] are black in skin color. All of the values in that household are strictly what I would call white American values” (Bryer and Hartig, 2006: 74). From their point of view, to achieve this kind of success in American society, black individuals are forced to abdicate who they are and act in accordance with the conventions of the majority community, the white population. Wilson is clearly against the assimilation of white community culture and feels that society can only achieve success if they go through the same process: “The social contract that white America has given blacks is that if you want to participate in society, you have to deny who you are, you cannot participate in this society as Africans” (*Ibidem*: 76).

Wilson does not deny the fact that every human being would like to enjoy the advantages that money provides in the materialistic society in which we live, but he does not accept the fact that one has to deny one’s identity in order to achieve that material comfort. Through his characters, Wilson expresses a clear critique of African Americans who have forgotten their past, their roots in the name of economic success and personal recognition. That’s what Levee (in *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*) or Hicks (in *Radio Golf*) represent: they both strive for success, acting like the white man, forgetting their roots.

All of Wilson’s work evokes the South, the return to the South, to Earth, but none of his plays have a Southern location as their background. The only idea is that life there would be better, closer to the past and to African American roots, something Wilson defends and expresses in his plays. Despite the defense of this idea, after emancipation and for many years life in the South was anything but idyllic, as mentioned earlier. Sandra Shannon points out that Wilson considers the capital exodus after emancipation to be the capital sin in African American history, when large numbers of blacks moved from the South to the northern cities, becoming uprooted, losing their connection to their past and the land, missing the opportunity to build a solid stake in society – “Whether directly or indirectly, each of the plays that make up Wilson’s cycle demonstrates the aftermath of the cardinal sin committed by the descendants of slaves: they abandoned the South rather than become landowners and gradually build a strong economic base” (Shannon, 2003: 12).

In his work, Wilson addresses the return to the South in terms of reconciliation with the historical past. In *Two Trains Running*, Memphis talks about returning south to reclaim his land; in *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, it is in the South where Ma has her fans and where she feels good; Toledo longingly remembers the time when he worked the land; In

The Piano Lesson, Boy Willie wants to sell the piano so he can buy a piece of land to work on. For Wilson, the migration of African Americans to the North caused them to lose the opportunity to succeed by working the land, which they were skilled at and could have given them a significant role in history. When they reached freedom, many former slaves set off for various reasons, from seeking lost relatives, to wanting to experience a better life in the cities, fleeing the oppressive environment of the South, or simply because they were free to travel.

In this movement away from the South, the region where the idea of African American community had originally formed, according to Wilson, something was lost, conditioning the lives of blacks in America:

We were land-based agrarian people from Africa. We were uprooted from Africa, and we spent 200 years developing our culture as black American. And then we left the south. (...) I think if we had stayed in the south, we would have been a stronger people. And because the connection between the south of the 20's, 30's and 40's has been broken, it's very difficult to understand who we are (Rothstein, 2010: 2).

At the time of emancipation, the widespread flight of blacks to the South would be expected, where the environment of physical and mental oppression remained virtually intact and was more deeply entrenched. The desire to travel freely was strong after centuries of prohibition and captivity. Also noteworthy is the fact that blacks have no financial capacity to acquire a piece of land and the fact that no one in the South finances blacks for this purpose, because only whites had the capital and land and none of them wanted to see blacks with the kind of power that came from owning the land.

Wilson's work is of the utmost importance, though his art is limited to a portion of the history of the African American experience on American soil. Wilson writes, bringing with him the responsibility of waking blacks, reminding them of their past and how that past can give them the strength to overcome and overcome the problems they face. The reaction it receives from audiences is significant, reaching not only its community, but also succeeding among the white community, a fact proven by its success on Broadway. Wilson questions the fact that many blacks have forgotten their African roots, assimilating a culture that is not theirs.

For Wilson, cultural assimilation is not the solution: "I simply believe that blacks have a culture, and that we have our own mythology, our own history, our own social organization, our own creative motif, our own way of doing things. Simply that" (Bryer and Hartig, 2006: 74). In his view, the contribution of the black community to building a better society also includes commemorating its African past, enriching American culture with traces of African culture from its ancestors. This

transmission was made by oral tradition, African determinant tradition of storytelling, passing stories, myths, rituals from generation to generation: “Blacks do not have a history of writing – things in Africa were passed on orally. In that tradition you orally pass on your entire philosophy, your ideas and attitudes about life” (Savran, 1988: 295). Wilson does not understand why other minority groups, such as Asians, can maintain their culture, and blacks are required to assimilate. In his plays Wilson exalts the value of the African American people, their ability to survive, their indomitable spirit, their artistic sensibility, present, for example, in their music, the keeping of habits, rituals, way of life, despite from outside pressures. He refuses to see his community reduced to American, and emphasizes throughout his work that his community is African American.

In this sense, Wilson’s plays assume a certain didactic aspect, and Wilson’s role in reminding the black community of its historical past and the importance it must maintain in the present and in the construction of the future. In his plays his characters struggle with daily life situations, with the need to make choices, make decisions that will affect their life and their future, living and being affected by their surroundings. It is in this environment that it is of significance to resort to the past, to African things, to understand the present. Their characters are African American in their ways, their worldview, their expression, their rituals; Wilson’s aim is, therefore, to obtain this recognition from the audience and to be disappointed when this is not apparent, as he does not understand the resistance of his community to accept his African-ness (*Ibidem*: 296).

Wilson’s aim (not to incite the masses, to call for revolution, as that of other black writers, for example Amiri Baraka) is nonetheless political, underlying the desire to effect a change in the status quo. Wilson sees the recognition of African roots by the black community as the starting point for change, using his characters to convey his message. As Joanne Gordon comments: “Wilson’s characters are primarily African Americans rather than Americans who happen to be black” (Gordon, in Elkins, 1994: 18).

Basically, in this view of Wilson one cannot disassociate the fact that they are black Americans from their African roots, that is, there are “black Americans”, there are African Americans, with a whole inheritance underlying this condition. Wilson hopes the audience will draw his political conclusions from his plays, by observing the conflicts and the very history of his characters. Elkins goes even further: “Wilson effects, instead, a powerful theatrical experience and trusts his audience to reach political conclusions which develop a logical extension of his plays' narrative situations” (Elkins, 1994: xii). When the viewer hears a character tell a story of his past about a situation of racism, Wilson hopes

that description will make him think and withdraw his relations. Wilson states:

All art is political. It serves a purpose. All of my plays are political but I try not to make them didactic or polemical. Theater doesn't have to be agitprop. I hope that my art serves the masses of blacks in America who are in desperate need of a solid sure identity. I hope that my plays make people understand that these are African people, that is why they do what they do. If blacks recognize the value in that, then we will be on our way to claiming our identity and participating in society as Africans (Savran, 1988: 304).

However, in another interview Wilson claims not to write political plays: "From Amiri Baraka I learned that all art is political, though I don't write political plays. That's not what I'm about" (Lyons and Plimpton, 1999: 3). He claims, therefore, that he does not write for an audience, nor to influence a particular audience, writes for himself, as any artist does, in order to do his best: "I don't write particularly to effect social change. I believe writing can do that, but that's not why I write. I work as an artist" (*Ibidem*: 5). Wilson dates his plays, locating each of them in a decade of the twentieth century, in relevant years. *Fences*, for example, temporally located in 1957, takes place in the year of the decision to allow black students to attend the Little Rock School and the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which aimed to ensure that all blacks could exercise their right to vote. *Ma Rainey* is located in 1927, the year of the rise of popularity of a more danceable type of music in the north, the swing. However, Wilson does not focus his plays on the historical events of the time. Wilson focuses his plays on their characters, the answers they seek, their visions of life, the circumstances that force them to act the way they do, and their decision-making that will shape their future. Kim Pereira notes: "[...] history is the context in which his [Wilson's] characters live their lives, but it is those lives that he places center stage, not the public events which are defined those decades" (Bigsby, 2007: 65). For his part, Wilson claims not to conduct a historical survey of the time he places the plays, which he considers reductive – "I believe you do research, you're limited by it ... it's like putting on a straitjacket" (Bryer and Hartig, 2006: 238) – the only research he does is listening to the music of the time. According to his words, in the music and in his lyrics the experience of his people is present, and it is based on it that he develops his plays.

In addition to music, your own past turns out to be a source of information, using episodes of your own life, or elements related to it. For example, the use of the characteristic vernacular of his community, street poetry (*Ibidem*: 87), full of images and echoing the situations of the characters' own experiences, with which Wilson maintained contact

throughout his life. The use of this rich and living vernacular is one of the most admired features, the transposition to the stage of the easily recognizable language of a community, giving realism to its plays. Michael Feingold comments, by the way: “[Wilson’s plays] are treasure houses of street talk, blunt saucy and extravagant” (*Ibidem*: 13). Another personal experience that helped Wilson was his time spent at “Pats Place,” (*Ibidem*: 101), listening to the conversations and stories told by senior locals and identified by the author as “walking history books” (*Ibidem*), sources from the history of your first-person community. Many other personal data are transposed into your work; For example, Bynum’s character is named after Wilson’s maternal grandfather. Thus, his plays, despite their expressed desire to rewrite history, are not presumed to be accurate historical accounts, but rather reflect his perception of realities, based on the blues and his personal experience, with all the underlying limitations. The author’s personal life and his memories, ultimately decisively influence his work on a historical, social and political level, as Sandra Shannon states:

Reestablishing links with the past – stretching across the black experience in America to Africa – involves tapping the resources of his memory, both conscious and subliminal [...] These memories begin as a result of a past that combines his growing up poor and fatherless in a Pittsburgh ghetto, his quest to discover his own genealogical ties with Africa, and his sustained belief that African Americans of the present generation urgently need to ground themselves in Africa’s cultural past (Shannon, 2003: 6).

Wilson uses his personal knowledge of African American life, transferring it to his plays, all the stories he has heard from his family and members of his community and everything he has experienced has a place in his work.

Conclusions

After three hundred years of exploitation and subjugation of an entire social mass, followed by decades of outrageous emancipation that would almost always replicate the previous regime of racial oppression (resulting in the alleged freedom of blacks and the persistence of grave social and economic inequity), Wilson’s literature deals with healing the painful wounds that have plagued the African American community for centuries. In his view, this healing process involves reestablishing the connections to its roots. The concept of roots transcends the experience of your community on American soil. The origins date back to the ancestral land – Africa. Throughout his work and career, the author mentions several reasons for the loss of links with the culture of his ancestors, resulting in a loss of identity, from migration north after

emancipation, to assimilation in a vain attempt to avoid further unpleasantness. Thus, the author's work focuses on the search for the identity of the African American community, diluted throughout the twentieth century in an experience within a society castrating difference.

In this search, the author presents possible paths through his characters and symbols. Wilson's characters are always faced with dilemmatic options – North or South? Assimilation or segregation? Accepting one's roots and reconciling with the past or ignoring ancestry, losing one's identity? React and act or adopt a passive attitude? Embrace materialism or protect individual spirituality? On the one hand, Wilson does not seem to want to give an unambiguous answer to the questions he raises: he elaborates complex characters whose paths are confused. While not taking the healthier options, the reasons behind their choices are somehow valid. On the other hand, when it claims to itself a certain pedagogical intervention, alerting to some equivocal and self-destructive manifestations of the African-American community in which it grew up, so as not to be perpetuated, its sociopolitical convictions are reverberated in the dialogues between characters.

As an unshakable advocate of African American culture, Wilson worries about blacks who, for minor reasons, dismiss their culture in favor of assimilation. According to the author, to achieve social, political or economic equality, it is not necessary to abdicate the defining characteristics:

Blacks have been all too willing and anxious to say that we are the same as whites, meaning that we should be treated the same, that we should enjoy the same opportunities in society as whites. That part is fine... but blacks are different, and they should be aware of their differences (Rothstein, 2010: 3).

For Wilson, differences are definitely a source of pride, as opposed to being a sign of inferiority. In their plays, the distinctive features of African American culture arise in the specific form of a mystical representation, for example a ghost, or a vision, or in the details of everyday life, such as cooking humming a blues (Doaker in *The Piano Lesson*).

Along the way, the author himself faced a process of searching for his own identity. At the personal level, the product of an interracial relationship (white father of German descent and African-American mother), Wilson had to make choices about his inheritance. The author refers to the choice process as apparently simple, due to the almost total absence of the father figure. However, in interviews given by the author, whenever the subject is broached, Wilson responds succinctly, leading some interviewers to draw elations from his disagreement in approaching this subject, such as Dinah Livingston: "Ask Wilson what the white part

of his heritage means to him, and he says: ‘The cultural environment of my life has been black, and I’ve always considered myself black.’ His eyes say: ‘Next question, please’” (in Bryer and Hartig, 2006: 39).

Growing up without one of the parenting figures affects an individual’s personality development. Wilson later notes that when he left his maternal home, he sought in the community, in the voice of the older men in his community, a model of the male figure of the father he did not have. Nevertheless, he had a stepfather, David Bedford, who is practically absent in his words because of disagreements over Wilson having dropped out of the football team while at school, which negatively affected his relationship. Wilson attended the Pat’s Place, cigar store and pool hall (*Ibidem*: xviii), where he listened to the stories of the elderly, regular customers of the place, where he was lovingly treated by Young Blood (Wilson, in “The Kennedy Center Interview”). Living with this group of elderly members of his community proved fruitful for the author, not only for the male image absent from his development, but also for the knowledge he acquired. From them, Wilson learned about the spirit of resistance, the history of his community, the stories / episodes of his life that he told became material to elaborate on later, and learned to listen to a quality he treasures as a playwright.

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Alexandru Macedonski și concepția sa despre versificație

Florina-Diana Cordoș*

Abstract:

This article presents Alexandru Macedonski's contribution to Romanian literature concerning the promotion of new literary tendencies – at the beginning in those times – Symbolism and Parnassianism. In this study I brought into discussion the vocation of “Mecenas poet” that Macedonski had in the literary space of Bucharest after the foundation of the society *Literatorul*. I also presented in this paper the Macedonski's conception on versification. His ideas were published in the pages of the magazine “Literatorul”, in the collection entitled *Arta versurilor*. I highlighted here his activity as a promoter and guider in the Romanian literary space, because this is a quality that makes him radically different from his contemporaries.

Keywords: prosodic elements, free verse, lines, rhyme, rhythm, metre

Cenaclul literar și revista „Literatorul”. Receptarea și asimilarea unei noi direcții poetice

În ianuarie 1880 a luat ființă în București societatea literară și revista „Literatorul”, al căror fondator a fost Alexandru Macedonski. Apariția acestei publicații a marcat începuturile poeziei române moderne, sub forma simbolismului și a parnasianismului. Cenaclul a reprezentat la vremea sa un important ferment literar, dedicat în totalitate poeziei, primul de acest fel din istoria literaturii române. Acesta a jucat un rol major în biografia poetului nostru, deoarece constituie în același timp și un aspect însemnat al laturii sale estetice, dar și etice. Tudor Vianu afirmă că „poeziile lui Macedonski sunt pline de strigătele durerii de a se ști singur într-o lume în care ne pândesc vrăjmașii și în care virtuțile omului nu numai că nu sunt recunoscute și răsplătite, dar sunt mai degrabă pricina nefericirii celui care le practică” (Vianu, 1974: 203). De altfel, poetul recunoaște că revolta sa este rezultatul răutății societății în care a trăit.

Exegețul Adrian Marino consideră că societatea *Literatorul* a însemnat pentru Macedonski „un protest și un refugiu, un vis lucid și un stil de viață, o metodă literară și, într-un sens însăși rațiunea de a fi a existenței sale” (Marino, 1966: 337). Fiind un nonconformist,

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temperamental, un suflet furtunos cu un imens orgoliu, permanent în dezacord cu societatea timpului său, pe care dorește să o schimbe din temelii, înființarea cenaclului a semnat pentru Macedonski o nouă perioadă a vieții, una de maturitate artistică, când poetul devine, probabil, mai stăpân pe sine și conștient de talentul și de originalitatea sa.

Cu toate că revista a apărut cu destule întreruperi, contribuțiile teoretice ale lui Macedonski au lăsat să se întrevadă elementele esențiale ale programului literar înnoitor. Obiectivul principal al doctrinei literare a „Literatorului” era gruparea tinerelor talente și oferirea unei direcții, stimularea și încurajarea lor, căci după cum afirmă poetul: „Am crezut întotdeauna că a dezbrăca pe un suflet de avânt este a-l nimici”, iar critica trebuie să fie „mai presus de orice optimistă și bună cu producerile celor de tot tineri” (Macedonski, 1946: 104). Macedonski era preocupat să dea fiecărui tânăr șansa de a se afirma, de a ieși din anonim, de a-l promova, ceea ce era un imbold vital pentru oricare „frunză tânără”. Afețiunea și entuziasmul pentru tinerii poeți și în special pentru creația lirică constituiau pentru șeful cenaclului un stil de viață; acesta îi încurajează pe discipolii săi, își prezintă cu delicatețe obiectiile, oferă ajutor, îndreptând câteodată versurile incorecte și inaugurează în literatura noastră critica ca formă a „iubirii” (Marino, 1966: 361). Iată cum apreciază maestrul versurile lui Carol Scrob: „Ți-am citit dragile versuri/Scumpe visător/Mi-au vorbit de poezie/Mi-au vorbit de-amor!//Ele sunt, desigur, șchioape/Mers când jos, când sus/Însă șchioapătă c-un farmec/Dulce și nespus! (*apud* Marino, 1966: 146).

Activitatea pe care o desfășoară Alexandru Macedonski nu rămâne fără ecou în arena literară a vremii. Printre talentele care aderă la cenaclul său literar și ale căror creații au fost publicate în „Literatorul” se numără Ștefan Petică, Traian Demetrescu, Mircea Demetriade, Eugeniu Speranția, Iuliu Cezar Săvescu, Cincinat Pavelescu, Duiliu Zamfirescu, Gala Galaction, și bineînțeles, Tudor Vianu, editorul de mai târziu al poetului. La începuturile lor literare, au pășit pragul cenaclului poeziei mari de mai târziu cum ar fi George Bacovia, Ion Barbu sau Ion Theo (Tudor Arghezi). Magistrul stăpânea arta convorbirii, dovadă aprecierea de care se bucura în rândul discipolilor. Ștefan Petică mărturisea astfel într-un articol: „ceea ce îl deosebește de alți maeștri e o căldură și un colorit viu în vorbire, cum nu mi-a fost dat să văd. Cuvintele au o putere de sufletească expansiune, care robește și fascinează de la început, pentru că maestrul posedă taina acelei fermecătoare *causerie* franceze, care se întâlnește așa de rar în saloanele românești” (Macedonski, 1946: 293).

După anii 1913 frecventează cenaclul nume precum Horia Furtună, Al. T. Stamatiad, Ion Pillat și Tudor Vianu. Cel din urmă a și editat între anii 1939 și 1946, opera macedonskiană în patru volume la Editura Fundațiilor Regale, restituind postum gloria literară a poetului. Ca fapt

divers, dar semnificativ pentru cercetarea aceasta este mărturia profesorului G. I. Tohăneanu, apropiat al lui Tudor Vianu, care povestește despre acesta că ori de câte ori treceau împreună pe lângă casa lui Macedonski (cea din urmă locuință a sa de pe Calea Dorobanților, nr. 23), criticul literar își ridică discret pălăria în semn de respect și prețuire față de poet: „Aș mai vrea să adaug că de fiecare dată, trecând pe acolo, se descoperea o clipă ridicându-și pălăria elegantă, cu boruri largi; o făcea cu desăvârșită discreție și în cel mai firesc mod cu putință, în semn de venerație și devoțiune pentru marele și atât de nedreptățitul poet” (*apud* Funeriu, 2017: 63). De altfel, cenaclul reprezenta pentru poetul nostru o adevărată familie, în mijlocul căruia acesta adoptă o ținută paternă, protectoare, tratându-și discipolii ca pe propriii copii. Tudor Vianu era vizitat de magistrul acasă la locuința sa din Giurgiu, unde activitățile literare se desfășurau în cadru rustic.

Dorința lui Macedonski și a discipolilor de la „Literatorul” era de a schimba coordonatele literare ale epocii, de a face poezia să respire un alt aer, să o apropie mai mult de esența ei, să o dezvolte, să introducă noi criterii de înțelegere a lirismului și frumosului și să îmbogățească mijloacele de expresie. În articolele *Logica poeziei*, *Poezia viitorului* sau *În pragul secolului*, poetul formulează principiile sale cu privire la noile orientări literare, simbolismul și parnasianismul, aducând astfel mai aproape cu un pas mișcarea literară pariziană susținută de poeți francezi ca Charles Baudelaire, Jean Moréas, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine sau Leconte de Lisle. Critici literari precum Tudor Vianu sau Adrian Marino consideră articolele menționate ca fiind certificatele de naștere ale acestor curente în poezia românească. Prin aceste lucrări științifice, conducătorul cenaclului a inițiat și a teoretizat simbolismul în literatura română, anticipând lirismul modern prin utilizarea versului liber (poezia *Hinov* în anul 1880) sau apropierea artei versurilor de arta muzicii: „Poezia viitorului nu va fi decât muzică și imagine, aceste două eterne și principale sorginți ale ideii” sau „A fi poet este a simți. Reprezentarea acestei simțiri printr-un mod de exprimare special – acel al imaginii, al culorii și al armoniei – este singura și adevărata poezie” (Macedonski, 1946: 101). În acest fel, Macedonski continuă o direcție a predecesorilor săi francezi și a celorlalți poeți amintiți prin sinesteziiile, simbolurile și corespondențele care stau la temelia simbolismului. Dincolo de senzații, dar tot prin intermediul lor poetul este capabil să atingă ideea. Un exemplu cunoscut este cel al lui Rimbaud în poemul *Vocale*. Acesta atribuie fiecărei vocale o culoare și realizează raporturi de sugestie între acestea. Vocalele devin obiecte care poartă în ele propriile realități. Charles Baudelaire formulează în poemul *Corespondețe* alianța dintre senzații, așa numitele sinestezii.

Revista „Literatorul” a fost prima publicație promotoare a simbolismului în literatura română, iar la societatea literară omonimă au gravitat poeți adepți ai inovației și ai modernizării. Desigur nu se poate afirma că fiecare dintre ei au creat opere de o importanță magistrală, însă cu toții au creat climatul prielnic din care s-a ridicat un singur magistru, poetul cu o vastă și inegalabilă operă – Alexandru Macedonski.

Alexandru Macedonski și *Arta versurilor*. Concepția poetului despre „tehnica exterioară” a versurilor

În această parte a articolului am tratat concepția poetului nostru cu privire la tehnica alcătuirii versurilor, atât sub aspect prozodic, cât și estetic-stilistic. Fiind un poet simbolist, cu influențe parnasiene, dar substrat pașoptist-romantic, Alexandru Macedonski – în calitatea sa de teoretician și critic literar – manifestă de timpuriu preocupări intense în legătură cu valoarea formală a poeziei și legile care o guvernează. Acesta își creează o direcție teoretică proprie. Studiile sale au fost susținute în cadrul unor conferințe ale cenaclului său literar, între anii 1878 și 1882, iar mai apoi publicate în revista „Literatorul”, sub titlul de *Arta versurilor*.

În aceste articole poetul prezintă un interes sporit față de problemele de muzicalitate ale poeziei, armonia imitativă, onomatopeele, rolul pauzei, al sincopei sau al eliziunii. Totodată militează pentru perfecțiunea rimei și relevă funcția pe care o au sunetele în ansamblul procedeele de orchestrație ale creației lirice. Dominat de fanatismul perfecțiunii formale, Macedonski se simte îndatorat să explice discipolilor de la cenaclu modul și regulile de scriere ale versurilor. El formulează opinii stricte în ceea ce privește ritmul, măsura, accentul, rima, fenomenele fonetice care o însoțesc, monosilabe, împietare (ingambament), hiat, ciocnirea vocalelor și consoanelor, dar și vocabularul care trebuie folosit în discursul versificat. În privința tehnicii, poetul rămâne un adept al versului tradițional, încât se poate afirma că atitudinile sale estetice relevă o structură parnasiană. Spre deosebire de Mihai Eminescu, care face uz în opera sa de licențe poetice, rime imperfecte, asonanțe, sau rimă interioară pentru a supune materialul lingvistic exigențelor prozodice precum ritmul, rima sau metrul, Macedonski repudiază asemenea procedee pe care le consideră inabilități gramaticale, „slăbiciuni” stilistice sau chiar compromisuri conjuncturale.

Fiind un admirator al culturii și literaturii franceze, micul tratat al lui Macedonski pare să fie apropiat de *Arta poetică* a lui Boileau. Nu se cunoaște dacă l-a citit pe scriitorul francez, însă cu siguranță a citit

traducerea făcută de Ion Heliade-Rădulescu¹ pe care îl adula și al cărui descendent se declara. Referitor la geniul poetic original și calitatea creațiilor lirice, traducându-i² pe Boileau și Horațiu, Heliade-Rădulescu declară astfel:

Lasă-ncolo, nu mai credeți c-un autor fiecum,
Scârțâind numai la versuri, spre Parnas să-și facă drum,
Dacă din ceruri nu simte darul acela secret
Și la nașterea lui steaua nu l-a format de poet.

Totodată studiile poetului par să aibă ceva din spiritul critic al teoreticianului francez Théodore de Banville, cu al său *Petit traité de poésie française* din 1872, pe care cu siguranță îl consultase datorită călătoriilor sale în Franța și contactului asiduu cu lumea literară pariziană. Macedonski, la fel ca Banville, are ambiția de a da și de a defini „regulile mecanice ale versurilor”. Poetul francez vorbește în tratatul său despre rimă, ritm, îngambament, umplutură, hiat, eliziune, poezia cu formă fixă și regulile de scriere ale versurilor. În aceeași măsură procedează și poetul român în articolele sale.

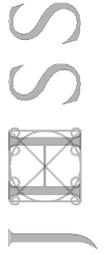
În ceea ce privește rimele în *i*, *a* și *u*, teoreticianul Macedonski afirmă „odată pentru totdeauna: sau devenim severi în versificațiunea rimată, sau, dacă ne supără rima, dacă nu suntem îndestul de dibaci în a o mânui, dacă e vorba ca ea să devină stăpâna noastră, iar nu noi să-i poruncim ei, s-o azvârlim ca pe o netrebnică și să ne apucăm să scriem versuri albe” (Macedonski, 1946: 32). Consideră că este inadmisibil a rima *cânta* cu *vâna* sau *înveli* cu *jertfi*, deoarece vocalele de sprijin (premergătoare vocalei identice) nu sunt identice, iar „limba noastră este destul de bogată” și nu trebuie „să producem asemenea distonuri” (*Ibidem*: 32); admite asemenea combinații rimice doar la „extremă nevoie”. Poetul rămâne fidel până la capăt preceptelor sale prozodice și respinge rimele „șchioape”, pretinde un cult al formei și reclamă întotdeauna plinătatea și armonia cuvintelor. Macedonski pare a fi întru totul în acord cu Boileau care, în *Arta poetică*, afirmă că poetul trebuie să aibă talent înăscut, deoarece nu este de ajuns doar să se supună cu strictețe regulilor de întocmire formală a poeziei. Recunoaște însă, asemenea poetului francez, că valoarea literară poate fi atinsă doar atunci când geniul artistic se unește cu respectarea regulilor:

Oricare-ar fi subiectul, glumeț, – sublim chiar fie, –

¹ *Poema didactică după Boileau și Horațiu*, 1836, accesată pe www.wikisource.org [03.08.2018].

² În fapt, e un fel de „traducere închipuită”, o „prelucrare”, căci eruditul Heliade realizează un soi de sinteză versificată a ideilor celor doi celebri poeți aparținând unor epoci îndepărtate, atât de deosebiți și totuși atât de apropiați în unele privințe.

Să puneți sensul frazei cu rima-n armonie;
Zadarnic se tot ceartă că nu pot sta-mpreună:
E doar o sclavă rima și-i drept să se supună.³



„Când citesc versuri stricate ce zgârie urechea nu le pot asemui decât cu atâtea chixuri ale unui lăutar ce s-ar apuca să execute pe *Norma* sau pe *Muta de Portici*. Se știe, credem, că unui poet nu-i este permis să se scuze că a pus o rimă schiloadă. Rima trebuie să i se supună; dar ea este întocmai ca o cavălă sălbatică, care nu e lesne de dresat până ce nu simte că și-a găsit stăpânul” (*Ibidem*: 33), afirma poetul nostru despre rimă în 1880 la cenaclul *Literatorul*. Acesta simte nevoia unei comunicări totale, cu direcție atât asupra simțului auditiv, cât și vizual, care trebuie să stimuleze în cititor percepția asupra întregii opere. Rimele defecte sunt asociate cu o muzică fals cântată. Atribuie cuvintelor valori muzicale corespunzătoare unor stări emoționale și care trebuie să reflecte în plan vizual, cât și lingvistic imaginea provocată și ideea poetică. Prin aceste observații teoreticianul anticipează într-o mică măsură instrumentalismul despre care considera că este „ultimul cuvânt al geniului omenesc”.

Poetul oferă mereu exemple pentru a arăta discipolilor și emulilor săi întru macedonskianism armonia, bogăția și curățenia rimelor. Combinația cuvintelor-rimă este studiată cu precauție și băgare de seamă de poet, pentru a oglindi cât mai bine în planul formal perfecțiunea pură – dezideratul suprem al poeziei în viziunea simboलिștiilor.

Desigur, el recunoaște că într-o oarecare măsură acestea pot părea excesiv de rigide și atent căutate, dar aduce argumentul că însuși Alfred de Musset a fost un poet valoros chiar dacă nu a realizat rime bune. Pe de altă parte, Victor Hugo, unanim recunoscut de critica franceză a vremii ca *le grand forger de rimes*, a creat adevărate capodopere pentru că și-a ales cuvintele-rimă cu multă seriozitate și severitate. Poezia și rigoarea nu pot exista una fără alta, trebuie să găsească adecvare perfectă între fond și formă, deoarece versul nu trebuie să fie încărcat în exces, ci trebuie să fie simplu și clar. Macedonski admite rime defectuoase precum *cânta/sta* sau *privi/lovi* doar în cazul versurilor scurte (de la 8 la 10 silabe), unde două sunete finale de același fel sunt suficiente, deoarece rima parvine mai repede auzului. În cazul versurilor lungi de la 12 până la 16 silabe exigența macedonskiană pretinde trei sunete finale identice, întrucât armonia versurilor, a cuvintelor și a sunetelor trebuie să primeze. Întâlnim astfel de exemple (*i.e.* două sunete finale identice) în opera macedonskiană, însă ele nu ne copleșesc prin numărul lor, semn că

³ Boileau, *Arta poetică*, în românește de Ionel Marinescu.

poetul nu agreea prea mult aceste rime. În cazul în care versurile nu formează rimă completă (unitățile fonetice nu formează perechi în întreaga poezie), ele se prezintă sub forma unor semirime, ca în poemul *Întâiul vânt de toamnă*:

Ieri a suflat întâiul vânt de toamnă
 Ş-a doborât pălitele foi,
 Ieri a suflat, iar recea lui suflare
 S-a resimțit și-n noi!

În 1881, când publică studiul *Rima. Versul. Împerecherea versurilor*, teoreticianul își schimbă ușor perspectiva și admite ca fiind suficientă, câteodată, chiar și coincidența fonică a unui sunet identic: „rîma însă nu pretinde în general trei litere de același fel, ci se mulțumește cu două, iar în unele cazuri se poate împăca și cu una singură” (*Ibidem*, 41). În volumul *Prima-verba* (1872) există un singur exemplu de acest fel, indiciu că poetul avea încă din tinerețe pentru „versificație, ureche muzicală, iar pentru coprins, inimă” (*Ibidem*, p. 32), ceea ce ne face să credem că în sinea lui respingea rimele imperfecte încă din tinerețe.

În orice caz, trebuie subliniat aici că rimele imperfecte din tinerețe sunt, totuși, rarissime. Vom găsi mai multe decât în realitate doar dacă ne bazăm în exclusivitate pe ediția lui Adrian Marino din anii '60 ai secolului trecut. Trebuie evidențiat faptul că, dând credit nelimitat acestei ediții, putem cădea într-o eroare statistică, căci editorul a fost destul de neatenț când a reprodus manuscrisele poetului. Există în destule poeme numeroase silabe lipsă sau chiar versuri întregi. După ce am restaurat filiația textelor și am ajuns până la manuscrisele poetului, am constatat că imperfecțiunile erau doar aparente în ediția din 1966, deoarece în manuscrise ele erau impecabile.

Nu putem afirma același lucru despre contemporanul său Mihai Eminescu, în ceea ce privește perfecțiunea formală, întrucât opera sa abundă în licențe poetice, rime imperfecte și asonante. Macedonski nu pierde ocazia de a-l persifla pe Eminescu (chiar și postum) pentru „rimele greșite” din *Epigonii*. Publică o listă a lor în articolul *Pensum literar* din 1890.

După analiza acestor exemple ne dăm seama de perfecțiunea muzicală și formală pe care Macedonski o impune versurilor sale. Poetul devine intransigent în această privință după anul 1890 când, constată critica literară, se naște adevărata poezie macedonskiană. Este intolerant la eliziuni precum *e* cu *i*, ex. *t-iubeam* în loc de *te iubeam*, *e* cu *u*, ex. *te-uram* în loc de *te uram*; sau în unele cazuri *u* cu *a*, ex. *Îmi iau lira cea iubită cu-acordări armonioase* și *u* cu *o*, de ex. *Păstorul umbra încoa și încolo cu o oaie*. Ca dovadă pentru aserțiunile menționate, în întreagă

operă a poetului nu am găsit astfel de eliziuni. Singura excepție de acest fel s-a strecurat în poemul *Filosofia morții*, la versul 50 unde vedem scris: „Vântu-o izbește, ploaia o sapă!”

Chiar și așa, ne permitem să-i acordăm versului circumstanțe atenuante, deoarece în articolul *Despre eliziune*, Macedonski face mențiunea următoare: „U de asemenea trebuie evitat de a se elida cu *o* și mai ales cu *o* urmat de *a*” (*Ibidem*, p. 31). Lucrurile capătă deja claritate. În emistihul, „Vântu-o izbește...”, vocala *o* se află în vecinătatea verbului care începe cu vocala închisă *i* succedată de grupul consonantic *zb* format dintr-o fricativă și o explozivă, grup ce reduce considerabil din efectul acustic neplăcut perceput de ureche, datorat elidării lui *u* cu *o*. În aceeași măsură grupul consonantic *st* acționează la diminuarea influenței sonore negative. Fiind unica eliziune de acest fel, ne simțim datori să afirmăm că poetul își urmează propria aserțiune de a scrie, dorind să impună această acuratețe a formei și discipolilor săi.

Versurile extrase datează din poeziile de tinerețe ale poetului nostru, când acesta se afla în etapa de început a experimentelor lirice, a încercărilor de exprimare, nuanțare și decelare a fluxului interior, un stadiu al epigonismului, pe care de altfel îl regăsim și în opera eminesciană a începuturilor; nu putem să nu remarcăm că acestea le-au conferit ambilor scriitori, mai târziu, un mediu propice pentru manifestarea originalității artistice. Dacă Macedonski devine după câțiva ani reticent la astfel de licențe și le va utiliza doar în cazuri excepționale, pentru Eminescu însă, ele devin un atribut *sui generis*.

Idealul clasic stipulat de criticul francez în 1674 este împărțit și de poetul nostru cu privire la fenomenul numit împietare – ingambament, pe care îl respinge aproape în totalitate. Acesta consideră că orice idee trebuie astfel exprimată încât să încapă într-un singur vers. Acceptă ingambamentul rareori, sfătuindu-și discipolii să nu îl ridice la rang de regulă și să nu facă exces în utilizarea lui. În *Poema rondelurilor*, volum scris între anii 1916 și 1920, am găsit un singur ingambament în *Rondelul înălțimilor*:

Dar prea mult nu este *până*
Va urca în Empireu...
Se și crede-n Eliseu,
Și el stă de-o săptămână
În mansarda lui, mereu.

În strofa de mai sus ingambamentul se produce între versul 1 și 2, unde conjuncția *până* este izolată de forma de viitor *va urca*, care este plasată în versul al doilea. Motivarea utilizării acestuia este atragerea rimei feminine: *până/săptămână*. Astfel de fenomene nu sunt frecvente în lirica macedonskiană, semn că poetul respecta rigurozitatea formei

strofice, nu apela la aceste „artificii” prozodice decât în situații limită, ci dorea cu orice preț să atingă perfecțiunea în plan sintactic, acustic și esteticovizual. Mai târziu, poezia modernă va supralicita de multe ori ingambamentul. Fenomenul prozodic este utilizat cu precădere de poezia de după jumătatea secolului al XX-lea și în mod special de cea de început de secol XXI. Poetii moderni și postmoderni interpretează ingambamentul ca pe o reanimare a limbajului liric.

Cu toate că există unele imperfecțiuni în poemele sale, la acea vreme Macedonski era în etapa de început a experimentelor lirice, încerca să își găsească fluxul interior, fiind mai mult sau mai puțin epigon. Mai târziu, încetul cu încetul licențele prozodice sunt eliminate din versurile sale, fiind utilizate cu precauție doar în situații excepționale. Putem afirma că poetul este precum emirul din *Noaptea de decembrie*, alege calea cea dreaptă, dar și cea mai dificilă. Nu a dorit să preia nimic de la înaintașii săi în ceea ce privește regulile prozodice. Treptat, Alexandru Macedonski a depășit constrângerile tiparului prozodic, făurindu-și propriul stil de scriere până la perfecțiunea dorită. Simplitatea, curățenia rimelor, frumusețea acustică, armonia nesilită, perfecțiunea formală, echilibrul exprimării, încadrarea naturală în tipare strofice standard (rondel) îl transformă pe poetul nostru într-unul care a trăit tot ce a scris, sentiment din care „scapără Lumina, Binele și Adevărul”.

După ce am parcurs în întregime micul tratat tehnic *Arta versurilor*, fapt coroborat cu studierea atentă a operei poetice a lui Macedonski, am ajuns la concluzia că poetul nostru este intransigent cu orice abatere de ordin prozodic (rimă, ritm, măsură, fenomene fonetice sau prozodice), vituperează până și cele mai mici greșeli de natură fonică – asonanțele –, își impune exigențe foarte stricte în această privință și instituie un cult al perfecțiunii formale în poezie oglindit prin unitatea dintre fond și formă.

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Subtilitatea formelor discursive în eseu *Grădina de piatră* de Nikos Kazantzakis

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The Subtlety of Discursive Forms in Nikos Kazantzakis' *Grădina de piatră*

Abstract:

This article presents the proteicity of some forms of discourse which combines aesthetics and representations, referring to mentalities and even ideology, in a genuine kind of metatext. Being a pretext for his atypical literature with philosophical insertions, Nikos Kazantzakis' voyages in China and Japan create the appropriate atmosphere for a temperate fiction and a hyperbolic reality. From this perspective a realistic allegory about the *eternal China* and the fragile Japan, two sources of chaos and wisdom in the same time, arises. Prefiguring some patterns of a *sui generis* postmodernism, this writing includes several topical ideas like the universality of a unique religion, the intercultural changes and even the idea of a mankind which recovers the signs of the humanity.

Keywords: voyage accounting, the category of sublime, Oriental mystique, spiritual pilgrimage, ultimate reality

Eseul care îmbracă forma unui roman de idei, *Grădina de piatră*, compus la Egina de către scriitorul grec Nikos Kazantzakis și apărut inițial în 1936, pare desuet și totuși purtător al unui mesaj de vădită actualitate. Cartea constituie și un manifest care, deși nu scapă de leștul existențialismului, tentează depășirea acestuia, mergând mai departe înspre o viziune universalistă, antiistorică și totalizatoare. De la *Ascetica* sa riguroasă, publicată cu mai bine de un deceniu mai devreme, cugetătorul elen încearcă o esențializare a propriei perspective, căutând să se depărteze de paradigma occidentală plămădită încă din vechime pe teritoriul Greciei, aflată bineînțeles la antipozii Orientului Îndepărtat. De aceea, scrierea respectivă reprezintă și o amplă relatare de călătorie, implicând descoperirea Chinei și Japoniei, cu un ochi aproape virgin și printr-o receptare nedistorsionată de mentalitatea vestică, în sensul larg al cuvântului. Volumul devine astfel și o modalitate de autocritică, de cântărire plină de îndoieli a propriei identități pornind la modul odiseic în căutarea alterității. Nu în ultimul rând, proza aceasta poate fi echivalată, în mod paradoxal, cu un macropoem închinat lumii fascinante sino-

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nipone. Pretextul descrierii extinse, căpătând dimensiuni de alegorie ori chiar de parabolă, rămâne în definitiv un soi de amenajare teritorială, ori mai degrabă o cultivare lăuntrică, precunoscuta grădină a lui Voltaire metamorfozându-se pe neașteptate în tulburătoarea ordine asimetrică din jardinologia asiatică, mai ales la modul figurat:

Această grădină este un deșert de nisip, și pe acest nisip vreo cinsprezece pietre mari și mici, împrăștiate ca din întâmplare. Poetul chinez care acum trei secole o aranjase avea o intenție explicită: să sugereze imaginea unui tigru fugind. (Kazantzakis, 2018: 252)

După cum se știe, tigroaica, la Kazantzakis, acoperă simbolistica voiajului inițiativ, și în acest caz, subînțelesurile unei mistici orientale care nu este niciodată pe deplin cunoscută. Tot în chip de *tigri flămânzi* apar și cele cinci simțuri ale omului cu ajutorul cărora va cunoaște, atât cât este omeneste cu putință, un vast teritoriu în care contrariile se conciliază în cele din urmă. Cât despre actualitatea scrierilor kazantzakiene, cunoscutul său exeget Peter Bien notează: „He predicted that it would last 200 years. Thus, perhaps he will still be needed and read in the twenty-second century as well as the twenty-first”¹ (Bien, 2010:6). Mai întâi, Japonia, *cu pasiuni teribile supuse unei forme disciplinate și zâmbitoare*, devine un fel de mentor al prefacerii interioare a gânditorului care provine tocmai din Elada. Patima de îndrăgostit pentru idealul nipon se complică apoi odată cu adorația trecătoare pentru o femeie, Joshiro-san, ce se dovedește în cele din urmă spioană și curtezană, japoneza având un adevărat cult pentru moartea fecundă. Dincolo de numeroasele aparențe, aidoma tentaculelor de caracatiță, scriitorul notează imperturbabil: „Cel ce posedă o privire sublimă este singurul care, într-o fulgerare de-o clipă, vede în același timp masca atât de frumoasă și chipul înspăimântător de dincolo de mască” (Kazantzakis, 2018: 18). Este interesant de observat că *Grădina de piatră* este și singura dintre puținele proze kazantzakiene în care figurează ca protagonist, discursul filosofic al autorului suprapunându-se așadar peste vocea emoționa(n)tă a naratorului. Pe alocuri, ca în psalmodierile corului antic, apar unele interludii în care eseistul își desfășoară adâncile reflecții despre *Umanitate, Pământ, Datorie, Viziune, Acțiune*, regăsite și în exercițiile „ascetice” așternute pe hârtie atunci când se afla în Germania, înainte de anii 30. Între paginile cărții se regăsesc, de altfel, *pensée*-urile unui adevărat vizionar, ca în următoarele rânduri: „Viziunea m-a copleșit; a durat doar o secundă; dar am avut

¹ „El prezicea că vor dura 200 de ani. De aceea, poate că [aceste scrieri] vor fi căutate și citite în secolul al XXI-lea în aceeași măsură ca și în secolul al XX-lea” [t. n.]

timp să văd catedralele, și bursele, și bordelurile albilor în flăcări” (Kazantzakis, 2018:10). Pe de altă parte, opul acesta în care persistă exotismul, semnifică și un autentic breviar de imagologie. Dacă altădată venețianul medieval Marco Polo se contamina pe îndelete de mentalitatea chinezească, grecul din secolul al XX-lea, N. Kazantzakis rezistă cu greu mirajului oriental și își impune un soi de autodisciplină interioară, așa cum în mitologie, Ulysse încercase să țină piept ispitelor sirenelor... *Să trăiești cu bine, să mori cu bine, strunește-ți inima!* devine astfel un îndemn generalizator pentru *lupta inexorabilă*, după expresia kazantzakiană. Câteodată este atras de spectacularul religiei japoneze, ca îndată după aceea, în această aventură intelectuală, după cum singur o numește, să urmărească cu atenție ceremonialul sofisticat al ceaiului, Cha-no-yu. Când contemplă vreo grădină de pe lângă templele shintoiste, cu toate că nu înțelege mare lucru, și se crede, în mod paradoxal, doar un *barbar occidental*, întâlnește, pe rând, câte o abstracțiune distilată în peisajul alăturat: beatitudinea, inocența, solitudinea, voluptatea, mândria și grandoarea etc. Tot aici, se întâlnește ideea unei *ultimate reality*, al unei metamorfoze superioare prin intermediul căreia, menționează criticul literar D. Dombrowski: “The transubstantiation of matter into spirit is explicitly treated many times in theoretical and symbolic terms in Kazantzakis’ writings”² (Dombrowski, 1998:183)

Convins că *sabia este forma materializată a sufletului japonez*, autorul contemplă apoi statuia lui Buddha, care îl intrigă și îl încântă deopotrivă... Altădată, se trezește brusc la realitate și face o comparație frustă între pagode și fabrici, în chip de temple moderne. Kazantzakis adaugă iarăși la modul vizionar:

Aceste suflete eroice care ard în corpurile galbene au un farmec neliniștitor. Simți că ai evadat din satul gălăgios, Europa, și că dincolo de rasa albă există un alt univers, mai profund și mai periculos, pentru că are mai multă forță și grație. Mai multă demnitate umană. (Kazantzakis, 2018: 57)

Este aproape anecdotic episodul în care compune un haiku despre lumina pe care o oferă dinamul, ca motor metaforic al civilizației occidentale. De fapt, trecutul mitic și viitorul îndepărtat sunt cele două coordonate temporale pe care le are drept repere prozatorul grec. O altă dimensiune spirituală niponă care îi atrage atenția încordată este conceptul de *Fudoshin*, un fel de ataraxie înțeleasă în întregime doar pe tărâmul soarelui-răsare, un soi de *sens tragic al responsabilității*. La capătul celălalt, al înclinației către efemer, către lucrurile pieritoare, se află și preferința scriitorului pentru simbolistică: steaua, crizantema, crapul ca

² „Transubstanțierea materiei în spirit se regăsește în mai multe rânduri în termeni simbolici și teoretici în scrierile lui Kazantzakis” [t.n.]

simbol al rezistenței fiind, de asemenea, elocvente pentru înțelegerea unei mentalități aparte. „Voi, albi, complicați toate lucrurile; creierul vostru este un mușuroi inextricabil. Japonia este mai simplă, adică mai enigmatică pentru creierul vostru de albi” (Kazantzakis, 2018: 67), afirmă personajul Kughe-san, un amic din studenție. Cât despre capacitatea de transfigurare a lucrurilor prin intermediul călătoriei, critica literară a remarcat, în acest caz, că “The modern spirit is revealed through the symbol of travel, which he expresses as an urge, a satisfaction and a means of self-fulfillment”³ (Aldridge, 1972: 303) Atunci când nu este fermecat de misterele minusculei insule japoneze ori a nesfârșitului „continent”, prozatorul analizează cu dezgust această *colonie de maimuțe* și defectele ori chiar viciile asiaticilor: opiul, aventura pe mare și femeile. Scriitorul însuși este sedus de mișcările unei frumoase dansatoare, numită O-Kuni, care par să atingă perfecțiunea... Din când în când, strecoară unele metafore percutante, spre deliciul cititorilor: imaginea viermelui de mătase care se prefacă în fluture; China plămădită din mâlul fluviilor și din excrementele milioanei sale de locuitori; fiecare ființă umană imaginată ca o adevărată cloacă, în sfârșit, *scoarța groasă, elastică și fecundă* a Chinei. Iată cum descrie Kazantzakis prostituatele din inima Shanghai-ului:

Păunii de noapte, cocotele, se trezesc. Se împăunează, își îndreaptă penele una câte una, se rujează... Hamalii tăcuți se înclină, ele urcă în ricșele de catifea. O clipă, ridică piciorul, un fulger întunecat le dezvăluie coapsele prin deschizătura rochiei. Altele parcurg străzile cu pași mari, violenți, ca niște arhangheli galbeni (Kazantzakis, 2018: 96).

După cum se știe, de cealaltă parte, cam toate scrierile sale de tinerețe exacerbează stagnarea ori chiar degradarea occidentală, așa cum subliniază și un istoric literar grec din anii ‘70: “All his works in his first period are dominated with the desperate feeling of the decline of Western Civilization. The forms of life and the ideas which for centuries have shaped the Western World are now rotten and decayed”⁴ (Laourdas, 1968: 158). Un personaj important în economia romanului este Li-Teh, un vechi prieten de la Oxford, un fel de suflet-pereche din cealaltă parte a lumii, dedicat cauzei chineze împotriva japonezilor. Indirect, afirmă despre acest personaj că este cumva posedat de *Chi*, o furie excesivă și neputincioasă. Într-un context mai larg, se face aluzie la răscoala

³ „Spiritul modern este relevat prin simbolul călătoriei, care este exprimat în chip de necesitate, satisfacție și mijloc de auto-împlinire” [t.n.]

⁴ „Toate scrierile lui din prima tinerețe sunt dominate de sentimentul acut al declinului lumii occidentale. Formele de viață, precum și ideile care au dat contur Vestului de secole întregi sunt acum putrede și decăzute” [t.n.]

boxerilor, o mișcare xenofobă și anticreștină violentă, petrecută în China la sfârșitul dinastiei Qing, pe la anul 1900. Multe reverberații ideatice din carte au ca punct culminant insinuarea că această țară enormă și aparent supusă, China, va deveni odată și odată stăpâna incontestabilă a lumii, făcând ca mesajul volumului să devină de o stringentă actualitate, după cum am mai menționat. Cât despre jurnalul propriu-zis al lui Kazantzakis despre Japonia și China, aflăm în subsidiar:

Cei care vor să cunoască în amănunt o cultură oarecum exotică față de cea europeană au toate datele și interpretările la îndemână. Cei mai apropiați de prezent – adică de secolul al XX-lea – și de ceea ce se consumă azi găsesc observații și analize pertinente despre spațiul Asia-Pacific. Nu lipsesc pasajele lirice, cu grădinile și palatele din Nara, Kobe și Kyoto, nici ceremonia ceaiului, nici comentariile despre samurai și Bushido, despre teatrul No și gheise, nici divagațiile savante despre țestoasa națiunilor, care ar fi milenara Chină (Manole, 2018).

O alegorie simplă despre zeul războiului și zeul înțelepciunii, introdusă între paginile scrierii, completează ideea că, dincolo de globalizare, a prezerva ideea de națiune este aproape o datorie. Câteodată pare deplasat că scriitorul face comparații între modul de gândire elen și mentalitatea asiatică, și cu toate acestea se întrevăd între cele două paradigme unele coordonate convergente: o anumită înțelepciune reținută, dar și o certă bucurie a vieții. Scrierea cu ideograme caligrafice rămâne și ea un mister pentru cunoscătorul alfabetului neogrec: „Ca și cum această scriere bizară era o junglă tenebroasă în care se încolăceau și se îmbrățișau amoros, ori se luptau cu furie, șerpilor seculari ai cunoașterii” (Kazantzakis, 2018: 126). Este impresionantă figura bătrânului mandarin care repetă într-o manieră stereotipă că Rusia este efemeră, Japonia este la fel de efemeră, și că numai China cunoaște eternitatea... Categoria sublimului, decantată în multe din scrierile acestui suflet elen rezidă și în relația destul de complicată dintre identitate și alteritate, cele două aflându-se mai degrabă într-o stare de completitudine: “The Self exists only in relation to the Other and this co-existence culminates in a dominance in the relationship insofar as the simple being of the Other deprives the Self of the complete certainty of its own existence. Hence it becomes a necessity for the subject either to reestablish the certainty of the totality of its existence on an equal relation with the Other or on the dominance over the Other⁵ (Petropoulou, 2000: 8)”.

⁵ „Sinele există numai în relație cu Celălalt și această co-existență culminează mai ales cu o dominanță în cadrul relației încât simpla ființare a Celuilalt privează Sinele de completa certitudine a propriei existențe. Așadar devine o necesitate pentru subiect ca să restabilească certitudinea totalității existenței sale printr-o relație echivalentă cu Celălalt sau prin dominarea Celuilalt” [t.n.]

Pe tărâmurii misterioase îndepărtate, personajul Nikos Kazantzakis, de această dată, încearcă și cei dintâi fiori ai dragostei, pentru chinezoaica Siu-lan, o făptură inefabilă, *suverană, distantă, imobilă*, care pare să fie pe jumătate din porțelan, pe jumătate de granit. Dacă iubirea se aseamănă cu un vultur pentru sufletul îndrăgostit, atunci tânărul grec își înecă amarul trecând prin cartierul rău famat Tamanoi, un adevărat bazar al trupurilor feminine. Din când în când, se transformă într-un estet, și contemplă artefactele miniaturale japoneze sau chinezești deopotrivă: „Această micuță Kwanon, zeița compasiunii, o statueta neagră, fusese scoasă din adâncul mării, acum treisprezece veacuri, de niște pescari. Fusese depusă chiar acolo, sub un biet acoperiș de paie” (Kazantzakis, 2018:146)”. Urmărind cu privirea, dar și cu toate simțurile, aceste frumuseți ori grozăvii din îndepărtata Asie, și transmițând subtil cititorilor propriile emoții, autorul devine, așa cum se auto-intitulează, nici mai mult, nici mai puțin decât un *om-orchestră*, un depozitar temporar al semnelor și semnificațiilor culturii și civilizației orientale. Alteori, este scuturat din visare ori din reverie de către amicul Kughe, care îi rostește în mod tainic: „Moartea este doar o invenție occidentală” (Kazantzakis, 2018:151): “The existing correlations of the eschatological aspects of human life manifest within the whole body of Kazantzakis’ writing. They tend to occur through sets of recurring patterns expressed by certain regularities of the chosen words and imagery⁶ (Zechowska & Smolinski, 2018: 281)”.

În acest jurnal compozit, scriitorul asistă uneori la discuții aproape filosofice cu venerabili *sensei* ori la dezvăluiri reținute despre viața intimă a gheișelor, în sensul larg al cuvântului:

Gheișa cea tânără a început să danseze în sunet de *shamisen*; o expresie ardentă și sobră, o nerăbdare febrilă impusă cu grație. În momentul în care pasiunea stă să izbucnească, ea se regăsește și revine la gestul fremătător al pudorii. Mima femeia care își așteaptă iubitul (Kazantzakis, 2018:153).

În această singură tentativă romanescă de dinaintea lui *Alexis Zorbas*, prozatorul își cristalizează viziunea subtilă asupra unui antagonism incomprehensibil între elementele marii unități primordiale. Mai departe, își exprimă crezul artistic și profund omenesc despre esența luptei umanității ca datorie cotidiană, pe de o parte, dar și de-a lungul generațiilor, ba chiar și prin intermediul diferitelor rase: albă, galbenă,

⁶ „Corelațiile existente referitoare la aspecte eshatologice ale vieții umane se manifestă pe tot parcursul operei lui Kazantzakis. Ele tind să apară prin intermediul unei serii întregi de tipare recurente exprimate prin anumite regularități în ceea ce privește imaginarii și cuvintele selectate” [t.n.]

neagră. Astfel, o călătorie în Orașul Interzis devine un alt pretext pentru adâncă meditație și pură melancolie:

Urc magnificele scări de marmură și un miracol imens se ivește sub flacăra privirii mele. Palate roșii, verzi, albastre se dezagregă încet în adierea ușoară; adun de pe jos bucățele de ghips și le frec între degete; simt praful luxurii de altădată acoperindu-mă ca un polen (Kazantzakis, 2018:173).

Când traversează împreună cu Siu-lan sălile de altădată ale Orașului interzis, cum ar fi gineceul imperial, jubilează și se tulbură în același timp... În altă ordine de idei, este copleșit de *acest mister lipsit de rușine numit dragoste*, cu toate că ea nu se va materializa până într-un sfârșit.

Cât despre stilul inconfundabil al lui Nikos Kazantzakis, aspirant la premiul Nobel în anul 1957, el rămâne unul versatil și purificat în același timp, serios și câteodată ludic, extrem de dens și fluent deopotrivă. “Despite its relentless and occasionally histrionic style, Kazantzakis manages to articulate something which will be discussed time and again: the identification of being and thinking, or in eschatological terms, of God and matter”⁷ mai completează Vrasidas Karalis (2018). *Rafinement, barbarie, efort supraomnesc al omului pentru a împlini o lucrare eternă* sunt, de altfel, sintagme care caracterizează sufletul asiatic. Numeroase paralele, între miturile ori simbolurile europene și religia ori ideologia asiatică întăresc în mod paradoxal ideea că, totuși, umanitatea are puncte comune de întâlnire. Dincolo de unele aspecte controversate, cartea oferă o lectură imagologică profitabilă, seducătoare și destul de tranșantă în ordinea deosebirilor dintre rasa albă și rasa galbenă. Femeile nipone sau chinezoaicele se dovedesc niște ființe supranaturale pentru europenii care confundă plăcerea ieftină cu rafinamentul prețios:

Suple, foarte slabe, fără sâni, fără șolduri, drepte și tăioase ca niște săbii. Fuste de mătase albastră, neagră, roșie despicate de-a lungul coapsei și a gambei. Merg repede. La fiecare pas, trupul gol și lucios se descoperă și strălucește ca o armură de oțel. (Kazantzakis, 2018:216).

În definitiv, sufletul închipuit ca o spadă de Toledo, rămâne un leit-motiv al scrierilor kazantzakiene. *Grădina de piatră*, una dintre cele dintâi încercări literare ale scriitorului, constituie un material de genetică literară de bună calitate: de aici se desprind câteva din semnificațiile fundamentale ale operei sale care, aproape involuntar, se apropie de unele implicații postmoderne. “Kazantzakis’ spiritual pilgrimage, this succession of enthusiasms ideologies and allegiances, may seem

⁷ „În pofida stilului său persistent și uneori histrionic, Kazantzakis reușește să articuleze acel ceva despre care se va discuta permanent: identificarea ființei și cugetării sau, în termeni eshatologici, a lui Dumnezeu și a materiei.” [t.n.]

wearing and futile to many contemporary readers, for our age seems to have given up on the idea of the great Quest.”⁸ (Scheper, 1967)

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⁸ „Pelerinajul spiritual al lui Kazantzakis, această succesiune de ideologii pline de entuziasm și alianțe, în sens larg, poate părea fastidios și futil multor cititori contemporani, pentru că epoca noastră pare să fi renunțat la ideea marii Căutări” [t.n.]

Reconciling Religious Orientation with the Demands of Fiction in Andrew M. Greeley's Selected Novels

Mark Anthony G. Moyano*

Abstract:

This article attempts to reconcile the religious orientation of Rev. Andrew M. Greeley with the demands of fiction, *i.e.* the literariness required in a masterpiece. As a sociologist-priest, he has written fictions that are considered or labeled as popular or those that belong to genre fiction. Using Russian formalist literary theories in reading Greeley's selected novels, the researcher was able to elucidate that Greeley's craftmanship is present, though it heavily relies on his background as a priest and sociologist.

Keywords: Greeley, sociology of literature, sociology of religion, fiction, craftmanship

Introduction

Writers show in their writings their beliefs towards many aspects in life. Either deliberately or subconsciously done, only the writer knows for sure. Poets, for instance, reveal how they look at the world at any given time – they never tell directly – as Dylan Thomas' oft repeated adjectival, temporal phrase, “a grief ago” – yet they show. Novelists are no exception for that matter; they are what they write. Also, the knowledge of the writer's life or the educational background may be a factor in seeing the deeper meanings of their works, as much as enhance their appreciation. Father Andrew M. Greeley himself admits that his sociological findings shaped his decision to engage in writing fiction (Pasquariello, 1988: 104).

The sociologist and priest, Father Andrew Greeley, is one of those writers who have embedded in their works veritable wisdom they have gotten from their education and experience (after all, the sins revealed in the confessional box could provide sources for fiction, but could not be exposed, under pain of oath). Contrastingly, being a sociologist seems to be inappropriate to his vocation as a priest. Yet obviously, he has no trouble whatsoever in fusing his academic leaning with his priestly vocation and creative impulse. In fact, he has used these to great advantage in writing novels.

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In his *Passover Trilogy* (1987), for instance, one can see the fusion of the Catholic teachings with the sociology of religion. Yet, one's faith is not shaken as one reads his novels. Astonishingly, Greeley does not stop at being a priest and sociologist. He has ventured in writing fiction to the delight of his parishioners-readers. He has also entered the world of the Arts. Usually called the "Renaissance Priest" (news.uchicago.edu) by his fans, he has written about sixty-six novels, excluding non-fiction books he has written. In his novels, a keen reader would observe that Greeley has never failed to teach in the most subtle way. If not teaching morality, one can read him teaching about his own "idea" of Catholicism. He has done this so subtly that a reader may only realize that the characters have chosen the "right", moral and "less travelled road" in life either by facing the consequences of their decisions and actions or by passing through baptism of fire and blood, so to speak.

Discussion

In the first and second novels of the *Passover Trilogy*, Greeley has shown his religious belief about commitments, no matter how these commitments are limited to the confines of marriage and priestly vows. Both these vows, however, are religious or spiritual in nature. He has specifically used this theme to show the "feast of commitment, of covenant – between God and people, and among the people of God and to one another (Greeley, 1987: ix)".

Through Sean's priestly commitments and Nora's marriage vows, Greeley has taught his readers that the Catholic Church considers the two kinds of vows sacred. Although Sean and Nora have almost broken their promises, they kept them in the end through sheer will (and who knows, by God's inscrutable grace). Readers see the same thing with Hugh when he has decided to leave the Church, although unable to keep his promise, the reader sees the greater purpose. From this point of view, the priest-writer implies that people may be tempted and sin against the Lord, but He is always ready to forgive, if one does not forget his promises.

Though this may sound as a didactic or a moralistic novel, Greeley has maintained his craftsmanship, i.e. he has hidden his purpose in his novels and let them speak for themselves. If only he did not write his "personal afterword", his works may not be easily understood. Besides, he has written those afterwords because he does not want to be misconstrued. He wants readers to consider that he does not focus solely on the carnal scenes in the novels; that these sensual and other sinful scenes in the novels are just means to an end. For instance, the adultery of Father Sean is only used to show that even priests are susceptible to sins; that priests are also human beings; that God forgives sinners; and that God is the God of love.

In addition, if the trilogy basically shows the “feast of commitment, of covenant (Greeley, 1987: ix)”; a “story of a man who spent much of his life in the misguided crucifixion of himself, a man who discovers at last that the Lord of the Passover is not a God of rules but a God of love, a God whose forgiveness cannot be earned since it is already given (Greeley, 1987: ix)” and a “feast of rebirth, of coming back from the dead, of beginning once again (Greeley, 1987: ix)”, one can justifiably say that Jakobson’s Theory on Metaphoric and Metonymic Texts is at work.

With this, one can conclude that the novels are all metaphoric. In *Thy Brother’s Wife* (1982), for instance, instead of deliberately showing what Jesus Christ has done or unfolding a scene from the Holy Bible, Greeley has written a story about a priest and his sister-in-law torn between their love for each other and their vows.

In *Ascent into Hell* (1983), instead of demonstrating ordinary sufferings of a man, the novelist has ventured into a man’s complicated and twisted grasp of suffering, i.e. suffering is good. As taught by his parents, Hugh believes that the easy way is the evil way and that the hard way is God’s will, so he chose not to love and to suppress his sexual desires. Eventually, this desire exploded which resulted to his descent into hell, and paradoxically, slowly, gradually leads him to the painful, glorious ascent into heavenly pursuit of God.

This theme of crucifixion also resonates in some of Greeley’s novels like *Virgin and Martyr* (1985), where Cathy Collins also suffers, and *Angels of September* (1985), where Ann Riley is “crucified” by the Church. And, in *Lord of the Dance*, which unravels several metaphoric resurrections, from the supposedly dead uncle to the return of Noelle as the savior of the Farrell family.

These obvious Catholic teachings cannot be easily seen by a common reader, i.e. if one would not read the “personal afterword”. The critical skills of Greeley, indeed, show that he is not only a learned sociologist and a faithful priest, but also a sensitive, lucid, committed artist in his own right.

The depiction of seven deadly sins, however, is another story. Although these sins were written a long time ago in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1856), many writers and theologians for ages have revisited their debilitating effects – Sophocles in *Oedipus Rex* (429 BC), Dante in *Divine Comedy* (1320), Shakespeare in *Hamlet* (1609), Racine in *Phaedra* (1677), O’Neill in *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), Kierkegaard in *Fear and the Trembling* (1843), to name some. In the trilogy, almost every sin can be seen. For instance, the most stressed sins in *Thy Brother’s Wife* (1982) are wrath, envy and lust. But the lust in the first novel is nothing compared to the sin of lust in the second novel,



Ascent into Hell (1983). In the *Lord of the Dance* (1984), it is pride that is most pervasive. However, as one reads the story these sins are not obviously seen. In fact, at first reading no one might even see these seven deadly sins – Greeley has indeed defamiliarized them. As Victor Shklovsky (1917) says:

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar’, to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged (Shklovsky, 1917).

Hence, defamiliarization is at work when talking about these seven sins. The sins have been made unfamiliar by merely giving the proper motivation for the characters to feel what they feel and sin. To illustrate, Sean has slowly, gradually realized that something appears amiss or wrong in his family, i.e. some secrets are being kept from him. At first, he thought he already knew the secret, only to find out later that the worst has been kept from him – his mother still lives and he is a son of a priest. His outrage seems to be normal to the average reader, but when Nora tells him that he will regret his confrontation with his father, the reader sees the level of wrath eating his heart out. Acceptable it may seem, yet his rage assumes evil proportion when his reasoning has been clouded.

Another example of the seemingly innocent sin is Hugh’s concupiscence. The average reader might be able to discern his lower appetite, because he seems to be the kind of man unsuited for a priestly vocation. With the twisted idea that God’s will is the difficult choice, he has chosen to be a priest; hence, the reader sees him as someone not fit for the holy vocation and understand him, as he is. Yet still, Hugh has sinned.

Found in *Lord of the Dance* (1984) is the most imperceptible sin – overweening family pride – somewhat common to all people, the rich, the famous, as well as the powerless; therefore, the average reader might not even see that there existed this sin in the last novel. This inordinate love of one’s family reputation is seemingly ordinary, but at times, exercised to great excess, verges sinful.

The defamiliarization of the seven sins only shows that Greeley has learned the art of hiding the seemingly obvious thing. He can “show and not tell” what he wants to convey to his readers.

Another defamiliarized sacred element lies on working out the theme of resurrection. Admittedly, the resurrection of Jesus is the central tenet around which the Christian faith seeks solace and comfort in “the

vale of tears”. It has, however, turned into a different kind of theory, i.e. resurrection “*without the cross*”, as Greeley described.

There are in Catholic circles, it seems for me, four “fallacies” which seem to focus on the Easter phenomenon:

1. Emphasis on the resurrection which ignores the cross.
2. Emphasis on the individual resurrection which ignores the communal nature of New Life.
3. Emphasis on the facts of the resurrection narratives without much attention paid to the meaning of the Easter event.
4. Emphasis to a point almost of compulsiveness on future personal resurrection while isolating this from the rest of the message of the kingdom (Greeley, 1989: 137-138).

The resurrection, as Greeley implied, is a complex process. What he means in first “fallacy” above is that Catholics have started believing that resurrection is possible without the “cross”, without suffering. Unlike what the reader sees in *Lord of the Dance*, Danny and Noelle have suffered so much that they died, so to speak. As Noelle realizes in the end, “you must lose your life to find it (Greeley, 1984: 375)”, a re-echoing of the Biblical construct that “whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10: 39). After the sufferings, they have emerged triumphant. Greeley has shown this eschatological argument in his novel by pointing out that the kind of Catholicism some have started embracing is wrong. Yet, he does not directly tell his readers this idea – instead, he lays bare to them the painful plights of Danny and Noelle.

Also, the second “fallacy” above decries the idea of resurrection becoming more personal, instead of being societal or racial. As Greeley avers, there is “evidence that Jesus came to preach a whole new creation in which life was promised not merely to individuals but to the whole race” (Greeley, 1989: 141).

Although Greeley has not demonstrated the third and fourth fallacies in the novel, he has definitely revealed these antinomies, to exemplify while reading *Lord of the Dance* with the idea that it represents Easter, one can clearly see its message, i.e. the sense of renewal and rebirth.

Essentially, it is the most successfully defamiliarized element in the trilogy – not only that many resurrections have happened, but also these resurrections are not to be taken as literal revival. In the third novel, Greeley’s craftsmanship has noticeably developed. For instance, a supposedly dead uncle has returned, a tortured and sodomized Noelle has regained her “pure, uncracked, unfissured confidence”, to use Iris Murdoch’s classical phrasing, and the family whose trust in one another has lost has been regained. Reading the third novel and looking at these

defamiliarized resurrections will indeed make virtual readers realize that Greeley's artistry has indeed grown.

The most mysterious sacred element is the physical act of love, or sex. Mysterious in the sense that on the one hand some might consider it sacred, the gift of God to mankind; while, on the other, some would regard it profane. However, Greeley looks at sex as the "Great Sacrament"; in fact, he explicitly says that the sexual relationship with one's spouse defines the couple's image of God (Greeley, as cited by Marsden, 1989: 176), however, an ideology, that has made him controversial among his peers. Moreover, the *Passover trilogy* itself has several sexual symbols. To exemplify, most of the settings in the novels happen near lakes, or bodies of water: the vacation house of the Cronin Family, the drowning of Nora's child, the eventual suicide of Paul Cronin, and the lake where Hugh and Maria had a summer swim. This suicidal resource is deliberately done for the symbolisms of the divine feminine—water is the symbol for woman, while fire the emblem for man. Although shocking and blasphemous to some, the Hebrew-Christian element reworked in the residual pagan rite now interlaced with Freudian overtones

...the first manifestation of this new attitude in the celebration of the Christian Passover was the addition in the fourth century of the rite of fire and water. While there was justification in the Exodus story for such a change (the pillar of fire hovered over the waters of the sea), in fact the rite was a Roman spring fertility rite: the fire represented the male organ, as it does in most nature religions and in the depths of the human unconscious; and the water, the female organ. The union of the two, in a symbolism patent to anyone familiar with the ancient religious symbols of humankind, represents sexual intercourse. Moreover, the words spoken as the candle was plunged into the water left little doubt about the meaning intended: "May this candle fructify these waters (Greeley, 1987: viii).

This statement also reinforces in the conversation of Father Ace McNamara and Danny Farrell in *Lord of the Dance*:

Catholicism is pagan symbols with a new overlay of meaning – like the blessing of the Easter water with the lighted candle: obviously a pagan intercourse ceremony converted to mean that on Easter Jesus consummated his marriage with his bride, the Church, and that we who are baptized are the fruits of this fertile union (Greeley, 1984: 311).

Most probably, readers may confuse this Christian Easter with the Egyptian goddess Ishtar – since Easter is the new veil of the feast of fertility, the old veil is Ishtar, the goddess of fertility. The term *Easter* may have come from her, Ishtar. Given the fact that the divine feminine has gravitas, this might be accurate. Greeley has said time and again that

“Catholicism is pagan symbols with a new overlay of meaning”, but he does not name the gods and goddesses of the old religions.

However, Greeley himself explains the origin of the Christian Passover:

That’s Anglo-Saxon. Easter comes from the same root word “east”, which stands for dawn, and for the East. Easter was a festival in the springtime honouring the dawn goddess whose name was Eastern, a kind of an Anglo-Saxon equivalent of the pagan Aurora.

Eastern had three symbols that always appeared with her in her ceremonies: they were bunnies and eggs and lilies. So, if you wonder where the Easter lily, and the Easter egg and the Easter bunny come from, they are an Anglo-Saxon overlay. But they are quite appropriate, because they stand for life, and Easter is a festival of life, of life renewed (Pasquariello, 1988: 7).

In light of these statements, sex is undeniably considered as sacred. Despite Greeley’s graphic description of lovemaking, especially with those characters that have illicit affairs, he holds that the physical act of love is sacred in its own right.

Creatively, sex in the novel is laid bare. Frustratingly enough, the scenes of physical union do not have any defamiliarization whatsoever; these scenes are all depicted in their rawness, full sensuousness, probably, to humanize the characters and to point out their natural appetites to live life in all its full glory. Nonetheless, the laid bare technique is most likely used by Greeley for him to show his admiration of the male and female energy.

Conclusion

In light of the discussion, Greeley has indeed reconciled his religious orientation with the demands of fiction through the use of the following: using Jakobson’s metaphoric-metonymic theory; applying Shklovsky’s defamiliarization of meanings behind the known icons in Catholicism – feminine divine, the cross and the Catholic Church; and, the lay-bare technique for the readers to see the basic and original intentions of the narrator – human sexuality, illicit affairs, corrupt clergy, dirty politics, family secrets, among others.

Through his fusion of his religious orientation and academic background within the novels, he was able to hint at deeper meanings in his trilogy, like the four “fallacies” in viewing the Easter rites; the residual pagan rites/symbols; and, the sacredness of marriage and physical union of man and woman.

As a fictionist, Greeley felt obliged to tell stories based on his sociological researches and ideologies. In doing so, he undoubtedly did not undermine his craftsmanship as a novelist. Although, Greeley’s craftsmanship relies heavily on his knowledge of the sociology of

religion and Catholicism, rather than the different literary techniques, hence, the virtual readers will have this sense or feeling of “let-down” in his works.

Interestingly, however, as Shafer mentioned, “Greeley is at the leading edge of postmodernity” (Shafer, 1989: xxv) which makes him more relevant in this age of postmodern literature. With the fusion of his craft, mythology, sociology, and religion, hopefully, his works will not remain on the shelves of the romances and popular literature and shall make their way to the shelves of great American writers.

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Quelques considérations sur l’imaginaire dans les sciences

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Some Considerations on the Imaginary in Science

Abstract:

Our study analyzes the relationship between the imaginary / imagination and scientific rationalism while mirroring seemingly contrasting aspects. Just as the imaginary has its own reasoning (structures, archetypes, the capacity to produce meaning – analyzed by Gilbert Durand, Gaston Bachelard and Northrop Frye), rationalism is subject to its own logic (cause- effect, arguments, deduction/ induction, etc.) which may surface in the realm of the imaginary. We further analyze the cognitive function of the imaginary, which is at the core of analogy-based knowledge and manifests itself through the metaphorical side of language. Thus a subtle, yet rigorous game emerges between clarity (characteristic to science) and ambiguity (a feature of the imaginary), between visible and invisible, further leading towards an understanding of reality beyond abstract rationalism which, in its turn, may lead to fiction while exploring possible worlds.

Keywords: imaginary, real, reason, cognitive, fiction, possible worlds/ mundus imaginalis

La notion d’*imaginaire* est encore « en construction » étant donné son caractère en continuelle expansion. La grande variété de manifestation, difficile à qualifier, de l’imaginaire, ses liaisons / connexions avec l’image et l’imagination, tout comme les conditionnements entre ces trois notions, tout ceci repose sur une activité de sélection et de mise en ordre des formes que l’imaginaire est censé valider aujourd’hui en tant que source possible de connaissance humaine.

La recherche des images récurrentes, leur variété, les corrélations qui s’établissent entre celles-ci et la créativité humaine, la création du stock d’images en relation avec les modalités créatives, voilà le sujet de notre premier chapitre.

Au niveau anthropologique, l’imaginaire se définit comme *une* forme de représentation de l’activité de la conscience par laquelle les perceptions et les représentations une fois constituées, convergent vers

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une compréhension intégratrice ou parfois, construisent leur propre sens, à savoir la *totalité* basée sur l'expérience de l'imagination individuelle ou collective, sur les formes créées par le processus intime de la représentation (cf. Durand, 1994). L'imaginaire est donc semblable à un espace privé ou collectif de la liberté, espace dans lequel les formes s'articulent sans aucune prédisposition ordonnée. Etant dans un perpétuel mouvement, les éléments, les représentations courantes et les associations ainsi établies forment une sorte de « monde »; dans ce contexte, l'imaginaire renvoie à des rêves, rêveries, fantasmes, mythes utopiques ou idéologies, aux représentations collectives ou personnelles qui affectent la vie de toute une communauté (cf. Durand, 1994).

Parce que l'imaginaire a été longtemps identifié avec l'irréel, Henry Corbin, sans limiter le champs de la connaissance dite vraie et signifiante aux seules opérations de l'entendement rationnel, énonce que l'imagination fait connaître un « objet » qui lui est propre, tout en admettant de la sorte la valeur noétique plénière de l'imagination. Entre le monde empirique et le monde de l'entendement abstrait se place un monde intermédiaire, le monde de l'image, appelé par Corbin « *mundus imaginalis* » ; celui-ci serait le lieu des visions théophaniques, la « scène où arrivent dans leur vraie réalité les événements visionnaires et les histoires symboliques » (Corbin, 1970 : 12). Mais il s'identifie également à la compréhension symbolique, à la transmutation de tout le visible en symboles, c'est même l'intuition d'une essence ou d'une personne dans une image qui n'est ni l'universel logique, ni l'espèce sensible.

Cette notion est une création conceptuelle due au philosophe français Henry Corbin, dont les travaux sont essentiels pour l'herméneutique comparée. Face à la défiance que la philosophie occidentale moderne a manifestée par rapport à l'imagination, le néologisme « imaginal » porte, au contraire, une exaltation philosophique de l'image. Cette exaltation ouvre à la connaissance symbolique de la réalité des archétypes.

Pour la psychologie islamique, l'imagination créatrice constitue la faculté centrale de l'âme. Pour cette tradition philosophique,

l'imagination possède sa fonction noétique et cognitive propre, c'est-à-dire qu'elle nous donne accès à une région et réalité de l'être qui sans elle nous reste fermée et interdite (Corbin, 1970 : 18).

Cette puissance de l'âme ouvre l'être et le connaître à un monde suprasensible : ni le monde connu par les sens, ni celui connu par l'intellect, mais un troisième monde, un intermonde entre le sensible et l'intelligible.

L'imagination créatrice est donc irréductible à l'« imaginaire »,

terme qui connote fabulation, irréalité, fiction, quand ce n'est pas délire.

Il nous fallait absolument trouver un terme qui différenciât radicalement de l'imaginaire l'intermonde de l'imagination. [...] La langue latine est venue à notre secours, et l'expression *mundus imaginalis* est l'équivalent littéral de l'arabe 'alam al-mithal, al-'alam al-mithali, en français le « monde imaginal » (Corbin, 1970 : 12).

Par là est désigné non un monde d'images comme réalité dégradée, affaiblie, s'originant dans les données sensibles, ou bien encore réalité purement fabulée, mais une authentique source de connaissance.

Bref, l'imaginal assure le passage réversible entre le sensible et l'intelligible. Il les réunit et les comprend dans une unité « *créationnelle* ». Sans ces formes imaginales, ni les formes intelligibles ni même les formes sensibles ne seraient connaissables. Ce sont, pour reprendre une expression de Henry Corbin, des « images métaphysiques » ; elles fondent la métaphysique par le biais des épiphanies, angélophanies ou théophanies.

Afin d'affiner sa thèse, Henry Corbin tranche entre l'allégorie et le symbole, ceci toujours pour éviter toute confusion. Si l'allégorie est une opération rationnelle qui n'implique de passage ni à un nouveau plan de l'être, ni à une nouvelle profondeur de conscience, étant donc une *figuration*, le symbole, par contre, annonce un autre plan de conscience que l'évidence rationnelle : il est le « chiffre » d'un mystère, le seul moyen de dire ce qui ne peut être appréhendé autrement. Par là, le symbole n'est jamais « expliqué » une fois pour toutes, mais il est toujours à déchiffrer de nouveau, de même qu'une partition musicale qui appelle une exécution toujours nouvelle.

Ainsi, la notion de l'imagination devient une sorte d'intermédiaire magique entre la pensée et l'être, l'avatar de la pensée dans l'image et la position de l'image dans l'être. La création serait donc analogue de l'épiphanie, à savoir passage de l'état d'occultation, de puissance, à l'état lumineux, manifesté et révélé.

L'imagination active est le miroir par excellence, le lieu épiphanique des images du monde archétype ; c'est pourquoi la théorie du « *mundus imaginalis* » est solidaire d'une théorie de la connaissance imaginative et de la fonction imaginative. Fonction vraiment centrale, médiatrice, en raison de la position médiane, médiatrice, du « *mundus imaginalis* ». (Corbin, 1964 : 10-11)

Il s'agit donc d'une fonction qui permet à tous les univers de symboliser les uns avec les autres et qui nous conduit à nous représenter, expérimentalement, que les mêmes réalités substantielles assument de formes correspondant à chaque univers. C'est en fait la fonction cognitive de l'imagination qui permet de fonder une *connaissance analogique* rigoureuse, échappant au dilemme du rationalisme courant,

lequel ne laisse le choix qu'entre les deux termes d'un dualisme banal : ou la matière ou l'esprit, dilemme auquel la socialisation des consciences finit par substituer un autre : *histoire* ou *mythe*.

Selon d'autres spécialistes de l'imaginaire, l'imagination désigne

une production mentale de représentations sensibles, distincte de la perception sensorielle de réalités concrètes et de la conceptualisation d'idées abstraites (Wunenburger, 1991 : 3).

Son champ de compréhension est moins large que celui des images en général, qui désignent toute représentation donnée dans une intuition sensible, par exemple les perceptions, mais déborde par contre celui de l'imaginaire, « qui se rapporte à la catégorie particulière des fictions, donc du faux et de la feinte » (Wunenburger, 1991 : 3).

En tant qu'élément de l'imaginaire, l'*image* suggère une interprétation toujours autre, en fonction des possibilités de la faculté imaginative et imaginante. L'image est une sorte d'intermédiaire entre l'état inavouable de la conscience et l'aveu assumé, une conscientisation clarifiée et clarifiante. Dans ces deux cas, l'image a le statut ambivalent du symbole, possédant à la fois un degré d'ouverture très variable, ce qui – par conséquent – donne lieu à des interprétations très variées (cf. Eco, 1965). Généralement parlant, on définit l'image comme étant quelque chose de perceptible à l'œil ; mais dans un sens plus large, l'image décrit des états / situations complexes où le signe visuel se combine avec le signe sonore ou gestuel.

La philosophie et les sciences humaines ont depuis un siècle permis d'accumuler un grand nombre de données et d'hypothèses nouvelles sur les composantes et les fonctions de l'activité imaginante, sans pour autant enlever les ambiguïtés. Ainsi, la phénoménologie (E. Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty) a mis en évidence l'intentionnalité propre à la conscience de l'image ; l'herméneutique (M. Heidegger, Gadamer, Paul Ricœur) a confirmé l'existence d'un sens symbolique latent des images, lors de leur production comme de leur perception ; l'étude comparative des corpus religieux et des mythologies a servi de support à la reconnaissance des structures de l'imaginaire dont les éléments attestent l'existence d'invariances ou de correspondances (Mircea Eliade, C. Lévi-Strauss, Gilbert Durand, Henry Corbin) ; des historiens et des sociologues ont valorisé la part instituante de l'imagination dans la production et le développement de l'histoire humaine (Edgar Morin, Cornelius Castoriadis); les travaux de psychologie théorique et clinique ont décrit les processus de formation et d'évolution des images chez un sujet (Jean Piaget), la participation de l'inconscient (Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan). Le développement des sciences du langage a permis d'approfondir la connaissance des processus de génération des images littéraires

(métaphores) ou de création des œuvres (Gaston Bachelard, Jean Pierre Richard, Charles Mauron, Roland Barthes, Jean Starobinsky, Georges Poulet) ; quant à l'histoire de l'art, elle a suscité de nouveaux modèles d'éclairage des œuvres en prenant en compte aussi les facteurs individuels que les contraintes formelles ou culturelles de création (Elie Faure, Henry Focillon, Pierre Francastel, René Huyghe, Erwin Panofsky, etc.).

La nature métaphorique du langage humain produit un jeu subtil entre l'ambiguïté et la clarté, entre le visible et ce qui est invisible. L'image a un fondement sensoriel qui tient de l'expérience psychologique – cognitive – de l'homme et lorsque l'image se transforme en symbole¹, il s'agit de l'expérience et du code culturel de toute une communauté. Le statut de l'image dans les beaux-arts et la littérature s'est détaché de l'image de l'art hiératique tout en étant assumé par l'imaginaire personnel de l'artiste / écrivain des temps modernes. Par la suite, le caractère cognitif de l'image est dû au code par lequel une certaine expérience humaine – artistique, religieuse, voire

¹ Traditionnellement, le terme de symbole recouvre trois ensembles de significations nettement distincts.

Le sens courant attribué à la notion de symbole un sens proche de celui *d'analogie emblématique* (la colombe est le symbole de la paix). On peut dire que ce sens se confond avec celui d'une *concrétisation* (objet, animal, figure...), d'une réalité abstraite (vertu, état, pouvoir, croyance...). Le sens étymologique du mot grec définit un *objet partagé en deux*, la possession de chacune des deux parties par deux individus différents leur permettant de se rejoindre et de se reconnaître. La troisième signification est celle du symbole *logico-mathématique*, par lequel on entend tout signe graphique, ou bien indiquant une grandeur donnée, ou bien prescrivant une opération précise sur ces grandeurs.

Ces trois définitions initiales appellent une remarque générale sur la très grande *dispersion sémique du terme*, lequel est caractérisé, dans un cas (le premier), par son pouvoir de concrétisation, sa « figurabilité » (en termes freudiens), et, dans un autre (le troisième), par son abstraction totale (cf. Eco, 2013).

Le symbole a au moins trois fonctions bien marquées, avec naturellement des glissements de sens et des cumuls possibles. *Le symbole montre, réunit et enjoint*. Le symbole, d'abord, *montre* ; il rend sensible ce qui ne l'est pas : valeurs abstraites, pouvoirs, vices, vertus, communautés. Il ne s'agit pas de la simple *analogie*, régie par la conjonction « comme ». Il a une valeur pour le groupe, pour la communauté, pour la société, qu'il a pouvoir de rassemblement, de consensus, en d'autres termes que le symbole est *social*. Le symbole logico-mathématique n'échappe pas à cette règle. Le graphisme symbolique tire sa force du fait que l'accord se fait, par exemple, pour estimer que le symbole + est l'inverse du symbole –, et indique des opérations précises et opposées. Hors cette convention universellement acceptée, il ne peut y avoir de communication mathématique. Le symbole, en deuxième lieu, *réunit*. Outre sa fonction consensuelle, il signale, en effet, l'appartenance. Le symbole, enfin, *enjoint et prescrit*. Cette fonction a déjà été mise clairement en évidence dans des emblèmes symboliques de nature politique. La fonction d'injonction peut être plus ou moins explicite : le sceptre et la couronne ne se contentent pas de signaler le pouvoir ; ils invitent à le respecter (cf. Todorov, 1977).

médiatique – est enchiffrée et gardée selon les lois de la tradition culturelle, afin d’être orientée et transmise au niveau symbolique.

Déjà au niveau de la philosophie dans les dialogues socratiques, l’imaginaire est présent sous sa forme mythique grâce au besoin existentiel de l’homme d’expliquer le sens de ses actes, ses idéaux et les idées en général. De la sorte, l’étude de l’imaginaire est orientée vers l’identification et la déconspiration des mythes – considérés dans leur variante utopique, religieuse, voire idéologique – comme des formes de la vérité, ensuite considérés comme étant désuets. De ce point de vue, l’étude de l’imaginaire met en évidence l’importance de l’affectivité humaine en alternance avec l’activité de raisonnement, tout comme l’impact des émotions sur la raison.

Parmi les représentations mentales, la psychanalyse distingue un certain nombre d’images qui ne sont pas des réminiscences neutres, mais des figures fortement investies d’affectivité. A ce niveau, l’imagination n’est pas une simple opération intellectuelle, mais c’est plutôt une *aventure du désir*. Dans l’optique de la psychanalyse, le symbole, comme le symptôme est une formation de compromis ; c’est l’expression que la libido se donne en désespoir de cause, faute de pouvoir atteindre son objet extérieur et d’être acceptée par le moi conscient. (cf. Roudinesco, 1997 : 1060-1062). Dans *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, Emile Benveniste a montré que les mécanismes invoqués par Freud – la condensation, le déplacement, la dénégation, etc. – ressemblent étrangement aux procédés stylistiques du discours et qu’il y a des analogies entre psychanalyse et stylistique. Il affirme que l’inconscient use d’une véritable « rhétorique » qui, tout comme le style, a ses propres « figures » ; on y trouve tous les procédés de substitution engendrés par le tabou : l’euphémisme, l’allusion, l’antiphrase, la prétérition, la litote (cf. Benveniste, 1980 : 86-87). La nature du contenu fera apparaître toutes les variétés de la métaphore, car c’est d’une conversion métaphorique que les symboles de l’inconscient tirent leur sens (cf. Roudinesco, 1997 : 1060-1062). L’imagination, aux différents niveaux de conscience qu’elle occupe, devra donc être analysée comme un discours et comme un comportement tout ensemble. Avec Jung, et sa théorie des archétypes, les symboles redeviennent des universaux, et l’imagination au niveau de l’inconscient collectif, redevient une activité de participation à la vérité du monde. Au lieu d’être une modulation individuelle de notre relation au monde, l’imagination se voit assigner le rôle d’une *force cosmique*. Elle n’est pas tenue pour une activité arbitraire, elle est plutôt *un secret du monde* auquel le rêveur et le poète, mais aussi le savant, sont *initiés*.

A travers les siècles, on a assisté à une véritable « bataille » pour accréditer l’imagination et l’imaginaire, tout comme pour accepter l’idée

que l'imagination peut être la source de la créativité dans des domaines très divers, tels les beaux-arts, la musique, la littérature, mais aussi l'architecture ou les sciences exactes et la technologie ; les études de Bergson et Nietzsche ou de J. F. Lyotard de nos jours illustrent cette idée.

L'imagination scientifique n'est pas très loin de l'imagination artistique. Mes livres scientifiques sont presque toujours des livres qui expriment les rêves réels de l'humanité. Les deux tendances sont très bien conciliées en moi.²

affirme Mircea Eliade à son tour afin de souligner le fait que nous vivons dans le monde des « signes » dont la signification n'est pas uniquement intellectuelle, mais beaucoup plus vaste, à savoir existentielle, voire métaphysique. Eliade construit son argumentation sur l'idée avancée par G. Bachelard, à savoir que la vie nocturne de l'esprit a une importance primordiale par rapport à la vie diurne représentée par la connaissance rationnelle.

Dans le sanctuaire de la physique elle-même, longtemps refermé sur l'exclusif mécanisme, les irréconciliables images de l'onde (continue) et du corpuscule (discontinu) sont contraintes d'être associées en une « mécanique ondulatoire ». La précision scientifique ne peut ainsi se passer d'une « réalité voilée » (D'Espagnat) dont les objets de l'imaginaire humaine, les symboles sont le modèle... (Durand, 1994 : 47)

Dans le double mouvement de spécialisation et d'unification qui accompagne le développement de la culture, il existe un invariant fondamental : *le désir de connaissance*, d'une connaissance qui ne peut s'accomplir que dans l'effort d'une représentation. Mais cet effort n'étant pas facile, il n'engage pas que l'esprit du chercheur ; sa sensibilité est sollicitée au point que les succès sont parfois excessivement triomphaux.

Représenter et connaître, c'est en effet depuis toujours, depuis les cosmogonies de l'antiquité jusqu'aux tentatives multidisciplinaires contemporaines, un effort passionné. C'est dessiner, décrire, proposer des mondes : mondes de paroles (pour la littérature), mondes de papier et de toile, d'images et de maquettes (pour la science). Il s'agit de créer, à côté de l'univers réel, des univers artificiels, actuels ou virtuels. La science peut donc être une source d'inspiration pour la poésie ou pour le roman, comme l'écriture romanesque peut offrir la possibilité d'« expériences de pensée » dans de nombreux domaines. Mais le danger existe de voir l'inspiration, si elle n'est pas instruite des mécanismes précis de

² En roumain en original: "Imaginația științifică nu e foarte departe de imaginația artistică. Cărțile mele științifice sunt aproape totdeauna cărți ce exprimă visele reale ale omenirii. Cele două tendințe se împacă foarte bine în mine", in Cristian Bădiliță, Paul Barbăneagră, *Intâlnirea cu sacralul – șapte interviuri cu și despre Mircea Eliade*, Editura Axa, Botoșani, 1996, p. 28.

l'analogie et de la métaphore, devenir source de confusion, couvrir de véritables impostures. L'assimilation de l'imagination à l'irréalité et à la fausseté peut faire méconnaître ou sous-estimer le rôle qu'elle joue pourtant dans de nombreux processus cognitifs. L'imagination peut contribuer à l'intelligibilité du réel, au moins autant que le raisonnement abstrait peut, de son côté, produire des fictions par transformation réglée de formes conceptuelles, par exploration raisonnée de « possibles latéraux ». En formant de images, ou en jouant avec elles, l'imagination contribue, sous certaines conditions à la constitution ou l'extension du savoir : ainsi, elle peut, par sa fonction de schématisation et de figuration assurer la liaison entre les données concrètes de l'expérience et les représentations abstraites, comme elle peut, par sa mobilité et plasticité, participer à la structuration, à la réorganisation, voire l'invention de contenus intellectuels.

Se pose alors la difficile question de savoir quelle place il convient de réserver dans l'histoire des sciences à tant de vues, de croyances fort peu scientifiques, souvent très vagues, qui ont été totalement abandonnées, qu'il s'agisse en astronomie de la cosmologie des présocratiques ou en chimie de l'alchimie. D'autres conceptions fausses, voire vaines et fastidieuses, paraissent devoir être exclues d'une histoire qui ne devrait s'intéresser qu'au progrès des connaissances reconnues valables, seraient-elles encore imparfaites. Et pourtant, des vues vagues, peu scientifiques, ont pu contribuer quelque peu à la genèse de vues justes; et, c'est souvent en s'opposant à de fausses conceptions qu'une connaissance valable s'est constituée.

Le rassemblement en *une* histoire des sciences fait apparaître, dans leur diversité, des traits communs dans la manière de parvenir à une connaissance de la nature ainsi que dans les multiples relations établies entre elles. En ce qui concerne les outils et les méthodes, les sciences ont connu une mathématisation progressive, surtout l'astronomie et la physique; quant aux relations interdisciplinaires, faut-il rappeler que souvent un même savant s'est occupé de sciences diverses, du moins jusqu'à la fin du XVIII^e siècle: Aristote a traité du mouvement des corps, de météorologie, d'astronomie, de zoologie; Pascal s'est intéressé au triangle arithmétique, au vide, aux jeux de hasard; d'Alembert, dans l'*Encyclopédie*, a rédigé des articles sur des sujets fort différents. Bien plus, un nombre de savants se sont occupés d'autres savoirs et de plusieurs techniques. La philosophie est associée à la science par la démarche, par le type de réflexion qu'elle impose, comme chez Aristote et plusieurs savants du Moyen Âge, notamment Albert le Grand, Roger Bacon, Nicolas de Cuse; la religion a aussi joué un rôle dans l'évolution de la pensée scientifique, surtout avant le XVII^e siècle.

Cette polyvalence du savant – que l'on songe à Archimède, à Léonard de Vinci ou à Albert Einstein – s'est atténuée surtout à partir du début du XIX^e siècle, à mesure que les disciplines sont devenues plus complexes et plus techniques, lorsqu'il est devenu un scientifique, et qu'il a été amené à intervenir toujours plus dans le développement des techniques.

Les activités d'invention constituent un domaine fécond de la production imaginative, dans les sciences comme dans les arts.

Inventer est tout autre chose que découvrir ... le talent d'inventeur s'appelle le génie ... le champ qui est propre au génie est celui de l'imagination, car elle est créatrice et elle se trouve moins que les autres facultés sous la contrainte des règles. (Wunenburger, 1991 : 103)

Déjà Bacon, tout en critiquant en tant qu'adversaire les théories magiques de son époque, l'imaginaire et ses idoles propose de mettre l'imagination opératoire, qu'il distingue de l'imagination spéculative, au service du développement d'une méthode expérimentale qui doit montrer tous les secrets de la nature. De nos jours, on considère qu'outre l'impulsion que l'imagination donne le style du chercheur scientifique, elle contrôle aussi les pratiques cognitives. L'extension de nos connaissances (mathématique, physique, biologie) passe souvent par l'intermédiaire d'images analogiques – théorisées déjà par Aristote. Ainsi, pour Paul Valéry

l'analogie n'est précisément que la faculté de varier les images, de les combiner, de faire coexister la partie de l'une avec la partie de l'autre et d'apercevoir, volontairement ou non, la liaison de leurs structures (Valéry, 1964 : 16).

On ne saurait cependant négliger l'apport des analogies dans l'invention des grandes théories scientifiques : analogie entre le son et la lumière pour Huygens, entre la lumière et l'oscillation électrique chez Maxwell, sans parler de la physique atomique et des sciences naturelles. Descartes lui-même légitime d'ailleurs l'usage de l'entendement « aidé des images dépeintes en la fantaisie » (Descartes, 2000 : 130) qui permet notamment d'étendre analogiquement la connaissance lorsque l'on veut déduire quelque chose d'inconnu à partir du connu.

Ce qui rendait à Newton son travail intelligible, c'est sûrement que, dans sa physique, il était confronté à un monde réel, tout pénétré de Dieu : Dieu lui-même se tient derrière la scène, tel un moniteur de marionnettes, et meut les ficelles invisibles de poupées qui n'agissent que par les pensées de Son grand sensorium. (Holton, 1982 : 44)

Quand on lit ce grand auteur, on est frappé combien de grands problèmes qui le préoccupaient, en dessous de leur surface apparente, se

trouvaient étroitement liés ; ce sont : la cause de la gravité, dont il avait seulement établi l'évidence à partir des phénomènes ; l'existence d'autres forces, par exemple les forces à courte portée pour expliquer la cohésion ; la nature de l'espace et du temps, ce qu'il appelait « le *sensoir* » de Dieu ; et, dernièrement, l'existence de la Déité (à savoir, montrer qu'il ne peut y avoir d'autres causes finales pour les forces et mouvements démontrés que la Déité, que, par conséquent, la Déité est pourvue non seulement de propriétés, mais aussi du « règne »).

Pour Paracelse, un autre savant dont l'œuvre est complexe, penser c'est correspondre, c'est imaginer ; plus que démontrer, conclure ou argumenter. Dans sa conception imaginer ne signifie pas la relation mimétique qui consisterait à se représenter quelque chose au moyen d'images. Ce qu'il cherche à travers l'imagination, c'est l'épiphanie ; mais elle ne se montre qu'à celui qui sait voir l'invisible qui habite le visible. Et dans sa conception, l'invisible ne se donne jamais comme image à cause du fait que l'invisible n'est pas objet : il est puissance vivante, force formante (cf. Braun, 1978 : 64-65).

S'il est vrai, comme l'a souligné Gaston Bachelard, que la vérité scientifique s'oriente en sens inverse de la démarche poétique, en ayant le souci d'épurer les concepts des images affectives qui les contaminent de valeurs jouant le rôle d'obstacles épistémologiques, il n'en reste pas moins que concepts et théories se génèrent et s'enrichissent souvent dans l'intermonde de configurations imaginatives. On peut déduire donc l'existence de la complémentarité entre les deux domaines distincts – la science et la démarche poétique. En fait, pour ce qui est de la science, le terme de complémentarité a été introduit par Niels Bohr en 1927 lors d'un Congrès International de Physique, en Italie, avec son intervention sur le postulat quantique et le développement récent de la théorie atomique. Influencé par la lecture de l'œuvre de Kierkegaard, *Etapas sur le chemin de la vie*, Bohr donne la définition suivante à la complémentarité :

L'intégrité des organismes vivants et les caractéristiques des individus conscients et des cultures humaines présentent des traits de totalité, dont on ne peut rendre compte qu'avec un mode de description typiquement complémentaire ... Nous avons affaire non à des analogies plus ou moins vagues, mais à des exemples clairs de relations logiques qui, dans des contextes différents, se rencontrent dans des domaines plus larges (Holton, 1982 : 122-123).

On voit donc que c'était la signification universelle du rôle de la complémentarité que Bohr cherchait à mettre en évidence ; et il continue son argumentation en soulignant que toute expérience, que ce soit en science, en philosophie ou dans l'art, pour être utile à l'humanité, doit pouvoir se communiquer par les moyens humains d'expression et que

c'est sur une telle base que l'on pourra approcher la question de l'unité de la connaissance.

Bien avant que celui des fractals et du chaos soit à la mode, un certain nombre de thèmes scientifiques avaient frappé l'imagination de écrivains et ont été l'objet d'une exploitation parfois abusive. C'était le cas des problèmes et innovations liées au concept *d'espace-temps*, concept dont on peut déjà des traces dans l'*Encyclopédie* de d'Alembert mais aussi dans *La machine à explorer le temps* de Wells. Mais c'est avec la diffusion dans le public des théories de la relativité que l'enthousiasme prend essor, comme en témoigne ce texte de l'académicien Daniel Berthelot :

La théorie de la relativité fait fureur en ce moment, non seulement dans les amphithéâtres et les salles de cours, mais dans les salons aussi. Nous voici donc revenus – on le dirait – au temps de Descartes, des Voltaire et des Fontenelle, alors que les controverses sur les tourbillons et la matière subtile, le plein ou le vide, les esprits animaux et la pluralité des mondes passionnaient la cour et la ville. Un de nos plus éminents spécialistes nous contait l'enthousiasme frissonnant d'une jolie femme à l'idée d'approcher le fameux mathématicien, dont elle écrivait d'ailleurs innocemment le nom : « instinct » (Berthelot, 1922 : 7).

Les écrivains, les artistes ne pouvaient évidemment pas demeurer insensibles à l'essor d'une problématique qui s'ajoutait à l'ébranlement culturel du futurisme et le Dada. Dès 1913, les thèmes de l'espace et du temps s'imposent en littérature avec *Du côté de chez Swann*, et, l'année même où meurt Marcel Proust, en 1922, James Joyce publie *Ulysse*. Le temps est un paramètre essentiel dans de nombreux domaines de la science également : mécanique, physique, chimie, biologie, sciences humaines. Mais poètes et romanciers, quand ils l'évoquent, son soumis à des contraintes originales que les théoriciens de la physique ne rencontrent pas : celles qu'impose la pragmatique de la lecture et de l'écriture et leurs « dispositions » (« la fatalité séquentielle » comme disait quelque part Raymond Queneau).

A part ces *topoi* du temps et de l'espace, des structures d'énonciation et de raisonnement très proches de certaines de celles que la science utilise sont à l'œuvre dans la fiction. On pourrait se demander si les textes scientifiques ne sont-ils pas eux aussi des fictions, au même titre, par exemple, que les récits historiques que l'on peut considérer également. Voici trois opinions à ce sujet :

la temporalité ne se laisse pas dire dans le discours direct d'une phénoménologie, mais requiert la méditation du discours indirect de la narration (Ricœur, 1986 : 349) ;

Le mystère du temps n'équivaut pas à un interdit pesant sur le langage ; il suscite plutôt l'exigence de penser plus et de dire autrement (Ricœur, 1986 : 392) ;

La science doit passer par la fiction [...] les appareils construits pour les expériences de physique, pour aller au-delà de la seule observation des faits spontanés, pour voir la nature à l'œuvre dans des situations inédites, ces dispositifs, que sont-ils sinon des machines fictionnelles ? (Braffort, 1999 : 283).

Les disciplines qui composent notre culture utilisent des matériaux qui se situent à différents niveaux de « matérialité » et que le créateur « manipule » plus ou moins facilement. Pour l'ensemble des domaines de l'art, de la littérature et de la science, ces matériaux ont une fonction informationnelle en ce sens que la forme du matériau utilisé importe souvent plus que sa nature. Dans le cas des arts plastiques et de la musique, la nature des matériaux utilisés, matériau de base, supports et couleurs, instruments, ne peut être négligée. Dans le cas de la littérature et de la science, l'information est essentiellement linguistique et les excès des tentatives unificatrices témoignent, une fois de plus, du dangereux *pouvoir des mots*. Comme l'indique Ilke Angela Maréchal :

Dans une approche très simple des choses, il semblerait que la poésie et la science aient au moins une attitude commune au départ, qui consisterait à s'avancer dans l'inconnu pour l'éclairer, et pour le transmettre ensuite aux autres : passion de découvrir, passion de communiquer, et donc aussi, en même temps, nécessité d'un langage (Maréchal in Braffort, 1999 : 37).

Les sciences – surtout celles qu'on appelle « sciences dures » – utilisent des langages artificiels, des formalismes, pour gagner en concision et perdre en ambiguïté. On peut cependant observer, en examinant des textes scientifiques réels, que les formules, les diagrammes, etc., sont toujours enveloppés de textes en « langage naturel » (français, anglais, allemand, etc.), mais un langage naturel augmenté, la partie formalisée étant au contraire assez libre, ce qui impose à l'auteur d'explicitier les conventions qu'il adopte. Mais parfois les textes littéraires font eux-mêmes appel à des extensions, diagrammes, schémas qui nous font sortir du cadre linguistique traditionnel.

En un sens, on doit concéder à la littérature une certaine vérité, comme à la science, mais leurs vérités sont différentes. C'est ce qu'illustre l'intuition poétique d'un maître du soufisme persan, Djala Al-Din Rumi (1207-1273) qui écrivait :

Il est un soleil caché dans un atome : soudain, cet atome ouvre la bouche. Les cieux et la terre s'effritent en poussière devant ce soleil lorsqu'il surgit de l'embuscade. (Braffort, 1999 : 287)

et Basarab Nicolescu déclare à ce sujet :

L'équation magique que l'on peut établir est : science plus amour égale poésie. La

science est liée au savoir. L'amour est lié à l'être. Et la poésie indique, dans cette équation symbolique, la compréhension. La poésie m'apparaît comme un espace inter-médiaire entre la science et la gnose (Braffort, 1999 : 287).

Mais, avec les progrès de la science et, plus vite, peut-être qu'avec les arts, de nouveaux langages sont créés. Un bel exemple est fourni par la chimie contemporaine. La synthèse organique, en particulier, a été l'occasion de créations où l'esthétique, la technique et l'imagination travaillent de concert. En ce sens, l'œuvre de Robert Woodward, qui reçut le prix Nobel de chimie en 1965, renforce le fait que penser dans le langage pluridimensionnel est différent de penser dans le langage verbal ; les aspects sensoriels et structuraux peuvent engager le chimiste dans des dynamiques de pensée similaires aux autres langages structurels et artistiques comme la peinture, la sculpture, la poésie.

Comme le mot chimique est pluridimensionnel, pictographique et structural autant qu'alphabétique, la « poésie chimique » pourrait-elle inclure aussi des aspects comparables aux dynamiques structurales de la poésie verbale tels le rythme, la rime, l'accentuation, ces techniques par lesquelles des niveaux sensoriels et corporels entrent dans le langage pour le faire vivre et pour régénérer l'expérience vécue, qui sinon serait ossifiée par le langage, comme l'écrit Cassirer ? (Braffort, 1999 : 288).

Raisonnement *démonstratif*, la recherche objective de la vérité absorbe en son entier ce qu'on a coutume d'appeler *la pensée*. Qu'elle soit l'œuvre de philosophes ou de scientifiques, sa requête d'apodicticité s'oppose intégralement à la rhétorique, comme le vrai au vraisemblable, le certain au plausible (mais le vraisemblable, c'est une de ses possibilités logiques, peut être vrai). La pensée travaille sur des prémisses nécessaires : historiquement y prédomine le modèle logique des sciences déductives ou des sciences inductives (expérimentales). Mais dans la mesure où la philosophie et les sciences sont aussi des discours et non de *pures langues formelles*, est-il encore fécond et pertinent d'admettre aujourd'hui la distinction entre les preuves dialectiques (argumentation) et les preuves analytiques (démonstration) ?

La science est aussi une rhétorique, qu'elle ne vise pas seulement à démontrer ou à prouver mais à persuader de la preuve et de la démonstration. Ces dernières n'y suffisent pas. Enfin, c'est oublier qu'une démonstration est aussi l'écriture d'une démonstration. Empiriquement, il est difficile d'isoler la rhétorique et la vérité. Comment expliquer autrement la présence des figures et des arguments (une rhétorique), des prosodies et des rythmes (une poétique) dans le discours scientifique ? Le processus de rationalisation doit compter sur les facteurs rhétoriques et poétiques. Ils constituent une nécessité du discours vrai parce qu'ils engagent tout le langage.

Qu'il y ait une rhétorique et une poétique de la pensée n'est pas faire

du langage un point de vue exclusif et unique mais reconnaître qu'il est la médiation constante de la science et montrer qu'il n'est pas de transparence du langage à la pensée. L'impensé rhétorique et poétique rend vulnérable ce que la pensée fait de la vérité et du sens, ce qui est paradoxal car les constructions rationnelles procèdent fréquemment à l'étude des discours, à la description des textes, à leurs interprétations...

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Christian Identity in a Secular World

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Abstract:

This paper intends to argue for the necessity to preserve the Christian identity in the secular world, in which the believer is called to live in. The manifestation of this identity is seen especially in the area of ethics. It is analysed the way ethics is interpreted in postmodernism and in Christianity. On the one hand, the postmoderns want to equalize the biblical perspective on ethics, which supports *the good and evil* antithesis. Stanley Hauerwas talks about differences between Christian and Postmodern perspective in the area of ethics. The reader is invited to compare the two systems of moral values, and come up with some conclusions. It is demonstrated that Christianity bases its morality on *Scripture*. On the other hand, the postmodern perspective allows all the voices in the society to support their own view. The author presents the actual tendency to ignore the classical values, such as good and evil. There is also a tendency to remove guilt. In this paper it is argued that from the biblical perspective of moral antithesis is rooted in creation. The sacred text argue that because man ignored the divine commandment from *Genesis 2:16-17*, he committed a moral action with dramatic consequences for all human race. The biblical books written by the so called “Deuteronomistic School”, are guided by the central idea of “blessings and curses”. By doing good, man is expected to be blessed, and by doing evil, he is expected to be punished.

Keywords: Christian, identity, *Scripture*, postmodernism, ethics

Introduction

The author of this paper intends to argue for the necessity to preserve the Christian identity in the secular world, in which the believer is called to live. It is said that there is a difference in the area of ethics between postmodern and biblical perspective. On the one hand, the postmodernism wants to equalize the biblical perspective on ethics, which supports the good and evil antithesis. Stanley Hauerwas talks about differences between Christian and Postmodern view in the area of moral principles. Christian community struggles to find solutions to preserve the Christian identity. Therefore, we are invited to compare the two systems of moral values, and come up with some conclusions in supporting the position we chose.

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It is demonstrated that Christianity bases its morality on Scripture, which is considered authoritative for behaviour. The Bible is taken as the text source for Christian morality (Mattison, III, 2017: 1). On the other hand, postmodern perspective promotes an open view about the sources people can use in order to formulate principles for moral behaviour. In this way, the society allows all the voices present in the community to express their own perspective.

There are presented the specific features of postmodern morality, in the light of Scripture, in order to guard against confusion in the area of morality. We may observe that in postmodernism, there is a tendency to eliminate the limits established by the Christian tradition concerning good and evil. One of the main figures of postmodernity, Julian Huxley proposed a dynamic concept of interpreting Christianity, in order that, we may avoid the traditional antithesis between good and evil, supported by the biblical text. In this way people may remove guilt experienced, based on the Christian Bible.

If we analyse the origins of creation, we will observe that the biblical perspective about moral antithesis, is rooted in the creation narrative. The author of Genesis says that because man ignored the divine commandment from Genesis 2: 16-17, he committed a moral action with dramatic consequences for all human race. After that moment, humanity finds herself in a fallen state, as a consequence of rebellion against God's commandment. The bible books written by the so called "Deuteronomistic School", are guided by the central idea of "blessings and curses". Therefore, by doing good, man is expected to be blessed, and by doing evil, he is expected to be punished.

Morality in Postmodernism

Speaking about the roots of postmodernism, Graham Ward the editor of *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, informs us that Baroque and Culture Weimar of 1920 are considered protopostmoderns, and writers like Rabelais, Mallarmé, Kierkegaard, and of course Nietzsche are classified also as protopostmodern (Ward, 2005: xiv). In this paper we will try to show that postmodernism wants to equalize the traditional antithesis in ethics. The fact that postmodernity rejects antithesis in ethics is demonstrated by its tendency to equalize the dualism supported by the modernism. Such dualisms as: public-private, reason-passion, universal-particular, nature-culture, object-subject, collapsed in Postmodernism (Ward, 2005: xix-xx).

Our idea is supported also by Gavin D'Costa, who asks himself, if there is possible to speak about Ethics in postmodernism. The title of his

book is illustrative in this sense: “Postmodernity and Religious plurality: Is a Common Global Ethic Possible or desirable?”¹.

We may observe that there are differences of opinion between the traditional Christian perspective and the postmodern perspective on ethics. Stanley Hauerwas talks about differences between Christianity and Postmodernism². In the same line, Myron Penner illustrates this difference, by presenting several perspectives on Christianity and Postmodernity (Penner (ed), 2005: 237). And Walter J. Lowe³ comes with a new version for the actual Christian Theology. He entitled his article: “Prospects for a Postmodern Christian Theology: Apocalyptic Without Reserve”.

In this period, there are serious attempts to re-write theology. Stephan Van Erp and André Lascaris edited a volume, in which some Dutch theologians, try to implement Christianity in our postmodern world. They named their volume: “Who is afraid of postmodernism?: challenging theology for a society in search of identity” (Van Erp, 2005: 8-9).

Kyle Roberts, proposes a comparison between Kierkegaard perspective of Christianity and the Emergent Christianity, in order to help Christians to discover how to implement Christianity in Postmodernism (Roberts, 2013: 30).

Therefore we are entitled to evaluate the way ethics are perceived in the classical Christianity and in Postmodernism.

Differences in approaching ethics

On the one hand, the postmodern mentality seeks to promote certain moral values, shared by Christianity, with more passion than they were promoted even by the traditional Christian community. By doing this, we observe a tendency to attenuate the importance of Christian community in promoting moral values.

On the other hand, postmodernism seeks to change certain moral values found in the traditional Christianity, demonstrating that the new moral system of values increases human comfort and freedom, which were restricted in Christianity.

In this way there is a tendency to give up Christian values, and adopt the values of postmodernism, on the supposed superiority of the

¹ See the chapter written by D’Costa, with this title, “Postmodernity and Religious Plurality: Is a Common Global Ethic Possible or Desirable?” in the book of Graham Ward ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 131 ff.

² This is illustrated by the chapter *The Christian Difference or Surviving Postmodernism* in the book of Graham Ward ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 144 ff.

³ See Walter J. Lowe, *Modern Theology*, from *Prospects for a Postmodern Christian Theology: Apocalyptic Without Reserve*, in philosophical research online, 5 (1), 1999, p. 17-24, in <http://philpapers.org/rec/LOWPFA>.

moral system promoted by the later. Therefore, we propose to compare the two systems of moral values, and come up with convincing arguments to support the position that we chose. As we know, Christianity bases its morality on Scripture, which is considered normative for every believer. The Bible is considered the ultimate source for morality.

On the other hand, postmodernism promotes an open view about the sources people can use in order to formulate principles for moral behaviour, allowing to all the voices from the human society to express their own perspective, including morality. We will observe that this tendency has a good motivation, trying to promote tolerance. However, this tolerance going in extremes, may ultimately lead to confusion in the area of morality.

In the following pages, we will present some specific features of postmodern morality, through the prism of Scripture, in order to avoid confusion in the area of morality.

Antithesis and Postmodernism

The antithesis can be defined as the contrast between the two phenomena, such as: joy, sorrow, good-evil, etc. We observe in postmodernism, a tendency to eliminate the limits established by the biblical text, in the area of good and evil.

One of the main figures of postmodernity, Julian Huxley proposed a dynamic concept of interpreting Christianity, in order that, we may get rid of the antithesis, between good and evil, which is supported by the classical Christianity (Thomas Henry Huxley, 1947: 135; see also Julian Huxley, 1957: 197).

On the other hand, Christianity claims that moral behavior depends mainly on knowing and practicing certain moral values. In this manner it is possible acquiring real knowledge.

Jesus stated this idea in John 7: 17. He says that "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own". From the New Testament perspective, when somebody is ready to apply the moral principles from the biblical text, he will be able to discern the falsity from truth. This means that, by acting in conformity with the moral principles from the Scripture, somebody can avoid confusion.

Another argument of postmoderns, against maintaining the antithesis between good and evil, is that it inoculates the sentiment of guilt in the life of a person. The tendency to improve the material and spiritual common good of the people, does not fit with the sentiment of guilt. Therefore postmodernism is struggling to remove guilt.

To a certain extent, the concern for removing guilt is a natural one. However, the explanation given by postmodern thinking may be questioned, because it affirms that human failures are not their own responsibility, but they are the consequences of a metaphysical problem. Postmodernism holds that man is not responsible for the evil or for the good he commits. If a man does some things classified as evil, they have to be interpreted as a fabrication problem. Man was created from the start with certain drawbacks, which he has to accept as unavoidable.

For example, the Marquis De Sade, supported chemical determinism theory, regarding the creation of man. As a result he promoted the dictum: “All that is created is good, because what somebody does belongs to this world, which God declared good” (Airaksinen, 2002: 17, see also Phillips, 2005: 38). He thus eliminates the antithesis between good and evil. We know that his ideology served to excuse his brutal behaviour. We cannot take the model promoted by De Sade in implementing the moral system of our society.

Speaking about the source of failures of man in the present, Francis Schaeffer observes that, because the new theology rejects the moral antithesis, and because for its followers, sin and guilt, are, finally a metaphysical problem (a design problem – independent of man) (Schaeffer, 1992: 136.), it would mean that man has always been in this fallen condition. This is not his fault, but the fault of the one who created him. Therefore sin, depravity are the responsibility of the Creator not man’s.

From the perspective of postmodern theology, man’s failures are not a moral problem, which could consider man responsible for his actions. Schaeffer argues that for this reason postmodern theologians promote an implicit or explicit universalism, with reference to man’s salvation. They say that eventually all people will be saved. In his view, he says that it would be naïve to believe that this universalism is only one isolated case in the neo-orthodox thinking. Because they do not support a moral antithesis between good and evil, there can be no real moral guilt for individual.

In this case the doctrine of justification (the need for man’s rehabilitation by God), makes no sense and ultimately no one will be condemned (Schaeffer, 1992: 136).

It is no wonder that the French poet Baudelaire reaches a shocking conclusion with respect to the identity of God. He says: “If there is a God, he is the devil”, because he is responsible for the sins of man, and for his evil behaviour. God had created man with this shortcoming (Schaeffer, 1992: 136).

A biblical perspective about antithesis

On the other hand, the Scripture clearly states that the mistakes man makes, have a moral cause. Man is responsible for the evil he is doing. In

Genesis 2: 16-17, the author informs us that God has forbidden man for eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “The LORD God commanded the man, «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 of it you will surely die»”.

The biblical text asserts that, from the beginning, God had confronted man, with the moral antithesis of good and evil. The adjective translated in the Bible as “good” in the original Hebrew is *tob*. It has the idea of selecting what is preferable, out of the two possibilities (Gen 29: 19; Exo 14: 12; Jon 4: 3), something good, pleasant (cf., Num 14: 7; Est 1: 11; Psa 52: 9), profitable (cf., Gen 2: 18; Zec 11: 12), something morally right, opposed to something evil (cf., Gen 2: 17; Lev 27: 14; Psa 37: 27), something appropriate (cf., Deu 1: 14; 1Sa 1: 23; Psa 92: 1). The adjective has the idea of happiness, wellbeing (Deu 6: 24; Ecc 2: 24).

God said about all the things he created, that were very good. “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good *והנהיטוב מאד*. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day (Genesis 1: 31). We have here a culmination of the antithesis: “very good”.

However, this verse can be used also as a counter argument against the moral antithesis. Because man belongs to this created order, which was declared to be very good, we may say that man has no moral problem.

In fact, Marquis de Sade by promoting determinism, argues that everything created is good, including violence. Hence the name ‘sadism’. However, the community condemned this perspective. Therefore the books of Marquis de Sade, were prohibited for the public reading, until the twentieth century. Currently they are being studied by researchers. They became a source of research in postmodernism⁴.

But the narrative of creation does not stop at Genesis 1: 31. It continues with the chapter 3: 1-5, from which we learn that man ignored the divine commandment. In this way, he committed a moral action with dramatic consequences for all human race. He acted wrongly from a biblical point view.

The Hebrew word translated with the adjective “evil” is *ra*, which can be translated by “evil” in a moral sense. It is used in antithesis with the adjective “good.” Evil describes fully and completely its meaning when used in reference to the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2: 9; Gen 3: 5, Gen 3: 22).

⁴ We found out 486,000 entries only at the subject about “Marquis De Sade – All that was created is good”.

There are many places in which the word is used in the Old Testament. We will present some instances in which the adjective is used. It refers to the bad quality stuff, like in Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41: 3, Gen 41: 20, Gen 41: 27). Also, poisoned water is considered bad (2Ki 2: 19; 2Ki 4: 41). In Israel, kings had to discern between good and evil (Ecc 12: 14); People are classified as bad (1Sam 30: 22; Esther 7: 6; Jer 2: 33). Genesis says that the heart of man is evil (Gen 6: 5, Gen 8: 21); God requires of His people to purge the evil from among them (Deu 17: 7). He ultimately decides what is right and wrong (Deu 9: 18; 1Ki 2: 22 ş.u.). The word can be used as a general negative attribute. We read that the psalmist is not afraid of evil (Psalm 23: 4). The people of Israel are declared bad, in order that Aaron justify himself (Exo 32: 22). Disasters, failures are all interpreted as consequences of evil.

As we could observe, the Scripture stresses the moral antithesis between good and evil. The Good and the Evil are clearly defined here. The bible books written by the so called "Deuteronomistic School"⁵, are guided by the central idea concerning: "The blessings and curses". The reader is informed also about the consequences which follow if somebody does good or evil. By doing good, he is expected to be blessed, and by doing evil, people are expected to be punished.

Conclusion

In this paper we intended to observe the necessity to preserve the Christian identity in the secular world, in which the believer is called to live. We saw that It is said that there are differences between postmodernism and traditional Christianity, in the area of ethics. On the one hand, the postmodernism intends to relativize the biblical perspective on ethics. In this way it is contested the moral antithesis between good and evil.

We saw that Stanley Hauerwas talks about differences between Christianity and Postmodernism in the area of morality. In order to preserve the Christian identity, Kyle Roberts proposes the concept of Emergent Christianity, in order to help Christians to implement Christianity in Postmodernism. Therefore, we are invited to compare the two systems of moral values, in order to come up with right conclusions, in this area.

We saw that Christianity bases its morality on Scripture, which is considered normative for the community. The Bible is considered as the ultimate source for morality. On the other hand, postmodernism, promotes an open view about the sources people can use in order to

⁵ The hypothesis of the "Deuteronomistic School" is questioned by Mark A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment*, Gottingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989.

formulate principles for moral behaviour, in order to allow all the voices from the society to express their own perspective about morality. We discovered some specific features of postmodern morality, which may help us avoid confusion in this area.

There is a tendency in postmodernism to eliminate the limits between good and evil, established by traditional Christianity. As we saw, Julian Huxley proposed a dynamic concept of interpreting Christianity, in order that, we may avoid antithesis, between good and evil, supported by the classical Christianity. In this way the postmoderns are struggling to remove guilt.

On the other hand we saw that from the biblical perspective, moral antithesis is rooted in creation. We are informed that man ignored the divine commandment from Genesis 2: 16-17. In this way he committed a moral transgression, with dramatic consequences humanity. Following this moment, the state of man is classified as fallen. A whole section of biblical books from the Old Testament, named books written by the so called “Deuteronomistic School”, are structured around the moral idea of “blessings and curses”. By doing good, man is expected to be blessed, and by doing evil, he is expected to be punished. In conclusion, we observed that the antithesis developed by the books of Scripture, is central for classifying man’s behaviour.

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Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae: Portrait of a Public Theologian

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Abstract:

It is the aim of this article to sketch the portrait of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae as a public theologian. Starting with his biography and continuing with his intellectual and spiritual development will become clear that Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae was a theologian profoundly involved in the cultural, intellectual and spiritual life of the Romanian society of the twentieth century. We will observe the fact that the uniqueness of Dumitru Stăniloae in the tapestry of Romanian theological thought is given, among many other things, by his robust interaction with different traditions than his own, an interaction that roots his interdisciplinary, dialogical approach to theology. We will also focus on the way Stăniloae is a theologian who rediscovers the vital connection between theology and spirituality. Moreover, we will understand that there are also many elements in Stăniloae's theological thought that could be taken in account in a formulation of new ways of thinking about the Church and her mission in third millennium Romania.

Keywords: theology, spirituality, culture, society, legacy

Introduction

Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993) is considered today the greatest Romanian theologian of every tradition, in the twentieth century. His life, covering almost the entire century, was a witness to all the transformations that the Romanian society in the twentieth century experienced. The aim of this article is to show the portrait of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae as an important public theologian of Romanian history. As will be shown his biography is a witness that he was educated in theology in a dialogical manner, and he was also a theologian concerned with the cultural and spiritual life of the society. The article will underline his unique attempt to make the vital connection between theology and spirituality in a culture that needed the robust affirmations of the truths of theology. Therefore, from his biography, and continuing with his spiritual and intellectual life -long journey, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae constitutes a model for the way a public theologian should develop and for the issues over which a public theologian should reflect, think and write.

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Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae's Biography

Regarding Stăniloae's biography (1903-1993), the first notable thing from a theological point of view, is that he was a contemporary witness to 20th century Romanian history with its greatest events (1918, the second World War, the Communist regime, the Revolution in 1989). As a contemporary of this history the issues concerning the society and the church, are reflected in his theology. So, Stăniloae was a theologian of his times, doing theology in a relevant way.

He is a spiritual father...A man of profound modesty and piety...A witness of his epoch he passes the history of this century with the trust and serenity of a witness of faith. He is a monument of contemporary experience of Christ (Bria, 1994: 7).

The second notable thing is that he tried not to be enslaved by previous systems of thought. He was always a theologian pushing the boundaries. He had no hesitation to address critically, yet in a constructive way, the philosophy, theology and spirituality of his times (Bria, 1994: 8). Third, Stăniloae tried never to evade in an academic tower of thought, or in the academic mediocrity so often practiced by churches (of any denomination) especially in times of crisis.

Proud to be Romanian and Orthodox, Stăniloae was in himself and through his theology, representing Romanian Orthodox thought and spiritual ethos at the superlative, in a unique way of seeing the complementarity of different areas of thought such as philosophy, history, science and theology. His interdisciplinary dialogical approach to theology was not only a feature of his theological thought, but also of his character and spirituality. He not only addressed each epoch of the history he participated in afresh and relevant theologically, but he also suffered for his theological convictions and spirituality during the communist regime (Stăniloae, 2003: 18). The reality described above is the reason one cannot separate Stăniloae's biography from his theology and his theology from his spirituality (Noble, 2007: 206). How all these complex dimensions of his life and theology are embodied today can be seen in what could be called Stăniloae's spiritual legacy, whose dimension can be seen in the school of thought he represents for his disciples.

There is a "Stăniloae's generation," a school, a current, an influence, an attraction. It was his generous presence that gathered around himself with love and true interest and he was considered a master (Plămădeală, 1993: XI).

Another important feature of Stăniloae's biography is his life of discipleship. In a time when Romanian Orthodox Christianity was

characterized by a crisis of models and spiritual direction, he was in himself a way to be followed towards revival. In the words of one of his disciples: „What Council Vatican II realized at the pastoral and structural level for the Roman Catholic Church, the same Father Stăniloae realized for Orthodoxy at the level of the theological reflection” (Bria, 1994: 43).

Third, part of Stăniloae’s biography is his enormous volume of work: 20 books, 1,300 articles, 30 translations (Constantinescu, 1993: 93). Considered an “Eastern Karl Barth” (Ierunca, 1993: 103), Stăniloae embodied in his writings the unique experiences of his philosophical and theological encounters (Bria, 1994: 8). This dialogical formation is expressed in his writings where the dialogue with philosophy and different Christian traditions is a constant feature. Reading the Bible, the Fathers and also contemporary Catholic and Protestant theology extensively, as well as Eastern Orthodox theology, Stăniloae had no problems using their arguments and ideas when all these were appropriate with his arguments. In this regard Mănăstireanu affirms that „Stăniloae’s theology in general ... was firstly *patristic* ... thoroughly *Trinitarian* ... profoundly *Romanian* ... *dialogical*, characterized by an *ecumenical spirit*” (Mănăstireanu, 2002: 238-239). Even though Stăniloae is often critical and polemical, he proves in most cases at least that he does not suffer from what I call “illiteracy of other traditions”. The way the characteristics of his character and spirituality contributed to the way he was doing theology will be explored in the next section.

Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae’ Spiritual and Intellectual Journey

For centuries, the population of the Romanian territories was under foreign domination. While the Transylvanian population and territory were under the domination of the Habsburg Empire since the eleventh century, the Wallachian and Moldavian populations and territories were under the domination of the Byzantine Empire until 1417 and for the next three centuries under Turkish domination (Popescu, 2004: 271). Yet, in spite of these dominations that were political, administrative and ideological the larger population in the territories remains predominantly Orthodox, even though with some positive influences from East and West (Miller, 2000: 8). Explaining the uniqueness of the Romanian ethos that developed under these influences, Dumitru Stăniloae says about the being of the Romanian people:

... his being structured as a border being between East and West. He cannot become unilaterally Western or multilaterally Eastern... Yet the spirit of synthesis of our people is not explained through his persistence from immemorial times in the middle space between East and West, but also through the penetration of the Latin character and of Orthodox Christianity (Stăniloae, 1992: 8, 14).

The development of Romanian nationalism, expressed in the

“cultural regeneration” of the eighteenth century, and the establishment of the United Principalities of Moldavia and Walachia in 1859, culminated with the formation of the Romanian unitary State in 1918, which included Moldavia, Walachia and Transylvania. Yet, even if as a new state, Romania experienced a short period of political stability until 1920 (Popescu, 2004: 271-273), it entered soon a period of 20 years of turmoil before the Second World War, characterized by “a passionate and profound confrontation of ideas” (Miller, 2000: 15), a confrontation that involved political as well as religious thinkers. Miller says in regard to Stăniloae in that period:

Amid the polarities of traditionalism and modernism, nationalism and internationalism, orthodoxy and “western materialism,” we find Stăniloae deepening his appreciation for the Romanian Orthodox cultural and theological tradition. A lasting influence was exercised upon Stăniloae by the militantly Orthodox journalist and poet Nichifor Crainic (1898-1972) who championed attempts to define a specifically Romanian mentality and return natural culture to traditional Christian roots (Miller, 2000: 15).

In fact, the tradition of Romanian nationalism started with the greatest poet of Romanian history Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889), he was named by Alexandru Popescu, “the leading political theorist of the nation-State”, having as followers the philosopher Petre Țuțea (1902-1991) and the theologian Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993) (Popescu, 2004: 30-31).

The period between the two World Wars, was also a period of spiritual struggle. For some important Romanian philosophers of those times, the spiritual struggle took the form of a critique of “the political theory divorced from God” that “would lead to the exaltation of power as the only truth.” Petre Țuțea, together with “two distinguished Romanian philosophers, Sorin Pavel (1903-1957) and Nicolae Tatu (1910-2000), produced The National Revolution Manifesto. According to Alexandru Popescu in the Manifesto, “the Orthodox identity of the Romanian people was proposed as the basis for a national policy”. It also “presents the country as being in a sorry spiritual state” and “identifies the real “enemy” as those who undermine the Church” (Popescu, 2004: 16-17). However, the nationalism of this period also took secular forms that tried to promote a secular Romanian ethos, having as one of its representatives “the philosopher-poet Lucian Blaga (1895-1961)” (Miller, 2000: 16). Also, there was an attractive nationalistic Christian ideology, attractive for many intellectuals of the period who were embodied in the extreme nationalistic organization called the Legionary Movement, whose ideologue was one of the famous philosophers of those times, Nae Ionesco (Popescu, 2004: 20).

For Dumitru Stăniloae, this spiritual struggle took the road of what Miller named as “Orthodox Via Media” (Miller, 2000: 10). Miller is right when affirming that Stăniloae’s balanced character was formed in the religious ethos of Romanian Orthodoxy of his native Vlădeni in Transylvania. Miller describes it as:

In its restraint, the discomfort with extremes, in its modest expressiveness; in its light-heartedness as well as its reasoned sensitivity to the mystery of God, the religious ethos of Romanian Orthodoxy is pre-eminently one of spiritual balance (Miller, 2000: 12).

In his search for balance, we find in Stăniloae, says Miller, “a religious sensibility in tune with the notion of *via media* ... understood as a fundamental spiritual disposition whose instinctive preference is for the observances of balance and due proportions”, a disposition that embarked Stăniloae on “a long, at times painful, theological journey” (Miller, 2000: 12).

Due to his spiritual sensibility, Stăniloae found himself from the beginning of his theological studies in Cernăuți (1922) dissatisfied with the way Orthodox theology was taught (Păcurariu, 1993: 3). Radu Bordeianu describes accurately the status of Orthodox theology in those times:

Orthodox theology suffered an unhealthy influence during its “Western captivity.” Its neo-scholastic theology was overly intellectualistic, an academic exercise divorced from spirituality (Bordeianu, 2011: 13).

This state of affairs had a long history with a decline that could be detected in Orthodox theology after the patristic period, culminating during the Ottoman Empire period, with the East turning “rather uncritically to the West”, and adopting Western Neo-Scholasticism. Bordeianu speaks of several reactions to this situation over the centuries. He starts with the philokalic movement of the eighteenth century, with the promotion of the hesychast literature that represented “a spiritual approach to theology in contrast with the rationalism of Neo-Scholasticism” (Bordeianu, 2011: 14-16). Then there was the Slavophil movement of the nineteenth century, with the departure from Catholic and Protestant West, and the movement of the twentieth century to depart from neo-scholastic theology, represented by, Nicholas Afanasiëff, Alexander Schmemmann, John Meyendorff, Vladimir Lossky, and Florovsky. However, Bordeianu considers that “Stăniloae was the first Orthodox theologian to successfully break away from manual theology” (Bordeianu, 2011: 19, 27).

For Stăniloae, this break consisted not in its rejection per se, rather he was looking to replace it with a theology that would be a profound

actualization of the Patristic heritage. This started earlier in his theological activity with the discovery of St Gregory Palamas (1296-1359). Palamas' thought helped Stăniloae to find balance for the concepts that he learned from theologians of other traditions. For example, Bordeianu signals the fact that after discovering in Karl Barth's theology "the transcendence of God before man," he balanced that view with the Palamite view of uncreated energies, a theology that facilitates an understanding of "God's real involvement with humankind and the world without compromising his essential unknowability and transcendence" (Bordeianu, 2011: 23). Also, through Palamas' thought, Stăniloae found a starting point for what he aimed for, a spiritual theology. Palamas is considered one of the theologians that were instrumental for the full development of Hesychasm (Popescu, 2004: 279) and considered "the theologian of Hesychasm" (Joantă, 1993: 559).

The synthesis of hesychast mystics owed to St Gregory Palamas closes theologically all the efforts, starting with the Alexandrian theologians to Simeon the New Theologian to express in a framework of a biblical and patristic theology, the most authentic Christian experience, proper to the Apostles on the Tabor, to the first martyr, Stephen, to Ap. Paul on the Damascus Road and to all monk – saints or to simple believers along the entire Christian history (Joantă, 1993: 561).

In Romania, the Hesychast tradition was present even from the time when the Romanian Principalities were not united. The presence of "a very ancient monastic tradition of prayer" was in existence in Walachia by the time St. Nikodemus of Tismana (1320-1406) came in these territories. Nikodemus was instrumental for the revitalization of this Hesychast spirituality, which continued and spread in monasteries and caves, from Walachia, to Transylvania, and in Moldavia. Some of the representatives of Romanian Hesychasm among monks, were Daniel the Hesychast (in the fifteenth century), Elder Basil of Poiana Mărului (eighteenth century), Paisy Velichovsky (1722-1794) – the first who translated into Slavonic the Hesychast writings from Greek, a collection that was named Philokalia. Considered "the first to achieve that synthesis of Byzantine and Russian spirituality that is so characteristic of Romanian Orthodoxy, Paisy was followed by disciples as St. Calinic of Cernica, and in the twentieth century by Arsenie Boca (1910-1989) in Transylvania and Ilie Cleopa (1912-1998) in Moldavia (Popescu, 2004: 280-282).

The novelty introduced by the Pysian view of hesychast spirituality, followed by his disciples, was that of opening the practice of Hesychasm outside the monastery to lay believers, something that was a kind of recapture for Nicolas Cabasilas "adapted Hesychast spirituality

for laity” (Joantă, 1993: 561). This Paysian innovation was embodied and revitalized in the “Burning Bush movement” a movement that reunited monks, intellectuals and scholars of Romania at the end of the Second World War. Dumitru Stăniloae, as one who was part of this movement, translated and published the second edition of *Filokalia* (Popescu, 2004: 282-283), to be available for the larger public. Mircea Păcurariu speaks about the diversity of the “Burning Bush” group:

Part of the group were the Archimandrites Benedict Ghiță and Sofian Boghin, the physician Alexandru Mironescu, Professor Constantin Joja, the poet Vasile Voiculescu, the poet and journalist Sandu Tudor, the writer and journalist Ion Marin Sadoveanu, the young assistant Andrei Scrima and others. They met periodically at the Antim Monastery or in one of their houses, and they were trying to keep alive the Orthodox and authentic Romanian conscience in the new condition of the political and social life of our country (Păcurariu, 1993: 9).

Also, in one of his last interviews, 1 April 1992, Dumitru Stăniloae, points out this new way of seeing Hesychasm. He considered that the prayer of the heart is “a gift and a result of a spiritual exercise”. As such it is a gift not to be used only in solitude, but it is communitarian. Therefore, it is not to be limited as a monastic practice, but also as a day-to-day practice. (Dumitrescu, 1992: 82-84). During the Antonescian dictatorship and the beginning of the Communist regime, Hesychasm flourished in political prisons. Later on under the Communist dictatorship of Gheorghe-Gheorghiu Dej, the members of the Burning Bush movement were arrested in 1958 and imprisoned. For them as for others before them, Hesychast prayer was a means for survival “that sustained them through the Soviet experiment of re-education” (Popescu, 2004: 284-285).

Conclusions

It was the aim of this article to sketch the portrait of Dumitru Stăniloae as a public theologian. We did that by exploring his rich biography, influenced as it were, by the spiritual and intellectual context in which Stăniloae was born, lived and developed his theology and spiritual practices. We observed the fact that the uniqueness of Dumitru Stăniloae in the tapestry of Romanian theological thought and intellectual life is given first by his interdisciplinary, dialogical approach. Therefore, we can conclude that Stăniloae, through his theology opens new avenues for the development of contemporary Orthodox theology, especially, on the direction of recovering the interdependency between theology and spirituality. A fertile thinker, profoundly engaging with the culture of his time, he was one of the most important public theologians of Romania in the twentieth century.

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Accounts of Holiness. A Socio-Religious *Tour d'horizon*

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to sketch a working definition of holiness, by offering a brief, comparative, and critical *tour d'horizon* of the notion, on the basis of five influential socio-religious accounts, namely those put forth by Emile Durkheim (*taboo*), Jonathan Söderblom (*mana* and *tabu*), Rudolf Otto (the *numinous*), Emmanuel Levinas (*ethical meaning*), and Mircea Eliade (*sacred vs. profane*). The paper ends with a theological wrap-up *in lieu* of conclusion.

Keywords: holiness, the sacred, sociology of religion, phenomenology, theology

Introduction

Defining *holiness* can be quite an elusive and intricate endeavour. In a famous Platonic dialogue, Socrates asks Euthyphro, an Athenian prophet who is ready to prosecute his own father for a misdeed, “Tell me then, what do you say holiness and what unholiness?” (Plato, 2005: 19). The zealous young prophet is convinced that holiness is doing what he is doing, prosecuting a wrongdoer, whether he/she be one’s parent. Since Euthyphro’s arguments are not persuasive, Socrates says: “At present try to *tell more clearly* what I asked you just now. For, my friend, you did not give me sufficient information before, when I asked *what holiness was...*” (Plato, 2005: 21, emphasis ours), insisting that Euthyphro “tell the essential aspect, by which all holy acts are holy” (Plato, 2005: 23). “Well then, what is dear to the gods is holy, and what is not dear to them is unholy” (Plato, 2005: 23), replies Euthyphro, giving birth to what has become known as the “Euthyphro dilemma”: is something holy because God approves of it or does God approve of it because it is holy? Although during the dialogue it becomes clear that *holiness* is rather piety or morality¹, the exchange of ideas is useful to illustrate the

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¹ To speak of holiness, Plato uses the word ὅσιος (*hosios*). In the secular usage of the classical Greek language, this term can refer to 1) actions that are seen as “sacred”, “legal” and “corresponding to the debt” (having as content what is right and good from the point of view of morality and religion), b) the quality of those who feel inner reverence before the gods or eternal laws and behave as such – “piety” or c) to things

difficulty – and age-long concern – to define holiness. Unfortunately, in their dialogue Socrates and Euthyphro reach a similar point with many researchers: “Euthyphro, it seems that when you were asked what holiness is, you were unwilling to plain its essence . . . So, if you please, do not hide it from me, but begin over again and tell me what holiness is...” (Plato, 2005: 41). But what or where is the “beginning”?

Indeed, one might ask if holiness is definable at all. Assuming that it is and that there is a “beginning”, a point of departure from where one can begin – otherwise why bother with this paper? – how is holiness to be approached? What “lens” should one use in attempting to offer a working definition? Several approaches are possible, some of them concurring and competing: theology/religion, sociology, philosophy, phenomenology, ethics etc. This paper will focus on the socio-religious approach, which is quite rich in the diversity of the material it considers. Thus, our goal is to sketch a working definition of holiness, by means of a brief, comparative, and critical survey of five influential socio-religious accounts, namely those put forth by Émile Durkheim (holiness as *taboo*), Jonathan Söderblom (holiness as *mana* and *tabu*), Rudolf Otto (holiness as *numinousness*), Emmanuel Levinas (the *ethical dimension* of holiness), and Mircea Eliade (*sacred vs. profane*).

Émile Durkheim - holiness as a *taboo*

Émile Durkheim was a French philosopher and sociologist of Jewish origin and is considered the founder of the French school of sociology. Just like Schleiermacher (Schleiermacher, 1955: 19-82)², Durkheim supported the idea that holiness/the holy is central to the study of religion (Durkheim, 1995: 34)³. Moreover, he argued that there are varying levels of holiness (Durkheim, 1955: 5). For example, an amulet is sacred, but it does not inspire fear and is not a taboo, while other things can be both sacred and taboo. Such a vision of the sacred could motivate us to conceive a hierarchical scheme, which would include the phases of transition between the profane and the sacred.

For Durkheim, however, the relationship between the sacred and the profane can not simply be arranged in a hierarchical order: “However,

“sanctified”, “pure”, “absolved” (Kittel, 1964: 489-490). Interestingly, the *TDNT* states that the term ὅσιος is probably related to the root of the words ἔθος and ἥθος (Kittel, 1964: 489).

² The work originally appeared under the title *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, in three editions: the first in 1799, the second in 1806, and the third in 1831.

³ Durkheim first published the book in 1912 in Paris, entitled *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en Australie*.

if the criterion of a purely hierarchical distinction is at once too general and too imprecise, nothing but their heterogeneity is left to define the relation..." (Durkheim, 1995: 36). Speaking of heterogeneity, which he considers absolute (Durkheim, 1995: 36), Durkheim argues that "heterogeneity is such that it degenerates into real antagonism. The two worlds are conceived of not only as separate but also as hostile and jealous rivals" (Durkheim, 1995: 37).

Durkheim's entire view of primitive religious life is based on the idea that

... whether simple or complex, all known religious beliefs display a common feature: They presuppose a classification of the real or ideal things that men conceive of into two classes - two opposite genera - that are widely designated by two distinct terms, which the words profane and sacred translate fairly well. The division of the world into two domains, one containing all that is sacred and the other all that is profane - such is the distinctive trait of religious thought. Beliefs, myths, dogmas, and legends are either representations or systems of representations that express the nature of sacred things, the virtues and powers attributed to them, their history, and their relationships with one another as well as with profane things (Durkheim, 1995: 34).

Due to this bipartite division, the *things that are set apart*, belonging to the sacred, require special attention, which makes the rituals rules of behavior that prescribe the way in which man must behave in the presence of the sacred. By defining the holy as that which is set apart (Durkheim, 1995: 44), the author deftly evades having to give it any substantive content, enabling a move beyond trite definitions.

Most interesting for this paper's purpose is to note that Durkheim's way of defining religion connects holiness/the holy to the idea of moral community:

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. The second element thus holds a place in my definition that is no less essential than the first: In showing that the idea of religion is inseparable from the idea of a Church, it conveys the notion that religion must be an eminently collective thing (Durkheim, 1995: 44).

It is clear, then, that in Durkheim's view *holiness/the holy* has unification as its main function and, as such, whether we speak of Australian Aboriginal culture or the worship of Israel before Jehovah, it is based on the same mechanism: the self-worship of society.

Jonathan Söderblom – holiness as *mana and tabu*⁴

Jonathan Söderblom, the Swedish Lutheran Archbishop of Uppsala, who coined the term “ecumenism” and was the first clergyman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1930, published an ample and very informative article on “Holiness”, in the famous *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hastings (Söderblom, 1914: 731-741). In the very beginning of his article, he makes a quite surprising statement, reminiscent of Émile Durkheim, who considered that the idea of deity is not necessary for religion and for the notion of holiness:

Holiness is the great word in religion; it is even more essential than the notion of God. Real religion may exist without definite conception of divinity, but there is no real religion without the distinction between holy and profane... (Söderblom, 1914: 731).

Söderblom goes on to say that “the original idea of holiness seems to have been somewhat indeterminate”, and that “the ‘holy’ is apart from ordinary life”. Interestingly, he maintains that spiritual religion “strives to bring the whole of life under the sway of holiness” and points out that “the prophetic religion in Israel considered the whole people of Israel as holy by bringing the idea of ‘the chosen people’ into the connexion with the idea of holiness” (Söderblom, 1914: 731). Thus, “holiness is viewed as a mysterious power or entity connected with certain beings, things, events, or actions” (Söderblom, 1914: 731). This “mysterious power or entity”, believes Söderblom, can be identified with the same thing which the Melanesians call anything that exceeds ordinary human capacity or course of nature: *mana* (Söderblom, 1914: 731).

Because it is so conceived, holiness becomes “the most valuable source of health, strength, food, success, influence”, but it can simultaneously involve “a constant danger” (Söderblom, 1914: 732). According to Söderblom the rites birthed of this notion of holiness can

⁴ *Mana* is a word belonging originally to Oceanic languages but borrowed by European languages in which it acquired the meaning ‘supernatural power’. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “Mana, among Melanesian and Polynesian peoples, a supernatural force or power that may be ascribed to persons, spirits, or inanimate objects ... The term was first used in the 19th century in the West during debates concerning the origin of religion. It was first used to describe what apparently was interpreted to be an impersonal, amoral, supernatural power that manifested itself in extraordinary phenomena and abilities. Anything distinguished from the ordinary (e.g., an uncommonly shaped stone) is so because of the mana it possesses” (Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, “Mana” in Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mana-Polynesian-and-Melanesian-religion>, accessed 26 March 2021). For a more detailed and extremely interesting study of *mana*, see Nicolas Meylan, *Mana: A History of a Western Category*, Leiden, Brill, 2017.

be categorised as having “either a positive or a negative character” (Söderblom, 1914: 732). “The positive rites” – which include “augmenting rites” (732), “revealing rites” (733), “initiatory rites” (733), and “the interdicts and observances imposed on holy persons” (733) – have their object the acquiring, concentrating, and utilising of holiness” (Söderblom, 1914: 733, emphasis ours). Furthermore – and somehow echoing Durkheim’s understanding of holiness as *taboo* – Söderblom maintains that “the negative or prohibitory rites are designated in current language by the word *tabu*¹²” (Söderblom, 1914: 733, emphasis ours).

Hence, Söderblom defines holiness as *mana and tabu*, that is a mysterious power that people believe exists and is therefore not closely linked to a deity. From this point of view, Söderblom sees holiness differently from Robertson Smith, for whom holiness is closely linked to the deity and its presence, and Rudolf Otto (as we shall later see), for whom holiness and divinity are essentially synonymous.

Söderblom then develops some ideas which can be summarized as follows: 1) In the early stages of development, holiness and impurity are so closely linked that they can be confused to some extent, since both are taboos. At the opposite pole is what is *permitted*, that is the pure and the profane; 2) At a more advanced stage, due to the influence of language, morality or other cultural factors, the pure becomes that which is holy, while the profane becomes that which is unclean (Söderblom, 1914: 736); 3) In those religions (especially the Semitic ones) in which the idea of the idea of God is pronounced, the idea of holiness remains distinct and superior to the idea of purity; 4) In those religions in which the gods have an insignificant role or in which the god did not have an important role from the beginning, the concept of purity becomes prominent and assimilates it to that of holiness (Söderblom, 1914: 737). This last stage of the development of the concept takes place when holiness becomes a personal quality of both humankind and God, insofar as God makes humans saints and forces them, as such, to struggle to attain perfection. From the ethical perspective of religion, holy means “good” or “perfect”; however, “holy” never becomes just an ethical term, as it denotes a divine, supernatural power.

In a similar vein to Durkheim, Söderblom concludes his encyclopaedic article by underlining that “the time-honoured sociological theory recognizes the momentous importance of society to religion”, but seems to arrive at a contradictory point to Durkheim’s idea that religion is the self-worship of society. Söderblom concludes that “as

¹² Söderblom explains that the word *tabu* comes from the Tonga dialect in the Friendship Islands, and is composed of *ta*, which means ‘marked’, and *pu*, which is an adverb with an intensive force, hence *tabu* means ‘marked thoroughly’. In the author’s opinion, *tabu* is closely connected with the idea of *mana*, their point of connection being the common idea of extraordinariness (see Söderblom, 1914: 733).

far as lower culture is concerned, the derivation of the holy institutions and beings from a mysterious apprehension of society seems to be artificial” (Söderblom, 1914: 741), and adds that “in the higher culture, holiness and mysticism most consciously put their ideals beyond society” (Söderblom, 1914: 741).

Apparently, Söderblom’s approach can be described as a scientific description of the evolution of religion, from the perspective of the component that he considers the most important, namely *holiness*. One can, however, spot, beyond the surface, a Christian apologetical interest. Thus, speaking of Durkheim’s work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Söderblom rejects the idea that the “sacred” is only a way of objectifying and idealizing the community, as a mysterious power superior to the individual (Söderblom, 1914: 732). Later, when talking about the role that holiness played in the evolution of society towards civilization, Söderblom wonders if the time will ever come for humanity to dispense with holiness and let itself be guided only by rational principles. Following J. G. Frazer, Söderblom emphasises “what the system of holiness meant for the establishment and stability of government, for the security of private property against theft and destruction, for the sanctity of marriage, and, above all, for the respect for and protection of human life” (Söderblom, 1914: 735). He then firmly states that “civilisation and progress are inconceivable without the profoundly unreasoning sanction afforded by holiness” (Söderblom, 1914: 735).

Rudolf Otto – the holy as *numinous*

It is impossible not to think of Rudolf Otto when it comes to the notions of *holiness* and *the Sacred*. Endowed with great psychological finesse and benefiting from a double training, in both theology and the history of religions, Rudolf Otto was one of the greatest religious thinkers of the twentieth century. Although he wrote several monumental works¹³, the book that consecrated him – and which enjoyed a resounding worldwide success – was *Das Heilige – Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, originally

¹³ Some of Rudolf Otto’s most important works are *Die Anschauung vom heiligen Geist bei Luther (The Vision of the Holy Spirit in Luther)*, 1904; *Kantisch-Fries’sche Religionsphilosophie (Philosophy of Religion in Kant and Fries)*, 1909; *Dipika des Nivasa (Dipika of Nivasa)*, 1916; *Aufsätze, das Numinose betreffend (Studies on the Numinous)*, 1923; *West-östliche Mystik (Western and Eastern Mysticism)*, 1926; *Die Gnadenreligion Indiens und das Christentum (Religion of Grace in India and Christianity)*, 1930; *Reich Gottes und Menschensohn (The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man)*, 1934.

published in 1917 and translated into English in 1958 as *The Idea of the Holy*¹⁴.

Otto's elaborate and complex analysis make the 200 pages of *The Idea of the Holy* quite difficult to summarise. The author begins by arguing that the common association of reason and morality with holiness has obscured the original substratum of the sacred and insists that the center of religious experience must not be mistakenly constructed as a vessel, neither to morality nor teleology (Otto, 1958: 5-8). Aspiring to safeguard holiness from the scientific impulse to naturalize all human experiences, including religion, Otto emphasizes the irrational, unassimilable nature of holiness (Otto, 1958: 8).

Although Rudolf Otto repeatedly reminds his readers that his view of holiness does not seek to diminish the significance of the rational dimension, according to him, the original, precognitive experience of holiness presupposes an *a priori* category; it stands both logically and chronologically before ethics. Once the secondary moral layer is removed from the original essence of holiness, as it appears in the Hebrew Scriptures, what remains, Otto would like us to believe, is an irreducible surplus that opposes cognitive assimilation.

Thus, according to Otto, the Holy/holiness consists of two elements: the *rational* and the *irrational*. The rational element is related to human understanding, can be understood through concepts and is especially associated with the ethical sphere (Otto, 1958: 1-5). This register can be found especially in Old Testament prophets, such as Amos (Amos 5: 23-24).

In his *Religion and Rational Theology*, Immanuel Kant has a chapter on "Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion", in which he identifies the sacred with morality, defining *holiness* as

... the absolute or unlimited moral perfection of the will. A holy being must not be affected with the least inclination contrary to morality. It must be impossible for it to will something which is contrary to moral law (Kant, 2001: 409)

According to Otto, however, this sacred rational dimension must be separated from the irrational one. The irrational can be perceived by the senses and intuitions, not through concepts. From a history of the phenomenology of religions perspective, these appear first in the religious life and are devoid of ethical content. Only later do they become filled with content ethical, a process which Otto called "schematization"¹⁵.

¹⁴ In Romanian, the title of the book is *Sacral*. See Rudolf Otto, *Sacral*, Ioan Milea (trans.), București, Humanitas, 2005.

¹⁵ Otto explains the relationship between holiness and morality with the help of the theory of *schematization*. As in the case of the psychological law of the association of

To speak of the irrational element of the sacred, Otto uses the term *numinous*. As he delves deeper into phenomenological analysis, Otto arrives at what he calls the *mysterium tremendum* and the *mysterium fascinans* of sacred experience (Otto, 1958: 12-23, 31-42). In other words, Otto is arguing that an authentic encounter with *the holy* simultaneously generates contradictory feelings of fear (*tremendum*) and fascination (*fascinans*). Purity and morality are no longer to be found in this antipodal experience. Otto warns his readers, however, that they must not be misled by the act of evaluation, which is expressed in the experience of the sacred. In the face of the majesty and greatness (*majestas*) of the sacred, the believer feels a strong sense of dependence. The prophet Isaiah's statement, "I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6: 5), is emblematic, according to Otto, of the self-deprecation that accompanies the experience of the sacred (Otto, 1958: 37). However, we would be wrong, Otto argues, to interpret such (de)valuations as occurrences of a moral judgment (Otto, 1958: 51). The feeling of self-depreciation associated with holy feelings can acquire a moral meaning only later.

Although he mentions Söderblom twice throughout his book, Otto's approach rejects the kind of evolutionary reason that characterizes Söderblom's work. First of all, Otto believes that attempts to rationally explain the Sacred cannot do justice to the most important aspect of holiness, namely its *irrationality*. It is precisely for this reason that Otto used the term *numinos* to describe the irrational part of the sacred, a part that remains after the rational accumulations acquired by it have been removed. Second, Otto does not accept that rational, evolutionary approaches can explain how different phenomena interrelate - from *mana*, *taboos*, spirits, and demons to monotheistic holiness. He is especially critical of phrases such as "gradual evolution", used in evolutionary approaches, but without demonstrating how ideas have evolved.

ideas, in the sphere of the senses a sense gives birth to other corresponding senses. Then the occasional connections turn into permanent associations. The non-rational noun, schematized by rational and moral concepts, offers us the complex category of the sacred itself, strongly charged and perfect in the full sense of the word. In a older but timely PhD thesis presented to the University of Kent, Leon P. Schlamm has convincingly argued that "Otto's concepts of schematization of the numinous, the numinous and the rational a priori, and divination cannot be understood by phenomenologists and philosophers of religion except in the light of this claim, and that Otto intends that his concept of schematization (profoundly influenced by Fries's transcendental idealism) be identified with his law of association of analogous feelings which explains how the excitation of numinous experience is produced" (Schlamm, 1988: 2). For an in-depth perspective, see Leon Schlamm, *Rudolph Otto's theory of religious experience in The Idea of the Holy: A study in the phenomenology and philosophy of religion*, unpublished Ph.D thesis, Canterbury, University of Kent, 1988, <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.235005>, accessed on 26 March 2021.

If Söderblom's *tour de force* was implicitly theistic and Christian, Rudolf Otto's perspective on the same subject is undoubtedly an explicit Christian one, as this gradually emerges from the *The Idea of the Holy*. The last words of the book bear witness to this fact:

We can look, beyond the prophet, to one in whom is found the Spirit in all its plenitude, and who at the same time in his person and in his performance is become most completely the object of divination, in whom Holiness is recognized apparent. Such a one is more than Prophet. He is the Son (Otto, 1958: 182).

Therefore, according to Otto, *holiness*, in its original state, has little or nothing to do with morality. It generates a whole spectrum of feelings, especially a “holy fea” and contains various elements such as an unapproachable or frightening “otherness”, a state of absolute overwhelming and an energy that corresponds to the mystical idea that God is a “consuming fire” or a “consuming love”.

In our opinion, there are at four issues to be critically addressed regarding Rudolf Otto's idea of holiness. First, if the distinctive feature of the Sacred is the mixture of fear and fascination, this formula can be applied to earthly things or places that have nothing in common with the idea of holiness. Mount Everest, for example. The frightening approach of Everest is exactly what fascinates and draws people to it.

The second problem is related to the fact that while Rudolf Otto categorically rejects the connection between the *numinous* and the ethical, he states that:

The venerable religion of Moses marks the beginning of a process which from that point onward proceeds with ever increasing momentum, by which the numinous is throughout rationalized and moralized, i.e., charged with ethical import, until it becomes ‘the holy’ in the fullest sense of the word. The culmination of the process is found in the Prophets and in the Gospels. And it is in this that the special nobility of the religion revealed to us by the Bible is to be found, which, when the stage represented by the deuterio-Isaiah is reached, justifies its claim to be a universal world-religion (Otto, 1958: 77).

If there is not – or cannot be – an inherent relationship between the *numinous* and the ethical, the “process” of which Otto speaks would not have been possible; otherwise, why would two concepts, from totally opposite spheres – according to Otto, the *sacred* and the ethical – follow the path of mutual union?

The third problem concerns the understanding of the relationship between the moral commandment within the context of the Holy and its non-rational elements. It can be best summed up by the. Following question: how could one *derive* the commandment to love one’s neighbour from the character of the *numen* perceived as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*?

Finally but not surprisingly, Otto's view the separation between the rational and the irrational makes one wonder whether holiness, anthropologically speaking, can be achieved in two ways – on the one hand through feeling, emotions, and on the other, through reason or teachings?

Emmanuel Levinas – the *ethical dimension of holiness*

Even if we take into account Otto's statement that the moral dimension completes the experience of the sacred, the firmness with which he argues that the original – historical and conceptual – holiness was not related to ethics *is* a challenge to Levinas' thinking.

A French philosopher, born in a cultured Jewish environment, with philosophy studies in Strasbourg and Freiburg, Emmanuel Levinas is one of the chief promoters of phenomenology in France. His career has been divided between phenomenological and Jewish studies. The famous philosopher Jacques Derrida informs the reader that Levinas once said to him in a conversation: "You know, one often speaks of ethics to describe what I do, but what really interests me in the end is not ethics, not ethics alone, but the holy, the *holiness of the holy*" (Derrida, 1997: 4, emphasis ours)¹⁶.

In order to better understand what Levinas means when he speaks of holiness, one must first distinguish between this and another category with which, Levinas argues, holiness is often confused. In fact, he frequently rebukes sociologists and philosophers of religion who fail to distinguish the idea of holiness (*la sainté*) from the category of the sacred (*le sacré*) (Levinas, 1994: 30-50)¹⁷.

Levinas is so bold in upholding the distinction between sacredness and holiness, largely due to a significant current in philosophical and literary thought, which, according to Levinas' assessment, is guilty of hiding the dangers of a certain type of religious feelings. In this sense, it is important to remember the way in which the sacred was understood and explained by European researchers of the twentieth century and, especially, by those of the French school, whose leading exponents are Emile Durkheim, Georges Bataille, Roger Caillois, and Mircea Eliade. Levinas's controversy over holiness must be placed in connection with what the authors mentioned had to say on the subject.

¹⁶ For an excellent study on Levinas' perspective on ethics and holiness, see John Caruana, "Not Ethics, Not Ethics Alone, but the Holy: Levinas on Ethics and Holiness", in: *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 34 (4), 2006, pp. 561-583.

¹⁷ In Levinas's thought, *le sacré* critically refers to a primitive religious experience, which suppresses the capacity for rational discernment and facilitates the loss of self-consciousness, and *la sainté* is exactly the opposite. About the Sacred, Levinas speaks as the "temptation of temptation" that affects each self; the seduction of the sacred consists in its promise to provide direct access to the supernatural.

Levinas' main objection is that most scholars have deepened the conceptual gap between sacredness and holiness. In regard to Durkheim, for example, Levinas sanctioned two of his important tendencies. First of all, while Durkheim considers the main function of holiness to be unification, Levinas sees holiness as an unstable and disturbing phenomenon. Second, Levinas vehemently rejects Durkheim's tendency to blur the differences between so-called "primitive" religions and classical monotheistic religions that originated in Judaism. Levinas reserves the notion of "sacre" only for a certain type of religious expression, one that Judaism denies.

One can also identify at least three irreconcilable differences between Levinas and Otto: 1) Otto's statement that holiness does not involve any moral connotation original; 2) Otto's characterization of the sacred as presupposing a direct encounter with the divine, and 3) while Otto claims that holiness consists in an irrational surplus of meaning beyond the ethical dimension of holiness, Levinas argues that that surplus is precisely the ethical nature of the sacred. First, Levinas – and with him, several Jewish thinkers – rejects Otto's assertion that the Jewish idea of holiness has no origin – at least in the Torah (Otto, 1958: 110) – no connection with ethics. In Levinas' view, Otto underestimates, if not completely ignores, the inseparable relationship that the Jewish Scriptures as a whole – not just the late prophetic texts, as Otto says – establish between God's holiness and ethics. As Levinas remarks, to say of God that he is the God of the poor or the God of justice presupposes a statement not of His attributes, but rather of His essence (Levinas, 1960: 116).

Levinas' view on holiness, as well as on other matters, places him in a certain current of Jewish thought, known as *ethical monotheism*¹⁸. This important current has its recent roots in the German-Jewish philosophy of the early twentieth century of Hermann Cohen¹⁹. It has, of course, much deeper roots in Hebrew Scripture and Talmudic sources. Levinas considers that the divine commandment concerning holiness (Leviticus 11: 44) has a two-fold purpose. First, the process of sanctification – often described in the Bible in terms of ritual demarcations between pure and

¹⁸ According to Dennis Prager, "Issues in Jewish Ethics: Ethical Monotheism", in: *Jewish Virtual Library*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/ethical-monotheism> (accessed 27 March 2021), "*Ethical monotheism* means two things: 1) There is one God from whom emanates one morality for all humanity and 2) God's primary demand of people is that they act decently toward one another". One of the most helpful, in-depth works on this topic is Ehud Benor's, *Ethical Monotheism: A Philosophy of Judaism*, London, Routledge, 2018.

¹⁹ Hermann Cohen is "more than any other single figure, responsible for founding the orthodox neo-Kantianism that dominated academic philosophy in Germany from the 1870s until the end of the First World War" (Scott Edgar, "Hermann Cohen", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Winter 2020 Online Edition), Edward Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/cohen/>, accessed on 26 March 2021.

impure objects and deeds – promotes an appreciation of the chasm between the mortal self and God. In this way, holiness intensifies the feeling of self-awareness. Levinas considers that sanctification aims at imposing a strong sense of limits, thus facilitating the process of individuation, i.e., the unification of the unconscious and consciousness. Before the Holy One, man becomes more and more self-conscious, as a separate and distinct being (Levinas, 1976: 198-199). Second, Levinas believes that if holiness intensifies awareness of the distance between the self and the divine, it does so not only to encourage respect for the Ultimate Other, but especially because that distance throws us back into the realm of interpersonal relationships. According to Levinas, if God forbids His direct representations, He does so to thwart the universal fantasy that the absolute can be known, and to reorient our selves to its true vocation. In *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, Levinas boldly declares that

The God of monotheists Whose Revelation coincides with the very awakening of conscience, of the accounts kept against nature - an action that henceforth doubles our energy expenditure - does not give Himself over to human fantasies (Levinas, 1976: 102).

With the same confidence, he states in his book, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, that

God – whatever his ultimate and, in some sense, naked meaning – appears to human consciousness (and especially in Jewish experience) “clothed” in values; and his clothing is not foreign to his nature or to his supra-nature (Levinas, 1994: 14-15).

In other words, Levinas believes that ethics is the basis of the divine command to be holy. As he says, “to know God is to know what must be done” (Levinas, 1976: 17). It is not to know some being or even to erect a regulative idea. The dignity and force of illeity thus share an important connection with what we might call our enacting God through responsibility to the other or through justice. Another word for this is “holiness”.

Mircea Eliade – *the sacred vs. the profane*

One of the most famous personalities of Romanian culture, Mircea Eliade hardly needs an introduction. A philosopher and historian of religions, fiction writer and professor at the University of Chicago, USA, Eliade is the author of 30 scientific volumes, literary works and philosophical essays translated into 18 languages and about 1200 articles and reviews.

As Bryan Rennie once remarked,

One of the most fundamental and, as we shall see, one of the most problematic of Eliade's categories for understanding and explicating the phenomena and the history of religion is that of the sacred. It is in terms of and, in relation to the sacred that almost all of his other categories are described. And it is in relation to the sacred that secondary scholars can most often be seen to be criticizing their own interpretations rather than the writings of Mircea Eliade (Rennie, 1996:17).

Sacrul și profanul [The Sacred and the Profane]²⁰ is certainly the work in which Mircea Eliade develops most of his conception of the sacred and of the way it is perceived by people.

For Eliade, all descriptions or definitions given to the religious phenomenon reveal a fact of paramount importance: the experience of the sacred, religious life in general, is inconceivable without the opposition and unity between the sacred and the profane. Probably feeling the need to clarify how the sacred is spoken of, Eliade writes:

Sacrul se manifestă întotdeauna ca o realitate de un ordin complet diferit de realitățile «naturale». Limbajul nu poate reda decât în chip naiv noțiunile de tremendum, majestas, mysterium fascinans, recurgând la termeni preluați din domeniul natural sau din viața spirituală profană a omului. Însă această terminologie analogică vine tocmai din incapacitatea omului de a exprima acel *ganz andere*: limbajul nu poate decât să sugereze ceea ce depășește experiența naturală a omului, cu ajutorul unor termeni preluați din această experiență (Eliade, 2000: 12)²¹.

Undoubtedly, Eliade adopts as a starting point Rudolf Otto's concept of the sacred, but unlike Otto, Eliade is not interested in the relationship between irrational and rational elements, but in the *sacred* as a whole. However, Eliade's statements about the language of the sacred leaves one in some confusion about the *Ganz andere*. What is this? Is it an autonomous entity, an intrinsic property of the sacred object or a property inherent in the perception of sacredness?

²⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Sacrul și profanul* [The Sacred and the Profane], Brândușa Prelipceanu (trans.), 3rd edition, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2000. The work initially appeared in *Rowohlts Deutsche Enzyklopädie*, under the coordination of Ernesto Grassi, with the title "Das Heilige und das Profane", Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, Reinbeck, 1957, and was published in French, *Le Sacré et le Profane*, in 1965 (the edition which the Romanian translation follows). Although for an exhaustive treatment of the category of the sacred in Eliade all his writings should be analyzed, this paper will focus on *Sacrul și profanul*.

²¹ "The sacred always manifests itself as a reality of a completely different order from the 'natural' realities. Language can only naively reproduce the notions of tremendum, majestas, mysterium fascinans, using terms taken from the natural realm or from the profane human spiritual life. But this analogical terminology comes precisely from man's inability to express that *ganz andere*: language can only suggest what goes beyond man's natural experience, with the help of terms taken from this experience" (*our own translation*).

Because the first definition that could be given to the sacred is the *opposite of the profane*²², Eliade claims that “omul își dă seama de existența sacralului pentru că acesta se manifestă, se înfățișează ca un lucru cu totul diferit de profan” (Eliade, 2000: 12-13)²³. For this reason, Eliade chooses to use the term *hierophany*²⁴ for the manifestation of the sacred (Eliade, 2000: 13).

What should one understand then, that a tree considered sacred ceases to be a tree? Eliade believes that although the sacred is always revealed through the profane, it does not suppress the profane in and through which it manifests itself:

Manifestând sacralul, un obiect oarecare devine altceva, fără a înceta însă să fie el însuși, deoarece continuă să facă parte din mediul său cosmic. O piatră sacră este tot o piatră; în aparență (sau mai bine zis din punct de vedere profan), nimic nu o deosebește de celelalte pietre. Pentru cei cărora o piatră li s-a arătat sacră, realitatea sa imediată se preschimbă însă în realitate supranaturală. Cu alte cuvinte, pentru cei care au o experiență religioasă, întreaga Natură se poate înfățișa ca sacralitate cosmică. Cosmosul, în totalitatea sa, poate deveni o hierofanie (Eliade, 2000: 14)²⁵.

What quality then has that what is perceived as sacred? Eliade argues that the sacred means *power* and, ultimately, *reality*. Eliade is quite clear and about this: the sacred is pre-eminently the real, at once power,

²² In the first fourteen pages of *Sacral și profanul*, Eliade progressively offers three definitions of the notion of the sacred: “the opposite of the profane”, “power” and, finally, “reality” (see Eliade, 2000:1-14).

²³ “Man realizes the existence of the sacred because it manifests itself, it appears as something completely different from the profane” (*our own translation*).

²⁴ A *hierophany* is a manifestation of the sacred. The word is a compound of the Greek adjective *hieros* (Greek: ἱερός, ‘sacred’, ‘holy’), and the verb *phainein* (φαίνειν, ‘to reveal’, ‘to bring to light’). For a better development of the concept, see Mircea Eliade, *Mituri, vise și mistere (Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries)*, Maria Ivănescu and Cezar Ivănescu (trans.), București, Univers Enciclopedic, 1998, p. 133-135. Also, an excellent article on the role of hierophanies was written by Robert Hodgson Jr., “The Social Setting of Holiness in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity,” in: *Reaching Beyond: Studies in the History of Perfectionism*, Stanley Burgess (ed.), Peabody, Wipf and Stock, 1986, p. 65–91. See also Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, J.E. Turner. (trans.), with appendices incorporating the additions to the second German edition by Hans H. Penner, with a new foreword by Ninian Smart, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 23-36.

²⁵ “Manifesting the sacred, an object becomes something else, without ceasing to be itself, because it continues to be part of its cosmic environment. A sacred stone is also a stone; In appearance (or rather profanely), nothing distinguishes it from the other stones. For those to whom a stone has been shown to be sacred, its immediate reality is transformed into a supernatural reality. In other words, for those who have a religious experience, the whole of Nature can be presented as a cosmic sacredness. The cosmos, in its entirety, can become a hierophany” (*our own translation*).

efficacy, the source of life and fecundity. This is not to say that the sacred is necessarily something independent of this experience, rather

... it is this experience of the sacred, that generates the idea of something which really exists and, in consequence the notion that there are absolute intangible values which confer a meaning upon human existence” (Rennie, 1996: 20).

One must, however, be careful and avoid assigning foreign meanings to the Eliadian notion of *reality*, that is, not to read Eliade believing that he is referring to what *we* mean by *reality*. Although many researchers have disregarded the definition quoted above or believed (wrongly) that it refers to a deity or a necessarily independent ontology, Rennie points out that Mircea Eliade has repeatedly stated that “the sacred it is an element of the structure of (human) consciousness” (Rennie, 1996: 21).

In other words, when he speaks of ‘real’ and ‘reality’, Eliade is not referring to an ontological sub-layer, which Aristotle calls *hyle* and Kant calls *noumenon*, but to the psycho-phenomenological act of *perceiving*, as a real consciousness of living religious experience. The ‘real’ is an intentional object, that is, an object of faith. Therefore, Eliade’s conception of the sacred can be summarized in the following statement: *the sacred is the intentional object of human experience that is perceived as reality*²⁶.

For Eliade, “the utterly profane world”, is the product of the modern man’s spiritual behaviour, who has desacralised his world and assumed a profane existence (Eliade, 2000:14), while “the *sacred* and the *profane* are two ways of being in the world, two existential situations assumed by humankind throughout its history” (Eliade, 2000: 15).

On a critical note, although extremely impressive due to the complexity of the analysis of the Sacred, Eliade’s *Sacral și profanul* seems to lack a more detailed explanation of the relationship between holiness and ethics. He speaks in the same context both about the world as being continually sanctified by the sanctity of sanctuaries, and about the fact that the world is purified by that sanctity, implying that, in his opinion, the two concepts are synonymous, not complementary or antithetical.

²⁶ Eliade's use of the term ‘sacred’ in this sense has led to all sorts of criticisms of his possible theological and metaphysical prejudices and assumptions. J. Z. Smith noted a certain similarity between the ‘sacred – profane’ pair in Eliade and Durkheim. He points out that Eliade may have replaced Rudolf Otto’s language of the sacred with Durkheim’s more neutral and positional ‘sacred’, while keeping the dynamics of Durkheim’s dualism. See Jonathan Smith, *Map is not Territory: studies in the history of religions*, Leiden, Brill, 1978, p. 91.

In lieu of conclusion: a theological wrap-up

This paper aimed to offer a brief, comparative, and critical *tour d'horizon* of the notion of holiness from a socio-religious perspective. The five accounts of the Sacred considered were those which still make a strong contribution to the field, namely those which have been employed forth by Emil Durkheim, Jonathan Söderblom, Rudolf Otto, Emmanuel Levinas, and Mircea Eliade.

Now, *in lieu* of a “definite” conclusion, we would like to offer a “theological wrap-up”, mentioning a word or two about how Christian theology could relate to and critically use the five views explored in this paper. Thus, the complexity of the notion of holiness, on one hand, and its elusiveness, on the other, also reflect two important realities that derive from a common truth, namely that our life in the world is not an abstract one. On the contrary, we are individuals endowed with freedom and gifts, and we live in a certain age, with specific peculiarities in terms of culture, education, economy, and social conditions. Regardless of how it is conceived, the very fact that holiness involves a certain “setting aside” or separation highlights this complexity and puts one in front of some essential questions.

For example, does the state of holiness involve the rejection of the profane or, in order to use more biblical language, does one have to reject the world in order to choose God? At the same time, any biblically and theologically coherent view of holiness must take into account the *coincidentia oppositorum* inherent to the Christian faith, which, on one hand, affirms Creation and Incarnation, and, on the other, calls the believers to a state of separation from the world and of consecration to God. This ‘tension’ has not always been resolved in the history of Christian spirituality. The proof is the continuous Christian preoccupation for the *contemplative* life to the detriment of the *lived* life or vice versa. The motif of this theme has many antitheses: Martha *vs.* Mary, desert *vs.* fortress, flight from the world *vs.* serving the world, being in the world *vs.* being not the world, etc.

To conclude on a practical note, it must be said that there are two extremes which must be avoided. The first one is to put the sign of equality between holiness and the complete renunciation to our creatureliness. Historically, this temptation, which was rightly called ‘angelism’ by Jacques Maritain, has persisted in Christian spirituality, manifesting itself in the tendency to downplay humanity in favor of the elevation of the ‘spiritual’ nature. The second extreme is to emphasise the need to get so much involved in the affairs of the world that the transcendent reality of God (and, of course, of one having a relationship with God) is downplayed as illusory or escapist, in the name of the so-

called ‘activism’. Any attempt to correctly understand and define holiness must recognize that there is a certain tension between that which is ‘received’ and that which is ‘required’, between holiness as a divine gift and holiness as a human virtue or ethical obligation. True holiness, rightly understood, must honor simultaneously both the transcendental axis (that of one’s relationship to God), and the immanent reality of human condition, i.e., living horizontally, in the bosom of the world, both as an individual, and as a community.

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The Ideological Challenges of Religious Pluralism and Multiculturalism for Globalized Societies

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Abstract:

The phenomenon of globalization has led to many globalized societies. Globalized societies are societies that have experienced and are influenced by the features of globalization. In globalization, time and space have shrunk and the world's peoples and cultures are now more interlinked and interconnected through transportation and information communication technology which has led to the movement of human capital and transmission of ideas and cultures. Globalization has facilitated the meeting of different religions and cultures. In many societies today you now have people of different religions and cultures living/working side by side. Religious pluralism and multiculturalism are now ideological standpoints as they are now sets of beliefs of how society should be organized. This paper will hermeneutically examine these phenomena and the challenges that they present. Through analysis the paper argues that both religious pluralism and multiculturalism are facts of globalized societies not to be ignored. The paper concludes that religious pluralism and multiculturalism can be managed for harmony in society. These done globalized societies will experience more social harmony and concord.

Keywords: ideology, religious pluralism, multiculturalism, globalization, globalized societies

Introduction

Globalized societies are impacted by different challenges such as: terrorism, climate change, atmospheric pollution, migration, racism, deforestation, desertification, religious pluralism and multiculturalism. The focus here is on religious pluralism and multiculturalism, hereafter RPM. RPM are to be managed for the good of society. The interest in multiculturalism and pluralism is a core feature of contemporary times from the 1990s as noted by some scholars (Pierik, 2013: 3470; Ejobowah, 2004: 301). Globalization has led to the encounter of religions and cultures in the world and this phenomenon is now a common fact of life that should not be ignored (Dupuis, 2001: 1; Woodhead, 2009: 10). It is important to be concerned not just by de facto

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reality of religious diversity but also de jure (in principle) whether there is a purpose in cosmic order for religious diversity (Dupuis, 2001: 11). It is also important to pay attention to the question of religious pluralism because religions have shaped and continue to shape the way of life of many persons in globalized societies either positively in creating healthy individuals, justice based societies or in precipitating fundamentally intolerant persons (Ferguson, 2010: xii).

The central thrust of this paper is to examine the ideological challenges posed by RPM. Though some may abuse their religions/cultural identities to become intolerant of the values of other religions/cultures, there is value in preserving the various religions and cultures in society in line with modern democratic and humanistic values. All the issues regarding RPM cannot be examined in this paper. The aim here is to break open and hermeneutically clarify the concepts of globalized societies, religious pluralism, and multiculturalism first and foremost. This will foreground exposing analytically the ideological challenges posed by RPM in globalized societies. The paper will also present some ways to manage RPM.

What are Globalized Societies?

Globalized societies are societies that have experienced globalization. They are societies that are influenced and impacted by the values of globalization. In these contemporary times almost all societies have in one way or the other been affected by globalization. There are various definitions of globalization. Globalization is intensification of social relations all over the world (Giddens, 1990: 68). Globalization is the increased extensive movement of people, cultures and capital across the societies of the world and it is also connected to an advanced type of capitalism; and new communications, technological and scientific technologies influencing new forms of socio-political co-operation (Woodhead, 2009: 10). Another definition of globalization sees it as: "... processes whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate worldwide. It is the process of the world shrinking, becoming a single place" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2006: 461).

Globalization has led to many societies in the world becoming globalized, multicultural and also religiously pluralistic. With the advancement of information communication technology, the movement of human capital, and migration of peoples from one society to another; many societies have become filled with peoples of various cultures and religions. Religions from the east such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, etc have been transported to the West. African traditional

religions have travelled through the transatlantic slave trade and recent migration of Africans to places like Brazil, the Caribbean, Australia and other places. It is common in places like New York, Washington DC, and London to find Chinese, Japanese, Indian migrants in these major cities. Values from the West through the process of westernization have also been adopted in non-western cultures. One positive benefit of globalization is that it has led to easy availability of scientific and technological innovations and discoveries. This has brought about higher agricultural and economic productivity. Dismantling of trade barriers, transportation of manufacturing equipment, quick electronic payment systems, rapid diffusion of knowledge have all led to increase in productivity and ease of commerce (Ozigbo, 2004: 79-80).

Globalization has exacerbated cultural conflicts and disintegration of local cultures (Ajayi, 2005: 202). As the world is globalizing the nation-states and economies with higher influences have more impact on the developing ones. Globalization has often propelled westernization as many western values and systems are transported to the non-western world. In places like Africa, and South East Asia there is often tension between traditionalism and modernity. Many anti-globalization protests especially by indigenous and social justice groups and people who feel left behind have happened. They include: the 1999 Seattle protests, the 2000 Davos Clashes, the 2017 Hamburg protest, the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protest and so forth.

From another perspective, “globalization connects the world as never before, and challenges Western values and self-centeredness by showing that there are other ways of being modern” (Woodhead, 2009: 10). While globalization can unify and bring people closer it can also create tensions among people. It can unpack complexes of local cultures, creates new identities and creates more diversity (Lehmann, 2009: 409). Lehmann writes that while Euro-Christianity came to Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries today it has been reshaped and repackaged by African migrants who have exported an African culturally informed form of charismatic styled Christianity to the western world in the forms of numerous African founded Pentecostal churches (2009: 409).

Though globalization has some negative effects when well harnessed in a spirit of authentic humanism and for the wellbeing of all it can be a powerful force for good and the welfare of all. In harnessing the forces of globalization for the common good it will be good to know that globalization has created room for movements of peoples and cultures which has resulted into multicultural and religiously plural societies in many parts of the world. While globalization is bringing about more inter-relationship and interaction among people, homogenizing cultures worldwide it has also concurrently led to resurgence of ethnic communal identity (Ajayi, 2005: 204). Managing the side effects and challenges

coming from these ideologies of pluralism and multiculturalism is vital for harmonious globalized societies. It is a basic feature of globalized societies that they are religiously plural and multicultural. The existence of various religions and multiple cultures pose challenges for these societies that have become globalized.

Understanding the Ideology of Religious Pluralism

It is important to define the concepts of ideology, religion and pluralism before understanding the ideology of religious pluralism. It is taken for granted in this paper that both RPM are ideologies (Nye, 2007: 109). The term, “ideology” can be defined as:

...a system of values and beliefs regarding the various institutions and processes of society that is accepted as fact or truth by a group of people. An ideology provides the believer with a picture of the world both as it is and as it should be, and, in doing so, it organizes the tremendous complexity of the world into something fairly simple and understandable (Sargent, 2009: 2).

Destutt de Tracy, a French theorist is the one who first used the term, “ideology” on 23rd May 1797 and he used it to refer to the “science of ideas” (Drucker, 1974: 3). Ideologies are a pragmatic and action-oriented set of ideas and convictions about the place of human beings in nature, society or history and how humans ought to organize their life (Macpherson, 1975: 157-158). In the light of this, Macpherson argues that systems of thoughts and programs for action such as conservatism, liberalism, democracy, populism, Marxism, Nkrumahism, and pan-Africanism are all forms of ideologies (Macpherson, 1975: 158).

A set of beliefs that promotes a plural religious society can rightly be identified as an ideology. Religious pluralism does not simply describe a state of things but also is an ideological stance on how society should be organized (Grimmitt, 1994: 133). In understanding religious pluralism, a definition of the two terms, religious and pluralism will be offered. Religious is the adjectival form of religion. A few definitions will suffice here to provide an opening to understand religious pluralism. Religions are “social forms which use practices, symbols and beliefs, usually in a collective setting, to orient people to a higher or ultimate level of reality, thereby providing them with template for ordering social and personal relationships in this life” (Woodhead, 2009: 11). Religion is human wonder over the mysteries of the universe and the purpose of humans and other creatures in the cosmos; and the world religions are “composite of the insights into ultimate mystery that people who struggled into these lofty questions have gained” (Stoutzenberger, 2011: 3-4). Most definitions of religions are restrictive as it is difficult to come up with a definition that embraces all aspects of religion for it can be

defined from sociological or metaphysical or psychological or humanistic perspective; yet “A definition that has received reasonable acceptance among scholars is as follows: religion is a system of communal beliefs and practices relative to superhuman beings” (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 1999: 915). The religions of the world include Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, African Traditional Religion, and Native American Religion.

Having defined religion, it is imperative to define pluralism. Pluralism refers to cultural, racial, ideological, national, gender, class or other forms of diversity in a nation or global community or even in the environment and it is a challenge to state centricism (Igwe, 2005: 326). Another definition sees pluralism as a term used to describe “the presence of variety” such as when the United States is called a plural society, and in a normative sense such as “salvation or enlightenment may be found in multiple religions” (Taliaferro and Marty, 2010: 180).

What then is religious pluralism? Religious pluralism is an aspect of multiculturalism and should not be divorced from it. Religious pluralism also named religious diversity is constitutive of increasingly postcolonial, global, and postmodern world (Carbine, 2007: 1049). With regard to religion, Hick has argued that pluralism means salvation occurs in all religions and no religion is exclusively true and so they should be open to one another in sharing and living together (Hick, 1989: 233-249). According to Dupuis the term, “religious pluralism” was coined recently within the contextual framework of “theology of religions and is replacing the term “theology of religions” (Dupuis, 2001: 10). Norton states that religious pluralism can refer to different responses/approaches to the phenomenal reality of multiplicity (diversity) of religious beliefs, traditions and practices (Norton, 2020: 1). Religious pluralism identifies the fact that there are many religions with different beliefs.

While affirming religious pluralism in globalized societies, it is important to remark that there are three main approaches to religious pluralism in Euro-American theology of religions and these three approaches are exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism (Carbine, 2007: 1051). Exclusivism affirms the centrality and absoluteness of Jesus Christ and belief in him as necessary for salvation. At a time in church history from a catholic perspective it was expressed in the statement: “ecclesia nulla salus” (outside the church there is no salvation). In *Dominus Iesus* (Christ the Lord), the Catholic Church enunciated that Christ Jesus is the universal redeemer and necessary for salvation (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2000). The second approach to religious pluralism according to Carbine is Inclusivism which proposes that knowledge of God can be found in other religions as they carry some “ray of truth” (Carbine, 2007: 1050). The Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* endorses that elements of truths can be found in

other religions but they are all leading to Christ (Catholic Bishops, 1965). Here there is a place for religious dialogue though with the aim of reaffirming Christian faith. The third position to issues of religious diversity asserts pluralism in which Jesus is unique to Christians but does not deny that God has revealed himself in other religions (Carbine, 2007: 1051). The philosopher of religion Hick asserts that all religions are different ways to God and are different responses to the one divine reality that there should be a move from christocentricism to theocentricism (Hick, 2007: 610-612).

The categories above can equally be used to define other religions attitudes to the question of religious pluralism. Exclusivist believers believe that only their own religion has positive value and offer salvation; inclusive believers hold to the uniqueness of their own religions truths and personalities while being open to the fact that God's saving power can be felt in other religions; and believers in religious pluralism affirm that all religions have "prima facie value by their own right" (Harrison, 2007: 197-198). A word on the attitudes of some few other religions on religious diversity is needful here for the issue of religions perspective should not only be seen from a Christian angle. The traditional Islamic disposition is that a Muslims can only live a truly Muslim life and be faithful to Allah in an Islamic society, in traditional Jewish thought a gentile life is unacceptable as only the Jews were uniquely chosen for a special relationship with Yahweh God almighty (Harrison, 2007: 197).

Conceptualizing the Ideology of Multiculturalism

The word, "multiculturalism" comes from two root words, "multi" and "culture". "Multi" refers to what is many. Culture on the other hand refers to "the total life ways characteristic of the members of a society including tools, knowledge and patterned ways of thinking and acting that are learned and shared and are not the direct product of biological inheritance" (Sanderson, 1988). It is important here to state the importance of culture and respecting the different cultures of people in a globalized society. Through culture human beings have adapted to their environment. In adjusting and adapting to their environments people create culture in the forms of the food they eat, the tools they use to work and play, the clothes they wear, their land use systems, their medicinal and pharmaceutical practices, their management of environmental resources, their interaction with others rooted in their moral precepts, their spiritualities and philosophies of life and in many other forms. Man and woman are cultural beings (Mondi, 1985: 146). The culture that human beings have created to help them to navigate through peaceful

and hostile environment is vitally important to the wellbeing of the people. Though not all aspect of created culture should be preserved (for there are aspects such as slavery, colonialism, apartheid, sexual discrimination, racism, xenophobia, etc that are inimical to authentic human flourishing); the good aspects should be conserved. Wherever human beings find themselves in a globalized society their viable cultural identity should be safeguarded (Taylor et al, 1992).

The presence of many cultures in a society leads to multi-cultures. There are many conceptualizations of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is “the coexistence of diverse cultural values and backgrounds” (Kapukaya, 2010: 126). A more extensive definition by Kapukaya states that: “Multiculturalism is the co-existence of a number of different cultural structures in the same living environment. The members of a multicultural society are the people who represent diverse cultures, civilizations, beliefs, types of lives, world views, etc.” (Kapukaya, 2010: 127). Hoffman and Graham say that multiculturalism can be an attitude, a tool of public policy, aspect of institutional design (Hoffman and Graham, 2009: 342). They note that multiculturalism as attitudes means a cosmopolitan openness to different cultures and respect for other people’s way of life; as tool of public policy it deals with issues of social inclusion in education, health and other aspects of social life; and as aspect of institutional design it refers to what kind of society should obtain

To a certain degree multiculturalism has existed for a very long time from the time that two or more cultures interacted. Pierik writes that from a descriptive angle societies have been inhabited by persons of various ethnicities, differing lifestyles, religious beliefs, and perceptual conception of what is the good (Pierik, 2013: 3471). Though from a theoretical standpoint some argue that it emanated from the activities in the 1960s of Black Panthers in the United States; and the agitations of people all the world who felt marginalized, excluded and stigmatized and needed a stay in their communities (Johari, 2014: 645). While demanding their distinct identities either as a racial group or ethnic group or linguistic or sexually different group they argue for the preservation of their identity within the community (Johari, 2014: 645). The history of the agitations of these various groups can at times be violent, separatist and a threat to national unity. This is one of the areas in which the challenge arising from multiculturalism comes into play. These communities that are arguing for recognition and full citizenship are different from the dominant ethnic or racial group in society. The deliberate policies created to manage the multicultural realities of society are called multicultural policies.

Some cardinal characteristics of multiculturalism are: (1) distinct cultures especially of vulnerable groups /minorities should be

safeguarded, (2) recognition of value pluralism and different conception of the good, (3) fostering social justice and affirmative action for underprivileged social groups, (4) demand for a more inclusive concept of citizenship, and (5) aspiration for a pluralistic order in which all are represented (Johari, 2014: 645). The debate on multiculturalism shows itself in different ways such as issues of migrant workers in Europe, threats of separatists in Quebec, the status of African American in the United States, issues of government policies on civic integration for migrants, issues of headscarves for religious adherents in the police or schools, cultural festival subsidies and other issues of attending to cultural diversity (Pierik, 2013: 3470). In reality, multiculturalism is a form of liberalism that emphasizes the rights/freedoms of neglected groups within the democratic space and rejects fascism, false assimilation or any other system that seeks to impose one culture on all others (Johari, 2014: 645).

The Ideological Challenges of RPM for Globalized Societies

One key ideological challenge is that it can breed anti-nationalistic feelings as sub-nations/minority groups assert their distinct identities. Realizing national integration becomes difficult as some persons may uphold the sentiments and values of their sectional groups more than that of the nation. For instance when Germans in Czechoslovakia and Austria sided with Hitler to take over those two countries or when Chinese living in South East Asian nations remain distinct creating problems for the nations in which they are living (Johari, 2014: 648). Related to the above is that recognition of RPM can create a flourishing space for identity politics which can be dangerous for the peace, harmony and wellbeing of society. A word on identity politics here is useful. Johari writes that as an offshoot of multicultural politics, identity politics describes the movements, agitations, struggles and protests of neglected groups in society who now clamour for recognition in the political and social institutions and systems of their nation-state and this process can become volatile (Johari, 2014: 650-651). Furthering on the dangers of identity politics, Johari writes that while citizens of a state can have several identities; these identities should be subject to national loyalty. The problem often is that people allow their parochial loyalties to supersede that of the nation (Johari, 2014: 650). In a place like Nigeria and many other nations in Africa there are often tensions between the two loyalties as people allow their loyalty to their cultural groups to supersede that of the nation. This is often precipitated by the failures of the nation-state to provide the good life for the people.

Another crucial challenge arising from upholding multicultural values and promoting religious pluralism is illiberalism. It is problematic to accommodate cultural practices and religious traditions that promote women oppression, racial discrimination, and even violence. This is a serious problem for globalized societies. Related to this is the problem that recognition of an ethnic culture can inadvertently make some people to become ethnocentric ignoring other people's culture. Ethnocentrism means valuing and seeing one's culture as the only center of truth and even being uncritical of unsavoury aspects of one's culture. In a globalized multicultural society one's own culture cannot simply be the measure of truth. Particular cultures should be moderated by global ethical norms.

There is equally the issue of security and terrorism. In globalized societies today, recognition of RPM has led to the admittance of migrants from diverse backgrounds. This can lead to security treats to the host society. In the 9/11 attacks it was migrants whom the United States had welcomed that blew up the World Trade Center killing thousands of people. Migrants in Europe have attacked members of the society also. It is a fact that these attackers are by religious fanatics. But the fact remains that there is security risk in admitting migrants. This does not mean that society should end migration. Freedom of movement is a fundamental human right. What needs to be done is how to respect the rights of migrants while at the same time securing people's welfare from the threat of fanatical migrants.

Flowing from the above is that an environment of RPM is susceptible to other forms of conflicts. There are persons who have a narrow particularistic understanding of their religion or culture who turn to violence to promote their ideologies. Terrorist groups like Boko Haram, Islamic State, Islamic State in West Africa, Al Shabab, and Al Queda have claimed they are fighting in the name of Islam and have turned against civil society. They have killed in the name of religion. A classic case of how from a religious perspective conflict can arise happened on 30th September 2005 when a major Danish paper, *Jyllands-Posten* did a publication of twelve cartons of the Prophet Mohammed showing him as a terrorist. Some Muslims were highly offended by these cartons as they understood from their religion that the prophet should not be depicted in such manner. There were some protests around the world in which some persons were killed. The fact is that if these western societies were not open to RPM, Islam and her adherents possibly may not have been allowed in these western societies. In 2015 Islamist terrorists attacked the office of Charlie Hebdo, a satirical newspaper. When religious adherents claim an exclusivist ideology, the adherents are likely to be hostile to other members of society (Omoregbe, 1993: 299).

No matter the ideological challenges posed by RPM it should not be abandoned. Globalized societies should create mechanisms to tap into the riches of RPM. Both the many different religions and cultural traditions have moral values that are helpful to building health and wellbeing of globalized societies. Modern globalized societies affirm values of human dignity, sacredness of human life, human equality, egalitarianism in their moral codes and public policy; and these values now generally supported by the liberal wings of all world religions and thus the ethico-social aspects of the religions serve as a conscientious moral guide to many in society (Woodhead, 2009: 7). While it is true that there are strands in these same religions that that oppose egalitarian values and universal human rights, by and large the religious traditions can help to foster gender equality, break down ethno-cultural barriers, and support a common humanity (Woodhead, 2009: 7-8). The side of religious faith that is open to promoting egalitarian values, democratic flourishing, and humanitarian harmony, environmental sustainability should be nourished and enhanced by public policy for the wellbeing of society. Through globalization the world is now interdependent and it is necessary for people from various religions and cultures to “get along together” or get destroyed together; and though at times some religions have been sources of conflicts and violence there are elements in them that encourage justice and peace that should be appealed to and built upon (Stoutzenberger, 2011: 16; Hill, Knitter and Madges, 1997: 148-150). It is this reality that leads to the proposals below.

Proposals on Mitigating/Overcoming these Ideological Challenges

Safeguarding the right to religious freedom and right to cultural association within the context of other fundamental human rights can help to mitigate the negative challenges and foster harmony. The right to religious freedom and cultural association is not an absolute right. Illiberal religious groups and cultural groups should live in respect of basic human rights. Promoting the right to religious freedom of conscience and religion is not only the duty of government. The religious bodies themselves can help to promote it in various ways (Appleby, 2000: 245). The United Nations have adopted different human rights instruments that affirm the rights to religious freedom and cultural association. These declarations include: Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (United Nations, 1992), and Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (United Nations, 2007).

Fostering dialogue is a crucial key to managing the challenges of RPM in a globalized society. Dialogue does lead to tolerance,

understanding, enlightenment, mutual knowledge and enrichment of one another (Paul, 1990: 4; Panikkar, 1999: 10; Cole, 2004: 10-11). Dialogue involves effective communication, openness, listening and positive criticism among various religions and cultures in society. Public authority should direct social policy to ensure that it enhances dialogues among the various groups in society without stifling what is valuable in them. In secular globalized societies the state should be separate from religious bodies and should endorse no religion or particular culture but it can tap from the riches of various cultures and religions since the many members of the state are equally members of these groups. Most religions affirm a social and justice dimensions to their faith. This can be an opening that the state can tap into. Various religious groups should engage in interfaith social projects to the good of their society and their members. Likewise different cultural traditions in society should live in self respect of one another and interact among themselves instead of fighting. Dialogue is necessary to combat religions violence, conflicts, and even religiously based terrorism. When people understand themselves they are likely to live in peace and harmony.

Education can foster intercultural values of peaceful and harmonious living; and also in promoting inter-religious understanding in globalized multicultural societies. With regard to religions, they have a powerful platform and there are many persons in the global society who still strive to adhere to their religious books and teachers. Religious teachers should conscientize for peaceful living. Since some of the ideological challenges that often emanate from religious pluralism and multiculturalism are violent conflicts, harnessing religious and cultural resource against violence is importance. The religions should educate/teach their members to realize that violence in their name cannot be justified in the name of God. Religious leaders have a responsibility to teach their members that.

The fact of religious plurality should be accepted, especially by religious leaders who should help and orient their coreligionists to accept and live with this fact. When interdependence is not just tolerated but is accepted and lived, it becomes the high moral value of solidarity (Arinze, 2002: 36-37).

Likewise cultural groups, associations, and other cultural platforms have a responsibility to educate their members towards respecting other cultures. They should educate their members in cosmopolitan values while respecting authentic national values in the nations in which they now live as citizens or residents.

Because in speaking of religious pluralism the focus is on the different religions, what the different religions value can equally help to bring them together thus enhancing togetherness against difference. One thing that most religions value is the ritual of prayer. At the heart of most

religions is prayer with worship. If religions pray together they are likely to live in love of one another and thus conquer many challenges arising from religious diversity. Annually there is the Assisi World Day of Prayer for Peace that started in 1986 initiated by Pope John Paul II to fast and pray in promotion of peace. That World Day of Prayer for Peace has seen Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews, Shintoists, Jainists and people of other religions assemble to pray for peace. When followers of the different religions see their leaders coming together to pray it re-enforce in them the value of solidarity and non-discrimination. Related to this the example of world religious leaders visiting the temples and churches of other religions is also very inspiring in promotion social love. A thing like this has been done by Catholic Leaders, Muslims leaders, Orthodox leaders, etc. The World Parliament of Religions is also remarkable in meeting and bringing religious leaders together to pray.

Conclusion

The paper examined the realities of RPM in globalized societies. It was revealed that religious pluralism is a reality and scholars and religious adherents have responded to it in different ways. There predominant positions of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism were indentified. The paper argued that in the light of the fundamental human right to religious freedom all religions should be respected and allowed room to flourish. Adherents of the various religious should be mindful of the human right of others to freedom of conscience and religion. Related to religious diversity is that today's societies are multicultural by the fact of globalization. All cultures carry cultural riches that can enrich society. Greater harmony will be achieved in society and society will advance better if RPM are channelled for the wellbeing of society. Religious groups and cultures in a globalized society should be open to have illiberal aspects of their beliefs and practices transformed for the greater good of humanity.

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On the Violence and the War

What is the most Important Philosophical Problem of War?

A Possible Interpretation on the War

Sándor Karikó*

Abstract:

Wars and war conflicts have been seen through history. It seems this is a necessity. From the history of philosophy – among others – Hegel can be quoted, who set the necessity of wars to moral cause. Karl Marx continues: he shows how unleashing wars relates to the appearance of property and ownership. According to him, man approaches the terms of production (mainly the land and its resource) as if they were the man's hands or own accessories. This general correspondence in the history of philosophy (could be hard to challenge its justness), does not negate the moral lesson: it is everyone's responsibility to protect peace, sedate war conflicts and solve them.

Keywords: war, violence, property, moral, peace, individuality

Motto:

“It is not given to humanity to live in eternal peace.”

Coleman Phillipson

Introduction

The subject of war and its conflicts cannot be analyzed enough, there is tons of scientific literature about it, but still we don't know enough. Unfailing and ineffaceable subject which cannot be closed, because, unfortunately, war itself keeps following history forever. We can safely state the fact, that predestinated responsibility typifies politicians, war historians, jurists, priests, generals and upper-deck ratings, researchers of moral and religion explaining and judging war issues (in general and concrete relations). And of course – maybe not with the same effect as the previous ones – philosophy cannot stay neutral.

As likely as not we could bring up many more scientific and intellectual professions involved, but I would remind for just one: art. Many art forms deal with war issues and – for me it is obvious – all of

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the significant (classic) artworks enrich our knowledge and image about war.

Undeniable, the subject of war brings up many self-explanatory questions, views, which won't be written down here. But I think, the basic dilemma is “*why is war even exists?*”, which question by the way must be analyzed by philosophy with some answer for it or a thought about it at least. Why does human history work out the way that war repeatedly and constantly appears in it? Why cannot be war conflicts cut off? Or if these type of conflicts appear all the time without end, but at least why can't we wipe out war from future history forever, peremptorily?

We all know (earlier generations experienced it) war is followed by terrible devastation. Human constructed buildings destroyed, nature damaged, herbs and animals dying, and most importantly human existence become in danger and then dozens of people die. We can be surprised by Leo Tolstoy in his novel *War and Peace*: “millions and millions of people had to go from the west to the east and kill people like themselves the same way as people coming from the east to the west did some centuries earlier” (Tolstoy, 1993: 10). For a first look war seems unexplainable and hard to understand. But we can see this kind of state when „life is constantly questionable” (Krasznahorkai, 1999: 146) is an unavoidable “accessory” of human civilization history. What is more, it seems like war itself moves the whole history. The great Russian realist writer gives an uncertain answer for the – essentially philosophical – dilemma, that „Why is war unleashed (...)? We don't know, but people unite in certain groups for some specific goal and (...) that is the way it is because other way it cannot be imagined, this is the law” (Tolstoy, 1993: 430).

I think this “law” basically the definition of necessity. Other artists, sociologists and philosophers recognize the correspondence in the concept of “law” and “necessity”. What is more, they not just discover the connection but also take it on. The incident of war becomes not only unavoidable, but also majestic. There are many examples in polite literature. Obvious to think of – randomly picked – Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The king says, who miss the battle will regret their absence later. (Shakespeare, 1972: 400) War appears as a “heroic action”, a summary of certain virtues (like bravery, good-fellowship, self-sacrifice etc.) In connection let me refer to a contemporary Hungarian writer, László Krasznahorkai, who mentioned an important psychological phase in his novel, titled “War and war” (which is a magnificent literary work about war conflicts and morals): “great achievements raise up men, and men desires greatness, the greatness needs (...) the great action itself, which

(...) can only be accomplished in danger, (...) the pitch of danger (that what war is according to the author – S.K.)” (Krasznahorkai, 1999: 146).

It is unquestionable in the processes of war there are some psychological and moral strains, noble virtues like these. The connection between war and morals can be really analyzed from this angle. At the same time – as we will see later – this relation must be explored from some other viewpoints.

Discussion

I think if there is some reason to consider war positive effects, then we have to review certain civilized, more precise social-economic (and scientific) consequences. For example in a chapter of Wolfgang Pohrt, contemporary German philosopher and sociologist’s new book (the title tells a lot already: “There is no advance (...) without war”) he brings our attention to the fact that “industrial capitalism is also made by war. Who created the market? Of course, the army. The general liability for military service means all of a sudden 100.000 or more uniforms needed and therefore material, cotton. (...) That created textiles, the first industrial mass production” (Pohrt, 2012: 26).

Clearly we could bring up many other certain historical examples where war creates positive, unpredictable (or did not wanted!) changes and progressive procedures in the timeline of history. Social developments like these – certainly – cover our views of war. But however may our opinions, image turn out; the basic question still is that really *what is war* and most importantly *why do people go to war against each other*. This dilemma comes up all the time and keep many people excited, not giving them a moment of rest.

So what is war, more precisely what is force in it like? What mysterious pressure, interest or necessity, or even misbelief moves the wholes process? Can we say Clausewitz, classic of the subject, that war is the “activity of human connection?” (Clausewitz, 1999: 107). Therefore a manifestation which is continued politics “only” with blood. Or simply do we beguile ourselves with that mysterious explanation which tells war is the devil itself? (Teichman, 2006: 2) Why it is a necessary symptom? Why is war necessary?

Obviously, philosophy deals with the questions above for a long time (as many other social sciences). It would be valid to analyze critically the rich material of philosophical history (it would be a huge challenge), I could not consider as my duty even the review of it. I have to settle for some edgy, but not well-known (or acclaimed!) philosophical thought’s highlight. I received some motivation from Jenny Teichman, Australian philosopher’s book. In her work, titled *The Philosophy of War and Peace* she writes about the subject from different angles in a form which is easy to follow and understand. A reviewer of

her book entitled to write that: “Teichman is the best, when she sets the totalitarianism, the conversion and the torture’s politics against the moral confusion which describes the contemporary thinking of the west” (Lang, 2009: 115). I don’t mean to underestimate this problem’s importance, and surely she has successfully defined some lessons at this point. (Paraphrasing this would be another great study.) For me the first chapter of her six part book is more interesting where she sums up and analyzes the most important philosophy historical thoughts from Plato, Aristotle through Grotius till the representatives of the 20th century about the substances of war. I think, the philosophical outlook and analysis in this subject – as in many others – deserves a warm welcome, this chapter of the study has written for the same reason. In the following text I want to add something – even if it is not too much – to set the philosophical basics of war’s subject. I want to bring up and analyze two classic thinkers, Marx and Hegel’s thoughts about the subject, especially some of the words, conceptions by Marx. The direct – actually negative – motivation has given by exactly Teichman who did not recognize the importance of Marx’s concept. I think, without diminishing Teichman’s merit, we must clarify and detail that image and view about war.

But at first let me recall an earlier philosopher’s view. Hegel – as known – in his work, titled *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* refers to the multiple liability of the state. According to Hegel, the state’s purpose is not only ensuring the individual’s life and property. The state’s sovereignty requires the sacrifice of individual’s life and property. Here is the moral issue of war: “War is not to be regarded as an absolute evil and as a purely external accident. (...) War is the state of affairs which deals in earnest with the vanity of temporal goods. (...) War has the higher significance that by its agency, the ethical health of peoples is preserved in their indifference to the stabilization of finite institutions: just as the blowing of the winds preserves the sea from the foulness which would be the result of a prolonged calm, so also corruption in notions would be the product of prolonged, let alone ‘perpetual’ peace” (Hegel, 1945: 210).

From this text, we can obviously see: war – if we want it or not – necessary social event. This necessity interestingly stands on moral view at Hegel. In connection it is worthy of note Cruysberg from Leuven, contemporary philosopher’s reaction. He claims it is right to take morals into the war-theory; what is more, we must pay attention to the war and morals historical changes too. For example, he looks *honor* as a moral virtue, and then he finds out “the state like the ambitious individual can see any critic as a disgrace, and therefore a motive for war. (... But today – S. K.) there is no war for honor, but for higher rank motives. It seems,

honor is no more respected as a motive for war. Rather (...) because basic humanist (...) reasons. Or the so-called civilized nations now rarely refer to honor as an official legitimacy for war. (...) They more likely to organize *land-* and time-limited interventions (...) now they rarely take risks even on the lives of deployed soldiers” (Cruysberg, 2007: 33-34, 140).

Uncontroverted, in the earlier times honor as a virtue and moral value was cherished, and offending that had a predestinated role in starting and maintaining a war. And we can experience that now this legitimate base – sadly – fades away, or in worse cases even vanishes. As if it would give its place for something else, a higher ranked principle above morals, which seems like an extremely abstract and vague ideal, mysterious motive, human move. Hegel stuck at accenting the – classic – moral view of war, maybe this lead him to his “interesting war-theory” (Cruysberg, 2007: 133)

Inserting morals in war-theory, apparently cannot be skipped, but I think there is need for more work to settle the basics or at least we must try it. We must reveal the deeper social roots of war’s motive and manifestation. In other words: do not narrow down the analysis of war to search for certain moral-spiritual categories, thoughts and virtues (like bravery, ambition, honor, etc.). Search for the *root* of all war, the *deepest* and *most generic* philosophical basics of it. We do not have to look far *in time* from Hegel in this case. Perhaps my statement is going to be surprising: there are instructions in the works of Marx which can push forward and deeper the research of war.

I know and feel, referring to Marx is not such a grateful decision nowadays. It is not hip to build from Marx (too), but it is to revile him. And to many others it is the best to totally stay away from him. For many researchers, teachers, intellectuals (who had been believers of Marx themselves that time) his name had become a curse-word, they try to degrade, diminish his thoughts to intellectual poverty. I do not want to deal with the political-ideal metamorphosis problem, not if it would not be relevant and exciting social dilemma. But from my subject’s view I must accent two things, general methodical lessons and concrete theoretical realizations. I will describe the last viewpoint a little more detailed.

About the methodical lesson I want to recall a remarkable but forgotten Hungarian philosopher from the 20th century, József Somogyi. By the way he was the senior lecturer in University of Szeged JGYPK institution (where I also teach now) between the two world wars. He defines the followings as a general policy (we can surely undertake these words still today): “we must keep the objective clarification of sense, edgy critical taste and above morale, trendy words, mass sense of taste, searching for the truth within problems *sub specie aeternitatis*. The

independent thinking ability and critical perspicacity have supremely described by exactly the fashion – we do not follow” (Somogyi, 1940: 9-10).

Today in Hungary (it is not soothing we are not alone with it) there is some intellectual courage needed to analyze thoughts by Marx in times and circumstances when it is absolutely not common. But in his work of lifetime there is a viewpoint – this time theoretical –, which brought me to him. Namely (and this is a stronger reason than the methodical lesson highlighted by József Somogyi) he discovered and deeply analyzed the theme (hopefully it will emerge from the next sketchy introduction), where – in my opinion – every war-research could be established. Or at least it seems like a good thought, which certainly worth discussing.

First of all, let’s take a look to his view about the connection of war and morals. Already known the works of Marx, it is not a surprise; he highlights the negative effects of it. I would only remind for one concrete example. According to the author of the *Capital*: the war is the great common task, the great common labour, which basically always means “*the concentrated and organized force of society*” (highlight from me – S. K.) (Marx, 1906: 823). It can’t be denied, the most brutal violence happened in the modern colonial wars, where nations thought model-like states (Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, France, England) had the responsibility for them. Marx harshly criticizes these otherwise Christian states’ wild and vile colonial economy, exploited campaign against many people. It is worth to highlight out of many atrocities the example of Netherlands in the 17th century. The Dutch, who were first in the development of the colonial system, they model the quarry of incomparable vileness. Marx states clearly: „Nothing is more characteristic than their system of stealing men, to get slaves for Java. (...) The young people stolen were thrown into the secret dungeons of Celebes, until they were ready for sending to the slave-ships. (...) Wherever they set foot, devastation and depopulation followed. Bajuwangi, a province of Java, in 1750 numbered over 80.000 inhabitants, in 1811 only 18.000. Sweet commerce!” (Marx, *ibidem*: 824).

Examples from Marx can be continued at will, and there is no doubt, colonization as the many other forms of war spells itself into history as violence, which brings huge pain and destruction. The discovery, awareness of open and hidden forms of *violence*, but firstly *convicting* social violence *clearly, firmly* are all-time moral obligation and responsibility of humanity. This is the main moral lesson and order of every war. The historical forms of violence obviously change with time, but the moral lesson always stays the same: war (as a concentrated social violence) is very undeserving and degrading to humanity, why it is

reprehensible and unacceptable. It is not much comparing this to the effects and power of violent behaviors, acts, but not standing up against it morally means that humanity gives up itself in every way degrading its fate to a simple toy of it.

The moral questions about war are important for Marx – as the same way for Hegel –, but it is apparent that he highlights some other legitimate connections of them. But he moves forward in his analysis, and makes a general history-philosophical discovery, which takes the base of the dilemma of the need for war to another level in its roots. It is quite understandable that Marx was excited about the question of why people maintain war. For a first sight it can be surprising he suggests a new starting-point for the analysis: set the base for the concept of *property*. At this point his analysis becomes more abstract but deeper in thinking, and the results forms into a unique conception. I may state, *the words of Marx about the birth of property and historical forming sets the base the whole war-research*. Or, at least it is a necessary, irreparable philosophical essential for every research of war. Let's take a look of the most important texts by Marx!

Property, which is the summarizing category of history eventually “*Property* thus originally means no more than a human being's relation to this natural conditions of production as belonging to him, as his, as presupposed along with his own being: relations to them as *natural presuppositions* of his self, which only form, so to speak, his extended body” (Marx, 1972: 370-371). The thing is that property itself is the production's relation of natural assumption: a connection, which belongs to the human nature. In this case according to Marx *land* is the key. We cannot accent the social-historical importance of land enough: it is material, tool and product at the same time. A “big laboratory”, the natural arsenal which starts the historical movement and repentance. Pristine union of property and land, what we talk about here, where: „property – i. e. the relation of the individual to the *natural* conditions of labor and of reproduction as belonging to him, as the objective, nature-given inorganic body of his subjectivity” (Marx, 1972: 357).

In other words – and here we get a direct instruction too about the meaning of war in a history-philosophical way: “they relate to it (namely to land and ground – K. S.) as their property, although they never stabilize this property. (...) *Warfare* is therefore one of the earliest occupations of each of these naturally arisen communities, both for the defense of their property and for obtaining new property” (Marx, 1972: 370). So it is not a coincidental formula, this view of property (as the sheer augmentation of the human inorganic body) comes up as a part of a direct and often analyzed concept. The view of the “mature” Marx – not surprisingly for me – is advancing in the most philosophical earlier work, but in a very abstract form. We can read the following lines in economy-

philosophical scripts: “both the material of labor and man as the subject, are the point of departure as well as the result of the movement (and precisely in this fact, that they must constitute the point of departure, lies the historical necessity of private property” (Marx, 1970: 70).

Of course the texts above can be extended with new add-ons and expansions. But perhaps the viewpoint of war and its necessity by Marx is sensible from this much. It belongs to the person himself, his body – which is unquestionable – like his two hands. Therefore those are his natural property. His life’s natural assumption. The human looks or tries to look the same way to the land, the ground and their product, together with the animals and people of the land. *Like those belong to his existence!* Like those are his hands’ extensions! With the most generic words: there comes up a unique, pristine symbiosis between man and nature, which materialized in property and its relations. Property becomes the starting-point, historical beginning of social movement. And in the end, this relation becomes the inducement of every war and conflict – even if someone does not recognize or deny that fact.

So war is a necessary event according to Marx, and to reveal and understand it – sketched above – we must go down to its deepest historical roots. But it is important to recognize that this necessity does not occur like fate, at all costs or a mystery above humanity. So it is not some mysterious force or an unexplainable curse on humanity. In connection with this, let me refer to Ferenc Tőkei’s concluding statement – as I know the best Hungarian philosopher of the works by Marx –, which has been avoided by the researchers of war. “Historical materialism – says Tőkei – is not admits any kind of relation and institution’s general necessity, abstract and eternal ‘unavoidability’, but is not giving that to the coincidental either, rather reveals the all-time historical necessities and makes some more general conclusions based on those” (Tőkei, 1977: 177-178). Marx talks about war with this historical dialect.

Apparently, Tőkei’s way of thinking and language, are based on defined views of Marx. In that sense, his theoretical, methodical views, philosophical thinking feed upon the works of Marx. But it is not a problem *of its own*, because every great thinker can be described by a certain source, defined explanation and linguistic description. Let’s think about any other classic philosopher’s way of thinking! However the Hungarian philosopher’s quotation above, I think – in proportion with Marx’s view –, contains a discovery, which worth a highlight and thinking more about it. Precisely: we must react shortly to his phrase and explanation of necessity’s “historical dialect”.

Truly, war and violence see history through, and we cannot be certain these kind of events going to stop in the future. In every war and conflict basically concrete historical interests, relations and objective pressures manifest themselves. Historical dialect exactly means, these are not happening above people, independently. So war is “not an absolute eternal social fact, rather a relative symptom depending on social changes”, – points out Sándor Giesswein, a forgotten Hungarian sociologist. With more generic words: “the show us war as a relatively independent variable in the ever-changing human scene, (...) war conditioning and supporting these in the most surprising and lasting ways” (Giesswein, 1915: 6). Obviously, human activities and participant’s conscious-emotional status work and summarized in the process. And at this point enter *morals*. The individual (a prime minister, political leader, military general, and owner of a multinational company, program-editor, teacher, artist, or anybody else) can’t be unconcerned in the question of why and how a war conflict starts. A man takes the floor and protest against the war and every kind of violence. As the individual is responsible for his own fate, in the same way every nation – on different levels – also responsible for the way of the world form. The reasons of violent conflicts and wars can’t be affixed to only economic or power interests, necessities.

Conclusion

Many think that way if war is necessary then every moral objection, effort is useless and pointless. For me it is still obvious that there is significance of moral views, responsibility and sense. It has also functionality if a war has already started. At this time it is a basic moral order to lead the opponents to the courtroom which is the place to argue, not the battlefield, where they take each other’s lives. This kind of moral view and gesture – certainly – not always leads to success, but if only one war conflict has been solved by this way, it was worth the try. And let’s not forget that in the other unsolved examples there is still hope for peaceful solution.

Because we cannot forget for a moment (I referred to a literary example in the beginning of my study, now for a closure let me do that again) the beautiful lines of László Krasznahorkai from his novel quoted earlier: peace is “the biggest achievement of humanity” (Krasznahorkai, 1999: 162). Agreed with the writer, let me add this – in orientation of my concrete theme –: *defending peace is a moral duty for all of us*. In the end, let me respond to the chosen thought of Coleman Phillipson to my motto, which says: it is not given to humanity to live in eternal peace. It seems like, it is a true statement, because we know well, experience the fact that if we shout for peace, there is need to be war, we like it or not. Many recognized this unique connection between war and peace.

Remember to the lines – of Giesswein again –: “war and peace is two presuming factor one another, like light and shadow. Where is no war, or, at least, the opportunity for war, there is no point of a movement for peace.” (Giesswein, 1915: 36) But I rather accent the second word, peace: in my opinion peace is the priceless, irretrievable treasure of humanity. Gaining that and defending it constantly is a community problem and work as huge – if not bigger – as war itself.

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REVIEW ARTICLES

JESS

Researching the Identity of
the Chosen People – A Hermeneutical Proposal,
Marcel V. Măcelaru,
*Discursul etno-național în Biblia Ebraică.
Repere metodologice în analiza narațiunilor
istoriografice veterotestamentare*



Iosif Riviș-Tipei*

The search for ancient Israel's identity has long been an issue of debate in scholarly circles. Most frequently the questions asked have had the historical emergence of Israel in Canaan in view and although several scenarios have been put forward over the years, the discussion seems to be far from over. Proposals range greatly – on the one hand we have the so-called maximalists, who tend to treat the narrative account given in the book of Joshua as objective history, and thus describe Israelite emergence in terms of total military conquest. On the other hand, there are the so-called minimalists, who do not trust the historical accuracy of the Biblical account and seek to explain Israel's appearance in Canaan as an emergence from within, in which the peasant population arose and took over the control of the territory from the inhabitants of the city-states.

The book authored by Marcel Măcelaru, entitled *Discursul etno-național în Biblia Ebraică: Repere metodologice în analiza narațiunilor istoriografice veterotestamentare* [*Ethno-national discourse in the Hebrew Bible: Methodological landmarks in the analysis of Old Testament historiographic narratives*], proposes a fresh approach to the issue, one which accounts for the way ethno-national identity is expressed in direct discourse within the narrative material of the Hebrew Bible. Methodologically this represents an innovative move, one which has the potential to refocus the debate on Israel's identity. As argued by the author, when so undertaken, such a description of Israel will be a discursive accomplishment rather than a historical one.

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The book consists of 4 chapters, bracketed by a short Introduction and a Conclusion. It begins in the Introduction with the observation that descriptions of identity can refer to features external observers see when dealing with a particular entity, or can be discursive articulations of internal feelings, thoughts and attitudes given by the entity itself. This categorization is complemented with the Romanian philosopher Lucian Blaga's particular insight that national/ethnic identity is best expressed in the literary/cultural creations of a people.

The conceptualization of identity given in the Introduction provides the theoretical framework used in Chapter 1 to assess the contribution of several representative scholars to the debate on Israel's identity. It is shown that, when talking of Israelite identity, most times scholars have in mind the historical entity 'Israel', distinct from and existing outside of the text of the Hebrew Bible. As such, definitions of Israelite identity tend to be limited – they make exclusive reference to what external observers (scholars) can say about Israel's characteristics at any given time and place. Even in works in which a careful examination of the Biblical text is undertaken, the expression of Israelite identity is envisioned as a description of such features within a given textual tradition. Such an understanding can lead to a hermeneutical fallacy, for an approach that looks for socio-historical information tends to treat Biblical narratives as a source of historical information, a pool of resources to talk about 'Israel', and consequently neglects their literary value. The author argues, however, that these traditions, envisioned as Israel's cultural/literary accomplishment, provide an internal identity articulation, that is, Israel's very self-expression. As such, the study undertaken here explores modalities of identity expressions within these narrative traditions for the purpose of establishing how Israel understood and defined itself.

The methodological framework proposed, which is the main point of the publication, is provided in Chapter 2. It is argued that Hebrew Bible narrative texts relating Israel's life come together to form a consistent narration, a 'sacred story', which provides a symbolic universe or a 'story world' within which the identity depiction takes place. It is also suggested that an examination of identity within such literature should be confined to the limits of this 'story world', for it is the only world to which the present researcher has unmediated access. Moreover, it is concluded that any examination of identity needs to take into account the structure of the plot and the rhetorical strategies used in this 'sacred story'. In terms of structure, the plot reveals pivotal narratives that describe changes in Israel's status and identity, two of which are selected for analysis in order to provide examples of how the theory

might work in practice. In terms of rhetorical strategies, the description of identity as external cultural features and internal attitudes expressed discursively is considered an appropriate conceptualization as long as the examination is restricted to the 'story world'. Finally, insights from ritual, cultural and discourse analysis are employed as specific methodological tools to be used in the analysis.

Following this methodological discussion, the book offers an interpretation of identity based on two biblical texts: Exodus 19: 1-24: 11 (Chapter 3) and Nehemiah 7: 72b-10: 40 (Chapter 4). Based on the first passage it is argued that the birth of Israel takes place (within the story-world) as a divine initiative, for in this passage God provides an identity definition expressed in direct discourse (in Exodus 20) that transforms a bunch of slaves running away from their Egyptian taskmasters into a 'holy nation'. The distinct external identity marker of this newly formed people is 'Torah', the Law given to them by their God, while the internalised definition of identity takes the form of 'Torah obedience' and verbally expressed allegiance to God, which make Israel a distinct community.

Regarding the second passage, it is argued that the culmination of Israel's re-birth as a 'nation' out of a group of former exiles is hereby depicted. As such, this pericope revisits the earlier Exodus paradigm of slaves being transformed into a nation. However, there is also a negative side to the situation in Nehemiah's account, for the former exiles remain subject to the Babylonian imperial power even after returning to Jerusalem. The emphasis in the pericope is again on Torah obedience, which again makes 'Torah' the most prominent external identity marker these people have. The internalised definition of identity, given as direct discourse, takes form here in the communal prayer of confession given in Nehemiah 9. Thus, differently than the Exodus account, where YHWH's voice is the only voice that describes who Israel is, here Israel herself has the speech production role, while the divinity does not appear to be explicitly involved. As such, while in the Exodus account the identity depicted appears to be solely YHWH's invention, here this is solely an Israelite enterprise. The author draws parallels between these two accounts and shows that the dynamic involved in the expression of identity via direct discourse seems to be the specific mode in which Biblical narratives portray Israel.

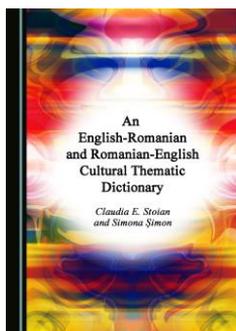
The conclusion of the book revisits the earlier observation that the search for Israel's identity within Biblical narratives ought to identify both external markers and internalised expressions of what makes Israel a distinct nation and suggests that based on the two texts examined this can be safely treated as a typical mode of

representation, commonly the way in which Biblical narratives speak about Israel. As such, the methodological point advanced in the book regarding how one ought to ‘search’ for Israel adds to the debate rehearsed in the first chapter, for it introduces the idea that a shift from purely historical concerns to a more literary sensitive approach would actually bear results in terms of describing who ancient Israel was.



Translating cultures:
Claudia Stoian and Simona Şimon, *An
English-Romanian and Romanian-
English Cultural Thematic Dictionary*

Carlos A. Sanz Mingo*



Seldom do we find dictionaries in Humanities focusing on very specific topics and in such a depth like *An English-Romanian and Romanian-English Cultural Thematic Dictionary* by Claudia Stoian and Simona Şimon (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2018). Usually, this kind of dictionaries tend to satisfy only part of the topics they intend to analyse, or a specific section of the language(s) of study. However, on the contrary, the work that both authors have employed in offering an exhaustive list of cultural terms used both in English and Romanian is praiseworthy.

Indeed, the importance of globalization that the world has been enjoying for the past few decades, at a higher speed, perhaps, than in all the previous centuries put together, has prompted the necessity of works such as this to help not only Modern Languages and/or Translation Studies in their learning process. In fact, this dictionary will be of interest to anyone who wants to learn more about the Romanian or Anglo-Saxon cultures, and it is, certainly, a very necessary text. Anyone who is interested in other cultures will find *An English-Romanian and Romanian-English Cultural Thematic Dictionary* by Claudia Stoian and Simona Şimon very useful. Moreover, the dictionary will become an indispensable tool for those students who are studying another culture or language. Interculturality is one of the skills that many employers emphasise and to which they attach importance, and they will continue to do so, even in difficult political and societal moments such as this- or, rather, because of them. To be intercultural is not only to know another language; it is to understand another culture and to live it. A dictionary

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such as this precisely helps university students to start this process, namely, to begin understanding another culture and its different fields (clothing, cuisine, holidays, language, sports, cuisine, etc) as a necessary preamble to live that culture, to know it, to become immersed in it, and to learn it properly in order to put all this gained knowledge in practice for their future employment.

The painstaking task which is to create a dictionary bears fruitful results in *An English-Romanian and Romanian-English Cultural Thematic Dictionary*. The election of topics provides a practical focus on lexis that is clearly linked to cultural ideology, national identity, touristic and leisure time activities, amongst others.

The dictionary is clearly divided into two parts following a preface by the two authors. The first part enlists the terms from English into Romanian within a general vocabulary section focused followed by semi-specialised sections focusing on cultural ideology and identity, ranging from clothing to sports and holidays. This is complemented by a carefully selected list of verbs and their translation into Romanian. Whenever the verb undergoes any phonetical change or an irregularity of any type, this is also clearly indicated in the dictionary. The thematic lists introduce the reader to the differences in interjections, which is a welcome feature of originality for works such as this, as well as introducing onomatopoeias a field with which language students feel awkward and surprised in equal terms (why do dogs bark differently in each language?). For translation studies particularly, the section on measurement units will be specifically useful when translating official texts. This section closes with a list of countries, languages, and nationalities, very useful for language learners of all levels. The second part (Romanian into English) mirrors the precedent one by using the same layout, thematic fields, and grammatical aid in their entries.

A dictionary such is this one is very valuable for learners of Romanian in English-speaking countries where there is a clear need of texts such as this. Using both everyday words and semi-specialised vocabulary (namely, the section on sports, holidays, weights and measurement, to mention a few), this dictionary will cater for the linguistic and cultural needs of the English-speaking learners of Romanian and vice-versa. As the authors explain, this dictionary will supply students with the basic tools to understand culture and intercultural communication in a globalised world.

The novelty of this dictionary does not only lie in the pair of languages used, but also in the introduction to semi-specialised terms in specific sections, with itemised lexis, or the inclusion of onomatopoeias and interjections, as mentioned above.

Translation is part of the human activity of communication and helps, between many other things, to bridge the gap of understanding and knowledge between cultures. Claudia Stoian and Simona Şimon's dictionary, *An English-Romanian and Romanian-English Cultural Thematic Dictionary*, helps in this precious task of intercommunication and comprehension in a moment when understanding others and being aware of cultural differences is transparently becoming more useful and needed.

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