



**The Romanian Institute of
Orthodox Theology and Spirituality**
The Chapel “St. Apostles Peter and Paul”
Incorporated in August 1993, New York

**Alienation and Authenticity
in Environments
of the 21st Century:
Technology, Person, and
Transcendence**

*The Nineteenth Ecumenical Theological
Symposium*

December 3, 2011

Published by The Romanian Institute of
Orthodox Theology and Spirituality

New York, 2012

The Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality
incorporated in August 1993

Theodor Damian, Ph.D., President

30-18 50th Street, Woodside, NY 11377, Tel.: (718) 626-6013,

E-mail: DamianTh@aol.com

Editor: Theodor Damian

Assistant to the editor and designer: Claudia Damian

INTERNATIONAL EDITORIAL BOARD:

John A. McGuckin (Theology), Columbia University and Union
Theological Seminary, New York;

Oskar Gruenwald (Interdisciplinary Studies), Institute for
Interdisciplinary Research, California;

Heinz-Uwe Haus (Theater), University of Delaware, Newark

Louis Tietje (Ethics, Social Policy), Metropolitan College of New
York;

Nina Tucci (Literature), University of Houston, Texas

Paul LaChance (Theology) College of St. Elisabeth, New Jersey;

Ioan N. Rosca (Philosophy) Spiru Haret University, Bucharest;

Gloria Possart (Applied Sciences) University of Applied Sciences,
Berlin;

Mihai Hincinschi (Theology), "Dec. 1st 1918" University, Alba
Iulia, Romania.

© 2012, The Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and
Spirituality, All rights reserved
Printed in the USA

Richard Gallo, *Principles of Interrogative Problem Representation*

©2012 Richard Gallo, PhD

ISBN 978-1-888067-34-9

ISSN 1084-0591

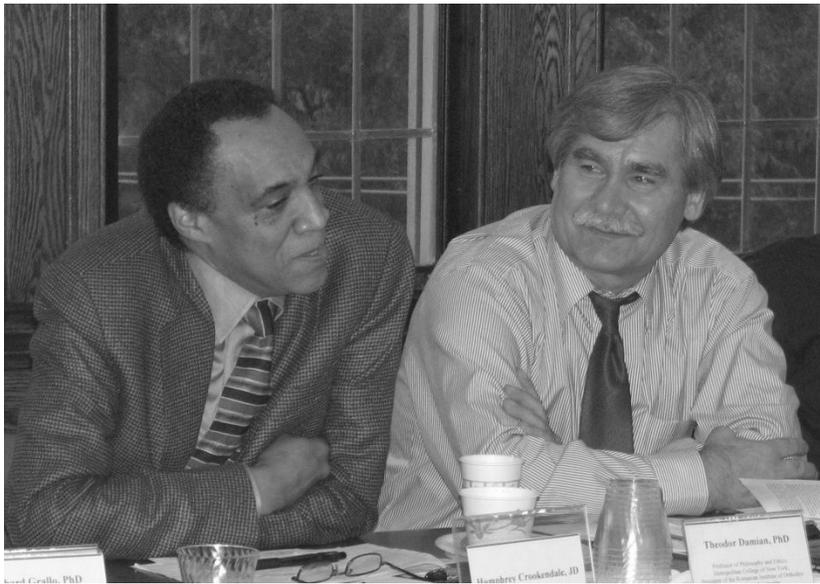
CONTENTS

**The Nineteenth Ecumenical Theological
Symposium**

THEODOR DAMIAN Man as Divine Gift: The Transcendent Character of Human Identity	5
RICHARD GRALLO Principles of Interrogative Problem Representation - A Preliminary Sketch	21
LOUIS TIETJE The Phenomenology of Sin: What Lutheran Theology Can Teach the Unbeliever	33
MIHAI HIMCINSCHI <i>Homo tehnicus</i> as Contemporary Missionary Challenge	49
STEVEN CRESAP The Morality of Mayhem. Moral and Policy Implications of Virtual Violence	69
PAUL LACHANCE Education for Authenticity: Bellah on Formation, Critical Thinking, and Participation	73
GEORGE LĂZĂROIU, RAMONA MIHĂILĂ The New Logic of Social Media	85
SERGEY TROSTYANSKIY Orthodoxy and the Issue of Human Identity: The Apophatic Approach to Christian Anthropology	93



Theodor Damian giving the opening address, next to Humphrey Crookendale (left) and Richard Grallo



Humphrey Crookendale (left) and Theodor Damian

Man as Divine Gift: The Transcendent Character of Human Identity

Introduction

If by the term “world” we refer to the cosmos, to our planet or planetary environment, then I agree with Leibnitz that our world is the best among all possible worlds. Astrophysicists and cosmologists like J. Polkinghorne, Karl Giberson, George Ellis, and others, who believe that there is purpose in the universe and that purpose has to do with man’s destiny, would agree, too.

But if by “world” we mean people and human civilization, I do not think we represent the best of all possible worlds. We acknowledge this with painful disappointment. We know all the problems of our civilization and world: alienation, agony, absurdity, futility, decay, disease, death, doubt. We are people of doubt. This “deadly disease” as some call it, was brought to us partially by science.

In the Middle Ages, doubt was considered the queen of philosophy: *dubito ergo sum*. Doubt is believed to be a fundamental ingredient of human nature. The justification of this view is simple: you doubt, because you don’t know; when you doubt you search and then you find out. And this is how you progress. The question here is: what if you only think you found out, but in fact you did not? Descartes, who is not only a philosopher, but also a theologian, was aware of this problem. That is why in his *Discourse on Method*, and more particularly through his metaphor of getting lost in the woods, he is looking for a way out of this epistemological and ontological impasse, but he does not guarantee any finding of the truth. Consequently, he advises the reader to consider, after due reflection, that which *appears* only to be of value (the true, the good, the useful) and stay firm on it and move forward.

Theodor Damian, PhD, is Professor of Philosophy and Ethics, Metropolitan College of New York; President of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality

The underlying assumption here is clear: we do not know. However, we need to do something; we cannot just sit down and die.

This is only a step away - or maybe not even that much - from the theological understanding of the human condition. We are created in the image of God. As creatures we cannot have knowledge of the Creator. We live by what is given to us. Just as the image of God through which we exist is a gift, so is the revelation of God and the possibility to know partially.

In fact Descartes' advice to believe that which only *appears* to our mind as good and the urge to stick to that because we need something firm in our life in order to make sense of things and go forward is a step behind the theological solution which says: believe in God. You cannot know God in His essence, but believe that there is a God, that there is providence, that you are cared for and that nothing is accidental in life, stay firm on that belief and do something, move on.

Now, if you believe in God, you place yourself in a much more complex and complicated situation, but also a much more meaningful one than Descartes' subjective paradigm.

The belief in God raises two major questions however: who is God in whom I believe, and who am I, the believer.

The identity of man as crown of God's creation represents a constant theme in Christian theology throughout the centuries. However, as human society has become more secularized and many new academic fields and disciplines have appeared in the mosaic of the study of man, all kinds of approaches have been formulated, many conflicting with one another, many reductionist in nature, that have made it necessary for theology to reaffirm its stance, not by rejecting or ignoring the other approaches but by engaging them in fruitful conversation.

The general framework in which the topic of human identity must be approached, discussed and analyzed is offered by the field of theological anthropology, where the concept of *imago Dei* is essential in understanding man's identity and dignity as divine gifts. In this context *imago Dei* is taken as a point of reference to either start a set of reflections, to conclude it or to have it as a permanent basis of analysis and interpretation.

This essay intends to explain that human identity springs from man's creation in the image of God and that it is maintained in purity and integrity inasmuch as man stands rightly before God. As

man is a theandric event, his or her positioning before God will have to have a Christocentric character and will have to happen in the Church.

Our World

Looking at the contemporary Western society it is easy to notice the rapid erosion of family values, the relativization of values such as friendship, commitment, honesty and the like, the blind dismissing of tradition, and other similar tendencies and attitudes. In fact, it seems that the more a certain thing is valuable to people, the more it will become subject to direct and indirect attacks and denigration.

This is especially relevant for our time and society, which is described by N. Berdiaev as being in a state of agony, where man lives in profound unhappiness due to his feeling of despair,¹ and of which, as A. Heschel writes,² we cannot think without a feeling of shame, indignation and disgust, a society where, according to E. Cioran's reflection,³ because of the speed of life there is no longer room for extasis, therefore no room for contemplation, meditation, and prayer; the same philosopher notices that this leads inevitably to perdition and even more so since, as described by V. Frankl⁴ and E. Fromm⁵ among others, we live in a neurotic world, a world characterized by a destructive neurosis, that annihilates itself and which is nothing but the pure expression of man's feeling of existential frustration.

In one of his seminal anthropologic works Abraham Heschel warns that the opposite of the human is not even the animal, but the demonic. He deplores man's giving to himself zoologic definitions and thus taking on the image of the animal instead of looking for higher standards.⁶

Indeed, starting even with Aristotle's definition according to which man is a social animal (*zoon politikon anthropos*) man has been compared with the animal, at least in this common translation. (In my view, this is a mistranslation and misinterpretation for two reasons: first, animals are social, too; in this case the definition does not tell anything specific about man, and therefore is not a definition. Second, the word *zoon* comes from *zoi*, "life"; *zoon* then

is “living being” in its primary sense; *politikon* is “who lives in the city”, *polis*. To live in the city implies rules, civilization, politeness, protocol etc.)

Similar to Aristotle’s definition of man, translated and transmitted to us in zoological terms, there are other, more modern, definitions according to which man is an animal who makes tools, animal who cooks his food, etc.

Whatever your term of comparison or point of reference is, that is what you will tend to become. We know that from daily experience. Tell your child constantly that he is good, talk to him or her only in positive terms and you will see how wonderfully that child grows; tell him constantly that he is bad, hit and hurt him all the time and you will see what child you will have. While exceptions might exist, the rule is that you become the value you adopt. Tell me the values you have and I will tell you who you are.

In this context a theology with emphasis on a loving relation between God and man, on the communitarian relation among people, on man’s conscientization of the value and dimension of his or her own identity, on deification as the supreme goal of our life on earth, is more than significant and necessary.

Image and Likeness

According to John Polkinghorne the concept of human dignity has to be liberated from the reductionist and distorted understandings of it. The same can be said about human identity. This is how man’s identity and dignity will recover their integrity and meaning.⁷ From a Christian perspective the only one who liberates is Christ. That is why a return to Christ’s teaching and to the Bible is necessary.

The entire Bible is about God and man and consequently the existence of man is presented there as a theocentric event. Human beings are characterized by an inherent neediness and vulnerability that determine a certain position they have to take as they stand *coram Deo*.

Being created in God’s image man is bestowed with glory and honor which are royal attributes and from which worth and dignity spring. According to Gerhard Ebeling, a protestant theologian, the

image of God is not a human property but the word of institution spoken upon human beings. With the word of institution there is a call, God's call upon us, and there are gifts, which are God's gifts in us.

According to Christian doctrine, man is created in the image of God. The image consists basically of reason, feelings and will as they are characteristic to the human being. But man was also created in God's likeness, that is with the possibility to attain holiness and immortality. As Fr. Dumitru Staniloae writes, "man is a being who is rational and endowed with the ability to speak, who is communicative, inexhaustible, and that is why he is thirsting for immortality. Man is capable of immortality".⁸

Man's great chance was that he was created out of God's love. That is why, even after the fall, God did not dismiss him altogether. Through the fall the image was darkened, but not destroyed. This point is so important for its dignifying character that the Church introduced it into the burial service in order to make it as widely known as possible: "I am the image of Your ineffable glory, even though I bear the marks of sin." This is, one can say, the most beautiful and noble definition ever given to the human being.

The image of God in man is what keeps man into being. Man's existence was and is entirely due to God's love. Just because this love was the same before and after the fall it indicates that it is divine, perfect, total. God hates sin, but loves the sinner. Thus there is no ontological identification between sin and sinner. That is why the salvation offered by God is consistent with God's own ways. In Christ, man is given the chance to go back to where he used to be and start again. Since Christ is true God and true man, participation in Christ's life is participation in the divine life.

The human hypostasis of Christ is the bridge on which man walks from himself to God, on which he or she walks the way of likeness to God: holiness and immortality. If I am in Christ I am in God. Being created in the image of God implies that the ultimate goal of man's life is deification. Participation is the foundation *sine qua non* for deification.

This is a process without end. St. Gregory of Nyssa calls it *epectasis*. It is the constant tendency to reach higher. It starts here, and it never ends, because in God there is no end.

This way of participation lets man live always *sub specie aeternitatis*. He cannot live without this eschatological perspective, because it is in perfect accord with his nature.⁹

Man as Divine Gift

The gift expresses the love of the giver towards the receiver. The meaning of the gift consists of the love it expresses and brings with it. And the meaning is fulfilled when we allow ourselves to be transformed by the gift, and transforming the gift by our acceptance of it through which we make it our own, we offer both the gift and ourselves, transformed, as a gift to God.

However even if man makes the gift his own in order to work on it in view of its transformation, he or she must not forget that he is not the one who created it and consequently man needs to keep a certain distance from it. This detachment is paradoxical and not easy to accomplish when people usually have the impression that what is given to them is totally theirs. Because what man possesses man destroys, while receiving a gift and using it, man must also keep being detached from it.

Man also must perceive his or her relationship with those surrounding him as a gift. If the gift of the relation was to disappear, there would not be anything left. Man is a gift to man. Instead of living as if he is a wolf to man, *Homo homini lupus*, man needs to live as a gift to man, *Homo homini donum*.

According to D. Staniloae's thinking, the gift must not be dealt with for its own sake, in separation from its two intrinsic poles: the giver and the receiver. The gift contains therefore in its nature a precise purpose, a precise destination. That is why it is on the one hand a working tool for the fulfillment of the purpose and on the other hand the expression of a conscious, deliberated relationship between two persons.

Thus, the receiver of the gift, beyond the immediate joy of its reception, must direct his or her mind and heart towards the giver. It is only then that the gift fulfills its destiny. That is even more so since the gift represents a renunciation from the part of the giver and consequently bears the sign of the cross.

The purpose of the gift is thus strictly related to the loving relationship between two persons. The gift is the messenger of love. In our relation to God, because God is love (John 4,16) and because God loved us first (John 4, 19), the gift we receive from Him is the sign of His love, meant to stimulate our love in such a way that through the gift, a dialogue of love and mutual giving between us and God be instated.¹⁰ The same can be said about the gifts people make to each other.

The gift must remain gift. One cannot receive it and then block it. The gift must be given, it is in this way only that it fulfills its meaning.

Actually, the supreme value of man consists exactly of the fact that his existence is constituted by God's gift. This is the reason for which, when he falls into darkness and risks to lose himself, God does not hesitate to send His only begotten Son to save man, as a valuable being, from the absurdity of death.¹¹

The fact that man represents such a high value before God is also confirmed by the distinctive, unique character of each human person; this is due to the Holy Spirit and this is why man was elevated to the level of being compatible with God who is also a unity in diversity; on the other hand distinction and diversity themselves are divine gifts.¹²

What is important here is the fact that the idea of gift leads directly to a certain way of being, namely one based on responsibility and gratitude. In other words, the relation giver-receiver generates and assumes the relation between vocation and responsibility (call - answer), and when vocation itself is a gift, the answer cannot be but doxologic. Doxologic man is then the incarnation of the model of man's existence for man and that of man before God. And this happens in the Church and is fulfilled in the Holy Communion.

The Holy Eucharist is the culminating point in which the circuit of the gift is accomplished. From God to man, from man - through men and in Christ - back to God. In this way the circulation of the gift is never closed, because it goes back to God, only to proceed from Him again, ever richer.

However in this pilgrimage the gift does not remain the same. Essentially it is the same, but going through so many hands it receives the imprint of each of them.

More precisely, man cannot return to God a gift which is not worked, enriched, fruitful, multiplied in a way or another. The parable of the talents tells this to us clearly. That is so because the gift is the immediate expression of love, and when one loves truly one does not only give what one received but also wants to give something from oneself.

When you make a gift useful, it bears in it two loves: the one of the giver and your own, as you put your own mark on it; making the gift useful in this way is the only way in which the dialogue of the gift is complete and indeed ever enriching.¹³

The offering of our life to God is thus an act of justice. It is just to give when you receive. The same is valid with those around us; because they are gifts for us, because without them we cannot live,¹⁴ our giving to them is a vital necessity and an act of justice.

The return of the gift must be done with gratitude. When we refer to our relation to God, the return of the gift is done in a framework of prayer, even though the prayer in itself is a divine gift offered to us in order for us to return it to God.¹⁵

In our relation to other people, gratitude becomes obligatory, because it makes the gift efficient. Our gratitude results from the awareness of the significance of the existence of the other for our own existence.¹⁶ This fact becomes even more evident when we think that in our fellow citizens we actually meet Christ.¹⁷

As D. Staniloae writes, the gift is man's way towards immortality, towards eternal life. Man, as a rational being is thirsty of knowledge and of immortality because he has the intuition of his capacity to be immortal. *Epectasis* is one of his fundamental characteristics. He always tends towards what is ahead, to what is bigger. The way to infinity, to eternity, must be accomplished both on the vertical and on the horizontal,¹⁸ that is through an adequate understanding of the idea of gift and its right application in both types of relationships: with God and with others, but always centered on Christ, since He is "both the personal God and the Man realized at maximum in his quality of person destined to eternity in God."¹⁹

Being the only one who can offer God to us in an inexhaustible manner, Christ is the key to the mystery of the gift, both at the level of understanding and at that of its application toward the acquisition of eternal life.

Human Identity and Transcendence

Man's ideal is always related to the transcendent as he or she is in constant pilgrimage from real to ideal, from immanent to transcendent. The target of the pilgrimage is the home of being. It is because man belongs (and not to himself) that his entire destiny is marked by this metaphysical thirst.

Because we don't own it, the *imago Dei* requires that we take "with utmost seriousness the existence of the sacred reality of God."²⁰ This should happen all the more since God is an apophatic reality. Based on this divine apophaticism and on man's being created in the image of God, there is an apophatic dimension in man's existence and being as well, which gives an even higher status to his or her identity and dignity. Hence the need for an apophatic anthropology which renders justice to and offers the right framework for an adequate understanding of who we are as humans.

When you believe in God you are placing yourself in front of the Other, you enter a transcending relationship, you are challenged in multiple ways by that relationship. And as Emmanuel Levinas put it, "The Other has a face, and the face of The Other is the foundation of ethics and the origin of civil society".²¹

It is because of the image of God in us that we have an inner propensity towards the holy. We admire the extraordinary and we want to be extraordinary. Indeed, as image of God we are by nature extraordinary. We only fall in different ways into the ordinary, and that is why the extraordinary remains for us a permanent point of reference, an ideal. Indeed, as R. Kendall Soulen writes, the human self is grounded in a transcendent reality.²²

If man is created in the image of God and God is Trinity then man is the image of that Trinity. That means that man first of all has an ontological structure that is communitarian. Community is the opposite of fragmentation, therefore it implies unity at several levels. We speak of one nature and three hypostases (or persons) in the Divine Trinity. For man this means that I am of the same nature as every other man while I am a distinct person, or hypostasis. As in a definition that implies the two elements that we call proximate genre and specific difference, we can say that both of them apply to me. When it comes to genre, I am part of all those who are in it. We share the genre. Then I have my own specific traits that do not

separate but only distinguish me from the others with whom I share the genre.

The communitarian, social character of man's existential destiny gives him not only power but also offers him infinite ways of growth and enrichment. Through the commonality of nature, which transcends me fundamentally, and over which I have no total control, I come in touch with every individual of my genre. Every good that one does affects me, whether I realize it or not, just as every evil. In other words, we are all in this together.

Due to this gift that we have through our creation in the image of God, we can say, paraphrasing well known existentialistic language that we are condemned to community, or, to use less deterministic language, we are given ontologically the gift of community. That is why fragmentation, division, separation is a sin: It goes against nature, against the divine intention for and with us, against the most intimate structures that make us who we are.

If something is complementary to something else and helps the thing to which it is complementary to be what it is, then the thing that is complementary is part of the essential definition of the other, which is why we cannot speak of one without the other. The same applies to oneness and trinity in God and to oneness and plurality in man.

On the other hand, if we are created in the image of the Trinity that means we have something from each divine person. Whatever attributes we believe the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to have, can be found in man, at the human level, keeping the proportions.

Having multiple of qualities from a multiplicity of persons man's existence has infinite opportunities for growth. Man can grow multidirectionally and multilaterally to horizons never imagined, that come from God, but also from other humans.

In fact, this infinite number of opportunities for growth is confirmed by man's thirst for eternity and infinite, for endless growth in the realm of the good.

Personhood and communication

The persons of the Trinity, Paul Florensky comments, are *homoousios* (of the same nature) not just similar to each other (*homiousios*). By the same token, based on the doctrine of man's creation in the image of God, all human beings are *homoousios*, of the same nature, not just *homiousios*, similar to each other. This consubstantiality of humans, understood in the most realistic way made concrete in the human personhood is the true ground for ethics and morality.

Being based on the unity of nature, human personhood tends naturally towards communion. The initial endowment of man with the possibility to reach immortality remains forever a virtual reality. Both the tendency towards communion and the virtual immortality are reflected in the act of communication. My thirst to communicate myself to the other, in a relationship of authentic love, is never exhausted; the same is valid with the unexhausted thirst to receive the loved one's offer of himself in his communication to me.

This is how Dumitru Staniloae puts it:

“The fact that I cannot communicate myself entirely to others shows me the inexhaustible mystery that I am even though even as a mystery I do not know myself except through the fact that I communicate myself to the others. My mystery does not contradict the fact that I know myself as a person that communicates itself to other persons that make themselves known to me as mysteries.”²³

The mystery of the human person is another dimension that connects us to God, and is based on the image of God that we are. The difference consists in the fact that while God is not a mystery to Himself but only to us, we are mysteries, each one to oneself and to one another.

The connection between us is a mystery in itself as well. It springs from the ontological need planted in our being by the One who created us together and for one another.²⁴ This is a *datum* which manifests itself in us independently of our will. That means that my communication here, with others, at the horizontal level is the basis

of my communication with God at the vertical level; one prepares me for the other.

The better I communicate with others here, and through communication offer myself to them, the easier I will get ready to communicate with God to whom I have to offer myself entirely and unconditionally.

Communication, as a tool that helps build the relationship and communion, is a mystery in itself. It is a kind of language that precedes us because it comes from God as it is given to us by God. That is why learning to communicate is a process of anamnesis, of remembering. The inner language of communication (not the external one, the words) is what brings the others to us and makes them transparent to us, thus helping us to discover them, to “see” them in their inner dimensions. This language that helps us to approach and address them properly is the language of contemplation and knowledge: *gnosis*. It reveals to us the others’ identity and facilitates our participation in that identity. That means we “see” how they are, and through that we enter in a perichoretical relationship that allows an essential interpenetration which strengthens communion and advances us towards the eternal life.

In this way our communication becomes an expression of our longing for the original communion placed in us by God through our creation in His Trinitarian image, and ultimately, an expression of our longing for God.

Such communication instaures and restores the original communion among us and implicitly with God. It thus has a sacramental dimension that makes it become liturgy, doxological chant.

John Zizioulas also believes that personhood is an ecstatic act of communion and the participation in the ecclesial personhood does not consist in what we can or cannot do, but in what God does for us. If human identity is a divine gift, that indicates why the divine agency and not the human agency is the source of human dignity.²⁵

Thus the ecclesiological dimension of man’s identity and dignity, since man is a being in communion, indicates the eschatological character of these two fundamentally important existential dimensions; in other words, what starts here and what is being done here in the struggling Church is continued in the triumphant Church in the Kingdom of God. And because the God whose image we bear is a Trinitarian God, it is the doctrine of the

Trinity that offers the most secure framework for a solid understanding of what human identity and dignity are.

Conclusion

It is important to conscientize our identity because realizing who we are leads to an understanding of what we do with who we are.

We live according to how we think. If our thinking is bad, our living is bad. And if the world and life do not go the way we think they should, that means our philosophy about the world and life must be changed. Yet the change of one's way of thinking changes the person, its identity; it changes the spiritual dimension of the person.

Theologically speaking, such a change or renewal can happen only in the Church, and in this action man needs God.

The Church thus becomes the meeting place between God and man and the mediator is Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God incarnated for the salvation of the world. It is Christ who in the Holy Spirit makes God accessible to us. When we are in God's proximity, in communion with Him, it is easier for us to work with the grace of the Holy Spirit towards the restoration of the divine image in us. This is the only way in which we can move from the anthropocentric life style we live in the world, which has led to a *homo homini lupus* (dog-eat-dog) type of existence, to a theocentric life style, where *homo homini deus* (man is god to man) is the saving and lasting paradigm. This is the only way that has a future.

NOTES:

- 1 N. Berdiaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI, 1963, pp. 19-21.
- 2 A. Heschel, *Who is Man?*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1965, p. 14.
- 3 E. Cioran, *The Fall into Time*, transl. by R. Howard, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1970, pp. 67; 73.
- 4 V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1984, p. 131.
- 5 E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, Henry Holt, New York, 1990, pp. 19-20.
- 6 A. Heschel, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-25; 101.
- 7 John Polkinghorne, "Anthropology in an Evolutionary Context," in *God and Human Dignity*, edited by R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead, William B. Eerdmans Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Cambridge, UK, 2006, p. 90.
- 8 Dumitru Staniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu [The Immortal Image of God]*, (in Romanian), Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1987, p. 11.
- 9 Theodor Damian, *Theological and Spiritual Dimensions of Icons According to St. Theodore of Studion*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, Queenstown, Lampeter, 2002, p. 23.
- 10 Dumitru Staniloae, *Ascetica si Mistica Ortodoxa [Orthodox Asceticism and Mysticism]*, II, Ed. Deisis, Alba Iulia, 1993, p. 31.
- 11 *Idem*, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu* pp. 19-20.
- 12 *Idem*, *Teologia Dogmatica Ortodoxa [Orthodox Dogmatic Theology]*, III, Ed. Institutului Biblic si de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Romane, Bucuresti, 1996, p. 56.
- 13 *Idem*, *Spiritualitate si comuniune in liturghia ortodoxa [Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy]*, Ed. Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1986, pp. 19-20.
- 14 *Ibidem*, pp. 166-171.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 407-409.
- 16 *Idem*, *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului [Jesus Christ or The Restoration of Man]*, Ed. II-a, Ed. Omniscope, Craiova, 1993, pp. 20-26.
- 17 *Idem*, *Ascetica si Mistica Ortodoxa*, p. 31; see also *Spiritualitate si comuniune in liturghia ortodoxa*, p. 20.
- 18 *Idem*, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, pp. 10-12.
- 19 *Ibidem*, p. 13.
- 20 John Polkinghorne, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
- 21 see Walter Earl Fluker, "Transformed Nonconformity: Spirituality, Ethics and Leadership in the Life and Work of Martin Luther King, Jr.," in *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Vol. XXV, Nr. 1, 2004, p. 29.

- 22 R. Kendall Soulen, "Cruising toward Bethlehem," in *God and Human Dignity...*, p. 105.
- 23 Dumitru Staniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, p. 114.
- 24 *Ibidem*, p. 100.
- 25 Hans S. Reinders, "Human Dignity in the Absence of Agency," in *God and Human Dignity...*, p. 135.



Richard Grallo



Richard Grallo, Louis Tietje and Theodor Damian

Principles of Interrogative Problem Representation - A Preliminary Sketch

“It appears to me that in ethics, as in all other philosophical studies, the difficulties and disagreements, of which history is full, are mainly due to a very simple cause: namely to the attempt to answer questions, without first discovering precisely what the question is which you desire to answer.Philosophers....are constantly endeavoring to prove that Yes or No will answer questions, to which neither answer is correct, owing to the fact that what they have before their minds is not one question, but several, to some of which the true answer is No, to others Yes.”¹

What is true in philosophy is true in many other fields as well. It is also well known that many human problems do not get solved easily. We know this from our own experience and from reports of the problem solving efforts of others. This paper explores two related reasons for slow progress in problem solving: (1) the obscuring influence of undefined abstractions and (2) the failure to link perceived problems with clear researchable questions. A procedure to remedy these two defects is offered: *Interrogative Problem Representation (IPR)*.

Background

Most developing fields face problems that are difficult, and each field's rate of progress is often assessed by the number and importance of the problems it resolves. For example, medicine, economics and education have their share of problems that seem to persist: finding a cure for various types of cancer, developing an

Richard Grallo, PhD, is Associate Professor of Applied Psychology at Metropolitan College of New York

effective approach to reducing unemployment, providing a meaningful and useful education for students. Some of these problems are poorly defined in terms of their current and desired states,² and because of the uncertainties involved may be described as “fuzzy problems.” Other problems seem far more intractable, fail to yield to greater clarity of definition and may be unsolvable. These have been described as “wicked problems.”³

Difficult problems, if they are to reach solution at all, are more likely to find it only through sustained attention and effort, repeated conceptual clarification and sifting through relevant evidence.⁴ Daniel Kahneman⁵ refers to such a careful process of thinking things through as System II Thinking.

This form of thinking stands in marked contrast to the immediate, reflex, automatic System I type thinking. Despite its speed and ease, System I’s sound-bite, fleeting image and conventional wisdom seem quite inadequate to bring about solutions that are meaningful and beneficial for really difficult problems. Nor do difficult problems yield to simply “thinking without thinking”⁶ or other mindless procedures. While the more elementary and simple forms of thinking grouped into System I may play a part, they are only a part in the more complex System II activities of a really thorough problem solving effort of observation, clarification, testing, application and further clarification.

In previous articles of this *Symposium series*, I have attempted to highlight the importance of this type of System II complex human problem solving for the large topics of the development of culture⁷ and the process of globalization.⁸ In addition, some of the component parts of this type of problem solving have been explored, including: the respective roles of question and insight,⁹ image and imagination,¹⁰ and problem representation.¹¹ In all these efforts it has been emphasized that complex human problem solving is a discursive process that (1) can go through a number of phases, coordinated by a distinct guiding intention, (2) may be disrupted from within or interrupted from outside, and (3) may be well or poorly guided, depending on the initial representation of the problem at hand.¹²

Based on these efforts we have concluded that *comprehensive problem solving* (CPS) is a collection of groups of mental acts and operations that are discursive in nature. Since CPS it is a collection of acts and operations, the overall goal of “solution” may require the

achievement of contributory sub-goals. Since CPS is discursive, it occurs over time tending to the goal of a solution. Also, since it occurs over-time, it is subject to personal disruptions and environmental interferences.

Based on these considerations, three operating assumptions are made in this article. First, complex human problem solving can successfully proceed through a number of phases. Second, this process can be distorted. Third, neither situation is inevitable.¹³

The focus here will be on that aspect of problem solving known as *problem representation*. The history of science offers numerous examples of how innovation was delayed due to a misguided initial representation of the problem at hand. While such examples are many, to be of any practical use historical examples must be formulated into clear principles that will allow problem solvers to address a wide range of problems in a variety of fields.

The aim here is to sketch out and illustrate some principles of problem representation that can be referred to as Interrogative Problem Representation (IPR). The purpose of these principles is twofold: (1) to increase the probability of identifying so-called problem solving efforts that are misguided, and (2) for serious problem solvers to reduce the probability of wasting time. Operating assumptions and recommendations for application will be offered with the principles. An illustrative example will also be considered.

Principles, Recommendations & Operating Assumptions of Interrogative Problem Representation (IPR)

Interrogative Problem Representation (IPR) is a set of three general principles for approaching difficult problems. These principles are associated with recommended interventions and operating assumptions. IPR itself is a cognitive process because it involves a number of mental acts and operations. As a process, it operates over time and is not immediate or intuitive. IPR stands in contrast to any mindless activism that is unguided by critical thinking and active problem solving. Such approaches are trial and error at best. IPR is part of an overall approach to comprehensive problem solving that is both a discipline and habit of mind that aims to avoid disruptions and interferences, short-circuits and the easy

way out. However, since it is a cognitive process extended over time, IPR is subject to personal disruptions and environmental interferences to some extent.

Principle 1 – Many problems, when formulated in a natural language or other symbolic system, contain abstractions with unclear definitions. Undefined abstractions tend to interfere with problem solving.

Recommendation 1a – Isolate and identify all abstract phrases in the problem statement.

Recommendation 1b – Replace abstract phrases with sub-topics or operational definitions. An operational definition defines some X in terms of the procedures needed to measure it or the evidence needed to confirm it.

Principle 2 – Sub-topics and operational definitions can be associated with relatively more specific questions.

Recommendation 2a – Reverse engineer sub-topics and operational definitions to the questions they address.

Assumption 2a – Anything can be formulated as the answer to some question. [What is the question?]

Assumption 2b – Anything can be regarded as evidence in support of some claim or proposition. [The question is: “What is that claim or proposition?”]

Principle 3 – Relatively more specific questions may be grouped according to the guiding cognitive intention.

(a) *Questions for understanding* guide a search for initial meaningful answers to achieve a preliminary grasp of a situation.

(b) *Reflective questions of fact* guide an effort to resolve issues of fact.

(c) *Reflective questions of value* guide an effort to identify and prioritize values.

(d) *Reflective deliberative questions* guide an effort at reasoned decision-making and action.

Recommendation 3a – Identify your current guiding intention, expressed as a question.

Recommendation 3b – Brainstorm multiple formulations of the questions initially expressed in 3a.

Recommendation 3c – Identify conditions requiring fulfillment for a well grounded answer to the newly formulated questions that emerge.

Recommendation 3d -- Select researchable question formulations which have identified ranges of possible answers and identified conditions for support of these answers. The conditions may include: conceptual standards, criteria for resolving issues of fact, criteria for clarifying values, criteria for prioritizing values, and criteria for decision making.

*Illustrative Topic – Digital Technology:
Problem or Solution?*

To be more specific, let us examine a highly problematic area in the field of education.

Since the 1990's there has been an explosive growth in the variety and use of digital technologies. This dramatic change has served to transform personal lives, social institutions and the wider culture. Given these developments one might ask: how is learning and development affected by different technological environments? This is a *question for understanding*, and, as such, it expresses an intention to achieve a preliminary grasp of a situation. To successfully address this question, we will also need some understanding of what an *environment* is, as well as the relative *advantages* and *disadvantages* of digital technology.

Consider what can be meant by “environment.” In the social sciences Bronfenbrenner¹⁴ has described an ecological model of the environment. In this model the human person is at the center, surrounded by a microsystem of persons that she directly interacts with. This microsystem is surrounded by a collection of persons from the microsystem interacting with one another. Beyond this there are the larger contexts of neighborhood, school, church etc. And finally, there is a nation and a culture which contains all of the other elements. In addition to Bronfenbrenner's work, the Russian

psychologist Lev Vygotsky¹⁵ has defined a “zone of proximal development” which includes persons who have a major impact on a given person’s intellectual, moral and social development. For the most part Vygotsky is talking about adults serving to assist children in important learning activities.

The idea of a “zone of proximal development” could also apply to adults and to the “digitalized” environments they find themselves in. The newly developing technologies have affected every aspect of computing, communications, data recovery, retrieval and storage. The result is that the physical environment is now a space that is widely interconnected electronically, that allows for many to participate in information sending, processing and sharing. In effect, during the course of a normal day the 21st century person in developed nations will typically visit and be part of a number of digital and virtual environments that allow for multiple ways of being connected. This phenomenon has been referred to by some as “digital nation.”

It is also important for our purposes to identify some *advantages of digital environments* in terms of things like data, memory and processing. With regard to data, digital environments bring data of all sorts (including text, voice, images, videos and other information) closer to the user at speeds much faster than could have been accomplished prior to their invention. With regard to memory, digital environments enhance the user’s memory allowing for the storage and retrieval of information at a much enhanced rate. In terms of processing, digital environments can facilitate multiple types of processing for problem solvers in many fields. For example this is true in the area of dealing with large quantities of numerical data that one may wish to summarize for statistical purposes.

Consider also some of the *disadvantages of digital environments*. This too can be done in terms of data, memory and processing. With regard to data, digital environments can provide an overflow of information that Alvin Toffler¹⁶ predicted would be “information overload”. In addition this deluge of information can lead to distraction, cognitive overload, and stress. In fact, if it is out of control, this situation could almost lead to a kind of “schizophrenic” mindset.¹⁷ From the point of view of popular culture, a continuous streaming of images and sound-bites can lead to a renewed empiricist overemphasis on sense-data and a renewed

behaviorist overemphasis on inputs and outputs. In terms of memory, digital environments not only enhance memory for the user but they enhance memory for anyone with access to those environments. Two immediate implications of this are that social classes will be reconstructed based on information access, and there will be a vast reduction of privacy. In terms of processing, digital environments enhance processing for any purpose whatsoever, whether useful or useless, constructive or destructive, moral or immoral.

From all of this, some initial general conclusions can be drawn. First, digital environments provide a tsunami of data, images and other information. Second, digital environments are data saturated environments that can lead to a new empiricism that emphasizes the primacy of sense data and can lead to a new behaviorism that emphasizes the primacy of input. Third, the relatively autonomous mental acts and operations of questioning, insight, judgment, decision making and reasoned action are required more than ever in practice and in theory to sort through all of this.¹⁸ Fourth, if relatively autonomous questioning, insight, judgment, decision making and reasoned action are consistently employed regarding digital environments then they can facilitate major intellectual growth. Fifth, the same can be true for moral growth. Sixth, if a conscious person is overwhelmed by incoming information and if relatively autonomous questioning, insight, judgment, decision making and reasoned action are disrupted, then human growth and comprehensive human learning will be stifled in that person. The result will be an uncritical thinker who is vulnerable to the sway of inputs and emotion.

These implications become more intensified and focused as digital technology becomes more widespread, helps shape the learning habits of students and enters the classroom. One teacher puts it this way: "I worry that plunging into the 'screen culture' students inhabit night and day leaves them stranded on the surface of these moments. 'Meeting them on their own terms' has placed us on the slippery slope of 'edutainment', where stimulation trumps the stillness needed to move from observation to understanding. Habituated to the pace and pizzazz of surfing and multi-tasking, students, by their own admission, struggle with the sort of patience and perseverance needed to wrestle for long quiet stretches with challenging work."¹⁹ In a recent interview, psychologist Howard

Gardner summarizes his concern this way: “Over time, individuals seem to be able to use multiple sources of information agilely, which is good, but may have less patience and less ability to go into things deeply and stay with them, which is not good.”²⁰

Illustrative Example – IPR and the Technological Landscape.

Given these abstract formulations, it may appear that the emergence of the new technologies is highly problematic at best. Those who are unused to it may find it especially troublesome, while those who have been working with it may find it a source of new opportunities. IPR may prove useful in this situation for the elimination of confusion and the identification of researchable problems. As specified above, IPR involves the removal of undefined abstractions, the identification of subtopics and reverse engineering to relatively specific researchable questions.

Remove undefined abstractions:

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of digital technology will not be advanced by focusing efforts at the poorly defined and abstract level of “technology”, “screen culture”, “edutainment”, “multi-tasking”, or any other such abstraction.

Identify subtopics:

We have identified aspects of technology that can serve as more specific subtopics: data, memory and processing. Any comprehensive understanding and evaluation of a given technological device or application will address these subtopics.

Relate to researchable questions:

Given each of these subtopics, one can brainstorm versions of the recurrent *questions for understanding*: who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, how? and their variants. Only a comprehensive understanding will address all these questions. For example, given a specific device or application, what type of data does it handle? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such data? How are these data stored? What are the advantages and disadvantages of that? How can these data be shared? What are the advantages and

disadvantages of that? How does the device or the app(lication) process the data? What are the advantages and disadvantages of that? What are the results of such processing? What are the advantages and disadvantages of that?

Of course, there are questions beyond these. There are other *questions for understanding* such as who?, where?, when?, why? Those could be addressed for a more complete grasp of the device or app under consideration. There are also *reflective questions of fact* and *value* that seek to check our facts and understanding and to determine whether the device or app is generally worthwhile. There are *reflective questions of deliberation* that explore whether or not this device or app should be adopted by me or by us in a specific context.

To explore questions like these seriously is a matter of “thinking things through” and it exemplifies the discursive nature of complex human problem solving and System II thinking. *Interrogative Problem Representation* can be an important part of this. It involves identifying researchable questions of interest, and using them to frame or represent the problem at hand. In each case, it is an activity that represents a “turn to the concrete” and away from undefined abstractions which only serve to befog the topic while seeming intelligent.

NOTES:

- 1 G. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1922, p. VII.
- 2 A. Newell and H. Simon, *Human Problem Solving*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972.
- 3 H. Rittel and M. Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," in *Policy Sciences*, 4, 1973, pp. 155-169.
- 4 Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1992; G. Nosich, *Learning to Think Things Through: A Guide to Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, 4th ed., Prentice Hall, New York, 2011; D. Schunck and B. Zimmerman, *Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance: Issues and Educational Applications*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ, 1994.
- 5 D. Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, New York, 2011.
- 6 M. Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, Little Brown & Co, Boston, MA, 2005.
- 7 Richard Grallo, "How to Think about Culture," in *Symposium*, X (1), 2003, pp. 19-26; *idem*, "Questioning as a Cognitive Process: Implications for Learning And Culture," in *Symposium*, XVI (1), 2009, pp. 13-23.
- 8 *Idem*, "Global Change: Prospects for Plutocracy and a 'Learning Planet'," in *Symposium*, XII (1), 2005, pp. 51-60.
- 9 *Idem*, "The Absence of Question and Insights in Accounts of Knowledge," in *Symposium*, XIV (1), 2007, pp. 33-43.
- 10 *Idem*, "Image and imagination as components of learning," in *Symposium*, XV (1), 2008, pp. 11-19.
- 11 *Idem*, "Problem Representation in Active Problem Solving," in *Symposium*, XVII (1), 2010, pp. 31-39.
- 12 *Idem*, "Learning, Functional Interferences and Personality Dynamics in Contemporary Context," in *Symposium*, XIII (1), 2006, pp. 15-22; *idem*, "Problem Representation in Active Problem Solving," in *Symposium*, XVII (1), 2010, pp. 31-39.
- 13 *Idem*, "Reframing Applied Psychology in Terms of Self-Transcendence: Selected Challenges, Problems and Prospects," presentation at the 38th annual Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, 2010; *idem*, "Expanding Horizons of Question and Insight: Some Conditions and Correlates of Personal Development," presentation at the 39th annual Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, 2011.
- 14 U. Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1979.
- 15 L. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1980.

- 16 A. Toffler, *Future Shock*, Random House, New York, 1970.
- 17 Richard Grallo, "Global Change: Prospects for Plutocracy and a 'Learning Planet'," in *Symposium*, XII (1), 2005, pp. 51-60.
- 18 *Idem*, "Learning, Functional Interferences..."; *idem*, "Reframing Applied Psychology..."; *idem*, "Expanding Horizons"; Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in education*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1993.
- 19 R. Fletcher, "Touching the surface: Considering my first month in an iPad classroom," in *The Boston Globe Magazine*, Oct.7, 2012, p. 8.
- 20 K. Campbell, "Answering deep questions – There's not an app for that," in *Boston Globe*, October 8,2012, G-14.



Louis Tietje



The Phenomenology of Sin: What Lutheran Theology Can Teach the Unbeliever

Introduction

Except for religious occasions, sin is not a concept that we use in social discourse because belief in sin depends on belief in God, and in the ordinary discourse of our everyday lives we assume that not everyone believes in God. For Christians, sin refers to some kind of broken relationship with God. Sin also affects human relationships. These effects are multifaceted, and different Christian traditions emphasize different facets. In this article, I will be concerned with how Lutherans understand these effects. From the Lutheran perspective, what phenomenon in the world should we look for as a consequence of sin?

I argue that the most significant phenomenon we should look for is self-justification, which in Lutheran theology is contrasted with God's justification or righteousness. What does self-justification mean, and why is it problematic? Two social psychologists, Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, have written a book, *Mistakes Were Made (but not by me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts*,¹ which offers well-known recent examples that perfectly illustrate the Lutheran understanding of the phenomenon. I will begin with some examples from the book, how the authors explain the phenomenon in terms of psychological theory, and what they think can be done about it. Next, I will discuss the theological response. Lutherans can accept the psychological theory as a partial explanation but not the solution. I conclude with their lessons for the unbeliever.

Louis Tietje, PhD, is Professor of Ethics, Metropolitan College of New York

Examples of the Phenomenon of Sin

1. George W. Bush

President Bush is famous for his unwavering justification of our military involvement in Iraq despite contradictory evidence. As Tavis and Aronson say,

Bush was wrong in his claim that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, he was wrong in claiming that Saddam was linked with Al Qaeda, he was wrong in predicting that Iraqis would be dancing joyfully in the streets to receive American soldiers, he was wrong in his gross underestimate of the human and financial costs of the war, and he was most famously wrong in his speech six weeks after the invasion began, when he announced (under a banner reading MISSION ACCOMPLISHED) that “major combat operations have ended.”

Even as commentators from the right and left called on Bush to admit he had been mistaken, Bush merely found new justifications for the war: getting rid of a “very bad guy,” fighting terrorists, promoting peace in the Middle East, bringing democracy to Iraq, increasing American security, and finishing “the task [our troops] gave their lives for.”²

2. Al Campanis

Tavis and Aronson recall Ted Koppel’s interview with Al Campanis, who found himself - in a “slip of the brain” - justifying the prejudice that blacks are not smart enough to be managers:

On April 6, 1987, *Nightline* devoted its whole show to the fortieth anniversary of Jackie Robinson’s Major League debut. Ted Koppel interviewed Al Campanis, general manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, who had been a part of the Dodger organization since 1943 and who had been Robinson’s teammate on the Montreal Royals in 1946. That year, he punched a bigoted player who had

insulted Robinson and, subsequently, championed the admission of black players into Major League Baseball. And then, in talking with Koppel, Campanis put his brain on automatic drive. Koppel asked him, as an old friend of Jackie Robinson's, why there were no black managers, general managers, or owners in baseball. Campanis was, at first, evasive. but Koppel pressed him:

Koppel: Yeah, but you know in your heart of hearts. . .you know that's a lot of baloney. . .Just tell me why you think it is. Is there still that much prejudice in baseball today?

Campanis: No, I don't believe it's prejudice. I truly believe that they may not have some of the necessities to be, let's say, a field manager, or perhaps a general manager.

Koppel: Do you really believe that?

Campanis: Well, I don't say that all of them, but they certainly are short. How many quarterbacks do you have? How many pitchers to you have that are black?³

The Los Angeles Dodgers fired Campanis. After a year had passed, Campanis justified his remarks by saying that "he had been 'wiped out' when the interview took place and therefore not entirely himself"⁴

3. Recovered-memory therapy and the sexual abuse of children in daycare centers

Tavris and Aronson remind us of how stories about the sexual abuse of children and women ignited two hysterical epidemics in the 1980s and 1990s. In their account,

One was the phenomenon of recovered-memory therapy, in which adults went into therapy with no memory of childhood trauma and came out believing that they had been sexually molested by their parents or tortured in Satanic cults, sometimes for many years, without ever being aware of it at the time and without any corroboration by siblings, friends, or physicians. Under hypnosis, they

said, their therapists enabled them to remember the horrifying experiences they had suffered as toddlers, as infants in the crib, and sometimes even in previous lives.⁵

The second major epidemic was a panic about the sexual abuse of children in daycare centers. In 1983, teachers at the McMartin Preschool in Manhattan Beach, California, were accused of committing heinous acts on their toddlers in their care, such as torturing them in Satanic rituals in underground chambers, slaughtering pet rabbits in front of them, and forcing them to submit to sexual acts. Social workers and other psychologists were called in to assess the children's stories, do therapy with the children, and help them disclose what had happened. Many later testified in court that, on the basis of their clinical judgment, they were certain the day-care teachers were guilty.⁶

All the claims these therapists made have since been scientifically studied. All of them are mistaken.⁷

Looking back from a less passionate perspective, we might think that the therapists would eventually admit they were wrong as evidence became available. But we would be wrong. Instead, the psychotherapists rejected the scientific evidence. As Tavis and Aronson explain,

As the scientific evidence that they were wrong began to accumulate, how likely was it that they would have embraced it readily, being grateful for the studies of memory and children's testimony that would improve their practice? To do so would have been to realize that they had harmed the very women and children they were trying to help. It was much easier to preserve their commitments by rejecting the scientific research as being irrelevant to clinical practice.⁸

There are almost no psychotherapists who practiced recovered-memory therapy who have admitted that they were wrong.⁹

4. Abu Ghraib

My final example is more recent but no less controversial. Most of us were surprised when we learned that US military personnel were torturing Iraqi prisoners. We quickly became engaged in a debate about what constitutes torture and when it is justified. Tavis and Aronson introduce the story by asking a question,

Did Charles Graner and Lynndie England know what they were doing, let alone believe they were “doing evil” while they were deliberately inflicting pain and humiliation on their Iraqi prisoners and then laughing at them? No, they didn’t. . .

We are good people. Therefore, if we deliberately inflict pain on another, the other must have deserved it. Therefore, we are not doing evil, quite the contrary. We are doing good.¹⁰

There were investigations that documented what had been done: “In the aftermath of Abu Ghraib, impartial investigators revealed that American interrogators and their allies have been using sleep deprivation, prolonged isolation, waterboarding, sexual humiliation, induced hypothermia, beatings, and other harsh methods on terrorist suspects, not only at Abu Ghraib but also at Guantanamo Bay and ‘black sites’ in other countries.”¹¹

There were two basic defenses of these practices. One defense was that these practices should not be classified as torture. The second defense was that the practices are justified because the detainees deserve them. The first defense was offered by the President: “We do not torture,” said George Bush, when he was confronted with evidence that we do. “We use an alternative set of procedures”.¹² The second defense, offered by Senator James Inhofe, was more difficult to accept because of the circumstances of detention. According to Tavis and Aronson,

The prisoners deserved everything they got, said Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), because “they’re murderers, they’re terrorists, they’re insurgents. Many of them probably have American blood on their hands.” He seemed unaware that most of the prisoners had been picked up for

arbitrary reasons or minor crimes, and were never formally accused. Indeed, several military officers told the International Committee on the Red Cross that between 70 and 90 percent of the Iraqi detainees had been arrested by mistake.¹³

Psychological Theory

What do these examples have in common? Tavris and Aronson argue that self-justification is the common denominator: “As fallible human beings, all of us share the impulse to justify ourselves and avoid taking responsibility for any actions that turn out to be harmful, immoral, or stupid ... most of us find it difficult, if not impossible, to say, ‘I was wrong; I made a mistake’”¹⁴. Fallibility suggests that the impulse to justify ourselves is a universal feature of human nature. If so, is it possible to avoid self-justification? Self-justification may be unavoidable because “most people, when directly confronted with proof that they are wrong, do not change their point of view or course of action but justify it even more tenaciously.”¹⁵ Self-justification is not just lying and making excuses; it is lying to oneself.

All of the examples illustrate the tenacity of self-justification. In the first, when President Bush was confronted with evidence that he was wrong about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the link between Saddam and Al Qaeda, he did not admit he was wrong. He looked for other justifications of military action. When Al Campanis realized that his remarks about blacks were prejudicial, he did not admit his mistake or simply admit that he believes blacks are not qualified to be managers. Rather, he denied that his remarks were authentic. When psychotherapists were confronted with scientific evidence that their opinions about recovered memories and the sexual abuse of children were mistaken, they did not admit they were wrong. Instead, they denied that the evidence was relevant. In the final example, President Bush justified interrogation techniques at Abu Ghraib that seemed to involve torture by reclassifying them. Senator Inhofe ignored the circumstances of detention and justified apparent torture by saying that the prisoners deserved it.

What explains self-justification? Tavris and Aronson argue that self-justification derives from the need to eliminate an unpleasant feeling or psychological discomfort that Leon Festinger (1957) first called “cognitive dissonance”: “Cognitive dissonance is a state of tension that occurs whenever a person holds two cognitions (ideas, attitudes, beliefs, opinions) that are psychologically inconsistent, such as ‘Smoking is a dumb thing to do because it could kill men’ and ‘I smoke two packs a day’.”¹⁶ As the example of smoking illustrates, the dissonance is usually between an evaluative attitude and a behavior.¹⁷ Tavris and Aronson believe that cognitive dissonance is a hardwired psychological mechanism.¹⁸

Dissonance theory challenges the assumption that we are rational beings who approach problem solving and the assimilation of new information in a logical manner. “On the contrary: If the new information is consonant with our beliefs, we think it is well-founded and useful: ‘Just what I always said!’ But if the new information is dissonant, then we consider it biased or foolish: ‘What a dumb argument!’.”¹⁹ We tend to notice confirming but ignore disconfirming information. But the need for consonance is so powerful that we also distort and reject contradictory evidence. This particular human fallibility, which is a product of cognitive dissonance, is called “confirmation bias.”²⁰

The need for consonance has a deeper root in “our need to feel good about what we have done, what we believe, and who we are.”²¹ This is why dissonance is always resolved in the same way—in favor of the self doing the justifying. We have a deep need for affirmation. This is why we want to be right, preserve self-esteem, excuse failures and bad decisions, maintain a feeling of self-worth, and look for blame outside ourselves. We need to be good persons, the truth notwithstanding.

What can be done about self-justification and the need to reduce dissonance? The solution is difficult because cognitive dissonance is a hardwired mechanism that creates self-justification. Because the self-justifying impulse is natural to human beings, Tavris and Aronson imply that it cannot be changed. But does this “mean that we are doomed to deep striving to justify our actions after the fact—like Sisyphus, never reaching the top of the hill of self-acceptance?”²² Their answer is no, “we have the ability to change.”²³ But this answer seems to contradict what they have said

about hardwiring. One way around this contradiction is to say that the solution is not to change our nature but to gain control over our behavior.

But how can we gain this control? Knowledge is the first step: “A richer understanding of how and why our minds work as they do is the first step toward breaking the self-justification habit.”²⁴ The problem, however, is that “No one is immune to the need to reduce dissonance, even those who know the theory inside out.”²⁵ How will we deal with the fact that even very knowledgeable people seem to be bound by their nature? The answer is weak: Tavris and Aronson say that we must “be more mindful of our behavior and the reasons for our choices. It takes time, self-reflection, and willingness.”²⁶

What will we do about other people who may not be enlightened and willing to put in the hard work to gain control over their behavior? Tavris and Aronson note that “Most human beings and institutions are going to do everything in their power to reduce dissonance in ways that are favorable to them, that allows them to justify their mistakes and maintain business as usual.”²⁷ Will most human beings acquire a rich understanding of how the mind works, be vigilant of their self-justifying inclinations, and be willing to work hard to change their behavior? This is clearly not an effective social solution. And self-reflection and willingness are not very good individual solutions. Tavris and Aronson may be asking more of the will than is humanly possible.

Lutheran Theology

The phenomena of self-justification and dissonance are only evidence of sin in the eyes of the believer. According to a Lutheran dogmatics, the existence of sin depends on the existence of God: “Sin has to do with God; it is against God. Were there no God and no relationship to God, there could be no sin.”²⁸ What is the nature of sin? In the same dogmatics, we learn that “Sin is an act and state of personal will against God and the will of God.”²⁹ Much could be said about what this statement means, but my focus is on the effects of this act and state. As a consequence of sin, what phenomenon in the world should we look for? Sponheim says that sin “issues in distortion in all the person’s relationships.”³⁰ His assertion is general

enough that most Christians would probably agree. But what specifically is the phenomenon for Lutherans?

We know that the consequence, effect, or phenomenon of sin is self-justification because of its contrast with God's justification, which for Lutherans is the "evangelical criterion, the article of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone—the article by which the church stands or falls."³¹ For the secular psychologist, self-justification and dissonance are the consequences of our nature—how we are "built": We can't help it. We are hardwired that way. For the Lutheran, they are the consequences of our lack of faith, which means that we cannot be reached by the grace of God's justification: "Grace is the cause of justification, not faith; faith is only a channel through which grace is mediated to us."³² But faith is not a human achievement: "The doctrine of the Spirit accounts for the rise of faith, in view of the fact that faith is not something we are able to create in ourselves."³³ In the absence of God's justification, we engage in endless futile attempts to justify ourselves.

The final element in the evangelical criterion, "on account of Christ alone," suggests that Lutherans believe in the forensic nature of justification. Justification is God's declaration based on what Christ has done. Justification does not depend on a change in human beings. A Lutheran theologian, Carl Braaten, says,

Forgiveness of sins is God's act in Christ; he alone deals objectively and realistically with the human predicament in its many dimensions, estrangement from God, alienation from others, and rejection of self. Christ is the One in whom the dynamic power of God's righteousness reaches us at the level of our abysmal sinfulness. ...

When forgiveness happens, a person gains a new orientation in life, new possibilities of existence, and a new motivation to practice the way of forgiving love.³⁴

The forensic act of declaring the sinner just makes the sinner just indeed in the sight of God. Regeneration and new obedience result from the justifying work of God.³⁵

In this quotation, forgiveness of sins is another expression for justification: "It is important to acknowledge that the word

'justification' is not the important thing. We refer to the same thing when we speak of 'forgiveness of sins'.³⁶

Braaten's remarks suggest that God's justification does make a difference in the Christian life. Christians gain "new possibilities of existence." They are not only justified but also sanctified, that is, made holy. The doctrine of sanctification has caused some difficulty for Lutherans in both theory and practice. There are a couple of reasons. First, Lutherans do not want to say that justification is irrelevant to Christian practice. Luther himself may have contributed to a lack of clarity about the relationship between justification and sanctification because of his famous declaration that a Christian is *simul iustus et peccator* (simultaneously righteous and sinner). This declaration may be understood as foreclosing any notion of progress in sanctification or Christian growth. But Gerhard Forde (1984) says that such an interpretation is mistaken: "Justification by faith means the death of the old and the resurrection of the new. Sanctification is what results when that is done to us."³⁷ The results are spontaneous good works.³⁸

A second reason is that Lutherans are hyper-vigilant about the implication that good works progressively lead to justification. If sanctification through good works is progressive, then "progressive sanctification would mean progressive emancipation from the divine imputation. The more one progresses, the less grace one would need."³⁹ Such a view impugns the power of God. According to Forde, "Good works do not make a person good, but a good person does good works—as the famous maxim has it. Imputed righteousness is not a legal fiction but the 'power of God unto salvation' which attacks sin as a total state and will eventually reduce it to nothing."⁴⁰

What kind of progress in sanctification should we expect from a Christian's faith in God's justification in Christ? First, we can expect recognition of the truth about the human condition. "Faith, however, born of the imputation of total righteousness, begets the beginnings of honesty as well. Such faith sees the truth of the human condition, the reality and totality of human sin, and has no need to indulge in fictions."⁴¹ One truth of the human condition is the inevitable phenomenon of self-justification. Second, we can expect a reduction in the Christian's need for self-justification. Forde notes that "Luther himself does speak of a kind of progress or growth."⁴² Forde conceptualizes growth as movement by the "descent of grace"

toward fulfillment, when by the power of the coming reality the *totus peccator* shall finally die completely and by grace alone be turned totally to love the God who gives it. *Then* we shall love as we are loved. In the end we shall realize that if we are to be saved, it will have to be by such grace “only.” The growth envisaged is growth in grace and just so is it growth in truth about ourselves vis-à-vis God and God’s righteousness.⁴³

For Lutherans, there will be no solution to the problem of self-justification without faith in God’s justification, and progress will not occur without setbacks. We will oscillate between saint and sinner, but the setbacks will be reduced by grace.

Conclusion

Lutheran theology has two basic lessons for the unbeliever. The first lesson is that the pervasive and harmful phenomenon of self-justification is not simply the result of nature’s hardwiring. Rather, the stubborn phenomenon of self-justification is the result of sin, that is, the alienation of human beings from God. Lutherans may agree with secular psychologists that the phenomenon is universal. No human being is exempt. But, of course, they disagree about the cause. This lesson may not be of much interest to the secular psychologist who does not believe in God and therefore must find some natural cause of the phenomenon.

Perhaps the secular psychologist will be more interested in the second lesson because the phenomenon is pervasive and stubborn. Even without belief in God, we still want to know how we can end our neurotic attempts at self-justification—our justification of foolish beliefs, bad decisions, and hurtful acts. The psychological solution is the exhortation to acquire a good understanding of how the mind works, critical and dispassionate vigilance, willingness to change, and hard work. The theological solution is God’s justification by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone. In other words, without grace self-justification won’t stop. The Lutheran theologian might point to history and ask, Where are the examples of how understanding of the mind and the will to change have worked?

NOTES:

- 1 Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, *Mistakes Were Made (But Not By Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Orlando, FL, 2007.
- 2 *Ibidem*, pp.2-3.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 198.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 202.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 17 R.F. Baumeister and B.J. Bushman, *Social Psychology and Human Nature*, 2nd ed., Wadsworth, Belmont, CA, 2011, p. 206.
- 18 Tavris and Aronson, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- 19 *Ibidem*, p. 18.
- 20 R.S. Nickerson, "Confirmation bias: A ubiquitous phenomenon in many guises," in *Review of General Psychology*, 2(2), 1998, pp. 175-220.
- 21 Tavris and Aronson, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- 22 *Ibidem*, p. 38
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 222.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 223.
- 28 P.R. Sponheim, „The nature of sin.” in C. E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson, Eds., *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 1 (pp. 367-383), Fortress Press. Philadelphia, PA1984, p. 367.
- 29 *Ibidem*.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 C.E. Braaten, . *Justification: The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls*, Minneapolis, MN, Augsburg Fortress,1990, p. 9.
- 32 *Ibidem*, p. 50.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

36 *Ibid.*, p.82.

37 G.O. Forde, "Justification and Sanctification," in C. E. Braaten and R.W. Jenson, Eds. *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 2 (pp. 425-44), Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1984, p. 430.

38 *Ibidem*, p. 441.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 434.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 435.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 434.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 432.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 437.



Mihai Hincinschi

***Homo tehnicus* as Contemporary Missionary Challenge**

Preliminaries

It has become a very well known fact stating that the modern man is living in intense fear and steeped in deepest agony every day. He is always undergoing daily difficulties such as: economic deprivation, crisis of identity and spirituality. His existential foundations are jolted, and his entity is collapsing in a chaotic atmosphere.

Confused, the postmodern man loses his inner balance. The psychic structure is placed more and more on an unfit relation with *the rational civilisation of a technical formulation*¹ third millennium.

Fallen into sin, man has sought to ease suffering and pressure of the environment through different instruments. He sought for them in the strictly immanent world, and because of sin he was not able to perceive their supernatural rationalities. Everything has become a purpose. But, remaining in this state, man turned into a servant of these irrational forces, and, by worshiping them, he becomes their slave.

The Church, through *theosis* of man and all the created elements, insists upon theandry of man, both ontological and soteriological, in relation with the Creation. “Regarding the criticisms to technology, they are the result of confusion between the thought and the will that create technology and the thought and the will that economically exploits technical invention. The former are led by creative impulse, and the latter are often subjective and selfish, depicting technology in a detrimental light. But the thought and the will of the one who creates technology as well as of that

Mihai Himcinschi, PhD, is Professor of Missiology and Ecumenism, Orthodox School of Theology, Alba Iulia University, Alba Iulia, Romania
--

who exploits it are, in their turn, dependent on the relationship between man and cosmos with God".²

This radiography has developed in an era in which man lives to the fullest the natural rhythm of material whose irrational laws he wishes to master more and more. What is worse, he considers there is no other direct way of dominating social order than through manipulation and subjugation of his fellow creature by using these impersonal and *non-rational* powers. "The condition of man in the bosom of natural world is tragic. Whereas once man feared the demons from nature and was set free from demonolatry by Christ, nowadays he fears the universal mechanism of nature. The power of technology is the latest metamorphosis of the Kingdom of Caesar".³

Eastern Doctrine speaks about a relation of complementarity and consecration between man and created nature.⁴ Telluric era in human history is coming to an end. The invasion of machinery, the rapid development of technology have made the greatest revolution in history, standard by which all human achievements are measured. Wars, revolutions, dictatorships and totalitarian regimes nowadays are bound by the influence of technology on the human being⁵, through the tremendous force that the above mentioned obtains. The man is found in a new posture before the universal cosmic forces and this involve serious social consequences. "Within man the work of mind is priceless comparing to existence materialism. The connection between spirit and material is made in a way that is mysterious and beyond nature, and unity takes place both on the inside and on the outside, without being either bounded to a certain place or confined to that particular place".⁶

In its basic meaning, revolution can be defined as the end of the cosmos, as it was believed by the ancients. The cosmos, as was contemplated by ancient Greeks, Thomas Aquinas and Dante, no longer exists after the revolution in technology; it ends pretending to be known and subjugated completely. *Homo tehnicus* "considers all values as being relative, even the ones he accepts, and argues with apparent depth everything humanity has taken into consideration throughout the ages. The attitude is that of the good-willing agnostics who are ready to agree with whatever you say, making you understand that, of course, there is no way to prove what was said and that is why it leaves them neither warm nor cold".⁷

In the history of knowledge about the Universe, some scholars placed the Earth in the center – as did Copernicus. Pascal was scared

of infinite spaces that opened before him. The discovery of microcosm, the small, microscopic infinity, still frightens many scholars. Modern Physics and Chemistry penetrate the structures of macro and micro-cosmos and destroy its transcendental poise. "Just like ancient Greeks, Europeans worshipped human reason, her passions, the strength and weakness of their soul; in one word they turned the man into the center, measure and purpose of all things. European culture comes from the man, exists for the man and finds its reasons within the man".⁸

Modern man, located midway between micro and macro-cosmos, is crushed by their greatness. The revolution in Physics and Chemistry succeeds by denying *the law of conservation of material*. It was ascertained that disintegration of free material releases formidable energy. Researches on atomic disintegration are eloquent in this regard, and they have led to the invention of nuclear bomb which can set mankind on the stage of self-destruction. Attitude contrary to nature was determined by the praxis of theology. "God – says Saint John Chrysostom – has arranged the results in maintaining the human race".⁹

In technology everything is placed under the sign of efficiency. Technology radically changes man's attitude towards space and time. The beauty of space as a good won, is the greatest achievement of postmodern man. "European civilization founded on a religion, but one that nobody wishes to designate as such, because this kind of religion does not consist of the worship of one or several things, as in the worship of man".¹⁰

You may find the following situation: unparalleled power of knowledge and technology, which goes up to the end of knowledge, is carried out through exhaustion and human slavery. Human knowledge and scientific and technical knowledge appear in antithesis. "The antithesis is rather to human wisdom, than to vain confidence in human mind. Science is knowledge of things as far as possible for man. But human wisdom is a belief that deludes itself. It makes us sure that we have understood and explained facts and things, a belief that most often turns out false, unless the haughty man does not come to his senses. Knowledge asks for an interpreter."¹¹

Man is placed before a new reality through which he is subject to spiritual degradation. The car and technology represent the new and ultimate reality for the modern man and this reality

does not look like organic and inorganic one, like created nature through which man can consider himself a creation of God. This is an ordered reality through universal attraction of all to a unit, a special world, conceived by civilization, knowledge and man's discoveries with soteriological sense. Technology has a cosmogonic sense... "In this sinful and uncorrupted state, the Earth and the entire Universe would have exploded and would have perished if, in His Providence, God hadn't given His creation universal attraction forces to take the place of His uncreated Grace".¹²

Scientific discoveries give man incredible power, a power of destruction which the State wishes to control, to possess. We can speak about a true *nationalization* of scientific discoveries. Hence the tension generating conflicts. Postmodernism is the boom era of etatisme. Contemporary state tends to believe that man belongs entirely to it. This is a fatal consequence of the two World Wars. During wars the power of the state increases without limit and this state survives the war. Habits and instincts of the war continue to assert, resulting in the ability to impose violence and disdain for human life. The state is especially trying to get hold of the power given by technology. Etatisme is not only a feature of the communist regime, but also a global phenomenon. Ever-growing power of technology plays an important role. Man's spiritual and moral progress no longer corresponds to the almost miraculous rapidity of technological boom, he remains behind. This is not the spirit, this is not the moral force of man possessing and controlling technology, this is the state which does not consider itself subject to any spiritual and moral principle and which acts autonomously, by its own law and sovereignty. Man, turned outwards, weakens on the inside. This situation threatens the world with a global conflict which nobody wants, neither the individual, nor the peoples, but which can be dangerous through the autonomous forces of technical formulation, the forces of capital power displayed by technology. Christians are not pardoned by this temptation either. "However, anyone who observes carefully the sermons and the occupations of most *Christians* will notice that what he looks and hopes for is not the Church but the glory of civilization".¹³

The technical character of civilization requires man an incredible acceleration of time. Man changes his perspective from decent existence to extra profit. In such rhythm, enrolled in such a race against the clock, man aims maximum efficiency, using a

method of scientific organization in his industrial work. Man is always restless, but, ultimately, this means spiritual passiveness, self abandon along an inhumane process. Such a man becomes a passive instrument with no inner activity. This process of time acceleration and transformation of man into economic production tool is most clearly expressed in a liberal society which emphasizes the theory of competition. "Permissive society proclaimed by Liberalism is nothing more than materialism absolutised and degraded in consumerism. Within it, man is worth not only to the extent that he produces a certain amount of products, but also that he manages to consume a certain amount of products. He must consume because, otherwise, production no longer makes sense. Consumption guarantees new production, and this ensures the functioning of the vicious circle. This absolutisation and worshiping of material welfare claims itself to be the ultimate liberation of man."¹⁴

The power of technology morally influences man's life. I have already pointed out that mechanized and rationalized industry remains under the pressure of individual and individuality. Everything is in series production. This is the rule of impersonality and anonymity. Everything becomes collective not common wealth. Community is a real brotherhood of men which involves transformation and transfiguration of men, it is organic, implies freedom, collectivity, mutual help, it means forced and mechanical aggregation of men, their subordination to a false-reality which can be found outside and above them. People can stay with one another and yet solitary. "The need is to build our lives not on our assumptions, but on the Discovery of God. Tragic events in the surrounding world are due to the denial of this path. The sin of *self deification* – this is what tears the man apart and kills him."¹⁵

Technical industry creates a very distant moral of human brotherhood, even if they possess collectivist treaties. It is characterized through a type of civilization that fights as if in a sports competition in which it plays a huge role and where it becomes a source of moral assessment. Worship of force and power develops increasingly more. "A frightening antinomy characterizes the Europeans: the antithesis between inner and outer man. The European seems to be one thing, but in reality he is something else. He lives and moves in the compromises lie. His entire culture is a bunch of trivial lies to which he has adapted. He is extremely

egocentric, but with absolute self and almost exaggerated courtesy".¹⁶

We live in an era in which power is worshipped, and not righteousness or truth. We can state that never before has there been noticed such huge indifference to the truth as now. Truth brings peace to human life, lying facilitates violence exerted on humans. We are witnessing a split between Evangelical and social morals. Evangelical moral is substituted by a moral of production. This moral of technical production develops envy, pride, transforms Evangelical love for our neighbor through self-exaltation. The transcendent has increasingly been understood as an absence of God from created world. "Prevailing of this absence of God from His creation, the Enlightenment declared autonomy of human reason to any Christian authority and developed a technique which, losing all contact with God, was animated by the ideal of transforming heavenly paradise into earthly paradise."¹⁷

In this era of transition, people find themselves shackled in what regards the exterior, the environment, and solitary in what regards the inner dimension of the human being, alone, isolated. Human reason is heading towards created immanent seeking own peace.

Faith-knowledge dialectics was the theological concern of the Holy Fathers in the first centuries. Saint Clement of Alexandria considered the positive role of reason which engaged in ancient philosophy in order to achieve righteousness. Reason can, and it is so desirable, deal with the philosophy of knowledge because it implies intellectual preparation, rational knowledge, which is also present in technological discoveries. But "God is the root of all good things"¹⁸ and this includes the created things as well; reason, on the other hand, must surpass them by engaging itself critically and constructively in the ellipsis of knowledge. "The Holy Scriptures advises you to make use of lay culture, but do not stick or stop to it, because the gifts offered by God at the right time, to be used by each generation, are preparatory teachings for receiving Word of God".¹⁹ Between reason and faith in a supreme force we find no contradiction. Reason without acknowledging faith in a supreme mystery is irrational. We reach supreme mystery through reason. The variety of natural laws which human reason inventiveness discovers and processes technically, indicates human mind creativity and clears up the fact that they do not exist accidentally. It was a

complex infinitely voluntary Being who offered them for synthesis and intellectual judgment, and not a monofrom, impersonal energy. A tri-hypostasis Existence with divine Reason has sought that everything was in harmony, a kind of harmony that can be reached by the speculative emanate mind which radiates wisdom and that can be sensed in numerous forms of existence. "It is possible for the one learning preparatory sciences to reach wisdom which represents the beginning of all sciences; to reach the mistress of sciences... in conclusion we see that wisdom is learnt, by passing on from contemplation of heavenly realms to faith in God and to Righteousness of God".²⁰

Reason incarnate, Jesus Christ, helps human reason to find its purpose through intellectual and technical progress. As Reason of the Father, Christ- the supreme Lawgiver- could not have been brought into being (as the Arians said), only as God creator and Pantocrator, he is the Supreme Lawgiver by Himself. A reason that is totally subject to technical immanent can no longer find the Giver of fundamental laws of creation. The dependent one cannot show ultimate sovereignty, cannot overcome autonomous barriers of the purely rational immanent. "The power of technology has another consequence that entails great difficulties for humans, because human soul is not sufficiently adapted to it. We are witnessing a terrible accumulation of time, which man cannot keep up with. An instant has no value within itself; it is only a means for the following instant. Man claims from himself incredible activity which does not allow any return to the self. At the same time, these moments of activity make the man passive. He becomes a mere means in the human process, a mere function of production process".²¹

When man handles the irrational laws of technological discoveries he can become their slave. This situation of slavery stems from the fact that man worships himself, and wants to manipulate both his own life and life of the others. Man, as creative and inventive as he might become, fails to substitute himself for the Creator. God alone has the attribute of Lawgiver, of He Who imposes well arranged laws for the Cosmos, of imposing laws to His creation according to which the latter can conduct itself by, but also through man's will to lead the world, as well, to its ultimate purpose. God can only be above His creation, because He is above its law. He is the beginning of all things, and without Him they cannot exist. Man can use them for his and the other's own good, or

for his and the other's own bad. "Technology coming from autonomous reason, which denies God, is like the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil in Paradise. On the one hand, it seems to be good and serves many of man's vital interests. On the other hand, it turns against man with terrible destructive power."²²

This total independence of man towards creation, expressed through existence objectification in relation with technological achievements, substitutes the Creator with the creature, faith with reason, theology with science, rationality with irrationality. During his ascent to deification man uses them neither separately, nor in a Nestorianist or Monophysite manner, but by working together, through mutual confirmation. The imbalance in this relation can be shown through four possibilities or perspectives in which man can be in relation with the creature scientifically examined and explored: a) Man may lose his identity, may steep in and merge with the world of things. Desiring to control the irrational forces of nature, he confuses with an atomic-materialistic kind of materialism that is specific to the antique philosophy of Thales, Democritus, Heraclitus and which continues to atheistic-materialistic philosophy of the totalitarian communist system. b) Desiring to liberate himself from material bondage, man chooses the path of asceticism. He removes the pleasure given by materiality through abstinence. He is looking for peace of genuine religious away from the noise caused by rapid technology. c) Driven to despair by mechanization of the environment, by excessive industrialization, he chooses immediate means to counteract massive pollution, he is looking for means of greening that lacks the principles of concern for a nature in which – although sinful – God's uncreated energies, personal and deifying through which the Creator can become fully transparent to his creation, are still persistent. Ecology is not exclusive anthropocentrism, but collaboration between man and God to restore genuine, apathetic beauty to nature and to all the things in it. d) Lack of synergistic vision between man as macro-cosmos and man as micro-cosmos results in the loss of personal identity, of God image from the structure of postmodern human ontology. "Autonomous technology tends to change into a purpose in itself and to make man forget the meaning of his life and existence. Technology is not and cannot be but an instrument, and not a purpose. There are NO technical purposes of life, only technical means. Purposes belong to the field of the spirit. The technical instrument, due to its own

nature, remains heterogeneous to the human, spirit and meaning. Nevertheless, it tends to substitute itself for the purpose pursued and, due to the importance it gets today, it can mask, or even wipe out the very meaning of life from man's mind".²³

All creations are not only dependent on the Creator, through even the laws issued by Him in order for them to exist and develop, but they also receive from Him the legacy of eternity ever since they were brought into being from nothingness, and they can keep these laws as their servants. Only when they serve the creator they can exist with a particular purpose, with a particular point. Science and technology are responsible for researching the truth about the world, and about the mundane things and about the nature of all living. "Preparatory sciences, which lead to rest into Christ, exercise the mind, awaken skill, giving birth to a liveliness of spirit in the search of true philosophy".²⁴

Man must find true freedom through experience; he must test all possibilities that are at hand. He even desired this. Freedom is explored in all spheres of individual and social life. "Culture is full of symbols, the images of heaven are shown in earthly forms, and signs of another world are reflected in it. But technology remains alien to symbols, it is realistic, it does not reflect anything, it creates a new reality, within it *everything* is present".²⁵

Getting out of the medieval state, contemporary man follows the path of autonomy in all spheres of creative life. He explores social and cultural life autonomy, self knowledge, science, political autonomy, economic, technical, inter ethnic and so on. All these separate spheres begin to evolve, obeying only their own irrational and impersonal law.

Autonomy means precisely that the law acts from within each particular sphere, without being subordinated to any unifying spiritual center. Through technical autonomy is sought man's death as Self, because the social dimension of his existence can develop more dynamic. Technological evolution diminishes Holiness and the supreme value of human being.

Christianity became part of culture at the beginning of the millennium. It ceased to be decisive force; it was repressed from the chambers of the soul. Christianity finds it hard to adapt to this technological process for which man is trying to open up to others, to be as free as possible. But it will be increasingly difficult to

identify the autonomy of these spheres through freedom of man who wants to be as integral and complete as possible.

We can find free spheres in science, politics, economy, technology, but not the man who has fallen under the power of separate, free and subject to their own laws. Scientism is hidden under this mask. It is not identical with science and rationalism in the knowledge of the surrounding world; with Machiavellianism in politics, with capitalism in economy, nationalism in life of the peoples. All these spheres refuse to obey a superior spiritual and moral principle. This is the fertile ground that gives life to technology force, this technology that develops in an uncontrolled manner and within which no human law can be found. "The world has become what it had been dreaming for centuries. Let it, therefore, wonder at the work of its own hands".²⁶

Man, increasingly fatigued, has fallen into slavery; he has become the slave of the autonomous spheres. This state generated imbalance, a chaotic state of man. Technical mechanism does not want to undergo any spiritual principle and spirituality is ever more weakened with contemporary man. Man has caused his own alienation from nature, he consented to become *homo tehnicus*. This is why man takes the initiative to set free effectively from everything technology has to offer, he wants to intensify spiritual life. "Man has thus been reduced from his elementary biological and cultural needs of his surviving (food and reproduction) to the game of fundamental impulses created around these needs, around economical relations, language and so on. The interrogatory function of Revelation has been usurped by metaphysics and then by ideology, the ill-fated result being the catastrophe of modern European humanism whose fragile anthropocentrism could not stop the mass suicide of man as theological and religious being, nor *industrialized* homicide horrors and dehumanization of all kinds which have invaded modern societies (drugs, violence, exacerbated eroticism, consumerism) making them lose personality".²⁷

If we were to certify the ontology of *homo tehnicus*, he would belong to time fallen, not time heavenly. Fallen from the context of divine eternity, the environment becomes a state of painful immobility for man. In order to get out of this immobility, to be able to confront and then conquer it, man becomes technical; he becomes the initiator of a new context which can make him forget about the imperfection and distortion of a world deformed by sin: "Cain built

a city.... Tubal Cain was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron” (Genesis 4, 17, 22)

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in his work *On the Making of Man*, claims that the tools made by the man fallen help him if he can find good use of them, and are hostile to him if they are used passionately: “man found benefit of iron only when time indicates to use it, otherwise it is left at home... the art of iron can serve us in time of war, and in time of peace we can spare such charge”.²⁸

Hellenism and Christianity are a fruitful combination between material and spirit. Christianity did not have a theology of world and man; Hellenism did not bother theocentrism of revelation, although it was anthropocentric and cosmocentric. Dialectics of ministry together: theology and gnoseology will first appear in Patristic thinking of the first centuries. We find the ratio between faith and scientific knowledge in Saint Cyril of Jerusalem’s work, *Catechesis*: “land can be worked through faith, for one who does not believe he will gather crop, will not bear the effort of cultivating land. Through faith people travel by sea, they entrust their lives to a very small timber and change the most steady of the elements, land, with volatile wave torment; give themselves to some undecided hope, because faith pushes them, and it is safer than any anchor. On the basis of faith are, therefore, committed most actions of men”.²⁹

Confirmation of faith through reason translated as *understanding* of things created, can be found at Theodoret of Cyrus: “on the one hand there is God, and on the other hand the existences to His likeness shall be through reason as well”,³⁰ and faith is understanding of those that harmonize with the nature of the unseen. Knowledge full of wisdom is apophatic knowledge, through technology we are under the impression that we know everything. Everything becomes immanent. The apophatic is lost in cataphatic, and exclusive cataphatic reason finds it impossible to explain everything that is created and uncreated. The latter is a false supposition of a reason that is not enlightened by faith in the process of knowing the world and God. “It is impossible to express God, and to understand Him is even harder. For, what is to be understood can be explained in words, although not sufficient, but at least in an obscure way, for the one whose ears are not completely corrupted and whose understanding is not false. But to understand such a reality is absolutely impossible and unrealizable, not only for the lock minded and leaning towards worldly, but also for the broad

minded and lovers of God; and so it is with all natures born, and which add darkness thick body to understanding the truth”.³¹

Radical anthropocentrism distorts the man historically (Marxism), causes him a neurotic frustration (Freudianism), a lack of scientific knowledge, a *logical* positivism denying, ultimately, human reason (A. Camus). Atheism emerged from the affirmations above; and atheism is scientism mixed with evolutionism and vitalism. “The amazing scientific and technological process of the 20th century in what regards knowing about the Universe combined with the discovery of greatness and fantastic perfection of the laws that govern it, especially in the fields of microphysics and microbiology”.³²

Ideas and ideals of human reason, immediately after Enlightenment, were materialized in the Reform that rationalized the dogma, and brought major contribution to ascertain technological bourgeois, rather humanistic in which man, not Christ is the measure of all things. “The ideals of science are in many respects different from the ideas of science. They indicate the vision of a scientific community of how science should look like if it ever were completed; they express the ultimate rationality criteria of their time. The interest of reason, claiming consistency to every definite scientific explanation, is often forced to support governing ideas which would be incompatible or which would lead to contradictory results if applied as strict to all scientific explanations”.³³

Contemporary orthodoxy must renew its discourse in order to strengthen credibility of its message in a world which wants to return to the roots of its spiritual identity, but is not willing to give up the achievements of science and of modern civilization in general.

We live in an era of technical formulation in every field of activity; sometimes we feel a need to scientific religion, Revelation and miracles. Everything is due to technical secularization process, which a global and dualistic one. The world with all the technical-scientific discoveries is placed on equal level with faith and Revelation. Instead of talking about technology ethics, as divine gift, and how useful it is to life, we are speaking about *a faith of technology, a technology organization, an ethos of technology*.³⁴

Autonomization of technical formulation in postmodern era, promotes a strictly rationalist activity with a very clear goal: the creation of new means of maintaining life independent of divine

Providence, and also alternatives to clarify social needs in a humanist way.

A reason which is not enlightened by faith isolates the human being. The reverse of rationality is secularization and laicization of modern society. From this point of view, the transcendent is excluded from the sphere of social concerns, and will be influenced by the new technical-scientific discoveries which want the substitution of the Creator from His own creation, and the use of technology will increase towards a tacit political domination of the masses that are yet unaware of the progress. The entire implication of autonomous reason in the context of social life will offer a quadrature formed by *interests, strategies, technologies* and *systems* meant to self – deify modern man. Autonomous reason has one goal only: exclusive domination of nature and society.

Western mentality has not sensed complementarity between reason and faith, between the dogmas of Church and human mind. Truths of faith have always been in accordance with human reason, although they have been above it from the point of view of content. Western imbalance is given by the inverse proportion between faith and lay thinking: as faith increases, lay or profane concern towards the worldly and its created laws must decrease, or, as economic activities intensify, religious pietism fades.

This perspective of secular ethics is only compatible with the Protestant dogma about the world, the presence of man in it and his purpose as *divine image*. Church sees technology as a fruit of spiritual power, a presence of man in God's creation that is as efficient as possible. All technological means must be used with the purpose of human survival in the context of a creation that is still dominated by sin and immorality. This *survival* cannot be fulfilled without Christ, Pantocrator, Almighty, All in All. In this respect, technology can help with transfiguration and pneumatization of the world in and through Jesus Christ. Technological achievements must be regarded as gifts to be shared with the others to edify this life and anticipate future life. We can mention here an eschatological feature of certain technological discoveries for the benefit of human life and for defending it against destructive forces of sin and death: God is in all and all is in God.

Rational autonomization through technology is due to the doctrinal implementation of predestination beginning with the reform in the 16th century: the man predestined to a sinful life,

helpless in what regards salvation, looks for a way out through technology. Technology, through temporal satisfactions, makes the predestined man behave as if he were not a *chosen* one. Work becomes the source of direct salvation, and Puritanism – the exaggerated form of social asceticism.

In Protestant environment, in which the avalanche of social ethics and the spirit of capitalism began³⁵, work utilitarianism is considered a sign of divine grace, a kind of salvation through labour: *sola labor*. Protestant ethics of work sketches the man as covetous, punctual, accurate and self-controlled. The attributes mentioned above have generated the development of a utilitarian-materialistic culture based on the facilities of technical means which are substitute for divine presence in the provident work.

In this structure, laborite Puritanism, humanist rationalism and scientific empiricism have facilitated – and are still facilitating – development of modern, cultural and autonomous technology. Technological innovations, the flow of material goods and capital market expansion are based on capitalist protestant doctrine.

This kind of progress, based on enlightenment doctrine of divine absenteeism from creation, generated a spirit of work with the purpose of self deification. Within this kind of autonomous work, for man and for his own satisfactions, capitalist individualism of production forces made way, as well as communism collectivist in which, despite working in community, the worker was alone; he was beneficiary, producer, and owner of all production means.

The ethics of autonomous technology emphasizes considerate man, and transmits the feeling of affiliation to guild which sects are seeking increasingly. “Protestantism, as religious movement, influenced the development of material culture and imprinted a general tendency on human activities. Psychological impulses that originate in religious beliefs and practices have given a meaning to people’s everyday life and determined them to join it”.³⁶

Conclusions

Orthodoxy sees the fruit of technological-scientific research as opportunity to support life, to give our neighbor what God enlightened us to create, namely an exchange of value for the benefit

of others. If autonomous technology promotes a new lifestyle, without God, the theonomy of technology urges us to use these innovative achievements to get as closely as possible to living in Christ, because the man is not only body, he is also soul, he is not only psychological impulse of ethics, or member of *ecclesia militans*, but he is fellow living with others in ecclesial, familial and social communion, being aware that if one part of the body suffers, everything falls apart. Hence the Eastern imperative to avoid economic exploitation of technological inventions. Even if autonomous technology wants an earthly paradise, instead of the heavenly one, which he does not want, or cannot obtain, theonomic technological progress is persistently seeking to improve life conditions for those who are on the way to eternity. As objective as he might want to be, in his pursuit of material, man remains always unsatisfied. True Christian does not want corrupted material, but a transfigured one, he does not want old, polluted heaven and earth, but new heaven and New earth.

NOTES:

1 “Max Weber introduced the concept of rationality to determine the form of economic activity in capitalism, of bourgeois private law and of bureaucratic domination. Rationing means, firstly, to extend social areas that are subject to rational decision criteria. The industrialization of social work corresponds to this concept, and it has as a result the infiltration of instrumental action criteria in other areas of life (urbanised lifestyle, technical transport and communication)”, Jürgen Habermas, “Tehnică și știința ca ideologie,” in *Cunoaștere și comunicare*, trad. Andrei Marga, Ed. Politică, Bucharest 1983, p. 142.

2 Dumitru Popescu, *Ortodoxie și contemporaneitate*, Ed. Diogene, Bucharest, 1996, p. 159.

3 Nikolai Berdiaev, *Împărăția spiritului și împărăția Cezarului*, trad. Ilie Gyurcsik, Ed. Amarcord, Timișoara 1994, p. 51.

4 American Professor John F. Haught believes that between religion and science there are four plausible relations: conflict, contrast, contact and *confirmation* (see *Știință și religie – de la conflict la dialog*, Ed. Eonul Dogmatic, București 2002).

- 5 “Technical reason of a social system based on rational action in relation to a goal does not lose, thereby, its political content” Jürgen Habermas, *op. cit.*, p.143.
- 6 Sf. Grigorie de Nyssa, *Despre facerea omului*, Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești (P. S. B.), vol. 30, trad. T. Bodogae, Editura Inst. Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1998, p.46.
- 7 Alexander Kalomiros, *Against False Union*, St. Nectarios Press, Seattle, Washington, 1978, pp. 29-30.
- 8 *Ibidem*.
- 9 Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilia a XX-a la Facere*, trad. D. Fecioru, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1987, p. 235.
- 10 Alexander Kalomiros, *op. cit.*
- 11 *Idem*, „Cele șase dimineți,” in *Sf. Părinți despre originile și destinul cosmosului și omului*, trad. Ioan Ică, Ed.Deisis, Sibiu 2003, p.21.
- 12 *Ibidem*, p. 93.
- 13 *Idem*, *Against False Union*, p. 50.
- 14 Francis-Vincent Anthony, *The Ecclesial Praxis of Inculturation*, Ed. Ateneo Salesiano, Rome 1997, p. 8.
- 15 Arhimandritul Sofronie, *Cuvântări duhovnicești*, trad. Ierom. Rafail Noica, Ed. Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia 2004, p. 275.
- 16 Alexander Kalomiros, *op. cit.*, p.29.
- 17 Dumitru Popescu, *op. cit.*, p.160.
- 18 Sf. Clement al Alexandriei, *Stromatele*, 1, 28, trad. D. Fecioru, P.S.B., vol. 5, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române București 1982, p. 25.
- 19 *Ibidem*, p. 26.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- 21 Nikolai Berdiaev, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- 22 Dumitru Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 161.
- 23 *Ibidem*, p. 162.
- 24 Sf. Clement al Alexandriei, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- 25 Nicolas Berdiaeff, *L'homme et la machine*, traduit du Russe par I. P. et H. M., Éditions „Je sers”, Paris 1933, p. 14.
- 26 Alexander Kalomiros, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
- 27 Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr. “Îndumnezeirea omului, P. Nellas și conflictul antropologilor,” in Panayotis Nellas, *Omul – animal îndumnezeit*, Ed. Deisis, Sibiu 1999, pp. 6-7.
- 28 Sf. Grigorie de Nyssa, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
- 29 Sf. Chiril al Ierusalimului, *Cateheze*, trad. D. Fecioru, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române București, 1943, p.137.

- 30 Teodoret Episcopul Cirului, *Istoria bisericească*, trad. Vasile Sibiescu, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române București, 1995, p. 38.
- 31 Sf. Grigorie de Nazianz, *Cele cinci cuvântări teologice*, trad. Pr. D. Stăniloae, Ed. Anastasia, București, 1993, p. 24.
- 32 Dr. Damaskinos Papandreou, *Biserică, societate, lume*, Ed. Trinitas, Iași 1999, p. 61.
- 33 Amos Fukenstein, *Teologie și imaginația științifică din Evul Mediu până în secolul al XVII-lea*, trad. Walter Fotescu, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 20.
- 34 These secular aspects of technical formulation are well captured by Teofan Mada in *Homo ethicus*, Ed. Agnost, Sibiu 2007, pp. 11-16.
- 35 Broadly, Max Weber, *Etica protestantă și spiritul capitalismului*, trad. Ihnor Lemnij, Ed. Humanitas, București, 2003, 285 pp.
- 36 Ioan Mihăilescu, *Protestantism și capitalism*, afterword to Max Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 294.



Steven Cresap



Steven Cresap (left), Humphrey Crookendale, and Theodor Damian

The Morality of Mayhem Moral and Policy Implications of Virtual Violence

I want to consider the morality of producing and consuming images of evil, or, as we would say today, graphic depictions of very bad behaviors. Entertainment is a powerful, quasi-autonomous sector in our culture. Millions of people spend the greater part of their waking (and, presumably, their dreaming) lives in various forms of mass virtual pleasure. Much of this pleasure comes from technologically-enhanced representations of mayhem, or, as it is more cultishly known, “ultra-violence”: assaults, often murderous, aggravated by Dionysian tropes involving gore and dismemberment. Obviously the growth of entertainment's power is a serious, but strangely confused, issue for policy-makers and communities.

The moral problem arises because images of evil are perceived to be evil images: detailed representations of extreme extreme cruelty, violence, suffering and destruction are also assumed to be conveyors of those very bad things themselves. Among others, Sissela Bok in *Mayhem* (1998) has expressed deep concern about the effects of the mass media's reliance on violent imagery.¹ It is remarkable the extent to which such “graphic” (which are actually much more than “written”) scenes are couched in the narratives, concepts and iconography of evil. What happens when images of extreme cruelty and violence are associated with evil and its attendant rituals and ways of thinking? Does associating violent imagery with evil deflect the power of the images themselves? Or does it add to their power?

Traditional accounts of the aesthetic value of violence and destruction have obscured the existential effects of appreciating this value on a regular and often communal basis. Likewise, the widespread use of the concept of evil and its traditional imagery obscures the degree to which evil as a concept has been removed

Steven Cresap, PhD, is Associate Professor of Modern European Intellectual History, Metropolitan College of New York
--

from its traditional theological foundations and from traditional morality. Images of evil permeate mass culture, especially in visual media such as movies and video games. From “Touch of Evil” to “The Evil Dead” to “Resident Evil”, movies have exploited the age-old fascination with diabolical, cosmic destructive forces.

It is often the evil characters that are the most compelling. But the media, and trends in other parts of our culture, especially in the postmodern period, have disengaged images of evil from their traditional mooring in religious tradition. Images of evil once served – or at least were intended to serve – as illustrations of theological truth. When the majority of the audience believed in that truth, the presentation of images of evil in popular dramatizations, morality plays, sermons, etc., were contained within societal norms. In the modern period images of evil were largely linked to the remnants of the tradition, but with the development of aestheticism and decadence and the subsequent dislocations of the Twentieth Century, such images became detached from the tradition. Images of evil became autonomous. From Doctor Evil to Cruella DeVil, comedic images of evil have reduced the resonance of the traditional concept. Most images of evil are reminiscent not of the Middle Ages but of the pre-Christian past: evil spirits, evil beasts, monsters, etc. It is difficult for Hollywood to know how to market Christian-themed projects. But pagan-themed projects proliferate.

The confusion about the morality of mayhem could come from the boring perpetuation of that ancient dualism, mimesis (imitation) versus catharsis (purgation). As Whitehead put it, everyone in this case is either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. Conservatives and some old leftists hold fast to Plato's position that producing and consuming entertainment causes us to imitate its scenarios in “ordinary”, i.e. non-entertaining reality. By contrast, liberals and entertainment-industry spokespersons maintain, with Aristotle, that entertainment cathartically or otherwise cleans up its own effects, so that negative content actually turns out to have a positive outcome. Neither position has been conclusive -- and this after two and a half thousand years.

Liberals and industry flacks would seem to have the initial forensic advantage, if only on the basis of logic: if negative elements affect behavior in negative ways, as their opponents claim, then positive elements must have positive effects. Entertainment

deforms the soul only if it also forms it. Even Plato was clear on this: recall his utopian recommendation of hymns and military marches. But as this example suggests, community-friendly alternatives to mayhem often come out denatured, perhaps indicating that entertainment may need irrational violence in order to be entertaining. Another difficulty for liberals is that there is a perhaps insurmountable lack of scientific validation for catharsis. So usually even welfare liberals fall back like libertarians on what they take to be a general constitutional prohibition on regulating speech and expression.

But concerns about freedom of speech and expression, no matter how well founded on legal grounds, often seem to serve to evade the issue of modern entertainment's power. Although it does involve some degree of information-transmission, the entertainment experience is dominated by performative and experiential elements. Speech is secondary to sight and sound; information drowns in sensory overload; personal expression submits to stereotyping and massification. In spite of its virtuality, entertainment functions less like a speech act and more like certain material commodities, such as weapons and automobiles. Just as we have an interest in controlling traffic in cars and guns, so we have an interest in controlling the flow of experiential commodities like shows and concerts and games. The entertainment-market, like any market, is always already regulated; the issue is who regulates it, and how, and to what end.

Social, rather than free-market, conservatives, on the other hand, have an equally persuasive rhetorical strategy in claiming to be able actually to express offense at what is offensive. And psychologists, even liberal ones, have weighed in on the side of mimesis: entertainment desensitizes those who participate in it and instigates violence more often than had been thought. But, in spite of their notoriety, the incidence of overt criminal acts directly inspired by entertainment in any form is dismally tiny in proportion to the total number of consumers. So conservatives, when pressed, customarily couch their concerns within religious or nationalistic frameworks beyond the range of scientific investigation. More serious, conservatives betray a strange inhibition on discernment when they identify offensive content as just a content: sex-and-violence the complex. (Libertarians usually resist this coupling, but then again, they don't even mind cars and guns). Finally, like Plato,

social conservatives' preferred solution tends to be utopian theocracy: censorship is institutionalized, young people and minorities wind up as victims of what we might call audience-profiling, and an obsessive uniformity covers all convocations and rites. The problem is that the debate as traditionally posed does not acknowledge the historical growth of entertainment's power.

What it means to be a quasi-autonomous cultural sector is that entertainment operates in an apparently value-free universe where other sectors -- politics, education, religion -- enter in only as material. More worrisome, the entertainment sector, as a free actor, seems poised to achieve cultural hegemony, colonizing the other sectors by means of new visual and aural technologies and an increased estimation of entertainment practitioners themselves: artists and producers have an historically unprecedented influence on politics and personal morality. Given the fact that most of these producers are driven by the youth market, the nature of that influence is even more dubious.

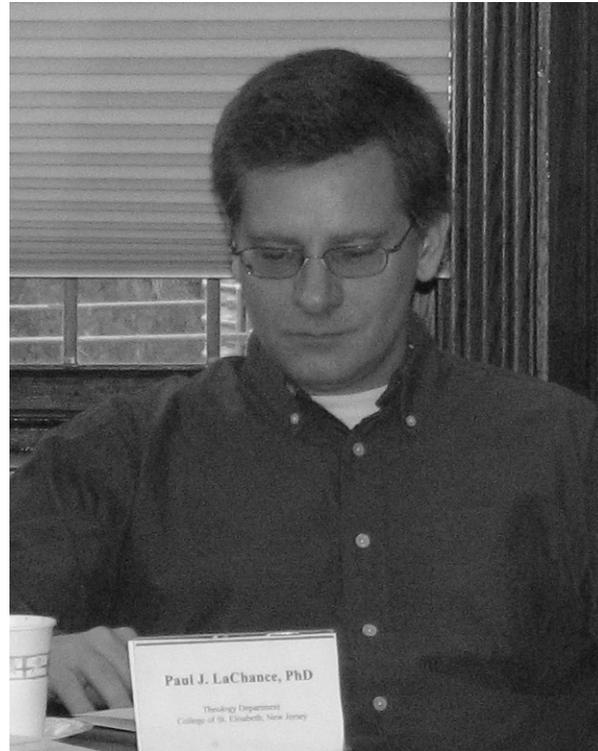
What are the moral effects, beyond mimesis and catharsis, of living in an entertainment-saturated culture? One is certainly the validation of appearance over reality. Judging persons and situations on the basis of their aesthetic value obviously prejudices us against ugly truths and ugly people. Another is a generalized amorality, summed up in the Nietzschean (and universally Decadent) mantra "Life as an aesthetic phenomenon." The well-known ironic stance that is a defining characteristic of the postmodern period seems is different from earlier forms of irony, such as Romantic irony. It seems to express a deep disengagement from responsibility and citizenship.

As a response to the overrepresentation of mayhem in our culture, I propose a classical anarchist response: substantially libertarian, yet collectivist in design. This would not necessarily rule out censorship, which of course we already have in place, and mostly approve, for the more extreme kinds of mayhem (and a quirky range of sexual acts). Provided "the custodians of the custodians", in Juvenal's phrase, are the people, and decisions are made transparently, and it is a measure of last resort, censorship has been and can be used positively to control entertainment's power. But it will always remain a blunt instrument. Much preferable are non-authoritarian means, such as ethically informed consumerism, boycotts, political correctness, counter-production (propaganda) and

zoning in time and space -- which latter might be described as censorship for some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time. But other more “asymmetrical” forms of public control need to be considered. Insofar as entertainment works aesthetically and subliminally, perhaps communities should investigate ways to counter it by means of nonrational effects of their own invention: shunning, shaming, and satire.

NOTES:

1 Sissela Bok, *Mayhem: Violence as Public Entertainment*, Reading, Mass., Perseus Books, 1998.



Paul LaChance

Education for Authenticity: Bellah on Formation, Critical Thinking, and Participation

Robert Bellah writes of education as a feature of social process that is by no means limited to schools. In sociological terms the institutions of modern life “educate us, in that they constitute a world for us that affects how we think and feel.”¹ In this sense modern life comes under scrutiny in terms of the essence of community as defined in *Habits of the Heart*: “A community is a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it.”

Bellah is critical of American society to the extent that the very notion of community is dissolved by radical individualism and what are commonly considered to be communities are in fact “lifestyle enclaves”, which are “composed of people who are not interdependent, do not make decisions together, and do not share a common history.”² Members of enclave communities, like their individualist cousins, do not see themselves as interdependent and do not exercise practical intelligence in common because they conduct themselves throughout the greater part of their day as ‘rational actors’: “Our cultural understanding of the world is shaped every time we enter a supermarket or a mall.”³ Where you have only rational actors, you have “no solidarity, no morality, no society, and no humanity.”⁴ In this way, modern life educates.

I believe that the effect of this social educational project is alienation rather than authenticity. It effectively blocks society from appropriation of its greatest achievements and hopes. Individuals find it increasingly difficult “to imagine a social fabric that would hold individuals together”⁵ apart from tribalism or an idolatrous nationalism. Consequently, “what we do not see, between rampant individualism on the one hand and communal absolutism on the other, is anything that [Walter] Lippmann or [John Courtney]

Paul J. LaChance, PhD, is Associate Professor, Philosophy/ Theology Department, College of St. Elisabeth, New Jersey

Murray would have recognized as a public philosophy concerned with the common good.”⁶ Apart from some native notion of the common good and a capacity among citizens to engage in critical debate about the common good, Bellah and company fear that the institutions of American society will prove unsustainable in themselves and effete in the face of the globalization of rational action.

The Problem

Bellah customarily highlights the impact of modern society on a people's thoughts and feelings by contrast with older regimes. For example, the authors of *the Good Society* contrast contemporary society with what even to John Dewey was already an older form of life. For Dewey, the domestic environment and the tradition of apprenticeship in a previous age engendered a sense of reality. For households untouched by the industrial revolution, family members performed daily tasks in an intelligible environment that allowed them to responsibly exercise in common their powers of observation, imagination, logical thought, and practical intelligence. This also fostered a sense of self in relation to an intelligible whole. The fact that the institutions that gave structure to daily life were on a human scale and could be met with intelligently and creatively meant that the order of society was something more than pragmatic. The institutions that related the self to others and to the whole were meaningful for those individuals. Dewey had also contrasted this pattern of education within the practical pattern of daily living with formal education, and found the latter wanting. However, the authors of *The Good Society* acknowledge the efficacy of formal instruction in this environment. Family, parish, and free public schools provided a level of literacy and education that rendered members of the community “capable of reading and conversing about complex issues of religion and politics.”⁷

In contemporary American society, basic literacy is common but the environment in which one is expected to operate cognitively, creatively, and responsibly is no longer intelligible. They assert that the ubiquity of media has made it often difficult “to see the flood of events as anything more than transient images on the screen, mildly

exhilarating or vaguely disturbing but hardly calling for responsible action or even judgment”; and modern “amenities tie us to ever larger structures of public provision at the same time that they isolate us from from our neighbors and enhance the illusion of our autonomy.”⁸ A realistic view of society gave way to myth and increasingly schools were called upon to help students to make sense of a chaotic world. Unfortunately, the university proved incapable of the task: “Far from becoming a new community that would bring coherence out of chaos, it became instead a congeries of faculty and students, each pursuing their own ends, integrated no by any shared vision but only by the bureaucratic procedures of the 'administration'.”⁹ For Bellah and colleagues, education remains a part of social process, not isolated within schools, but schools at all levels have come to mirror and reinforce dominant societal trends. To that extent higher education prevents students from becoming aware of their individualism as a product of socialization.

For Bellah and company, education is a form of socialization and thus is constituted by an existential moment. They write:

It is characteristic of that older form of knowing which Dewey located in the household and the neighborhoods that one learns, not through accumulating tested propositions about the objective world, but through participation in social practices, by assuming social roles, by becoming familiar with exemplary narratives and with typical characters who illustrate a variety of patterns of behavior. One does not feel like an autonomous subject learning specific facts about an objective world out there. One becomes what one knows.¹⁰

The principle is universal. The authors point to the observations of James A. Berlin in his history of rhetoric, “When we teach students to write we are teaching more than an instrumental skill. We are teaching a mode of conduct, a way of responding to experience....The way we teach writing behavior, whether we like it or not, causes reverberations in all features of a students private and social life.”¹¹ The authors see the dominant trends in society, the sectoral ordering of society into the public and private and the hegemony of natural scientific modes of thought, echoed and reinforced by the what is often referred to as the multiversity. These trends are discussed more fully in their earlier book, *Habits of the Heart*, under the headings utilitarian (or Lockean) and expressive (or Romantic) individualism. Their influence on the university is

affirmed as the fragmentation of the disciplines and the instrumentalization of education for wealth—the wedding of science and cupidity. However, the purpose of education and the reciprocal influence of learning and character is not a common concern in the context of specialization. Thus the authors' evaluation of the moral superiority of the older form of education is, in part, founded on the transparency of the moral and political end of education, which could become the object of reflection and conversation. They see inquiry about ends today reduced to questions about the efficient delivery of job preparation to consumers.

The authors see signs of light wherever educators reawaken Republican virtues through re-discovering the connections among rhetoric, reflection, and citizenship. Rhetoric is not simply an instrumental art of persuasion but initiation into a plurality of traditions or discourse communities.¹² Students receive a formation within learning communities empowering them to take part in a common conversation with moral and political ends. Formation alone is not enough however. Students must learn to think critically about their own traditions and societies—that is, to think historically. Concretely this means not accepting market forces as morally neutral or beyond human control, on the one hand, and making some sense of a modern pluralistic society, on the other. The authors of *The Good Society* suggest that both goals can be achieved by focusing on traditional cultures and attending to just what makes them different from modern cultures through a hermeneutics of suspicion and of recovery.¹³ In practice, much of what the authors do is to critically reflect on the history of modern institutions, “immersing ourselves in the work of those scholars who are knowledgeable about the various institutional sectors of American society, attempting to remain sensitive to the underlying principles that animate institutions and give them their defining purposes, while simultaneously understanding their more concrete organizational difficulties.”¹⁴

For Bellah and company learning communities and communities of discourse serve to counteract individualism. In their view the failure of philosophic breakthroughs to make a difference in the mainstream is a feature of individualism. When investigators mistakenly understand themselves as trying to construct coherent ideas about the real world in isolation from others rather than in conversation with others and responding to common problems by

addressing common questions, they are unable to communicate their discoveries: “An isolated investigator unable to influence the consensus of inquirers might as well not exist.”¹⁵ This explanation however does not account for the peculiarity that those the authors herald as the champions of a collective view of science did not succeed in effecting an enduring paradigm shift in the university, so that “Today, in an academic and social context that continues to be dominated by instrumental reason, the paradigm of communicative reason needs actively to be re-appropriated – as a model for research and teaching in the university and as a support for non-utilitarian tendencies in the culture at large.”¹⁶ The problem is not simply the decline of rhetoric or philosophy among the arts but the fact that throughout the process of education subjects are becoming what they are learning.

For this reason, they call for a morally engaged social science, founded on a recovery of an ancient notion of practical reason that seeks not simply to understand but to change institutions. The prospect of a morally engaged social scientist rests on the recognition that in social science as in philosophy the investigator is also among the objects of investigation. For this reason, as Lonergan explained more explicitly than have others, no advance in social understanding is possible without a concomitant change in one's self and one's understanding of oneself. For those who think historically, the engagement of core values of one's institutions raises the question of one's own life. In “Education and the Common Good”, Bellah explains that practical reason also means moral reason and connotes a sense of responsibility for the self one is becoming.

In *The Good Society* the fundamental difference in the history of education in America is, to be sure, the difference between an older, simpler pattern of life and a newer, more complicated one. But the concern is not simplicity versus complexity itself but the opacity of social structures and the failure of schools to rise to meet the challenge. The simpler society did allow communities to enjoy a form of education closest to the Greek notion of *paideia*, but they did so because of a fundamental unity of formation, philosophic thinking, and existential engagement made possible by the social structures met by a high tradition of Greek learning. What mediated the engagement was a Christian culture of responsibility for changes in deep social structure – the unity of Biblical and Republican

virtue. By contrast, contemporary education is often a fragmentary affair.

The Solution

In his most practical recommendation for higher education Robert Bellah offers a vision of education in three phases united by an Aristotelian notion of practical reason.¹⁷ In the formative phase educators aim to foster in students some pre-critical or common sense notion of or a spontaneous concern for universal brotherhood and sisterhood, the meaning and value of society, and personal virtue. The second phase helps students develop a capacity for methodical analysis and critical thinking. Together the first two phases prepare students for dialectical thinking about themselves and their world--as individuals who cherish values yet are open to the critical examination of their deepest beliefs and as scientists who are willing to question the value of their research. The third phase, practice or engagement, embodies Bellah's sense that professional ethics is the heart of professionalism itself and not an ancillary course of study. As a whole, the three phases point toward the existential dimension of human thought and action. Knowing by itself is incomplete, and spontaneously or authentically individuals ask, "What ought I/we to do about it?" Social realities have also brought home the point that together we are, and have always been, responsible for the institutions that constitute the world in which we live. Consequently we may raise a further question, "Are we up to the task?" If not, what can we as educators do about it?

Limitations

For the sake of time, I here briefly, and unfairly, summarize what I think are limitations to this solution. Each of these phases appears to have a perhaps overdetermined place in a vision of education as communicative action. The formation of character in the participants creates a common purpose or goal that gives the discussion and envisioned end, at least in outline. Critical thinking

is explicitly restricted in Bellah's own practice to participation in political discourse, albeit a conversation that examines ends as well as means. It is deliberative in the fullest sense, but it is still thinking within a practical pattern of experience that insists that each individual engage in both action and contemplation, withdrawal and return. Simply put, this may be asking too much of the good person in a bad society, and it may not take full advantage of the notion of knowledge as a social enterprise.¹⁸ There seems to be a tendency to de-differentiate the good of the intellect from the human good in order to oppose their separation. Where the good at stake is always the good of society, it is hard to see how one might justify dedication to the good of the intellect alone.¹⁹ Finally, engagement, while explicitly distinguished from activity alone by its concern to effect changes in both social structures and one's own way of being in the world, is defined strictly in terms of pragmatic concerns.

Bellah's criticisms of major features of contemporary universities and his proposal for higher education tackles the problem from the point of view of the relationship between society and education. He situates the problems of contemporary education in both social and academic patterns of self-understanding. A strength of Bellah's contributions to the discussion is his attention to the nature of society and his insightful analysis of American society informed by German sociologists as well as some not too shabby philosophical and historical thinkers, like Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Eric Voegelin. Finally, the problems of modern society are mirrored in societies principle organs of socialization and education. The social development with its emphasis on rational agency gave rise to a cultural separation of fact and value, of empirical science and philosophy, and of the public world of government and state sponsored education, on the one hand, and the private world of tradition and religion, on the other. For this reason Bellah admires those sociologists who do not separate the scientific study of society from their professional responsibility to improve society. Education, for Bellah, is teleological, and every academic discipline is oriented to the improvement of humanity. Since institutions of higher education have come to resemble society at large, Bellah looks for a solution in a recovery of pre-modern notions of community and of practical intelligence. In this way he seems to hope for a creative synthesis between those modes of

thought and of living that do not presuppose the modern separations and the development of modern disciplines.²⁰

Bellah's most explicit account of that synthesis is in psychological and sociological terms of the rhythms of work and rest, of action and contemplation.²¹ A psychological synthesis, while personally enriching, may not provide the criteria for social integration. The advantages and limitations of a sociological synthesis may be brought out by contrast to something like the medieval synthesis between faith and reason. The medieval synthesis as reflected in Saint Thomas Aquinas was a theoretical synthesis founded on Aristotelian notions of science and Christian notions of revelation, with some key contributions from Neoplatonism. As a theoretical synthesis metaphysics is an architectonic discipline. Specific aspects of medieval society itself notably Church and the Cathedral could be envisioned in terms of a celestial hierarchy. The theoretical worldview allowed individuals to grasp the unity and integration of society and their place within it. Now a metaphysical synthesis is not the only way in which individuals can intuit a sense of the whole and of their place in it. In sociological terms we might distinguish this theoretical achievement from a commonsense ordering where by social integration is effected by pragmatic concerns alone. The commonsense order is expressed, where necessary, in less philosophical and more mythic terms. The sense I get from Bellah's work is that in the early days of the American republic citizens could still envision the whole in more or less philosophic and mythic terms and could order their lives and act in light of that intelligence. By contrast, modern society is fragmented and may be characterized by theoretic disintegration and as governed by a pragmatic culture. Citizens can no longer envision the whole philosophically, and the variety of mythic conceptions are either irreconcilable or intrinsically inadequate.

However, it may be argued, as Bernard Lonergan argued in his 1959 lectures on philosophy of education, that the medieval synthesis is not adequate to meet contemporary problems of education:

A contemporary philosophy of education cannot simply be the medieval symbiosis of philosophy and theology. For such a view does not provide proximate criteria for an examination of the new learning. The new learning is what has come into being since that

philosophy was worked out, and that philosophy does not offer a direct synthesis for the unassimilated mass of the new learning.²²

An adequate contemporary synthesis must provide criteria for inclusion and integration of diverse worlds of scholarship and patterns of thinking. Bellah demonstrates respect for both theoretic and historical thinking and attempts with his students to effect an integration in the course of doing sociology as social critique. Thus, a philosophic sociology is the architectonic discipline. But, it may not be clear how that integration is relevant to other disciplines or how it might order a university. This is devastating where the integration of action and contemplation is mediated institutionally and is not a matter of the appropriation of one's own acts of consciousness. Further, where the necessary formation is only conceived as a matter of personal maturity, its normative relationship to human nature or its role in the achievement of authentic human living may be obscure. In the concrete, enlightened administrators will find it difficult to answer accusations of alienation resulting from the imposition of their own formation on members of the faculty, as do teachers in the classroom. Finally, where critical thinking is not defined specifically in terms of the autonomous good of the intellect, citizens and officials will not be in possession of an adequate cultural criterion for discerning good and bad results in research. Public policy will continue to be dominated by utilitarian concerns except in those pockets of society where individuals share a common formation. Short of intentional integration mediated by philosophic and mythic common meanings, the best we can hope for is a more human pragmatic integration. But the reality appears to be heading in the direction of increasing bureaucratization, inauthenticity, and alienation. We are in the midst of redesigning our general education curriculum, and I sat this week through a Dean's meeting in which we were presented with a format for incorporating standardized assessment tools and procedures into our programs. I apologize for ending on a dreary note. It is simply the examination of sin prior to the appeal to healing grace and the ministrations of the Icon of Human Authenticity.

NOTES:

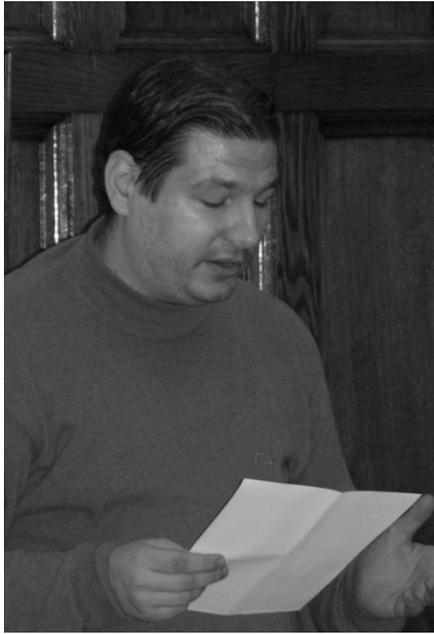
- 1 Robert Bellah, R. Madsen, W.M. Sullivan, A. Swidler, and S.M. Tipton, *The Good Society*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1991, p. 149.
- 2 Bellah, "Citizenship, Diversity, and the Common Good", in R. Bellah and S. M. Tipton, eds., *The Robert Bellah Reader*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2006, pp. 302-318; here p. 306.
- 3 *Idem*, "Is There a Common American Culture", in *The Robert Bellah Reader*, pp. 319-332, p. 321.
- 4 *Idem*, "Durkheim and Ritual", in *The Robert Bellah Reader*, pp. 150-180; p. 164.
- 5 *Idem*, "Is There a Common American Culture", p. 329.
- 6 *Idem*, "Citizenship, Diversity, and the Common Good", p. 316.
- 7 *Ibidem*, p. 147.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 158.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 160, quoting Berlin, *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century Colleges*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1984), pp. 86, 92.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 171.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 303.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 163.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 165.
- 17 Bellah, "Education for Justice and the Common Good", in *The Robert Bellah Reader*, pp. 434-449.
- 18 Bellah argues that "the prolonged dominance of an intellectual tendency cannot but affect the larger culture. The loss of respect for the *vita contemplativa* by Western (and Eastern) intellectuals for several centuries has certainly put it on the defensive, even where it survives. The most viable survival technique under these circumstances, as we have seen in the West (there are comparable examples in East Asia), is to combine the two ways of life in some sort of synthesis" ("To Kill and Survive", in *The Robert Bellah Reader*, p. 104). For Bellah, Erik Erickson articulated a notion of adult maturity that effects a psychological synthesis of action and contemplation.
- 19 Bellah writes that the true scholar is one who has an ethical stance toward the world; "In our common use, then, though not in our reigning philosophies, the true and the good are not two different things, but aspects of one thing. Everything I want to say in this essay is an effort to make that common sense perception more conscious and defensible I the argument

about that scholarship in its multiple meanings, including teaching, is all about” (“The True Scholar”, in *The Robert Bellah Reader*, p. 421).

20 Bellah admires Charles Taylor's approach: “Only by appreciating the genuine achievements of modernity, Taylor argues, will we be in a position to criticize adequately its weaknesses and its failings” (“On Being Catholic in America”, in *The Robert Bellah Reader*, p. 459).

21 Bellah, “To Kill and Survive”, pp. 81-106.

22 B. Lonergan, *Topics in Education: The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education*, edited by Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe, Univ. of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1993, p. 19.



George Lăzăroiu



From the right: Humphrey Crookendale, George Lăzăroiu, Mihnea Drumea, Cristian Dima, Doru Tsaganea, Bert Breiner

The New Logic of Social Media

1. Introduction

We highlight the importance of examining the new connectivity culture, the increase in social networking spaces, the way new communications technologies reinforce communicative capitalism, intensifications and interconnections of global telecommunications, and the expansion and intensification of communication networks. The findings of this study have implications for the extension and intensification of capitalist markets into everyday life, the reproduction of our contemporary social order, the relationship between audiences and popular culture, the process of media convergence, the production of affect, and the creative and communicative practices of immaterial labor. Scholarly research reveals strong correlations between epistemological limits of mainstream journalism, the use of participatory communication for social change, the changing landscape of cultural production, the nature of facilitating crowd-sourced citizen journalism, and the rise of citizen-led media.

2. The Organizational Form of Social Networks

M. Coté and J. Pybus point out that the interactive sociality that gets reproduced within Facebook's circuits is extremely sophisticated (the immaterial labor exercised therein is a modality of biopower). The newsfeed sets the ontological conditions for a user's virtual existence and circulation (identities are reproduced via the

George LazaroIU, PhD, is Associate Professor of Philosophy, School of Journalism, Communications and Public Relations at Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, and Ramona Mihaila, PhD, is Associate Professor of English Literature at Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania.

immediate feedback loops). *As the flow of the newsfeed intensifies, so too does the need for valorization or recognition therein*, and users are “learning” to be more and more productive. “The newsfeed is perhaps, then, one of the most important biopolitical features on Facebook; a ‘performative’ virtual playground that drives the production of subjectivities on-line, while simultaneously acting as site of capture for the immaterial labour required for users to remain recognizable.”¹

According to this discussion, the organizational form of social networks is expressive of biopower. Coté and Pybus write that cognitive capitalism’s diffusion of production in the social factory is exemplified in Facebook. Disciplinary power fixes relations between individuals and various institutions. “Disciplinary societies spatially and temporally ordered things via discrete institutions, composing bodies in fixed, stable subjectivities, and in the process making them greater than the sum of their parts.”² This strongly suggests that Facebook is intensely social and performative, and the desire to signify amongst networks of friends, establishes modes of intelligibility. On Coté and Pybus’s reading, the newsfeed is *an ontological space grounded in the affective and constitutive relations of users, functioning as a fluid and flexible site of identity (re)production*. The digital profile should be understood as a social practice *that enables subjectivization both in the virtual and the fleshy body*. “What we learn, amidst our quotidian immaterial labor, is how to extend, amend, and reproduce social relations in networked form that are also capital relations *non pareil*.”³

What is important here is that the digital archive of the self, paradigmatic of new forms of social *and* economic relation, is user generated and user oriented, *in transubstantiation from the social to surplus value*. Coté and Pybus contend that the information stored remains *both retrievable in its profile and aggregated across the social network*, while the human and technology increasingly meld in the information flow/archive.

3. *The Growth of the Internet as a News Source*

Michelle Weldon says that citizen journalism and community-written websites *have forced newspapers to alter writing styles and source selection*. Traditional reporting methods have evolved to include consideration of many different factors from readers to culture to competition. Everyman news is a phenomenon likely to influence the content of new media forms not yet imagined. “The revolution in American newspapers had many causes: reader appetites, citizen journalism, blogging, a post-9/11 reverence for the individual story, the proliferation of narrative journalism, diversifying newsrooms, the field of narrative therapy and the concurrent explosion in marketing of the stories of ordinary people.”⁴ Weldon insists that the increasing volume of featurized news stories running in American newspapers is a growing phenomenon. The writing styles in newspapers embrace *the softer, more humanistic approach to the reporting of daily events in print*. “What makes front-page news today are the stories of everyman, ordinary citizens whom journalists ideally are ordained to inform and represent. And those stories on the front page are not only about news events. The news on the front page not only validates the voices of everyman, it validates the trends, behaviors, and interests of everyman and declares them newsworthy.”⁵

Based on the above reasoning, it is not difficult to show that *everyman news is the newspaper’s niche, while ignoring the dynamics of audience is suicide for newspapers*. Weldon points out that the newspaper’s brand of everyman news is what the reader is after. The growth of the Internet as a news source threatens the newspaper’s future. Blogs inspire journalists at daily newspapers to write in a mode that reflects the blogger’s language (*bloguage*). The function of newspapers has moved past the telling of news, *a regurgitation of events*. “While the move toward personal stories in newspapers demonstrates a desire by journalists to tell stories of the individual, diversity in journalism is about more than just choosing someone off the street for an anecdotal lead. It is about highlighting and fully representing the voices of everyman in news.”⁶

The basic idea here is that the genre of everyman news illuminates the personal stories of individuals, while readers of newspapers are drawn to stories of ordinary individuals and their reactions to events. Weldon maintains that everyman news wrapped

around the core of individual personal story *may provide a benefit to the source, the journalist, and the reader*. The newspaper story told as everyman journalism serves as the organizational tool. A democratization of news culminates in the trend of everyman news *and the inclusion of more unofficial sources*. Balanced presentation of news demands journalists diversify sourcing. The proliferation of features in newspapers is a response to what readers want. “Everyman news has grown from a desire for newspapers to bring to the media buffet a different brand of story. It is a reaction to a cultural climate that sanctifies the story and reveres the viewpoints, input, and reactions to events cultivated from a broader range of sources. And it fills the demand for the democracy of voice.”⁷

4. *The Creation of User-generated News Content*

Maria Daskalaki focuses on the creative industries and studies networking as a cultural process *reciprocally linked with network identity formation and transformation*. Creativity is situated in individual capabilities and talent, and is a distributed and embedded cultural process. “Creative collaborations have the capacity to change the market as well as organizations and individuals.”⁸ Daskalaki discusses the concept of network identity in the context of the creative industries and evolving collaborative relationships: creative networks are characterized by shifting boundary relations with negotiated and emergent identities. Creative, project-based organizations, networks *create a sense of security and foster co-operation*.

This strongly suggests that creative industries rely on informal patterns of interaction and processes. Daskalaki maintains that the distribution of different types of ties reflects the team’s identity features. Tie evolution constitutes a structurally and a culturally embedded process. “The decisions and patterns of mixing similarities (‘bonds’) and differences (‘bridges’) to drive network linkages become very important for the study of network transformation and creative potential.”⁹ Daskalaki argues that affective bonding does not necessarily secure tie activation and re-activation in a network. Tie processes in the creative sectors *involve the negotiation of affective bonding and anticonformist bridging*.

Tie relations evolve towards a balance of affective and anti-conformist tie relations. Interpersonal relationships are *complex*, *dynamic* and *heterogeneous*. Personality variables and identity *affect* and *are affected* by networking processes and structures. “The process of balancing bonding and bridging of ties leads to the formation of persistent yet flexible network boundaries and identities that are constantly re-adjusted.”¹⁰

J. Wilson et al. note that independent online initiatives and established news organizations have experimented with user-generated content. Citizen journalism cannot do without the ongoing input of professionals, as crowd-sourced citizen journalism projects must rely on the work and leadership of a professional core team. Pros in citizen journalism provide coordination and make content. “Content work embodies the production and editing of news content. Networking means establishing interpersonal relationships and content webs across the networked media environment. Community work involves providing service to the community of contributors, commenters and readers gathered around a news platform. Tech work is the range of on- and offsite technological competencies required in online, crowd-sourced citizen journalism projects.”¹¹ Wilson et al. identify a tension between the needs of any online journalism community *qua* contributors, and their needs *qua* readers, applying the “preditor” concept to the role of facilitating “journalism as a conversation” at the heart of an online community.

Thus preditors must have the ability to establish collaborative interpersonal and professional relationships. The preditor needs to function at the centre of a news-making community. Wilson et al. develop a typology of labor for the preditors who must facilitate and promote the creation of user-generated news content. Preditors are under pressure balance the needs of readers and active contributors. Pro content is a driver of the growth of citizen journalism communities. Crafting stories that are targeted to mainstream news values *may bring about precious exposure for the service in the mainstream media*. “Big media” exposure is the most important way of getting notice for citizen journalism sites. “Understanding the sources of news, the progress of campaigns, the disciplines of newsgathering, and the presentation of news in different formats – all traditional journalistic attributes – is crucial to operating successfully as a content-making preditor in pro-am citizen journalism.”¹²

5. Conclusions

We seek to contribute to a wider understanding of contextual and cultural influences on the proliferation of news providers on the Internet, the nature of the challenges that alternative journalism presents to the mainstream, the value of participatory media production, the factual nature of news, and the social construction of news. This paper has provided a literature review on the adoption and use of mobile communication, the interactive complexity of a media interaction, the internationalization of collaboration in global knowledge networked mass participation and collaboration, the effects of communication technologies on social cohesion, and the rise of user-generated content.

NOTES:

1 Coté, Mark, and Jennifer Pybus, “Learning to Immaterial Labour 2.0: Facebook and Social Networks,” in Michael A. Peters and Ergin Bulut, eds., *Cognitive Capitalism, Education and Digital Labor*, Peter Lang, New York, 2011, p. 172.

2 *Ibidem*, p. 173.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

4 Weldon, Michele, *Everyman News: The Changing American Front Page*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, MO, 2008, p. 24.

5 *Ibidem*, p. 43.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 163–164.

8 Maria Daskalaki, “Building ‘Bonds’ and ‘Bridges’: Linking the Evolution and Network Identity in the Creative Industries,” in *Organization Studies*, 31(12), 2010, p. 1650.

9 *Ibidem*, p. 1652.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 1659.

11 Wilson, Jason A., Barry J. Saunders, and Axel Bruns, “‘Predators’: Making Citizen Journalism Work,” in *Proceedings of the AMIC Conference: Convergence, Citizen Journalism and Social Change*, March 26–28, 2008, Brisbane, p. 36.

12 *Ibidem*, p. 23.



The scholars of the 19th symposium



Audience



Sergey Trostyanskiy



Alina Feld (left), Sergey Trostyanskiy, Onorina Botezat, Alina Botezat

Orthodoxy and the Issue of Human Identity: the Apophatic Approach to Christian Anthropology

Orthodoxy is said to be *apophatic*. Though the notions of *apophasis* and *kataphasis* almost always coincide in discourse (for example when we attempt to speak of that which is ineffable), in Orthodoxy the primary emphasis is frequently given to the *apophatic* approach to theology. What is *apophasis*? An immediate translation is negation and the immediate association would be with privative terms (Greek alpha privatives) which signify the lack of a particular quality; or with negation which signifies a denial. Where does the notion of apophasis come from? In antiquity it was associated with Plotinus' concept of *aporia apophasis*¹ and understood as derivative from it. *Aporia* here means a certain intellectual difficulty with which human intellect has to struggle. *Apophasis* signifies negation. Contemporary scholars translate it as stripping away referential connections of natural languages from theological discourse. And for what reason? Because they tie the divine to the created realm (*ta pragmata*, the world of things) through the use of terms properly designed for natural phenomena.² How does the stripping proceed? It can proceed by the way of negation or by fusing contraries and contradictories within the same subject, violating the laws of identity and non-contradiction, and thus speaking nonsense. By implication we can classify nonsense as a legitimate way of constructing theological discourse.

Apophasis as applied to the One or the Father (the ultimate source of all) is pure negation. Here the first deduction of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* is used as a model. ('If one is the one cannot be many'). 'Neither – nor' schema is applied in this case. However, on the level of *noeta*, intellectual objects, and of *Nous* it is precisely the fusion that is used for the purposes of stripping (following the model of the second deduction of the second part of

Sergey Trostyanskiy is PhD candidate at Union Theological Seminary, New York
--

the *Parmenides*: ‘if one is’). Here, therefore, *apophasis* is characterized by the fusion of contraries and contradictories within the same subject. On the level of *ta pragmata*, however, it is always the ‘either-or’ schema that had to be used. Thus, *apophasis*, if applied to the One, is pure negation; but if applied to *Nous* and *noeta* it is fusion; and if it is applied to the soul in its *noetic* phase it is also fusion. Accordingly classic Christian theology and anthropology always proceeds *apophatically* through the way of fusion and never through the way of pure negation or the ‘either-or’ schema.

When the opposites coincide within the same subject simultaneously, human discursive reasoning (*dianoia* or *logismos*) cannot ascend to the level of cognitive clarity (due to the incarnate conditions of human soul and the limitations associated with them) as the discursive faculty is incapable of making sense out of nonsense and thus is unable to proceed further. We cannot make sense out of the fusion discursively. Due to the descent of our souls, i.e. their incarnate conditions, our knowledge does not easily proceed to the level of *noesis*. Thus we generally stay content with *dianoia* or *logismos* which is ruled by the principles of identity and non-contradiction and therefore we tend habitually to reject any fusions characteristic of *noesis*. Thus instead of *apophasis* (the famous Plotinian ‘thus and non-thus’) we proceed to ‘either – or’, making a choice between the two contraries but never accepting both contraries simultaneously and in the same sense. Even so, this signifies a deep deficiency of human cognition as a result of such a descent and of incapacity of activating and articulating the power of *noesis*. Thus, when human consciousness encounters coinciding opposites it cannot ascend further and, being unable to make sense out of the fusion, it remains on the level of *dianoia* and attempts to reject the fusion as illegitimate way of thinking. Despite this, Orthodoxy accepts *apophasis* as a valid way of reasoning and, facing two choices, always embraces both (and thus proceeds by the way of fusion).

One immediate example of this *apophatic* mode of thinking is clearly manifested in the orthodox understanding of the principle of unity and identity of the human being. What is human being? What is that which constitutes its identity? These questions are complex and require a significant intellectual effort to answer them. In a

sense, to attempt to answer these questions is to resolve the most significant anthropological issues that still puzzle humanity.

When the question of identity is posited, a person will probably consider a few different choices as satisfactory answers to the question. Since the human being is composed of soul and body the choices will be the following: 1. body, 2. soul, 3. a combination of both (compound). In addition (4.) some might also refer to the social nature of human beings. However for the ancients the answer is clear: a human being is simply an incarnate soul. Soul as a higher principle is that which gives unity and identity to the body (and to the compound) and thus functions as the body's principle of identity. Where does soul come from? For the ancients it emanates from the world soul which, in turn, emanates from the *Nous*. The higher principle gives unity and identity to the lower principles. Thus, soul emanates from *Nous* and therefore it is *Nous* that constitutes its ultimate principle of identity. If the order is violated and reversed, if the lower principle (instead of the higher one) becomes the principle of unity and identity, a human being experiences deterioration and falls into parts (a situation which signifies both physical and psychological deterioration and lack of identity). Thus, the principle of identity of the human being (i.e., the descended or incarnate soul) is the soul and the identity principle of the soul is the *Nous*.

This, however, is the only definitive answer (that is framed into the 'either – or' schema) which Orthodoxy gives to the question of human being. Now the problematic aspect immediately follows: is soul fully descended and thus alienated from its source and the principle of unity and identity (*Nous*) or not? If the answer is affirmative then the soul loses its connection and *Nous* becomes fully transcendent to it. As a consequence deterioration follows. If the higher phase of soul is, on the contrary, un-descended and keeps an intrinsic connection with its source, then it preserves the unity and integrity of its being. Which choice should we make? Orthodoxy, in its *apophatic* mode of thinking, always embraces both.

The choices here are quite traditional philosophically speaking: the one being associated with Plotinus and the other with Iamblichus.³ The theory of Plotinus is sustained by a particular psychological model of late Platonism which speaks of soul as twofold, having one part fully descended and fully incarnate and the

other part un-descended and thus dis-incarnate. If soul is not fully incarnate it can make an ascent to its source through the use of its own *noetic* power and through the gradual detachment from bodies and powers acquired during its descent. According to this theory the human being (whose principle of identity is soul) is not completely alienated from its source (*Nous*). It has a power to re-ascend to *Nous* through intellectual effort. This model, if applied consistently is, however, in danger of annihilating the salvific work of Christ (the savior of incarnate souls opening up the path to the re-ascent to the ultimate source of all). Because, if the soul can re-ascend on its own, what would be the necessity of the Incarnation of the Divine *Logos/Nous*, and what role is there for the *Logos/Nous* in the economy of salvation (*apokatastasis*)? Thus, this model is attractive but is also not without certain drawbacks from a Christian standpoint; generally making this ‘renaissance’ model unacceptable in its pure form.

If, on the contrary, the soul fully descends and loses its connection with its source, it becomes completely alienated from *Nous* (which is its principle of identity), and then slowly deteriorates and falls apart. Under this scenario certain external measures need to be taken first to purify the bodies acquired by the soul on its descent, and then to facilitate the re-ascent of the soul to *Nous*. Here, however, the difficulty for anthropology is associated with the incapacity of the soul to make a choice on its own. Thus, this model tends to deny the fact that human being can initiate an ascent on its own without external help.

Christian philosophy has faced the same intellectual challenges as early as in the 3rd century AD and had to come up with some answers relating to the issues of identity. Christian response was quite intriguing, classifying the soul as fully descended and alienated from God and at the same time as partially descended having its higher part in touch with the divine and as capable to make an ascent to the divine *Nous*. Thus, the radical transcendence of the Divine and human alienation and incapacity to reconnect with the very source of their being is fused with an affirmation of the radical immanence of the Divine to the *noetic* phase of the soul which keeps perfect connection with the source of all. Thus, Orthodoxy embraces both choices, successfully incorporating two exclusivist anthropological frameworks seamlessly into its *apophatic* anthropology. This, in turn, allows for Christian theorists

to avoid the unhappy implications of both ancient philosophical models (one leading to predestination and the other one - annihilating the salvific work of Christ). This explicit playing with ambivalence and fusion can be clearly seen in the religious poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus, a great luminary of Christian thought.

Now, why does soul descend on the first place? How does Orthodoxy understand this issue? Here again two ancient philosophical choices as given and accepted simultaneously. Thus, in Plato's *Timaeus* we read that the soul descends so that it can become an active participant in the process of creation (of both physical and socially constructed realities). This choice is necessitated by the fact that *Nous* cannot 'come-to-be' without soul. Otherwise, the mythical intervention of the divine (*Nous*) into the realm of *ta pragmata* is unavoidable. Here soul is a medium that allows *Nous* to descend. In other words, it is the soul that mediates the creation of the cosmos in giving the cosmos its degree of rationality and order through the use of its power of *noesis*. This pertains to both the physical and social aspects of the cosmos.

However, in Plato's *Phaedrus* we read that the soul's descent is a result of the lack of control over the ignoble horse (which figuratively depicts the lower part of the soul) and thus can be classified as punishment. Indeed, what can be more reasonable than to assume that the existential conditions of the soul are not exceedingly promising and indicate rather that something terribly wrong has happened, something which initiated the descent and caused so much purifying pain to the entity whose un-descended nature was simple and immaterial and thus completely free of evil and suffering?⁴

Now Orthodoxy again goes for both choices and affirms their double necessity. If someone will see a contradiction in this particular choice, Orthodox theologians simply responds that the critic merely shows that he or she cannot assent to the level of *noesis* and thus cannot see things beyond the artificial boundaries of the laws of identity and non-contradiction (which signify the reality of our fallen/descended conditions).⁵

Here, however, there is another aspect that needs to be taken into account, namely, the nature of evil. What is evil? In Scripture Christ heals by exorcising people possessed by the unclean spirits. It is not uncommon that Scripture speaks of evil in substantive terms taking into account the reality of evil as a cosmic substantive force.

However, philosophically speaking, Christianity has largely adopted the privative notion of evil in its monistic approach to being. Under this scenario evil does not subsist on its own, does not have its own ontological status (on the scale of *ta onta*) but signifies a certain lack of goodness. Its nature is privative and our confusion about its peculiar features has to do with certain limitations of human cognition, with human incapacity to holistically apprehend the world. Thus, what can be understood as evil in the realm of *ta pragmata*, or the level of phenomena (as opposed to noumena if someone prefers a different philosophical jargon of a later origin), is a misconception which can be easily overcome during the ascent to *noesis*.⁶

Now, what does evil mean in terms of this monistic philosophical approach? What is its source? What are the conditions of lack and deficiency? The answer is – matter, bodies. Thus, here evil is intrinsically connected with the descent and the acquisition of bodies. So, instead of keeping its connection with *Nous* and activating its *noetic* powers human being falls under the spells of bodily motions and gradually loses the source of identity, slowly deteriorates and manifests evil degradations. Here cosmic evil goes hand in hand with the social evil. A disorderly structured universe correlates with a disorderly social society.

Now it seems that instead of bringing order and rationality the incarnate soul, as a matter of fact, messes up the whole integrity of the cosmos. Is it a third choice along the line with the other two (bringing rationality and being punished)? And which phase of soul is responsible for this mess? Is it the incarnated phase only?

At this point we note an interesting feature of Orthodoxy; as the very nature of the human *noetic* phase is here apprehended *apophatically*. Thus, human *nous* is the very source of order and rationality for the created universe. Nevertheless, the source of evil is also found in the very same human *nous*. For example, all across his *Five Theological Orations* Gregory of Nazianzus⁷ speaks of *nous* as the source of order and goodness. However, in the *Letter 101 to Cledonius* Gregory speaks of the *noetic* phase of human soul (or the power of *noesis*) as bringing evil into existence through the original fall. Thus, it is the very power of *noesis* which is responsible for the initiating cosmic disorder. It is an interesting argument. It might also be helpful to remember Origen of Alexandria, Gregory's intellectual mentor, and the former's postulate of the necessity of

the pure soul of Jesus (especially in its *noetic* phase) as a medium through which *Nous/Logos* can ‘come-to-be’, or, in other words, descend to the realm of things. Thus, the purity of human power of *noesis* (of the *noetic* phase of human soul) is also questioned here.

Now, what follows from this is that the very nature of the *noetic* phase of the soul is understood by Orthodoxy in a very *apophatic* way. That is why Gregory of Nazianzus speaks of the soul as being in full contact with *Nous* and of the *noetic* powers as sufficient conditions for an ascent to the divine; and at the same time he speaks of the *noetic* phase of the soul as initiating sin (noticeably not blaming the body or the irrational/incarnated phase of soul for sin). Thus, here we deal with the soul as both fully and partially descended; with the substantive – privative notion of evil; and with the power of *noesis* as being and not-being responsible for initiating self-subsisting and non-self-subsisting evil. What is the other choice? It is to apply the ‘either-or’ schema and stay content with one of the choices and take responsibility for its unhappy implications.

Now, is the answer satisfactory? Do we have anything definite here and, so to say, any clarity and certainty on the subject matter at stake? Is it appropriate to take Gregory of Nazianzus as a great example of how the issues are handled in a discerning way in the form of religious poetry and theology? Does the *apophatic* approach provide us with a working anthropological framework? Does patristic anthropology as a working framework fully address the challenges of human identity? Here again the answer supplied might not be fully satisfactory for discursive reasoning which does not accept nonsense as a legitimate way of thinking but always tends to make an exclusivist choice.

Orthodox answer is simple. Orthodoxy starts with an affirmation of the original goodness of a totally corrupted human soul which is fully and partially descended; which keeps and not keep an original connection with *Nous*; which is fully responsible and not responsible for the cosmic evil which is spoken of in substantive and privative terms. This approach avoids the Scylla and Charybdis of the exclusivist takes on philosophical anthropology presented by the ‘either-or’ choices of various schemas (we can mention the Monophysite-Nestorian; or Augustinian-Pelagian antitheses among others). The role of the Incarnate *Logos/Nous* here consists of fixing the faculty of *noesis* (re-twisting it and giving it

the shape possessed prior the descent) and helping human beings to re-ascent and to become active partakers of the cosmic creation and facilitators of the redemptive process (*theiopoiesis*).

It seems at first glance that the notion of the *Logos/Nous* incarnate and of the economy of salvation immediately redirects us to *Kataphasis* (direct objective and affirmative discourse) and demands that we should set aside the praxis of fusion and instead construct discourse in affirmative terms framed into the ‘either – or’ framework. How does this change take place? Is apophasis appropriate to theology and anthropology but not to the economy? First of all, here we need to take into account the original overlap between two approaches or modes of thinking. Thus, it is impossible to construct any coherent speech by constantly shifting discourse into *aporia* and negating its conclusions through the permanent fusion of contraries. On the other hand, it is equally impossible to speak affirmatively of the ineffable Deity and posit as existing that which is beyond both being and speech.

However, the other important thing to be accounted for here is associated with the very nature of affirmative speech. Gregory refutes Eunomius’s insistence on the use of categories in theological discourse and his understanding of names or categories as having essential connections with that which they designate (namely: intelligible objects and the ultimate reality of the Divine), with their referent. Gregory’s position here is associated with the assertion of epistemic imperfection of any theological (categorical) discourse and with epistemic elevation of a discourse which operates by ways of figure and symbol. Thus, ‘the name’ here is both capable and incapable of expressing the nature of its referent (the Divine). When the capacity is emphasized a discourse becomes more *kataphatic*; when it is de-emphasized the stripping immediately follows. Here, however, the use of figure and symbol signifies the middle way of acknowledging incapacities and simultaneously stressing the discernability of affirmations. It can be used for both purposes, thus initiating epistemic ascent to *noesis* and also functioning as one of the tools that facilitate the stripping by the way of denial. Here names or categories are not used categorically and thus cannot fully satisfy *dianoia*. Thus a philosophy fully grounded in *dianoia* rejects the way of figure and symbol as childish and immature.

The only instance where the name (functioning as a sign) becomes more transparent and lets the Deity shine through the sign

is poetry. Here intertwining approaches can finally find a perfect harmony. Poetry here (speaking of the nature of imitative arts) is re-described as being capable of overcoming natural limitations of discursive reasoning and able to discern the very being of the Divine. Thus, interestingly enough (a great novelty of Christian attitude to imitative arts), it is poetry, not philosophy that is more adjusted to the power of *noesis* and can discern the very nature of the ineffable (since philosophy can hardly ascend to the level of *noesis* and in most of the instances stays content with *dianoia*).

Are there any better answers to these critical and intractable epistemological and anthropological problems? Not that I know of!

NOTES:

1 An excellent survey of the subject matter can be found in Michael Sells' *Mystical Language of Unsayings*, University Of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1994.

2 Here is it reasonable to remind us about the neo-Platonist critique of Aristotelian categories. The denial of their validity for and applicability to the intellectual realm is the key theme in the *Enneads*. Thus, kinds rather than categories should be used if the *noetic* realm is discussed.

3 For more information on this subject see Gregory Shaw's *Theurgy and the Soul*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1967.

4 A very detailed survey of the subject matter can be found in John Finamore's *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Scholars Press, Chico, California, 1985.

5 An interesting philosophical account of the role of the law of identity in theology is provided by Paul Florensky in his *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2004.

6 Does it mean that in the realm of pure beings, *auta kath' auta ta eide*, each unit (*eidos*) is a self-identical difference and self-moving rest? This question is not an easy one to answer. However, epistemologically it is given to us in such form.

7 Gregory of Nazianzus. *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 2002. An excellent book on Gregory is authored by John McGuckin: *Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 2001.

The Academy of Romanian Scientists
Splaiul Independentei 54, Sector 5
050094 Bucharest, Romania
tel. +40-21-314 7491, www.aos.ro
USA Branch: 30-18 50th Street, Woodside,
NY 11377, Tel. (718) 626-6013, DamianTh@aol.com,
Theodor Damian, PhD, US Branch president



The Romanian Institute
of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality
30-18 50th Street, Woodside, NY 11377,
Tel. (718) 626-6013, DamianTh@aol.com
Theodor Damian, Ph.D., president



*The Nineteenth Ecumenical Interdisciplinary
Symposium*

**Alienation and Authenticity in
Environments of the 21st Century:
Technology, Person and Transcendence**

Saturday, December 3, 2011
10:00 AM

Bonhoeffer Room at Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway, New York, NY 10027
(at 121st Street, Subway 1 and 9, stop at 116th Street, Bus M4, M5,
M60, M104, stop at 120th Street)

Theodor Damian, PhD
Professor of Philosophy and Ethics, Metropolitan College of New
York; President of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology
and Spirituality:
Man as Divine Gift: The Transcendent Character of Human Identity

Richard Grallo, PhD
Professor of Applied Psychology, Metropolitan College of New York:
Digital Technology and Transcendence

Louis Tietje, PhD
Professor of Ethics, Metropolitan College of New York:
The Phenomenology of Sin: What Lutheran Theology Can Teach the Unbeliever

Mihai Himcinschi, PhD
Professor of Missiology and Ecumenism, Orthodox School of Theology, Alba Iulia University, Romania:
Homo Technicus as Contemporary Missionary Challenge

Steven Cresap, PhD
Associate Professor of Modern European Intellectual History, Metropolitan College of New York:
The Morality of Mayhem

Paul J. LaChance, PhD
Associate Professor, Philosophy/Theology Department, College of St. Elisabeth, New Jersey:
Authenticity and Education: Bellah on Formation, Critical Thinking and Existential Engagement

George Lazaroiu, PhD
Associate Professor of Philosophy, School of Journalism, Communications and Public Relations, Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, and
Ramona Mihaila, PhD
Associate Professor of English Literature, Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania:
The New Logic of Social Media

Gheorghe Dinu, PhD
Associate Professor of Law, Spiru Haret University, Constanta:
Direct Consequences of EU Regulations on National Courts

Mihnea Drumea, JD
Associate Professor of Labor Law and Social Security, Spiru Haret
University, Constanta, Romania:
*New Liabilities for Persons According to the 2011 Romanian Labor
Code Provisions*

Alina Feld, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Hofstra University:
Transcendent Man

Onorina Botezat, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Legal English and French, School of Law and
Public Administration, Spiru Haret University, Constanta, Romania:

EU Legal English in a Multilingual Environment

Fr. Nicolae Nicolescu, Ph.D.
Director *Epiphania* Magazine, Jassy, Romania:
*The Concept of Eros and Agape in the Works of the Holy Fathers
and the Concept of Philia in the Thought of Father Pavel Florensky
the Martyr*

Sergey Trostyanskiy, Ph.D. candidate
Union Theological Seminary, New York:
*The Issue of Personal Identity in the Light of Social and Cosmic
Evil; The Patristic Response to the 21st Century Issues of
Theological Anthropology*

Cristian Dima, Ph.D. candidate
Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova:
*NBFI Factoring Market: A New Service in the Romanian Economic
Environment*

Alina Botezat, Ph.D. candidate
“Nicolae Testemitanu” School of Medicine and Pharmacy, State
University, Republic of Moldova:
Increasing Persons’ Immunology with Bio-R Treatment

Moderator:

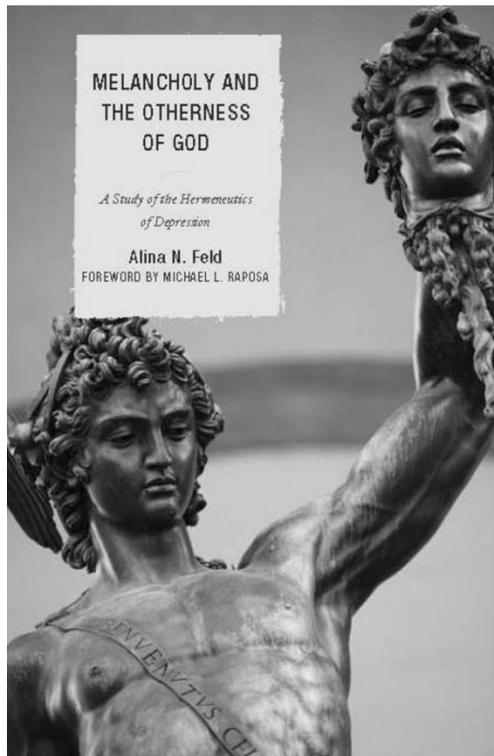
Humphrey Crookendale, JD
Dean, School of Management, Metropolitan College of New York

Discussants:

Doru Tsaganea, PhD
Associate Professor of Mathematics, Metropolitan College of New York

Bert Breiner, Ph.D.
Adjunct Professor of Religion, Hunter College, City University of New York

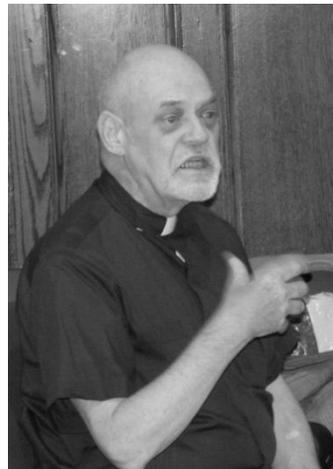
Special event: Book launching



Alina Feld,
*Melancholy and the
Otherness of God.
A Study of the
Hermeneutics
of Depression*



Presenters at the symposium



Bert Breiner



Doru Tsaganea



Alina Feld



Alina Feld
and
Richard Grallo



Alina Feld and
Bert Breiner



Onorina Botezat



Gheorghe Dinu



Mihnea Drumea



Alina Botezat



Cristian Dima

Symposium:
20 Years of Academic Research and Publication

**Alienation and Authenticity in Environments of the 21st
Century: Technology, Person and Transcendence**
Symposium, Nr. XIX/1, 2012

**Meaning and Mystery: From the Philosophy of Knowledge to
the Theology of Person**
Symposium, Nr. XVIII/1, 2011

**Religion and Politics: The Human Society between the Power of
God and the Power of Man**
Symposium, Nr. XVII/1, 2010

**Cult and Culture: The Transcendental Roots of Human
Civilization**
Symposium, Nr. XVI/1, 2009

**Theology and Literature: The Deification of Imagination and Its
Cathartic Function in Spiritual Growth**
Symposium, Nr. XV/1, 2008

**The Glory of Knowledge: Construction and Deconstruction.
When Human Quest Ends in Apophasis**
Symposium, Nr. XIV/1, 2007

**Unity in Diversity: Can We Live Together in an Apocalyptic
World?**
Symposium, Nr. XIII/1, 2006

**Globalization from A (Archeology) to S (Spirituality): What Is
It and Who Needs It?**
Symposium, Nr. XII/1, 2005

Science and Theology: New Challenges and Perspectives
Symposium, Nr. XI/1, 2004

Contemporary Culture in the Light of Christian Spirituality at the Beginning of the Third Millennium. The Secular Realities and Spiritual Perspectives

Symposium, Nr. X/1, 2003

Prayer as Theology of the Mind and of the Heart for the Humanity in the New Millennium

Symposium, Nr. IX/1, 2002

Humanity in the Third Millennium and the Mystery of the Divine

Symposium, Nr. VIII/1, 2001

Jesus Christ as the Theandric Paradigm of Man's Restoration at the Dawn of the Third Millennium

Symposium, Nr. VII/1, 2000

The Theological Legacy of Fr. Dumitru Staniloae and its Ecumenical Actuality

Symposium, Nr. VI/1, 1999

Rediscovering God: The Relation between God and Man and its Significance for our Life Today

Symposium, Nr. V/1, 1998

Freedom and Responsibility in Contemporary Society

Symposium, Nr. IV/1, 1997

Divine Creation and Human Responsibility in the Context of Contemporary Ecological Preoccupations

Symposium, Nr. III/1, 1996

Quo Vadis Homo? Salvation and the Modern World

Symposium, Nr. II/1, 1995

Worship and Identity in our Contemporary Society

Symposium, Nr. I/1, 1994