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DOCTORAL THESIS

**THE UNCONSCIOUS IN PASTORAL WORK
"Spiritual Personality" and the ontological goal of deification**

- Summary -

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"Spiritual Personality" and the ontological goal of deification

Keywords: unconscious, pastoral work, spiritual personality, ontological, deification

- Summary -

The post-industrial society is in a new revolutionary phase that began with the development of computers, programming languages, and later with artificial intelligence. Information technologies are what allow the creation of "non-territorial empires"¹ and imaginary worlds that tend to suppress reality. Today's society is saturated with the virtual due to social networks, which enable the creation of classes of people who organize and live transnationally, in the virtual space. This way of life produces significant changes in human personality, and the virtual world brings about a personal transformation through continuously expanding personal freedom and an apparent solitude of personal desires and whims². Additionally, artificial intelligence profoundly alters how society functions, impacting all social structures, from production processes and organizational operations to the educational process and medical practice. The virtual world is filled with images, and society lives in a form of "emocracy," which is the result of how unconscious emotions influence human behavior. In this context, where today's Knowledge Society is fundamentally changing the expression of naturalness, it is essential for the Church to remain the haven of humanity.

¹ Cosmin Dragoș DUGAN, *Neurargumentarea în epoca cognitivă, între competiție și sinergie: optimizarea performanțelor umane pentru personalul de securitate națională și profesii de elită*, Editura Militară, București, 2020, p. 23.

² C. D. DUGAN, *Neurargumentarea în epoca cognitivă...*, p. 24.

Current research in psychology, neuroscience, and medicine seeks to understand the most subtle human aspects, such as the mind and consciousness, from a new perspective. Recent studies by Antonio Damasio, Eric R. Kandel, Ray Dona, But Craig, and Mark Solms attempt to provide answers to how unconscious processes influence humans, from the formation of emotions and perceptions to the shaping of behavior. These studies complement what the old philosophical, psychological, and psychoanalytic schools have managed to formulate regarding the unconscious. Similarly, Jean-Claude Larchet has conducted a systematic study of the spiritual unconscious, outlining how spiritual realities influence human behavior. The ontological reality regarding the emergence and development of man on earth represents one of the formidable challenges that current science attempts to explain through various categories of methods, techniques, and tools. However, contrary to expectations, current research presents only a multitude of hypotheses, some well-argued and others less so, regarding this ontological paradox. While the formulation of assumptions about the unconscious (cognitive, emotional, motivational, etc.) and the psychoanalytic unconscious relies on science, the spiritual unconscious is formulated based on patristic writings grounded in scripture. St. Sophrony Sakharov mentions that, following Adam's fall, its consequences have affected all of humanity. Thus, after the fall, man first experienced "shame"³ followed by the "martyrdom of the murderous darkness of the passions."⁴ Addressing the unconscious in pastoral work is a difficult but necessary endeavor because man has the ontological obligation to achieve likeness to God (Genesis 1:26). However, studying the specific characteristics of the unconscious dimension of man within the framework of pastoral work requires a scientifically grounded approach, which may present certain challenges. Research requires a praxiological dimension to contribute to the systematization of a methodology through which priests and pastoral counselors can approach the unconscious. Therefore, a profound exploration of the concept of person and implicitly of personality, as well as the specific characteristics of the unconscious, is necessary. This requires the psychological, psychoanalytic, and theological perspectives, implicitly through the lens of Orthodox spirituality and dogmatics.

³ Gheorghios GALITIS, *Adam cel dintâi și cele de pe urmă, în teologia Părintelui Sofronie* (Părintele Sofronie - teologul luminii necreate. Simpozionul științific interortodox, 2007, Atena), trad. Florin - Cătălin Ghiț și Elena Dinu, Editura Renașterea, București, 2018, p. 127.

⁴ G. GALITIS, *Adam cel dintâi și cele de pe urmă...*, p. 127.

Thus, presenting the most relevant studies related to the concepts of person, personality, and the specific implications of the unconscious in relation to these concepts is sine qua non for the current research. This is because human personality undergoes changes and interpretations due to virtualization and digitalization. Virtual and digital personalities have become scientifically addressed realities. In such a context, pastoral work needs to update its practices by including the unconscious. Understanding and knowing the unconscious, as well as the scientific research dedicated to this concept, must be included in the way pastoral care is conducted. Therefore, the Church must provide a response that meets the current challenges. This doctoral thesis is the result of research and study on the unconscious applicable in pastoral work. This scientific endeavor is necessary because new realities require an understanding of the unconscious and related studies to optimize pastoral work, at least in terms of pastoral counseling and catechesis. Similarly, the explanation of how unconscious processes influence visual art, creativity, culture, and the economy should be studied in theology. Ultimately, the rehabilitation of man can only be achieved through the knowledge of these realities spiritual and psycho-emotional. Analyzing these realities contributes to understanding the complexity of the human finite being and its depths, as well as to understanding the ontological potential of man. Thus, the doctoral thesis, *The Unconscious in Pastoral Work: "Spiritual Personality" and the Ontological Goal of Theosis*, through the concept of spiritual personality, opens up new research opportunities with practical applications in pastoral work. Similarly, understanding and explaining the potential and the ontological goal of theosis need to be addressed through scientific concepts, which this doctoral thesis has attempted to accomplish. As a result, the understanding of certain spiritual realities can be more easily explained and accepted through the concept of spiritual personality proposed in relation to the ontological goal of theosis.

Pastoral work possesses a volatile character that targets various categories of believers as beneficiaries of the triple ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ through the clergy. Even though the clergy are representatives of the Lord Christ, in the new society (Knowledge Society), there is discussion about various categories of people who can perform pastoral work (pastoral counselors, philosophical counselors, trainers, mentors, virtuous leaders, psychoanalysts, etc.). However, pastoral work remains, by excellence, the prerogative of the priest. This is also due to the fact that "the most effective way to restore spiritual life remains the Holy Sacrament of Confession, which

is of paramount importance in the individual pastoral care of believers."⁵ Pastoral work, as a spiritual endeavor par excellence, has its origins in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19), seen as direct commands addressed to the Holy Apostles. Moreover, teaching is emphasized by the Lord Jesus Christ, who tells the Holy Apostles that they must teach "them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). At the same time, the priest is guided to carry out pastoral work through the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, who says: "to preach the gospel to the poor; to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). From the words of the Savior Jesus Christ, it is understood that pastoral work also involves the following types of actions: preaching, healing of the heart, awareness of sins and forgiveness, and proclaiming what is pleasing to God. However, to carry out this "pastoral program" provided by the Savior Jesus Christ, the priest has the obligation to living a life in Jesus Christ. The goal of pastoral ministry "is none other than that for which Jesus Christ established His grace-filled Kingdom on earth, that is, the Church"⁶. This involves the following specific aspects⁷:

- a) the unceasing succession of his ministry among humankind until the end of time;
- b) enlightening people in faith;
- c) cultivating christian piety;
- d) sanctification through divine grace;
- e) guiding people toward eternal happiness and salvation.

To achieve effective pastoral work, the threefold ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ: teaching, sacred service, and governance (spiritual guidance of the flock) ⁸ is offered as a model. This threefold ministry represents the general framework on which pastoral work is based. In order to increase pastoral efficiency, it is necessary to diversify the forms within this framework. The socio-cultural and economic realities challenge the Church to develop new ways of conveying the truths

⁵ Cosmin-Cătălin LAZĂR, „Misiune și pastorație individuală prin Taina Spovedaniei”, *Altarul Reîntregirii, The Journal of the Faculty of Theology, Alba Iulia* Nr. 3 (2015), p. 206.

⁶ Melchisedec UNGUREANU, *Teologia pastorală*, ed. îngrij. de: Pr. Prof. Dr. Viorel Sava și Diac. Drd. Cezar Pelin, Doxologia, Iași, 2011, p. 55.

⁷ M. UNGUREANU, *Teologia pastorală*, p. 55.

⁸ M. UNGUREANU, *Teologia pastorală*, p. 55.

of faith. The advent and widespread use of the Internet and IT&C technologies contribute to altering the old human paradigms. Technology has become a true ideology, equivalent to an *axis mundi veritas*, without which humanity would not experience new stages of development.

Addressing the unconscious in pastoral work requires an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary study due to the specific complexity of the unconscious. Current research on the unconscious covers increasingly diverse areas (psychology, psychiatry, neurology, psychoanalysis, economics, philosophy, etc.), which reflects the complexity of humans both as beings and as persons. Unlike psychology, neurology, psychoanalysis, and philosophy, theology possesses a much deeper body of knowledge regarding the spiritual dimension and the spiritual unconscious. The need for explorations of the unconscious to identify opportunities for its application in pastoral work is both necessary and demanded by new realities. This body of knowledge refers to the depth of the human being, and the various structural nuances attest to this reality. The spiritual man possesses a depth much greater than that of the psychological or biological man.

Regarding the nature of the unconscious, it can be noted that it is predominantly affective. This reality was well synthesized by C.G. Jung, who understood that "archetypes, being condensed and collective images, although instinctual, are equally close to feeling and idea"⁹. According to this observation by C.G. Jung, the study of the unconscious in pastoral work requires special attention because understanding the affective aspect of the unconscious is necessary if one wishes to provide long-term healing solutions.

Research on how the unconscious has been approached over time reveals various perspectives, but some tend to place Freud's research as an exceptional moment, a zero point in the discovery of the unconscious. Since antiquity, Plato referred to the unmanifested fury with an allusion to the concept of repression as an unconscious process. In the current context of research, the unconscious is referred to through a multitude of subdivisions, such as cognitive unconscious, motivational unconscious, emotional unconscious, etc. Just as there is a psychological and biological unconscious, there is also a spiritual unconscious. This assertion can also be supported by St. Paul's statement that the Lord of peace should sanctify the entire spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Most patristic writings remain in a bipartite view, stating that man is

⁹ Mihaela POP, *Imaginarul: teorii și aplicații*, Editura Universității din București, București, 2011, p. 220.

composed of body and soul, with the spirit (mind or intellect) being the finest or most elevated part¹⁰. A very important note is that spirituality does not represent a component of man but rather a dimension of him. Thus, references to the spirit should be understood in this sense. When speaking of spirituality, it refers to a dimension, to another aspect of man that is subjected to a different kind of reality. This creates difficulty in correctly understanding the concept of spiritual unconscious, because, unlike the cognitive, motivational, emotional, and biological unconscious, the spiritual unconscious pertains to a different dimension. While the cognitive, emotional, motivational, and biological unconscious are included within man, the spiritual unconscious does not refer to a component of man. Certainly, the spirit is not dissociated from the psyche and the body, but it cannot be categorized within them.

Ultimately, the essence of spirituality lies in the connection with God. Therefore, spirituality refers to everything related to God. Although the terms "spiritual" or "spirit" are often used erroneously, leading to a false understanding of spiritual matters, priests and theologians have the duty to maintain the correct meaning according to patristic writings. An important observation is that any activity undertaken by the mind or body in relation to God, when related to Him, also acquires a spiritual dimension.

The foundation of the human person needs to be identified based on the divine person, starting from the model of Christ. In this regard, it is mentioned that "just as the divine Hypostasis is all-transcendent, so too is the human person, in its ultimate realization, transcendent of any finitude"¹¹. Thus, the human person faces a difficult challenge, through ascetic methods, to "pierce" space and time, thereby becoming all-transcendent. If the natural logos of one's nature constitutes the "spiritual unconscious of man," with its own life and inherent dynamism, it continuously drives human nature toward its ultimate goal, which is God"¹². Accordingly, the concept of "spiritual personality" is proposed as a new concept in the study of personality and Christian anthropology, approached spiritually or theologically. The concept of "spiritual personality" must be understood and interpreted in relation to the spiritual dimension of man, even though it has implications for man in a holistic sense. "Spiritual personality" highlights the importance of the spiritual

¹⁰ J. C. LARCHET, *Inconștientul spiritual...*, p. 122

¹¹ N. SAHAROV, *Iubesc, deci exist...*, p. 95.

¹² J. C. LARCHET, *Inconștientul spiritual...*, p. 135.

unconscious in pastoral work for achieving the ontological goal of deification. However, before discussing the concept of "spiritual personality," its definition, and specific dimensions, it is necessary to present a summary of the definitions of human personality from the perspectives of psychology, psychoanalysis, and philosophy.

The proposed definition of "spiritual personality" is as follows: spiritual personality represents the manifestation of the unity of the love-person's attributes, according to their tropos, whose meaning is related to the natural logos. In the writings of St. Maximus the Confessor, as mentioned by Jean-Claude Larchet, the logos is immutable, while the tropos is variable depending on the will (gnome) and choice (proairesis) of each person¹³. These variations in tropos are expressed behaviorally and, in relation to the meaning of the logos, define two human typologies: just or unjust.¹⁴ These typologies can vary, such as partially just or partially unjust, thus relativizing the ontological meaning of their nature. However, the tropos remains only an expression of the will (gnome) as an ontological vector, and at the same time, as the basis for understanding and formulating behavior studied psychologically, which led to the development of the concept of personality (as an expression of the interaction between the individual and their environment).

In pastoral work, the unconscious can be most effectively approached through the spiritual unconscious to achieve a process of awareness. Naturally, pastoral work must also address the cognitive, emotional, motivational, and physiological unconscious due to the complexity of the human being. Nonetheless, the essence should be focused on the soul, which should be the central point of attention.

Research on the concept of "spiritual personality," as an ontological and metaphysical reality, is primarily based on the theology of St. Sophrony Sakharov and the theological research of Jean-Claude Larchet. St. Sophrony Sakharov's conception of the person has contributed to changing the paradigm concerning the human dimension and its infinite potential. Contributions to researching the approach to the unconscious in pastoral work could represent a new stage in how the unconscious is addressed in theology, particularly in pastoral work.

¹³ J. C. LARCHET, *Inconștientul spiritual...*, p. 133.

¹⁴ J. C. LARCHET, *Inconștientul spiritual...*, p. 134.

