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The importance of the dialogue between theology and science from an anthropological analysis perspective

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Abstract. The anthropological chapter defines itself as the most important research that mankind can undertake, as it brings to the foreground aspects that give meaning to the entire universe. The dialogue between science and theology is imperatively necessary in defining man, as only through co-working can man be correctly defined in his dichotomy, thus pointing out elements of evolution as much as elements related to the spiritual side of man, side that takes him out of „contingency” and positions him in the love of God.

Keywords. God, Man, Creationism, Evolutionism, Science

Introduction

The anthropological chapter is perhaps the most under scrutiny segment of sciences. It has been subjected to analysis since always, starting with the great philosophers and up to the present day, thus making understandable the paramount importance for man of defining his identity. If in the heyday of philosophy, there were often dialogues with theology regarding the anthropological chapter, it should be mentioned that they were not dominated by the dramatic form that this dialogue has taken in our days, through the involvement of science.

Through this involvement, more or less accurate, modern humanity reaches a form of crisis, acknowledged or not, crisis regarding the question: what is the meaning of man, of consciousness and what are his values? In this context of defining human consciousness and human values, it is imperative for theology to be the discipline that expresses the divine will regarding man. In other words, only theology can express certain human values, these values being expressed only through the correct relation between the creation and the Creator.

This text seeks to highlight the causes of the controversy between Science and Theology in relation to the origin and ultimate purpose of man, and to highlight methods of solving the problem, in a society that wants to take man out of the sacred sphere, in order to control him through consumerism and other increasingly inventive methods.

I. Causes of the Controversy between Science and Theology from an Anthropologic Perspective

The secularized society we live in is characterized by the gratuitous support of the conflict between science and theology, as a natural consequence of the divorce between the secular and the sacred. As a result, the today's society has kept science as the only option for

knowledge, claiming to be unique in the space of objectivity. In this context, theology is considered "a subjective option that cannot claim significance in expressing the truth"¹. Starting from different research methods, the two disciplines reach different conclusions, and from here it might be understood, at first sight, that a point of congruence between them is impossible.

The removal of man from the sacred sphere determines science to analyse him without taking into account that he belongs to Christ, so as a simple phenomenon that "comes from nowhere and goes nowhere."² Therefore, according to some famous schools of thought that have only science as the foundation of their knowledge, man is a natural result of evolution, and can be considered "very accidental"³. Analysed from this perspective, man would define himself as a result of chance, a genetic mechanism with chemical foundations.

According to science, man is the result of a history of millions of years, without anything special from a biological standpoint, and his life does not strive towards a goal that exceeds the limits of materiality. Therefore, the human being is, from the science point of view, contained only by biology as the only level of reality, the body being the way the instincts manifest themselves. Reducing man to a simple rational animal has immediate consequences, in the sense that the instinct of survival goes beyond the rational, and man is fully subjected to it, having no other purpose in himself. For the sciences that analyse evolution, the transmission of genes is the only purpose of human life, which is doomed to be limited to materiality.

Following this scientific approach, theology presents itself in a totally different sense, wanting to highlight the creation of God in general and of man in particular. It presents, according to the Biblical references, the divine supernatural intervention in the act of creating man. Starting from how God created the world, through direct intervention, in conjunction with the purpose and abilities with which the crown of creation is endowed, man defines himself as a dichotomous being, with a material body and a spiritual soul, this second part being the one that gives value to man, being the one that can surpass materiality at any time, on its way to God. Through the dichotomy of human nature, we mean that the ultimate goal of man is achieved through his spiritual part, beyond any laws of physics and biology that can be applicable only to the body. Otherwise, the spiritual part of man, which although cannot be measured physically, still exists in man without a scientific explanation, is the one through which man is able to maintain a dialogue of love with God and with his fellow men.

Anthropological analysis from an evolutionary perspective defines an autonomous history of humanity, without reference to the divine, thus without theological elements, bringing to the foreground man's lack of purpose. On the other hand, through theology, man is defined as a rational creature, totally different from the entire Creation, who can be part of a dialogue with God, and who can respond to divine love. Starting from the idea that God creates everything out of love for the crown of His creation, that is, for man, the latter can be presented as the link between the material and the spiritual.

The first cause of the separation between science and theology in anthropological analysis comes from the difference in the object of their study. Science only deals with the naturalistic vision, not being able to rise above materiality, and theology refers to the supernatural vision, according to which man cannot be conceived outside of his relationship with God. In order to properly understand human nature, it is imperative that the relationship between the natural and the supernatural be understood in correct terms. The instinctive dualism between the natural and the supernatural implies in itself an impossibility of correct articulation.

¹ Claude Allègre, *Dieu face à la science*, Fayard, Paris, 1997, p. 7.

² Petre Țuțea, *Omul: tratat de antropologie creștină*, Timpul, 2003, Bucharest, p. 62.

³ Stephen Jay Gould, *Ever since Darwin*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 1979, p. 122.

If there is no direct, aggressive conflict between classical philosophy and theology on this matter, modern science claims to be the only one that expresses the truth, considering itself the science by excellence.

The modern scientific approach, which is based on the brutal separation between sacred and profane, giving up on the competence of faith, reaches the conclusion of the existence of an infinite universe, without a centre and implicitly without a definable meaning, and the supernatural obviously can no longer be part of the empirical method of knowledge testing. Modernity has managed the negative exploit of outlining a model of presentation of the universe, without any reference to God.

Starting from this principle that wanted to present the universe and implicitly man without relating them to a pronator Creator, modern sciences that try to explain the infinity of the universe have emerged⁴. In this universe devoid of Logos, thus devoid of any spiritual significance and finality, man is put in front of the immensity of the universe, devoid of any landmark, and can be considered a neglectable quantity. At this point, man can no longer be defined as a dichotomous being, with material body and spiritual soul, as defined by theology, but only as an entity that exists by chance, without having other higher purpose than genetic survival. Of course, theology cannot agree with this atheistic, devoid of finality and of meaning definition of man.

The origin of the conflict is therefore based on the desire to reduce man only to the sensory, to what the intellect, devoid of faith, can define in a philosophical language. Thus, modern science today does not call into question the existence of God and does not perceive the historical presence of the Logos in creation. Moreover, modern sciences cannot plausibly explain how they allow themselves to deny theology the scientific authority to investigate reality.

Although science excludes theology, the latter is not radical about the former. According to theology, which defines man in his dichotomy, the autonomy of science is recognized, as by relating to God, the world itself has a dynamic character. This dynamism requires the world, the creation, "to follow its own course of evolutionary development"⁵, this involving also the research that science can perform from a strictly rational perspective. It is important to specify that rational, scientific research, even if it has its own corridor of analysis, can only be appreciated if it understands man and creation in their relationship with God. Otherwise, any scientific research that ignores God's participation in all that exists is dangerously unilateral.

II. The Expression of Human Complexity – Decisive Factor of the Conflict between Science and Theology

Man, in his complexity, wants to be defined and explained by both the scientific and the theological sides, parts that, in modern times, have come to be in contradiction because of a wrong way of relating the research to God. Thus, science, wishing to express the absence of God, defines man as the result of evolution, and theology, analysing the complexity of the relationship between body and soul, defines the human person as the fruit of God's free and conscious creation. Science is expressed through all forms of research subjected to the ideas of evolutionism, and theology presents the truth of faith, perfectly expressed in the biblical account of creation.

It should be specified that theology is in favour of a complex presentation of the human being, even from the perspective of the evolution of the human species, starting the

⁴ Alexander Koyre, *De la lumea închisă la universul infinit*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1997, p. 7.

⁵ John Meyendorff, *Teologia Bizantină. Tendințe istorice și teme doctrinare*, Nemira, Bucharest, 2013, p. 180.

demonstration by analysing both the factors defined by natural causes and those defined by supernatural causes.

If anthropology is viewed only from a single perspective, the result obtained is imperatively unilateral, incomplete⁶. The fact that the theology of the Sixth Ecumenical Council answers, through Maximus the Confessor, to the anthropological problems of the time, that are topical even today, is impressive. The foundation of theological knowledge has in its composition the impossibility of expressing existence outside the relationship with God. Of the same opinion is also Saint Basil the Great, who, in the dialogues he had with the philosophers of his time, did not accuse them for the increasingly contrary anthropological proposals they set out, but for removing the Logos from the act of creation. From the perspective of patristic theology, which is based on the biblical account and the Holy Tradition, the anthropological problem cannot be fully expressed unless we take into account the dichotomy of human nature on the one hand, and the Logos as the Rational Cause of all created on the other.

If the systems of science have expressed over time several forms of presentation of the way man came into existence, some already dismantled by new demonstrations, theology has remained constant, for it does not seek to present the best anthropological theory, but the fact that man, a rational being, could come to existence only by being created "by the Rational Cause, that is, by the Logos."⁷

The analysis of evolutionary ideology denotes from the beginning a philosophical approach, by the fact that it uses elements of philosophical discourse, and this anti-metaphysical nihilism highlights an approach to the problem only from the perspective of naturalistic interpretation of reality, denying *in principio* any action of the divinity and implicitly the existence of God. At this point, science no longer distinguishes between its own beliefs based on a naturalistic philosophy, and pure research, which requires an impartial approach of the problem. From here, it naturally results a presentation of conclusions modelled in a package characterized by atheism and nihilism.

For this reason, researchers such as Richard Dawkins end up allowing themselves to make fun of the existence of God, defining through their studies the existence of a river in genes that expresses a single purpose: the survival of the genetic background⁸. From here we see how the complexity of the theological being is reduced to the absurd, only to what can be defined by the physical laws. However, man is through his dichotomy much more than science can prove, being able to ensure a relationship of communion between creation and Creator.

Science, that seeks to reduce the human being to the sole form of gene survival, is often in conflict with other sciences that analyse man from other perspectives and denotes a struggle between the authors of various genetic studies and beyond, a struggle that expresses a total uncertainty in the approach of the matter. The voluntary renunciation of the interpretation of the anthropological problem from a theological perspective denotes the acceptance of meaningless interpretations, only for subjective reasons. Now the following questions can be asked: can't theology fill the void in scientific research? The human being is nothing more than a mere body subject to materiality? And if science were to admit the spiritual part of man, would it not directly lead to conclusions that have, as their primary condition, the existence of a Rational Creator of all that exists? Certainly, it would. Moreover, how is it possible for man to show morality in interpersonal relationships if he does not have a supreme model to relate to?

⁶ Pr. Prof. Dumitru Popescu, *Hristos, Biserică, Societate*, IBMBOR, Bucharest, 2017, p. 42.

⁷ St. Basil the Great, *Omiliile la Hexaemeron*, 1, 2, Sophia, Bucharest, 2004, p. 42.

⁸ Richard Dawkins, *Un rău pornit din Eden. Codul genetic, computerul și evoluția speciilor*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2007, p. 33.

Unfortunately, the secularized society, which wants to remove man from the sacred and subjugate him through techno-sciences, seeks, today more than ever, the elimination of the Creator from the human life, precisely to reduce the dignity of the human person, to define the latter as a rational individual, who has no purpose that exceeds the limits of materiality.

All the sciences that want in their research to exclude the existence of a rational Creator, face the problem of the perfect organization of the universe through irrational causes, which is actually an absurdity. The irrational can never produce perfection from and through itself. Just as the letters of a book, in order to make sense, must be arranged by a personal reason, without the involvement of which they could never be in the necessary order allowing to decipher the message, so the human genetic code, the book of life, must be written by a Reason that theology defines as God.

III. The Clarification of the Conflict

From what has been previously highlighted, we understand that between theology and science there is a conflict resulting from the faulty understanding of the anthropological chapter. Thus, neither of them holds the absolute truth, but only in part, and a collaboration between science and theology is imperative for the full expression of the complexity of the human being. If science can make a pertinent analysis of man from a material perspective, this cannot be sufficient to define him, because man also has a spiritual side. Only through such collaboration can man be defined in his dichotomy.

Taking the word of St. Maximus the Confessor as starting point, "the origin and the beginning are illuminated only from the end"⁹, we can highlight the fact that the universe is moving, and human history is part of this movement. But this movement must not be understood outside of Christ, if the principle of synergy is taken into account, as it should naturally be. By this principle we cannot reduce everything to natural selection, because the possibility of selection, beyond the inventiveness of genes and implicitly the tendency of survival, was conceived by the Logos who, in the act of creation, endows man with the desire for evolution, of a fully conscious advance towards God. This evolution is based on the synergy between the divine and the human, that is fulfilled through Christ. Moreover, He provides us with all the elements necessary for development, through His providence, so that man can reach his purpose. Through Him, man transcends the limits imposed by materiality, transfiguring himself as did Christ through His resurrection, the body of the risen Son of God being the ultimate form that man can reach, that is deification by grace.

All the natural selections presented by science are made only in Christ and through His plan, through the parameters in which He conceived the world, that He made out of nothing. That is why man cannot be defined outside the relationship with God. It follows that we must focus on the origin and ultimate purpose of man, none of which can be completely defined outside the Logos. Only from this perspective can a collaboration between science and theology be fruitful, regarding the complete definition of man. By the fact that man is capable of love that transcends materiality, and by the fact that he is permanently attracted by the desire to evolve in the sense of striving for the Absolute, it follows that scientific and theological anthropology must collaborate in order for man to be correctly placed in the universe created by God out of love.

⁹ St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, EIBMO, Bucharest, 2006, p. 85.

IV. Conclusions

From what has been highlighted above, we may conclude that man, in his complexity, can be defined scientifically only up to a point, beyond which science can no longer penetrate the mystery. This is where theology steps in and, through uncreated divine grace, defines man beyond the materiality of the world, highlighting his dichotomy in demonstrations, as the link between the created and the One who created them. Therefore, what science cannot perfectly define must be completed by theology, as the latter knows man beyond the elements strictly related to genetics. Therefore, a serious collaboration between science and theology is imperative, and the truth about man can thus be highlighted in both scientific and theological parameters, which in their depth are not mutually exclusive, but complete each other harmoniously.

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