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**ONTOLOGY AND HUMANISM IN THE THEOLOGY  
OF FATHER DUMITRU STĂNILOAE AND  
PROFESSOR CHRISTOS YANNARAS  
ABSTRACT**

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## ABSTRACT

The paper entitled *Ontology and Humanism in the theology of Father Dumitru Stăniloae and Professor Christos Yannaras* aims to highlight how the terms *ontology* and *person* were perceived in the early twentieth century in the Church, and not only, and the evolution of the meaning of these terms based on the social, cultural and theological movements of the first half of that century. The analysis of this terminological evolution is not meant to be a historical one, but rather a dogmatic one, and therefore, for a better understanding, we cannot ignore the historical situation nor the specific cultural movements of that particular period of time.

In the light of those presented in the paper, it is desirable to expose as accurately as possible the unfavourable situation of the spiritual life in the Church in general, given the existence of adverse influences that were integrated into the life of the Church, either at academic level or personal spiritual life.

The paper seeks, in particular, to follow the sinuous path of the best meaning of the human being, and in general how the human person can move from the individual level to the person level, the hazards to which the human being is exposed through a false understanding and erroneous reference to God, and especially the immense role played by the humanist theologians in the second half of the twentieth century in the restitution to the human being of the dignity weakened by other meanings than those belonging to the patristic spirit of the Church. Of course, in the paper I only mentioned tangentially important names of some great theologians with universal resonance, who deserved much more attention, but the space of the paper was primarily intended for the two great theologians of the 20th century, i.e. Father Dumitru Stăniloae and Professor Christos Yannaras,

without minimizing the contribution of the other very important theologians.

Regarding the methodological content of the paper, it covers seven chapters, each one being structured on several subchapters, in which I tried to capture, without claiming that I made an exhaustive analysis – in fact, the content of any paper, including mine, can be improved at any time –, the essential aspects of the terms *being* and *person*, as well as the modality to perceive them in the first half of the twentieth century, in the Church, and not only, along with the essential role played by the Father Dumitru Stăniloae in the renewal of the Romanian dogmatic theology, all these in a synthesis compared to the theology of Professor Christos Yannaras. Thus, in the first chapter entitled *Synthetic and historical view on the terms “ontology” and “person”*, structured on two large subchapters comprising several subheadings, I considered to be absolutely necessary to make an insight into the term *being*, especially in the history of philosophy, from the presocratic philosophy to the emergence of Christianity, given that this term has a philosophical origin and has been circulated for a long time in the universal thinking, long before the emergence of Christianity.

It is interesting to see in this chapter the fact that the ancient Greek philosophers identified the Divine Being with that famous Unique Principle from which everything is springing. Through their simple purely human wisdom, long before any specific Divine Revelation, the philosophers had come to accept a Demiurge, a Unique Principle that created the Universe, beyond any specific pre-Christian polytheism. I considered that such incursion was necessary, since the term *being* was later taken over by the Fathers of the Church, being christened and getting a meaning of its own, as Divine Being, based on the Incarnation of God and the Biblical Revelation.

In the ancient philosophy, it had come to draw some features specific to this Unique Principle. Thus, the old presocratic philosophers knew that God must be *eternal* and *unborn*, based on the reasoning that if God was born, it would mean, on the one hand, that there was something greater than He and, on the other hand, God could not be born out of existence because, in this way, the principle of being existence would deny itself.

On the basis of reasoning, it was also known that God must be *unique and indivisible*, because it is impossible to have more eternal and infinite beings, because their existence would be limited, excluding each other. In another train of thoughts, God must be the *Necessary Being*, because if something exists – in this case God –, then He must exist with necessity.

Another idea developed by the presocratic philosophers refers to the *fullness of Being*, which is a feature somewhat akin to the idea of God's perfection in Christianity.

A particularly important aspect underlined in this chapter is the failure to see the God as a Person in philosophy. As I have mentioned above, all the attributes of God affirmed by philosophy are mainly attributes of the being, and not of the person. The great merit of the Holy Fathers of the Church consists in revealing the world of God as a shared person, which is a particularly important aspect whereby man can relate to communion with God, this idea being totally absent in the ancient Greek philosophy.

As a teaching and operational support of this first part of the paper, I used several specific books and philosophical dictionaries, doubled by other specific theological books strictly on the subject, whose titles are found in the chapter references, that helped me to check how these terms were understood and used in philosophy and how they were later taken over by the Fathers of the Church, and the meanings given by them.



The observation and analysis of the term *being*, term that has a consistent substance in the field of philosophy, though impoverished in comparison with its meaning in theology, was followed by the observation and analysis of the term *person*, a term that appears to us almost irrelevant in the ancient philosophy. Only in the ancient Latin philosophy we find the notion *person* in the Latin word *persona*, whose meaning was *face*, *mask*, and *appearance* with reference to man, but, in comparison with the richness of meanings applied to the notion *person* by the Holy Fathers of the Church, this notion is subsequently totally irrelevant and insignificant in philosophy. I have shown that it could not be otherwise, since the notion *person* must be strictly related to the notion of God as Person, something that was not known in the old philosophy.

The second chapter of the paper, entitled *The relationship between Ontology and Humanism in Orthodox theology of the twentieth century*, contains four great subchapters, in which I presented the situation of the Orthodox Church in the context of social troubles of the first half of this century, aiming, of course, the issue of the person, intensely debated and troubled during this period. The first subchapter was devoted to the very general presentation of the context of these troubles, the century being marked by tragic transformations and social crises of all kinds, which culminated in the two world wars, situation in which the Church had greatly suffered.

In this context, unfit for the natural development of the church life, the Church also faced many internal crises, crises that challenged the dogmatic and moral balance in the Church. These internal crises that aimed the issue of the person, the ecumenism – which caused at that time a great disorder in the Church, given that some theologians were preferring the dialogue and others were opposing it, emphasizing only the inherent and specific values of the

Church –, the issue of ecclesiology, the scholasticism of the promoted theological education, which was increasingly frustrating for the prestigious theologians, all these and others had created unimaginable strains in the Church, the unity of the Church itself being put to the test.

In this cultural and theological climate, the Orthodox theologians began more and more to demand the return to the theology of the Holy Fathers of the Church in the early centuries. In this regard, a period of settling, filtering and purifying the teaching of Orthodox faith began, initially by identifying the elements that did not belong to the Christian-Orthodox spirituality in the Church, especially in the academic theological education, the denunciation of Western elements of theology, the scholasticism as a didactic method, the pietism as an existential attitude towards God, because all these were altering the intrinsic patristic teaching of the Orthodox Church, falsifying the spirit of the Church.

Then came a period when the great theologians began to write their own books and textbooks of dogmatic and systematic theology and not only, being dissatisfied with continuing to use all the old textbooks that were heavily suffering either from Western scholastic influences or from pietistic influences of the Slavic theology. In the first half of the twentieth century, even this episode of writing their own textbooks did not have the desired success, given that these textbooks continued to use the scholastic approaches, i.e. the historical method used by Makarie Bulgakiv, but which was devoid of any spiritual relevance, being perfectly rational, the synthetic-philosophical method, approached by some Greek theologians, from which I mention Hristu Andrutsos as the most representative one, but who was also a tributary of philosophy and, therefore, he missed the spiritual element absolutely necessary for theology and the symbolic method, much used in the Romanian theology, until the assertion as

theologian of Father Dumitru Stăniloae, which definitively changed the vision on theology, providing a patristic vision which, of course, was the only one belonging to the Orthodox Church. It is understood that all these major orientation changes have taken place over many years, the teaching of Church being slowly embodied, as it cleansed from the influences mentioned above.

Then, in the second subchapter, I briefly talked about the importance of the Congress of the Faculty of Theology held in Athens in 1936, although the issue of humanism has not been explicitly discussed here, but this congress was extremely important, especially by the appeal made by George Florovsky, who denounced the scholastic theology and insisted on the necessity of returning to the mode of theologizing the Holy Fathers.

In our country, Father Dumitru Stăniloae understood before the year 1936 the necessity to return to the theologizing of the Church Fathers when, from 1929 to 1933, he dealt with the translation of some fragments from the work of Saint Gregory Palamas. These translations were printed in 1938 in Sibiu, his book entitled *The Life and Teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas* being original as method of theological approach in those times.

The third subchapter of the second chapter, which is extremely important for the whole paper, is dedicated to the Russian Orthodox theology of Diaspora. I have emphasized, in this chapter, the tragedy of the expulsion of Russian intellectuals in Diaspora, in the context of negation by the Russian political regime of their value. Thus, many intellectuals – priests, professors, philosophers, culture people, scientists, etc. – have taken the road to exile in various European countries and not only, situation which has proved to be very favourable to their cultural preoccupations. Although, on a personal level, the exile itself was a tragedy, it was

however extremely beneficial to the cultural and theological life of the Church in general, the Russian theologians offering the ferment to develop the theology of the person.

The Russian theology of Diaspora theologians was a profoundly humanistic, experimental and almost pietistic theology, but missed a well-defined ontology. On the contrary, the theology of the Western Church, even the theology of the Greek Orthodox Church of that period, which acted under a strong influence of the scholastic theology, was an ontologically well-defined theology, but devoid of the depths of spiritual experience, the theology of the person being precariously defined, almost irrelevant. Taking into account the existence and the force of the existentialist philosophy of that period, in full swing, we have the perfect *ingredients* for conducting a new cultural and theological revolution.

I have developed in this subchapter, within the allocated space, the theology of the most representative Russian theologians and philosophers of Diaspora, their theological implications, the contribution to the development and clarification of the hot theological issues of that time, the errors of the scholastic and pietistic theologies, trying to draw some directives regarding the consequences of such development of theology.

In the last subchapter, the fourth of this chapter, I outlined my own ideas regarding the relationship between Ontology and Humanism in the Greek theology, in the thinking of some Greek Orthodox theologians, not pursuing the theologies themselves – their multitude not allowing this analysis –, but highlighting the differences between the Russian humanism theology, through its representatives, and the Greek humanism theology, through its representatives. Moreover, excluding Father Dumitru Staniloae and Professor Christos Yannaras, theologians who are directly subject of this paper, no other theologian was approached directly, the paper

referring to the ontology and humanism as a phenomenon manifested in the Church.

If all that I dealt with in the first two chapters of the paper were somehow introductory and pre-requisite issues, although absolutely necessary to clarify the subject, the third chapter of the paper begins to actually treat the proposed subject.

The third chapter of the paper, entitled *The Concept of Person in the Thinking of Father Dumitru Stăniloae*, consists of five subchapters divided into subparts, in which I tried as much as possible, on the one hand, to highlight the contribution of Father Dumitru Stăniloae to the clarification of the notion *person*, extremely obtrusively defined in the previous theology, and on the other hand to emphasize the invaluable contribution that Father Dumitru Staniloae has brought to the development of the Romanian and universal dogmatic theology, often referring to the theology of Professor Christos Yannaras, as in the next chapter, dedicated to Professor Christos Yannaras, I often referred to the theology of Father Dumitru Stăniloae.

As is well known, the academic theology before Father Dumitru Stăniloae suffered from serious shortcomings. Thus, the theology, but especially the dogmatic theology, was taught using textbooks translated from other languages, textbooks that suffered from serious influences and failing to include the spirit of the Orthodox Church, i.e. Western scholastic influences or Eastern pietistic influences. The Romanian theological education was not based on its own textbooks, because they were missing. Even after the great Romanian theologians, prior Father Dumitru Stăniloae, realized the great deficiencies of the Romanian theological education and began to write their own theology textbooks, they could not totally ignore the influences of the Western theology scholasticism, thus continuing to teach theology, although

improved, until the affirmation as theologian of Father Dumitru Stăniloae.

In the first phase, the theology of Father Dumitru Stăniloae was regarded with reluctance, given that the father did not make a theology based almost exclusively on quotations and arguments from the Holy Scripture. His theology was heavily based on quotes and arguments from the writings of the Holy Fathers of the Church, fact for what he was criticized for some time. Through his writings, Father Dumitru Stăniloae changed the viewing angle of theology and understanding, long before the Congress held in Athens, i.e. the urge *back to Fathers* of Father Florovsky, that became famous after 1936, is more than necessary, even essential for the renewal of the Romanian and universal dogmatic theology.

In the first part of this chapter, we talked about the rediscovery of the relationship between person and ontology, in the Romanian Orthodox theology, based on the theology of Father Dumitru Staniloae.

As I have shown in this chapter, in the theology of those times, the being was separated from the person, being understood separately. Thus, the rationalist scholastic theology emphasized the Being of God at the expense of His Person. Strongly impregnated by rationalist philosophy, the Western theology rationalized excessively the teaching of faith in God to the detriment of the spiritual experience, blurring in all sorts of rationalistic, abstract and sterile arguments lacking sap and spiritual life. It goes without saying that, in that situation, God, as a sharing person, has no echo in the believer's soul. I have also emphasized that, taking into account the history of Catholic and Protestant Europe – excluding the geographical areas of Orthodox theology –, and the spirit of the peoples concerned, it was almost impossible for the Church's teaching in these area to be not affected. On the other hand, due to the historical social movements – conquests, invasions,

subjugations, etc. – the Orthodox space was also subjected to external influences, including at the church level, found in the scholastic theological approach in education. But the doctrine of righteous faith must always overcome these realities and rise above the historical realities.

Understanding the major impasse of the Orthodox theology, Father Dumitru Stăniloae developed an almost exclusively humanist theology. Even though he approached all the subjects of dogmatic theology and not only, the red thread of his theology has always been Christ - the Man, the Incarnate God. The Christian Christology and anthropology have always been the essential points of his theology without minimizing the importance of Ontology. The great merit of Father Dumitru Stăniloae is the balance found between Being and Person at the Divine Being, on the one hand, and on the other hand the highlight of the possibility of living in communion with God. What the scholastic theology did not know – the fact that somebody can create a connection of personal communion with the Incarnate God – was insistently preached by Father Dumitru Staniloae in all his work.

In the next subchapter, I tried to highlight some aspects of the influences from the philosophy of that time, influences that marked in a positive way the thinking of Father Dumitru Stăniloae.

It is known that the philosophy of the beginning of the twentieth century, propagated in all cultural environments, was the existentialist philosophy. This type of philosophy was based on its special interest in the human being. This interest was also primordial for Father Dumitru Staniloae, but only from a theological perspective. However, neither the existentialist philosophy of the time should be negligible, because it includes many positive elements that worth taking into account and analyzed.

As neither the Holy Fathers of the Church in the early Christian ages have neglected the Platonic, Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophy of the time, but on the contrary, they have proved to be excellent connoisseurs of it, so Father Dumitru Stăniloae proved to be an excellent connoisseur of the existentialist and idealistic philosophy of his time. I must specify that, unlike other theologians whose substance of thinking has been influenced, borrowing philosophical ideas to be later applied in theology, Father Dumitru Stăniloae was influenced only by the method and form of approaching his theology, especially in the writings of his youth, but he always remained faithful to the teaching of faith specific to the Orthodox Church via the theology of the Holy Fathers.

Universal Spirit, Father Dumitru Stăniloae was a personality who had important contributions not only in theology, but also in philosophy, being able to problematize a particular subject. Father Dumitru Stăniloae's theology came somewhat as a clear answer to the philosophical dilemmas and obscurities of that time regarding the person's issue. He was not influenced in his thinking by a certain philosopher to take over his ideas and apply them in theology.

It is true that some philosophical ideas taken from Heidegger, Burger, Grisebach, Jaspers, Camus, Sartre, etc. were taken over by the father, but only to be brought to an end by finding theological solutions where the philosophy no longer had solutions. For example, the anxiety of existentialism towards the nonsense is turned by Father Dumitru Stăniloae into the anxiety about the possibility of losing Salvation. The idea about the nonsense of man's existence, taken later by Camus's absurd philosophy or Nietzsche's philosophy of nihilism, the father transformed it into the idea of man's existence nonsense on Earth outside the communion with God.

Regarding that famous relationship of interpersonal communion (I – you – he), found in the theology of Father



Dumitru Stăniloae, in which the two people involved – you and I – are found only in the third person, as a way to exclude selfishness and possession over the other one, some voices said that the father had borrowed that idea from the existential psychologist and philosopher Ludwig Binswanger, the opponent of Freud's thinking, but even so, the depth of Father Dumitru Stăniloae's thinking far exceeds and deepens this idea.

Also, Father Dumitru Stăniloae was significantly influenced by the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's thinking regarding the so-called relational ethics among persons, but this influence was limited because, if Father Dumitru Stăniloae could not think anything beyond the triadological model of existence, Levinas approached a dyadic structure of the person. I addressed this issue in sufficient detail in that subchapter.

It is worth noting that Father Dumitru Stăniloae was not influenced at the ideological level by any philosopher. I mean that the father did not introduce in his theology any idea specific to philosophy that alters the identity of the faith, although he has argued many times, either convergently or divergently, with many people of culture, even though in his writings there is some influence from the existentialist philosophy, but not as the content of ideas, but only as a form of exposure.

In the next subchapter I have tried to identify the patristic sources of inspiration and influence that have defined the thinking of Father Dumitru Stăniloae. As might be expected, humanly speaking, any theologian feels more attracted by some thinkers and less by others. Although the theological spirit of Father Dumitru Stăniloae is a universal spirit those thinking includes all the Holy Fathers of the Church – he was not a specialist in a certain Holy Father, in academic sense –, someone can see quite clearly how certain Fathers have influenced his thinking. It is necessary to recall here some of the most important ones: Saint Maxim the Confessor, Saint

Gregory Palamas, Saint Simeon the New Theologian and, in general, the Fathers from Philokalia, the father being rightly considered a theologian with a Philocalic thinking.

In matters of anthropology, Father Dumitru Stăniloae takes St. Maxim the Confessor as witness and, in matters of personal communion with God, Saint Simeon the New Theologian witnesses him. It is worth noting that Father Dumitru Stăniloae did not create a *personal theology*, but he continued the theology of the Holy Fathers of the Church in a Philocalic spirit. Reading his writings, I did not have the impression that they differ in spirit from the writings of the Holy Fathers of the Church.

Also, the translation in the Romanian edition of the twelve volumes of Philokalia had strong connotations in influencing the father's thinking. Unlike other theologians, at Father Dumitru Stăniloae, when we speak about influences, we have nothing to do with negative connotations in his thinking – the influence implying an alteration of his own thinking –, but on the contrary, an improvement of his own theological vision, based on the theology of the great Fathers. Father Dumitru Stăniloae was not an original theologian regarding the introduction of certain innovations in theology. His theology is the very theology of the Church and of the Holy Fathers, which had been obliterated at that time and was waiting for the right person to bring it back to the light and give it to the world as it is, without other influences than its own spirit, which has been successfully accomplished through the father's spiritual qualities and intellectual efforts. We have a testimony left from Father Dumitru Stăniloae written in such a magnitude and value that, until now, after more than half a century, it has not been discovered and assimilated entirely by the later and current theologians.

In the last subchapter, I have tried to reveal, point by point, which are, in Father Dumitru Stăniloae's thinking, the

implications of the relationships between Ontology and Humanism in addressing dogmatic themes in his *Dogmatics*. Thus, I analyzed this aspect and its implications in Triadology, Anthropology, Christology, Ecclesiology and, finally, in Eschatology.

What is noteworthy in all these subheadings is that Father Dumitru Staniloae gives to the person, whether divine or human, depending on the actually approached subject, the central place. For the father, there is no being non-hypostasized in a person, as no person can exist without ontology. These two realities – the being and the person – are mutually implied, no one being able to exist without the another one, Father Dumitru Stăniloae succeeding to happily reconcile the ontotheology with the theology of the person, and the rationalist theology of the Divine Being with the humanistic theology. The person, in the father's vision, is the key to the meaning of all beings. First of all, God must be Tri-Personal, because otherwise the persons could not relate to each other. According to his theology, the being just is. The being does not relate. It is a given. The Person is the one who relates. God is a communion relationship, so He is a Trinity of Persons. Then, the bond between God as the Person and the human being as a person is the Son of God, the Incarnate Christ. Christ made Himself man to be one of us – the human beings, to be able to rise us to the state of perfection and dignity as being His brothers. By virtue of the image of God embedded in us by Him at Creation and by virtue of the imitation of the Son of God, the human being has the dignity of being a person like God.

The fourth chapter, entitled *The Being and the Person in the Thinking of Professor Christos Yannaras*, divided into three subchapters made up of several sub-points, presents, as much as possible, the theology of Professor Christos Yannaras, especially with regard to his humanistic theology.

In Professor Christos Yannaras's thinking, the person's theology occupies a central place. He sees the being and the person as two inseparable realities. In his book entitled *The Truth and Unity of the Church*, Professor Christos Yannaras analyzes the value of the human being as a person, ecclesially integrated. For Professor Christos Yannaras, the idea of human being *becoming* a person, by the free and conscious assumption of the values of Orthodox Church, is also very important. In fact, this idea of becoming is also found at some contemporary theologians, such as Sophrony Sakharov, Rafail Noica, idea by which the human being can be considered a full person only to the extent that his spiritual qualities are activated by God in church. At Professor Christos Yannaras, the human being can not be understood as a person in the fullest meaning than in the church that faithfully preserves the teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Church.

Professor Christos Yannaras opposes the Catholic Church and Protestant Church theologization, showing that they have greatly diluted the truth and unity of the Church, going away, either by essentialism – in the case of Catholic Church – or by pietism – in the case of Protestant Church – from the evangelical truth preached in the Orthodox Church.

Moreover, it is remarked in Professor Christos Yannaras's thinking an accentuated philhellenism, this aspect manifesting in his thinking through a certain disregard of the Orthodox theology of another nationality. On the one hand, the philhellenism of his thinking is manifested through an exaggerated assertion of the humanism theology of his own thinking, as a reaction against the Western Essential theology and, on the other hand, by an exaggerated accusation to the Slavonic rite Orthodox theology which he blames for pietism, although it is not the same type of pietism found in the Protestant Church, in the conditions in which a strong pietistic current was manifesting itself in certain theological

environments, including in Greece. In fact, Professor Christos Yannaras was aware of this when he talked about the occidentalization of the Greek theology. In this regard, a slight imbalance can be found in his theological thinking regarding the relationship established between Being and Person.

Concerning the Being of God, the thinking of Professor Christos Yannaras resonates with the thinking of Father Dumitru Stăniloae regarding the impossibility to know God as a Being and the possibility to know Him as a Person from His works and manifestations in Creation. According to his thinking, the Holy Trinity is not perceived simply as a group of three unrelated people, but relationally in the Church. I mean, for example, God the Father is perceived in the Church more as a providential father than an almighty being, as well as concerning the other two persons of the Holy Trinity. And if the Holy Trinity is relationally behaving in the Church, it means that the relationship establishes the communion character of the Trinity Persons.

It is also useful to emphasize here that, as regards the Divine Being, Professor Christos Yannaras notices the divine essence starting from the Person of God, and not vice versa, as stated in the Catholic theology. If the Catholic theology starts, by reasoning, from the idea of being of God to reach the idea of person, the Orthodox theology, to which Professor Christos Yannaras subscribes here, starts experimentally from the idea of God as person, to define, as well as possible, His being. In fact, it is natural to be so, since God has been revealed to men as a Person, not as a Being, and in an accomplished way as a Person by Incarnation.

Understanding God as a Trinity of Loving People, God reveals Himself as a Person, not as a Being, i.e. God is understood in Church, more as Father, Son and Holy Spirit than as Almighty God. This is important because the personal character of the Divine Being is revealed to us in this form.

The fifth chapter, entitled *Theology and Philosophy in Professor Christos Yannaras's thinking*, is divided into four subchapters, in which I mainly referred to the philosophical influences of his theological thinking and to the so-called *limits in his humanism*.

Professor Christos Yannaras is not calling himself *theologian*. On the contrary, he calls himself a philosopher rather than a theologian, and therefore his thinking is considered to be more a religious philosophy than a theology. His theological evolution is closely linked to the evolution of humanistic theology in Diaspora. The Russian theologians, being expelled to Diaspora by the political regime of their country, brought with them this type of theology, which somehow came as a powerful counter-argument to the existentialist philosophy. The theology of Professor Christos Yannaras, being a profoundly humanist theology, was obviously influenced by the Russian humanist thinkers from Diaspora.

The most important philosophical personalities that influenced the theological thinking of Christos Yannaras were Berdiaev, Sarte, Heidegger, etc. Christos Yannaras has often borrowed some ideas from their philosophy, which he has integrated into his books. For example, if Father Dumitru Stăniloae uses in his theological argumentation ideas and quotations from the Holy Fathers, we note that Professor Christos Yannaras uses in his argumentation philosophical ideas that he applies to his theology, but especially as an approach and argumentation method, this aspect being more than obvious.

An important point to be specified here, in terms of how to perceive the personal divine reality, is the divergence of opinion with the Christian Occident. If in Occident there was a tendency, on philosophical and rational basis, to base the idea of divine unity on the substance unity, Christos Yannaras

shows, as a rational argumentation, the fact that the Divine unity is founded on the Father's monarchy, as unique causal principle in the Trinity.

Also, Professor Christos Yannaras has often received criticism from other theologians, of whom the most fervent is perhaps Jean-Claude Larchet, the professor being criticized about his method of argumentation, which is considered to be inherent to the Catholic and Protestant theology. However, Christos Yannaras did not develop in essence a Western-type theology, but an Orthodox theology. As regard to the form of expression and argumentation method, the subject remains still open.

Even though the theological thinking of Professor Christos Yannaras had certain influences from the existentialist philosophy, especially regarding the theology of the person, his contributions to the perception and understanding of humanism as a phenomenon manifested in church are significant. The humanism, as a theological phenomenon manifested in the Church of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with echoes until today, came as a reaction against the existentialist philosophy and Catholic essentialism, and was almost exclusively propagated by the Russian Neopatristic School in Diaspora. This method of theological approach – because it is also a method, not just a reaction –, became later a special category of interpretation of the mystical and liturgical life of the Church's teaching of faith, which inspired all generations of newer theologians.

Seeing that the Modern Greek theology is currently in a deadlock imposed by the scholastic and pietistic theology on both sides, Professor Christos Yannaras, along with Ioannis Zizioulas, changed the theological orientation perspective, resuming the humanistic theses in Eucharistic way, as helenophile patristic theological manifestation, deeply anti-occidental. In this context, the exaggerated helenophilism of

Professor Christos Yannaras can be considered as a minus – nonessential, but still a minus – of his theological thinking.

I believe that another minus in his theology would be Christos Yannaras's inability to find a way of reconciliation between person and nature in the human being. Thus, according to his thinking, the person has the duty to fight *against* his individual nature, i.e. against his personal affections, natural and biological needs, through which the person expresses his physical freedom. However, according to the faith teachings of our Church, the affections or natural psychic qualities are good, positive, and none of what God has placed into man's being should be rejected, and these must not be suppressed by the ascetic effort but, on the contrary, they must be spiritually *converted*. The man does not become a person – the idea of man becoming person is strongly advocated by Professor Christos Yannaras – by suppressing or denying his physiological necessities but, on the contrary, by spiritualizing them. This idea of suppressing the affections, which influenced the thinking of Professor Christos Yannaras, is an idea found in philosophy since antiquity and taken over by the modern philosophy. Unlike Professor Christos Yannaras, Father Dumitru Stăniloae was able to clearly and coherently express this issue, keeping the spirit of our Church.

The sixth chapter, entitled *Ontology and Humanism in the Thinking of Father Dumitru Stăniloae and Professor Christos Yannaras*, is divided into two subchapters in which I tried to present, point by point, the similarities and differences between the theological thinking of the two theologians mentioned above.

The third, the fourth and the fifth part of the paper were devoted exclusively to the theological thinking of the two ones, as far as the issue of humanism is concerned, in which I have often referred to the thinking of the other one regarding a specific issue. In the chapter dedicated to Father Dumitru



Staniloae, I have often referred to the theology of Professor Christos Yannaras, as in the chapters dedicated to Professor Christos Yannaras I did not hesitate to refer to the vision of Father Dumitru Staniloae.

However, I consider it auspicious to have a distinct chapter in which to emphasize point by point – as far as possible –, the common points and the divergences of their theology. In the first subchapter, I tried to highlight the common points. Thus, with regard to the common points, we must first of all note the increased interest, almost exclusively of the two great theologians towards the theology of the person, in general. This is somewhat natural if we consider the issue of the time when they activated, a time strongly impregnated by theological, philosophical, psychological and social humanism.

Secondly, both theologians have been profoundly influenced by the existentialist - humanist philosophy of the time and area in which they have activated, but in different forms, as I'm going to show below, when talking about differences.

Thirdly, both theologians were highlighting the teaching of the Orthodox Church on the relationship between *being* and *person*. Thus, as I have already shown, it is well-known that the Catholic Church was promoting a rationalist theology and, from this perspective, the promoted theology about God could be nothing else than essentialist. The two ones showed the effects of this theological perspective, i.e. scholasticism, theological aridity – dead theology because it is almost exclusively rationalist, lifeless, religious philosophy. The two great theologians have shown that the secret of a living and working theology lies just in the opposite perspective, i.e. in perceiving God as a sharing, communicable person, God the Father being more like a loving, caring Father

who sent His Son into the world to die for the sins of mankind, and not almost exclusively as an Almighty and Infinite Being.

They also have shown that, by considering God as a Person, we will finally consider Him as an Almighty Being. But the opposite reasoning is not valid, the proof being the whole philosophy starting from the Presocratics who have failed to perceive God as a Person, because they did not experience the communion with Him in the church through prayer.

The theological differences between the two ones are slightly more nuanced. The most important difference between them is the different viewing angle of the person's issue, and this is related to the way in which they were influenced by other teachings unrelated with the teaching of the Orthodox Church, especially by the existentialist - humanistic philosophy of that time. Therefore, it is noted that Professor Christos Yannaras was influenced by philosophy as the basis of his thinking, whereas Father Dumitru Stăniloae was influenced by the philosophy just as form of expression and method, but only in his youth.

If the thinking of Father Dumitru Stăniloae was profoundly influenced by the Holy Fathers of the Church, i.e. by St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory Palamas, Saint Simeon the New Theologian and the Philocalic fathers, theologizing from this position, Professor Christos Yannaras was influenced by the existentialist philosophy, i.e. Berdiaev, Sartre, Heidegger, arguing his theological statements from this position and in this spirit.

Father Dumitru Stăniloae was known to be a profound Orthodox theologian whose dogmatic theology has accentuated philocalic features. On the contrary, Professor Christos Yannaras was known as a skilled professor of theology, whose theology, being more rational in

argumentation, comes closer to what we might call *a religious philosophy*.

Therefore, an important difference between the two ones is the *working method* which, as we have seen above, is based on different positions, and the results differ because of the philosophical influences. If the method of theological approach of Father Dumitru Stăniloae can be considered as an analogous - experimental one, because there is no difference between the father's way of writing and way of living, we find a different approach in the theology of Professor Christos Yannaras, a more rational one, but without enabling us to make valuable judgments on the professor's personal religious life. In fact, the professor was calling himself more philosopher than theologian, the very structure of his thinking being formed under the categorical influences of Berdiaev's and Heidegger's philosophy.

Another difference is the *style* of theological approach. Father Dumitru Stăniloae approaches the theological themes in the form of spirals, returning over and over to the original idea, and therefore an ignorant reader could have the impression that the father is continuously repeating his ideas. But this style is not a repetitive one, but one that deepens, so if the father returns to the original idea, the purpose is to enrich the original meaning, to see the idea in a more complex way and from multiple perspectives. Professor Christos Yannaras, being more rational, settles the issue more directly and categorically, coming immediately to a conclusion to be deepened later on.

In his writings, Professor Christos Yannaras often manifests a volcanic temperament, especially when it comes to the Western theology, labelling it directly and categorically, or when it comes to the affirmation of the philhellenism specific to his thinking. Father Dumitru Stăniloae is much gentler, more conciliatory, looking objectively at other points of view,

although he has cultivated quite a lot a nationalist orthodox theology.

As far as the theology of the person is concerned, Father Dumitru Stăniloae happily reconciles, in a perfect Orthodox way, the theology of being (*Ontotheology*) with the theology of the person, placing them in the balance that was necessary for an authentic Orthodox theology, even if the theology of the person occupies in the mind of the father a more important place than the theology of the being, aspect which is perfectly natural if we take into account the specificity of the Orthodox theological thinking. On the contrary, Professor Christos Yannaras exaggerates the role of the person to the detriment of the being, but we understand this fact as a somewhat natural reaction against the essentialism of the Catholic theology. I have also shown above the ambiguity of Professor Christos Yannaras's argumentation regarding the relationship between personality and nature in the human being.

In conclusion, I consider that both theologians have brought a substantial contribution to the development of the theology of the person and not only, being extremely valuable in their thinking, and becoming, over time, essential theological milestones for the younger generations of theologians in terms of further development and enrichment of the dogmatic theology.

The last chapter, the seventh one, entitled *Ontology and Humanism. Contemporary Trends and Perspectives*, divided into five subchapters, is on the one hand a concluding chapter, and on the other hand it brings the issue of the person in the contemporary world, drawing some ideas regarding the foreseen tendencies and prospects in the activity of the Church.

The second half of the twentieth century proves to be a period of settling and clarification of the church view on the person issue, following the immense efforts of the theologians

to clarify this aspect as an effect of emergence of the existentialist-humanistic philosophy.

Far from ending this episode of the theological life, we consider that the issue of humanism draws new directions and perspectives in the direction of the development and deepening of the dogmatic theology. This is because of the increasingly acute personality crisis that the today's society is going through. Strangely, although the theology of the person's meaning is extremely clear, the society is still facing a serious identity crisis, perhaps because of the lack of living patterns sufficient to draw the meaning of man's existence on the Earth.

On the one hand, the material comfort, the technological advancement, and the template of the Church on social-charitable activities contribute significantly to man's inability to engage in a spiritual, ascetic life. The material comfort has been never greater than today, as never before in history the interest in theology and culture in general has been lower, as if the material welfare and cultural performance were two antagonistic parallel issues. From the intellectual point of view, we find on the one hand the cultural elite of a small group of people and, on the other hand, a total lack of interest in knowledge of most people. We are witnessing the disappearance of the middle class and the emergence of an antagonistic society and culture.

From the church point of view, under the current pressure of the society, we are probably witnessing the focus of the church on three major issues. On the one hand, the affirmation of the ecclesial identity and the purpose of the church in society and, on the other hand, the problems related to ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue and the emphasis on the social-philanthropic activities of the Church, as a result of the existence of a certain increasingly poor social strata.

The post-modern society has become a reality difficult to define. The religious syncretism, socio-cultural

pluralism, doubled by the freedom of expression – through which anything may be said and anything may be denied, without personal consequences –, which would rather be translated not by the term *liberty*, but by the term *libertinism*, generates, as a result, a state of indifference to the values of the past, i.e. the *right* of the society to challenge everything, fact that leads to an acute crisis of the meaning of personal life.

In this context, not at all favourable, the message of the Gospel of Christ must find its way to reach the man's heart. The teaching of the Church is now very well crystallized. However, the Church is paradoxically dealing with the difficulty of conveying the message of the Gospel, in the situation where the religious information can reach extremely quickly any part of the world. But, the Church does not convey information. It conveys life and living content. The Church gives to the world an eternal perspective of life. However, the mode of life conveyance is extremely difficult, as the human being is already full of material life content.

Therefore, I believe that it is absolutely necessary to reorient and reposition the place that the Church occupies in society in the context of the new social realities, seeking to give to the society viable solutions to the dilemmas facing the human person. We are glad to see that the Church has begun to understand this phenomenon, providing the society with all kinds of actions and activities that open the Church to the world, and accepting, with a greater condescension, the new society that is prefiguring now.

The man is a being created by God, with unlimited capabilities, even in materiality. In the same way, the society in which he lives provides unlimited possibilities of expressing his personality, through which the man seeks the eternity, being more or less aware of his seeking. One thing is certain: the Church holds the truth about man, always seeking methods

most appropriate to the actual time of existence for conveying this truth to the world.

In this final chapter, I have sought to draw a general picture of the contemporary society and the identity crises that the man is passing through, as well as to define, as much as possible, the methods by which the Church comes closer to the society and man's issues, understanding that it can no longer provide answers to the questions that no one is asking, but rather through new theological researches and development trends, all in a very Orthodox vision.

At the end of the paper, I believe that this study contributes, at least to some extent, alongside other specialized papers, to a better understanding of the Divine Being, of the human being, of the Divine Person and of the human person, in the amalgam of contemporary teachings about the man, all based on the theology of the two great theologians, Father Dumitru Staniloae and Professor Christos Yannaras, in light of the teachings provided by the Holy Fathers of the Church and the Holy Scripture.

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