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**ASPECTS OF CORPORALITY IN CONTEMPORARY
SOCIETY.**
AN ORTHODOX EVALUATION

Doctoral Thesis

Summary

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Keywords:

body, corporality, platonic dualism, Cartesian philosophy, feminism, biotechnology, performing body, hedonism, individualism, defeated body, undesirable body, end of body, decorporalized body, incarnation, heart as spiritual center, skin clothes, body affections, face responsibility of the body, the spiritualization of the body, the body as doxological language, bodily needs, asceticism, the deified body, the iconic face

What does the body represent for the individual of contemporary society? How is it viewed, thought or represented in the common mind? What are the expectations that nowadays man has of his body? How did the body become a topical issue for today's society? How does the

progress in medicine and biotechnology transform the relationship that man has with his body? What impact does the virtual environment have on the way in which the individual of today's society perceives his body and lives his own corporality? How does Orthodox theology respond to a society that glorifies the body and presents it as an exclusive object of salvation, here and now? What is the value that Christianity gives to the body and how does it determine how the person relates to his own body? What does Orthodox theology bring in addition to the contemporary view of the body? Is there a different destiny of the body than to perceive it as a simple object of pleasure? What is man's moral responsibility to his body? These are some of the questions that this thesis seeks to answer, offering, on the one hand, an incursion into the discourses, representations and contemporary social practices of the body, and, on the other hand, outlining a theology of the body as an alternative to current views on body. Finally, we seek to emphasize that the destiny of the body is not to be reduced to its own materiality, but is meant to be spiritualized and penetrated by the energies of the soul overwhelmed by divine grace.

Regarding the compositional structure of the doctoral thesis, we can distinguish 2 large parts of it, totaling 13 chapters. The two parts are preceded by the Contents and Introduction and are followed by the Final conclusions related to this doctoral thesis, ending with the Bibliography.

Part I of the thesis is entitled "The body in the vision of postmodernity" and includes a number of eight chapters, with subchapters and conclusions related to each chapter, in which we generally aimed to provide a presentation of the idea of body in contemporary society, focusing on mainly on the discourses, the imaginary and the social practices that base this idea or conception and determine new attitudes of the people towards their body. In order to obtain a much clearer understanding of the idea of the body today, in the first chapter of this part we presented three representative conceptions of body and corporality - the Platonic, Cartesian and Nietzschean conceptions. What we found after the presentation is that, in the first two philosophical conceptions, the emphasis is on the idea of denigrating or disregarding the body in order to dedicate more time to the life and activity of the soul or mind, the only ones worth capitalizing on. Or, from this perspective, the way in which postmodernity thinks and looks at the body is at the opposite part of the two classical visions, because, as we will show during the other chapters, the postmodern will glorify the body par excellence. Nietzsche's vision of the

body is at the opposite part of Platonism and Cartesian perspective. The German thinker make the apology of the body, argues that philosophy must be concerned with the living body, considers the soul as a function of the body.

In the second chapter, entitled "Rediscovering the body in contemporary society", we have systematized, starting from some sociological, anthropological or philosophical analyzes, five premises that explain the growing interest in the topic of the body in academic disciplines and social practices. The second chapter also contains a subchapter dedicated to terminological clarifications related to body and body, meant to clarify the option for one term or another in current discourses.

The third chapter, "The body in the mirror of consumer society and postmodernity", highlights the perception of the body in consumer society and in postmodern thinking. Using the observations of consumer society analysts, we aimed to show in the pages of this chapter how the body becomes an object of salvation in consumerist rhetoric, to explain why the body has become for the postmodern individual a cardinal value of today's Western society and the only certainty of his life, to present the connection between the emergence of contemporary individualism and the favoring of a hedonistic cult of the body or to emphasize that behind the ideal of a performing body is the metaphysical idea of self-transcendence.

"Reflections on the body and sexuality in Michel Foucault's thinking" is the title of the fourth chapter in which we tried to briefly explain how the thinker explains the existing interest in the problem of sexuality in modern society. The chapter is important, and finds its place in the economics of the paper, because many of the ideas developed by Foucault were taken over by currents such as feminism or sexual liberation movements. Foucault states that the last three centuries have not been marked by a repression of sexuality, as some authors claim, so there has been no repression of sexuality, but on the contrary a multiplicity of sexual discourses, which have transformed modern man into a being who seeks to obtain pleasure from the very pleasure with which he expresses his sexual desires and fantasies. Through his ideas, Foucault contributed to the moral decriminalization of sexuality in postmodern Western society.

In the fifth chapter, "The body in medical vision and in bioethical debates", we show, based on sociological research, that modern medicine, through the practice of dissection, "invents" the body from the epistemological point of view, which will be perceived from now on as an object detached from the person who embodies it, a biological material that can be

subjected to research, analyzed piece by piece. From an anthropological point of view, and in relation to traditional conceptions, modern medicine establishes an ontological caesura between man and his body. At the level of social perceptions, this fact will lead to a depersonalization of the body, which will determine the modern man to refer to his body as something foreign to himself. A consequence of this way of representing the body is that in the medical discourse there is more talk of healing the body, in the sense of repairing its damaged functions or organs, than the healing of man. In turn, the body is also at the center of bioethical debates as on the one hand its very status is questioned by the application of technological advances in the medical field. What until recently was believed to be "given" immutably to the human body, is seen today as only a certain stage of knowledge about the body, but surpassed by new research or discoveries about the possibilities of the body. On the other hand, organ marketing, renting the body for surrogacy, the problem of abortion, stem cell research, etc. - these are some of the current issues that raise more and more ethical questions about the extent to which the human body can be disposed of and to which concrete answers are required.

In the sixth chapter, "Practices of the body in postmodern society," summarizing several ideas expressed in the social sciences, we want to provide an idea of what the body has become in today's mentality by exposing aspects of three practices involving human corporeality. Both the liberalization of sexual practices, the decriminalization of public nudity, the generalization of body markings, and the use of one's body as an artistic subject prove that in the postmodern vision the body is the place of pleasure, well-being, the favorite place of identity and self-search, an aesthetic object.

Chapter seven, though brief, exposes three negative social representations of corporeality in today's world. The defeated, undesirable or incapable body contrasts with the glorious vision of the bodily ideal promoted in the postmodern mind, that is why it is the source of failures, frustrations, fatalities, non-acceptance or social isolation. The last chapter of Part I brings up the issue of the disappearance of the body by briefly presenting, on the one hand, the conception of the transhumanist movement about the hyper-technologized body, and, on the other hand, the metamorphoses of the body in the virtual environment.

Part II of this paper, entitled "Elements for a Theology of the Body in Eastern Tradition and Spirituality," is developed over five chapters and is intended to be a presentation of the

vision of Christian anthropology about the body by focusing on the ascetic and spiritual dimensions of the body. The first chapter, which opens the second part of our research, is entitled "The human body in the original anthropological project and in the framework of the fallen world." Starting from the revelation of the Holy Scripture and appealing to the patristic interpretations and comments of contemporary theologians, in this chapter we will reflect on the body in its original condition and in the state after the fall of the forefathers. One aspect I referred to at the beginning of the chapter is that Christian anthropology is holistic. The body, created by God through personal and careful intervention, is a constituent part of the person brought into existence by the Creator. The care that God manifests in regard to the shaping of the body in the dust shows that the matter of which the body is composed is good in itself and that the purpose of the body is to be a support of the soul in the spiritual life. The body is the place of the soul, not a prison of it - as Platonism and the Gnostic currents professed - and, from this point of view, there is a communion of destiny of the soul and the body. On the other hand, the holistic character of Eastern anthropology is proved very concretely by the connection between the faculties of the soul and the bodily senses. In this sense, the human body or its organs or functions also have a spiritual opening.

The most representative example is the heart - an ambivalent organ from the perspective of Eastern spirituality. Physiologically speaking, the heart is the engine of man's biological life, but, moreover, the pages of Scripture and patristic interpretations show the role of the heart as the center par excellence of religious and moral life. Another aspect I approached is that of the fallen body. The fall into sin brings with it a change in the ontological state of the body. The "skin clothes" referred to in the book of Genesis represent the condition of mortality that man experiences after being banished from heaven. According to the Church Fathers, by this expression we must also consider the affections that were introduced into our nature after the fall and that characterize our fallen life. The presentation of theological reflections on affections is of great importance because our daily existence and the dynamism of our spiritual life depend very much on how we manage to sublimate these affections. This becomes all the more imperative as contemporary consumerist and hedonistic society has made a program of stimulating and nurturing affections for pleasure. At the end of the chapter we address the issue of bodily diseases and suffering and biological death as the ultimate effect of original sin.

In the second chapter we emphasize the value that the Son of God gives, through His Incarnation of woman, on the human body. This value results from the fact that the Eternal Son of God cloths the human condition with all the weaknesses of nature from sin, but without taking sin. The human nature assumed in the Person of Jesus Christ is not only restored or healed by the act of the Incarnation, but is elevated to a degree of perfection that it did not have before. Through the Incarnation of Christ, the human nature in the divine Subject is deified, and this deification culminates in the Resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ with the body in heaven. On the other hand, the importance and value of the human body is highlighted by the role that the human body played in the saving activity of Jesus Christ. Christ accomplished our salvation in and through his body, showing us that we too must be saved or deified with our whole person. Equally, in the resurrection and ascension of Christ with the pneumatized body to heaven, we are revealed the eternal destiny of the human body that can unite with God and his body.

In the third chapter we turned our attention to man's moral responsibility for his body. In the first subchapter we emphasized that, although it has a unitary character, the moral responsibility of man towards the body is expressed differently in relation to each Trinity Person. I emphasized that the responsibility to God the Father lies in the fact that He showed in the creation and shaping of the human body from the dust a special attention and care to make the body a moral support of the soul. The fulfillment of this responsibility is achieved by man by (over)watching that his body is always fit to support the soul in the spiritual life. I then showed that the responsibility in relation to God-Son stems from the special value that the Son of God places on the human body through His incarnation. Man becomes responsible for the fruits of the saving work that Christ accomplishes in his body. The fact that Christ through his incarnation deifies the human body, sanctifying it and giving it the vocation of the Temple of God is also a responsibility for the human being, which the latter carries out through his life of holiness in the body. Finally, there is a responsibility of man to the Holy Spirit, because in the life of the Church He is the one who pours out on us in the Holy Mysteries the grace of God, strengthening and sanctifying us permanently, provided we conclude with this grace. We have thus emphasized that we are responsible for the renewal of our being and our senses through the Sacraments and for the fact that through our incorporation into the body of the Church our body is revealed as a temple in which the Spirit of God dwells. In the second subchapter we set out to show that man is responsible for his body before his conscience, because through divine revelation he knows the

purpose given by God to the human body. I emphasized, developing an idea of Fr. Stăniloae, that, in relation to oneself, man's responsibility lies in making his body constantly participate in human subjectivity. This means not taking care of the needs of the body an end in itself, a situation in which the body loses its subjective, personal character. Along with this, we also pointed out that the person's responsibility to the body also includes the need to live a life of purity of soul and body by cultivating the virtues of virginity and chastity, maintaining a balance in terms of biological care needs of the body, responsibility for maintaining health and bodily integrity. In the last instance, I noticed that man is responsible for the state in which his body will be found in the resurrection.

The next chapter, the fourth, focuses on highlighting the importance of the body's participation in the cult-sacramental life of the Church and in spiritual work, in the form of bodily asceticism. The careful reading of the ordinances of the Holy Sacraments, of the content of the prayers read by the minister priest as well as of the liturgical gestures performed by the latter, highlight the importance of the body for receiving the Holy Sacraments. In life in Christ man must participate with his whole being, therefore the grace of God which embraces him renews both his soul and his body. Inseparable from the Sacraments, the worship of the Church has an obvious material character that emphasizes the important role of the body in living and expressing faith. In worship, the prayer of the soul is accompanied by the movements and gestures of the body, is articulated by the specific language of the body, and all five senses of man are involved and spiritualized in the liturgical atmosphere. In worship the body becomes epiphany. On the other hand, the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church cannot be understood outside the ascetic dimension. Asceticism is an intrinsic dimension of the Christian life. Whoever says Christianity also says asceticism. Therefore, in the second subchapter I insisted mainly on the necessity and role of bodily asceticism in the spiritual life. The purpose of bodily asceticism is not the mortification or annulment of the body, but the irrational lusts that have taken over man, and the rebalancing of the hierarchy between soul and body. As the theologian Sergiu Bulgakov states, asceticism kills the flesh by making the body appear / manifest. For their part, patristic writers and philocal authors have shown that bodily asceticism is a means of spiritual growth. Through bodily asceticism, the Christian makes room for the work of the soul, and in all this time the body becomes the support of the soul's life. In this sense, bodily asceticism restores the initial relationship between soul and body. But both through bodily

will man unites and reaches a fuller knowledge of God, because his bodily senses are spiritualized and man experiences the grace of God in his own body.

The final chapter of the second part addresses the subject of the condition of the risen human body in the Kingdom of God. We have shown that in the pages of the New Testament we are given some details about the shape of the resurrected bodies. The Savior Jesus Christ speaks of the radiance, of the glory which the righteous will share in the Kingdom of the Father, and the Apostle Paul presents some essential characteristics of the risen body. On the other hand, we have shown that the Eastern tradition read the event on Tabor in an eschatological key, in the sense that this event reveals to us the face of the transfigured and deified man, the state of the spiritualized body. Regarding the holy relics, we noticed that in their reality we have a foreshadowing of the incorruptibility that the body will receive after the resurrection, and related to the representation of the face and body of the saints in the icon we highlighted the idea that the icon reveals our spiritualized, pneumatized, full body. of glory, the transfigured body of the Kingdom.

The final conclusions of the paper summarize the main ideas that emerge from our scientific approach.