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Teologická fakulta, Trnavská univerzita v Trnave

Róbert Horka

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Mariya Horyacha

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Fórum pre kresťanský dialóg

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Vizualizácia mystickej skúsenosti v Živote svätého Martina od Venantia Fortunata¹

Róbert Horka

Visualization of a mystical experience in the Venantius' Fortunatus' *Life of St. Martin*

Abstract: Although mystical religious experience occurs in inner depths of mystic's soul it is always materialized in visual or auditory representation. Christian mystic of the 6th century Venantius Fortunatus had mystical experience when God healed him of an eye disease through the intercession of St. Martin. In his panegyrics to St. Martin, Venantius describes his mystical encounter in the form of colourful creations which are static in contrast to the storyline of the poem which is dynamic. Play of colours and light represented by colored gems was probably stored in Venantius's memory as the most beautiful thing he had ever seen, and thus he also described the divine glory by means of this visionary experience.

Key words : Keywords: gems, mysticism, Biography of St. Martin, play of lights, Venantius Fortunatus

Ak chceme hovoriť o mystike, sme v podstate vždy odkázaní hovoriť o transformácii zážitku, ktorý neprešiel zmyslami, do roviny zmyslov, teda o presnom opak toho, čo voláme percepcia, alebo vnímanie. Mystický zážitok sa totiž odohráva mimo telesných zmyslov, čiže priamo v duši, hoci jeho vyjadrenie má napokon vždy zmyslovú podobu. Koniec koncov, práve od uzavretia telesných zmyslov, čiže z gréckych slovies $\mu\acute{\upsilon}\omega$ (zatvoriť, zastaviť)² alebo $\mu\upsilon\acute{\alpha}\omega$ (stláčať pery)³ pochádza termín $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\rho\iota\omicron\nu$ (tajomstvo).⁴ Toto uzavretie zmyslov môže mať podobu posvätného mlčania,⁵ ktoré sa vyžadovalo od každého zasvätenca

¹ Táto štúdia vznikla v rámci grantu VEGA 1/0514/19 Poetika mystickej skúsenosti a literárne podoby mystagógie.

² LIDDELL, G., SCOTT, R., JONES, H.: *Greek – English Lexikon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1940, s. 1157.

³ LIDDELL, SCOTT, JONES, *Greek – English Lexikon*, s. 1150.

⁴ LIDDELL, SCOTT, JONES, *Greek – English Lexikon*, s. 1047.

⁵ DOSTÁLOVÁ, R., HOŠEK, R.: *Antická mystéria*. Praha: Vyšehrad 1997, s. 15.

a je reprezentované latinským zvolaním: *favete linguis*,⁶ či privretia očí, keď počas mystérií hierofant ukazoval mystovi omámenému dlhým pôstom a vyčerpávajúcou liturgiou posvätné artefakty (τὰ ἑποπτεία) uprostred noci v ostrom jasnom svetle.⁷

Pri pokusoch spätne reprodukovat mystický zážitok teda ide o vyjadrenie nevýslovného, obraz nezobraziteľného a definíciu nedefinovateľného. Je zrejme, že toto sa nedá doceliť formou exaktného opisu. Takto mystická skúsenosť prenosná nie je. Všetci mystici sa preto pokúšajú ju vtiesnať kdesi medzi riadky, či ťahy štetca, kde sa síce nenachádza žiadna informácia, ale je tam dostatok miesta pre komunikovanie zážitku. Ak sa obmedzíme na pole literatúry, konkrétne poézie, mystická skúsenosť sa dá ukryť do sekvencie presne definovaných termínov, ktoré sú usporiadané ako príslovečná horáciovská *callida iunctura*.⁸ Takéto ľstivé či prešpekulované slovné spojenie vytvára často rozsiahly nový sémantický priestor, ktorý môže byť nositeľom zážitku aj zážitku mystického do tej miery, v akej je tento typ zážitku vôbec prenosný. V našom príspevku sa chceme venovať takémuto typu mystického zážitku komunikovateľného formou poézie na mieste, na ktorom by sme ho zrejme nikdy nehládali: v epickej skladbe.

Prozaik Sulpicius Severus spísal koncom 4. stor., konkrétne v r. 397 *Život svätého Martina*, turonského biskupa a prvého známeho mnícha na latinskom Západe.⁹ Ide o spis vysokej umeleckej úrovne. Autor bol absolventom slávnej Ausoniovej literárnej školy v Burdigale, dnešnom Bordeaux.¹⁰ No Severus bol povolaním právnik. Dielo je teda literárnym skvostom, ale mystiku by sme v ňom hľadali márne. Po ňom sa túto literárnu predlohu obohatenú o ďalšie svätomartinské literárne pamiatky z pera toho istého autora,¹¹ podujali spracovať dvaja básnici. Prvý z nich, Paulín z Petrikordie, napísal v 5. stor. (470) epickú skladbu, ktorá má v základnej rovine didaktický charakter.¹² Pevne, priam otrocky, sa drží Severovej dejovej línie a vlastne iba transkribuje prózu do hexametrov s tým, že niektoré pasáže prozaickej predlohy celé vynecháva.

⁶ LEWIS Ch., SHORT, Ch.: *A new Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1891, s. 731.

⁷ VIDMAN, L.: *Od Olympu k Panteonu*. Praha: Vyšehrad 1997, s. 109.

⁸ HOR., A. P. 242. LCL 194, s. 454.

⁹ V slovenčine vyšlo: SULPICIUS SEVERUS: *Život svätého Martina*. Trnava: Dobrá kniha 2019.

¹⁰ KLEIN, R.: Die Praefatio der Martinsvita des Sulpicius Severus. In: *Der altsprachliche Unterricht*. Čís. 31, roč. 1988, s. 11.

¹¹ Ide o tri dialógy a tri listy. Por. SULPICIUS SEVERUS: *Dialogi III*. CSEL 1, s. 152-216. SULPICIUS SEVERUS: *Epistulae III*. CSEL 1, s. 138-151.

¹² POLLMANN, K.: *The Baptized Muse: Early Christian Poetry as Cultural Authority*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017, s. 194.

Sám Paulín sa rozhodol označiť svoju prácu za *transcriptio*,¹³ čiže prostý prepis prózy do veršov a ide o pomerne presný termín. Didaktický a kerigmatický charakter básne tak opäť nenecháva veľa miesta pre komunikáciu mystických skutočností.

Ako tretí sa v 6. stor. (575) zhostil svätomartinskej legendy elegik z italskej Raveny Venantius Fortunátus.¹⁴ V jeho čase už nebolo potrebné Martina nikomu predstavovať. Nemusel teda ponúkať dielo didaktické, ako Paulín. Martina v jeho dobe bolo považovať za správne najmä osláviť.¹⁵ Takou úlohou ho napokon poveril aj jeho priateľ, biskup Gregor z Turonu (Tours).¹⁶ Ale oslava Martina bola i jeho osobnou záležitosťou, lebo počas svojho pobytu v Ravene sa na príhovor tohto svätca uzdravil z bližšie nešpecifikovanej choroby očí. Tento osobný zážitok opisuje priamo vo svojej básni a bezpochyby ho podľa opisu môžeme nazvať zážitkom mystickým:

*Pod štítom baziliky, čo meno má Pavla a Jána,¹⁷
na stene postava svätca je verne vyobrazená,
farbami tak lahodnými, že doslova chceš sa ho dotknúť.
Stena pod nohami svätca má v sebe výklenok krásny,
pre svietnik, na ktorom stále plá oheň v nádobke sklenej.
Práve tam som sa náblil, keď trpel som bolesťou veľkou
zronený, lebo som stratil jas svetla z výklenkov očných.
Žehnaným olejom som sa tam dotkol aj lampáša svojho
a hneď horúčka prudká mi vymizla z nemocnej tváre.
Lekár chorobu razom mi zahnal tým olejom drahým.
Nikdy som nezabudol, že môj zrak je svätcovým darom.
Pred zrakom všetkých mi vtedy zrak vyliečil veľký muž viery.
Toto si pamätať budem, kým sám v tele budem zrieť svetlo.¹⁸*

¹³ PAUL. PET.: V. S. M. praef. 3. CSEL 16, s. 17: „*prolata transcribere*.“

¹⁴ V slovenčine vyšlo: VENANCIUS FORTUNÁTUS: *Život svätého Martina. Z latinského originálu preložil a úvodnú štúdiu napísal Róbert Horka*. Bratislava: RKCMBF UK 2019.

¹⁵ VENANCIUS FORTUNÁTUS, *Život svätého Martina*, s. 43.

¹⁶ QUESNEL, S., ed.: *Venance Fortunat: Vie de Saint Martin*. (=Collection des universités de France: Série Latine 336). Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1996, s. xv.

¹⁷ Lat. *basilica Pauli atque Iohannis*. Dnešný Kostol svätých mučeníkov Jána a Pavla stojí na mieste pôvodnej baziliky z 5. st. Má však opačnú orientáciu, ako pôvodná bazilika, čiže staroveká apsida sa nachádzala na mieste súčasnej fasády. Pravá kaplnka je aj dnes zasvätená svätému Martinovi, hoci už nie na mieste, kde stála v pôvodnej bazilike.

¹⁸ FORT., V. S. M. IV, 689-701. MGH AA 4/1, s. 370.

V analýze tohto Fortunátovho zážitku môžeme vidieť človeka, ktorý zažíva mystickú skúsenosť. Vo jeho podaní ide predovšetkým o vnímanie vizuálnych efektov počas toho, ako sa na ňom dial zázrak. Na úseku 13 veršov máme 12 termínov týkajúcich sa svetla: *svietnik, plá oheň, jas svetla, očný, lampáš, zrak (3x), zrieť svetlo*. Ak k nim pridáme ešte príbuzné výrazy, pri ktorých je svetlo podstatným elementom: *vyobrazeny, farba, tvár*, ide spolu o 15 výrazov. Fortunátus svoj mystický zážitok opisuje ako dar svetla z Martinovho ohňa. Tento moment zásadne zmenil jeho život. Dovtedy bol skôr blúdením, sem-tam v tme, ako študent, ktorý je nadaný, ale nemá jasný cieľ života. Od tohto momentu sa jeho život stáva cestou¹⁹ za Martinom. Putoval totiž do Galie a následne po Galii celý život. Tak si zrejme predstavoval život pravého svätca a tak opísal aj život Martina.²⁰ Takmer každá nová udalosť v Martinovom živote začína slovami: „odtiaľ šiel, ďalej cesta viedla, potom sa svätý muž vydal a pod.“ Celkovo ide o štyridsiatku takýchto premostení,²¹ ktoré z jednotlivých epizód robia ucelenú púť. A na ceste bol nielen Martin. Už z citovaného úseku je jasné, že aj básnik sa k Martinovi náhlil (*properare*).²² Nešlo teda o bežný všedný pomalý pohyb, ako keď sa niekde prechádzame, alebo váhame, kam sa ďalej vydáme. Išlo o náhlenie sa, aby mystik čím skôr dosiahol svoj cieľ. Celý epos by sme preto mohli v miernej hyperbole nazvať *Cestou svätého Martina* a rovnako celý Fortunátov život by sme mohli označiť za *Putovanie svätého Venantia Fortunata*. Svätca i básnika nedostatok času v pozemskom živote súri ísť a putovať, lebo nebo je blízko. Čas a svetlo sú tak základné elementy Fortunátovej mystiky. Zatiaľ sme však predstavili len polovicu týkajúcu sa času, ktorá ma podobu cesty. Tá však

¹⁹ PIETRI, L.: Autobiographie d'un poète chrétien: Venance Fortunat, un émigré en terre d'exil ou un immigré parfaitement intégré? In: *Camena*. Čís. 11, roč. 2012, s. 13.

²⁰ POLLMANN, K.: Das lateinsche Epos in Spätantike. In: RÜPKE, Jörg, ed. *Von Gotters und Menschen erzählen. Formknostanzen und Funktionswandel moderner Epik*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2001, s. 122.

²¹ post: V. S. M. I, 68, 235, 325, 429, IV, 1

hinc: V. S. M. I, 78, 88, 149, 280, 472; II, 162, 179, 222; III, 121, 153, 247, 379, 430; dehinc: V. S. M. II, 278

rursus: FORT., V. S. M. I, 155, 299, 345

demum: FORT., V. S. M. I, 179

inde: FORT., V. S. M. I, 220, 487; III, 296; IV, 52, 72; IV, 272

dum: FORT., V. S. M. III, 74, 209; IV, 87

illico: FORT., V. S. M. III, 97; IV, 99

item: FORT., V. S. M. III, 388

protinus: FORT., V. S. M. I, 249

nec longo spatio: FORT., V. S. M. I, 450

interea: FORT., V. S. M. I, 104; III, 405; IV, 28.

²² FORT., V. S. M. IV, 694. MGH AA 4/1, s. 370.

sama osebe nedáva zmysel. Ten sa odhalí, až keď náhliaci sa Martin a bežiaci básnik uzrú a dosiahnu svoj nebeský cieľ.

Hoci sa Fortunatus držal Severovej predlohy, tieto pasáže opisujúce nebo sú jeho vlastnou kreáciou. Použil na ne jeden zo zaužívaných postupov pri spracovávaní prozaickej predlohy do epickej poémy v antike, zvaný *commoratio* (zdržanie sa).²³ Na prvý pohľad triviálna veta v Severovom sujete tak umožnila básnikovi rozpracovať celú paletu figúr a postupov a vytvoriť tak samostatný obraz. Takúto možnosť ponúkali predovšetkým tzv. *loci communes* (všeobecné témy). No Fortunatus našiel takúto možnosť aj pri pomerne strohom opise toho, ako sa Martinovi zjavili tri svätice: Agnesa, Tekla a Mária a rozprávali sa s ním:²⁴

*Neskôr sa udialo zasa, že vonku Severus s Gálom
sedeli vedno a s nimi kruh múdrych, láskavých bratov.
Okolo poludnia ozval sa odrazu z príbytku svätca
šepot rozličných hlasov, hoc' dovnútra nevošiel nikto.
Riekli, že počuli hovor, no nemohli rozumieť slovám,
vnímali šumenie reči, jej obsah však rozoznať nešlo.
Iba to blažiť ich mohlo, že na chvíľku cítili nebo,
aj keď nič nerozumeli, už zvuk tej reči ich tešil.
Z cely keď vyšiel von svätec, tvár jeho žiarila jasom,
preto ho Severus prosil, nech rozpovie, čo sa dnu stalo.
Napokon podľahol prosbám a podrobne zvestoval, ako
Mária, Agnesa, Tekla s ním vo vnútri rozhovor viedli.
Odev a výzor svätíc muž blažený opísal presne,
oči, tvár, ruky a nohy i kolená, postavy štíhle,
(lebo podoby sestier už mnohokrát vidieť smel jasne),
akú farbu líc mali, ich pôvab a spanilú krásu,
hlas i reč rovnako milé, keď o spáse bavil sa prišli.²⁵*

Fortunátus jasne vidí, že opis výzoru svätíc, ktorý Martin poskytol Severovi a Gálovi je vhodnou príležitosťou na to, aby čitateľovi alebo poslucháčovi predstavil, ako on sám vidí nebo. Preto sa pri tejto veci zastaví a ponúkne opis Panny Márie:

²³ ROBERTS, M.: *The Humblest Sparrow. The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2009, s. 202.

²⁴ SULP. SEV., *Dial.* II, 13, 5. CSEL 1, s. 196.

²⁵ FORT., *V. S. M.* III, 430-448. MGH AA 4/1, s. 344-345.

*Aké to blažené oči, vždy čisté, bez temných mračien,
 jasný premúdry duch, čo nepozná oblačné tiene!
 Nimi si nebeskú Teklu smel zazrieť telesným zrakom,
 Agnesu zočil si taktiež, jej korunou venčené čelo.
 Tebe v nadzemskom jase sa zjavila Mária skvostná,
 posvätný Pánov chrám si videl kráľovský žiariť,
 ženícha svadobné lôžko, čo všetko prevýšši krásou,
 zložené z kameňov drahých a zdobené purpúrom, zlatom.
 Aký je jaspis jej nôh a topás spanilých bokov?
 Akéže prstene krásia driek prstov zeleným leskom?
 Zdobí jej pravú ruku snád' náramok hyacintový?
 Koľkože briliantov vzácnych sa pri svetle v opasku blyští?
 Ktoré leštené šperky má votkané do skvostnej róby?
 Ako sa na pleciah pláštá jej chryzopras s berylom strieda?
 Rozlieva náhrdelník jas červený po štíhlom krku?
 Vo vkusnom účese možno má stužku ametystovú
 s výjavmi vyššivanými a v ušiach pečate biele.
 Vari jej diadém leskne sa pestrými farbami sviežo?
 Akú tvár, oči a ústa má, čelo, ruky a lakte?
 Kolená, nohy sú aké? A kvitnú v nich briliantov púčiky?²⁶*

V tomto opise už na obrazy svetla nie je potrebné z našej strany upozorňovať, pretože každému doslova udierajú do očí. Pre Fortunátovo stvárňovanie svätcov a svätíc je dôležité uviesť, že v mladosti mal kontakt s Akvileou, kde končila slávna Jantárová cesta. Mesto ho navždy poznačilo svojou chýrnou šperkárskou tradíciou.²⁷ Jeho láska k drahokamom a iným krásnym výjavom sa ešte umocnila a rozvinula v cisárskej Ravene, keď uvidel mozaiky cisárovnej Teodory a jej suity, ako aj ďalšie nádherné výjavy, ktoré dodnes zobia ravenké chrámy.²⁸ Ligtavé priehľadné kamene žiariace rôznymi farbami mu učarovali natoľko, že sa ako červená niť tiahnu celým jeho dielom. Tento *the jeweled style*, ako ho príznačne pomenoval Michael Roberts,²⁹ cítiť z jeho poézie na

²⁶ FORT., V. S. M. III, 455-474. MGH AA 4/1, s. 345.

²⁷ SCRINARI, V.: Aquileia. In: BIANCHI BANDINELLI, R., ed. *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica 1 (A-Bar)*. Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana 1985 s. 511-520.

²⁸ LABARRE, S.: *Continuity and discontinuity of Space in Venantius Fortunatus*, s. 2. Dostupné na internete (18. jún 2019): www.academia.edu/24837889.

²⁹ ROBERTS, M.: *The jeweled Style. Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*. New York: Cornell University Press 1989, s. 142.

každom mieste a vložil ho aj do svojho eposu o chudobnom a pokornom mníchovi a biskupovi Martinovi.

Takáto kombinácia sa môže na prvý pohľad zdať priam nevhodná či poburujúca. Ale Fortunatus si dáva veľký pozor, aby svoje drahokamové kreácie priradil svätcom až pri opise ich večnej slávy a nebeskej odmeny za ich pozemskú chudobu a charitu.³⁰ Z tohto pohľadu je pochopiteľné, že pre nedostatok iných obrazných prostriedkov na opis nebeskej slávy, krásy a blaženosti použil to najkrajšie, čo mu zostalo v pamäti z jeho akvilejského a ravenského pobytu a čo mu v Galii zrejme veľmi chýbalo a najviac pripomínalo domov: majstrovsky opracované brilianty odborne osadené do nádherných šperkov.

Uvedený opis Panny Márie pochádza z tretej knihy Fortunatovej básne. Druhá, tretia a štvrtá kniha sa zhodne končia triumfálnym záverom vo forme Martinovej apoteózy do Kristovej večnosti v nebeskej sláve.³¹ Tieto Fortunatove vlastné epilógy sa výrazne líšia od zvyšku diela formou i obsahom. Pri nich sa totiž nemusel držať Severovej prozaickej predlohy. Neobsahujú žiadne antitézy typické pre celú báseň, nie sú zostavené do kľúčového formátu cesty. Sú statické a ich dej sa v rámci rozprávania nijako nevyvíja ani nemení. Fortunátus pri nich používa jednoduché, hoci veľkolepo koncipované básnické opisy (*ekfrázy*).³² Tieto zakončenia sú skrátka vyskladané tak, ako majestátne mozaiky na stenách ravenských bazilík.³³ Je možné, dokonca pravdepodobné, že si Fortunátus pri týchto opisoch predstavoval práve skvostné vyobrazenia neba zo svojej vlasti.³⁴ Na záver jednotlivých kníh sa teda celý akcelerovaný dej spomalí a doslova zamrzne v efekte záverečnej triumfálnej nebeskej scény. Ako by sa v týchto pasážach naplnil vzletný vzdych Goetheho Fausta: „Postoj chvíľa, si taká krásna.“³⁵ V nebi sa teda ani čas, ani protagonisti poémy nepohybujú, ale stoja. Tam už jednoducho nie je kam ísť.

Pri takejto vízii neba, teda všetkého žiarivého krásneho, farebného a pokojného, nečudo, že dotyk toho nebeského svetla, ktorým Martin zasiahol Fortunatove oči pri uzdravení, provokoval básnika náhliť sa za jeho dosiahnutím a pokladať v porovnaní s ním všetko ostatné a najmä seba samého za biedu

³⁰ ROBERTS, *The Humblest Sparow*, s. 195.

³¹ PIETRI, L.: Venance Fortunat et ses commanditaires: Un poète italien dans la société gallo – franque. In: *Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull' – alto medioevo*. Čís. 39, roč. 1992, s. 752-753.

³² ROBERTS, *The Humblest Sparow*, s. 234.

³³ LABARRE, S.: Variations poétiques sur la *Vie de saint Martin*: du réalisme à l'abstraction. In: *Annales Latini Montium Arvernorum*. Čís. 24, roč. 1998, s. 106-107.

³⁴ LABARRE, *Continuity and Discontinuity*, s. 7.

³⁵ GOTHE, J. W.: *Faust II*, 11582: „*Verweile doch! du bist so schön!*“ GOETHE, J. W.: *Faust*. Die Tragödie erster und zweiter Teil. Berlin: Karl-Maria Guth 2015, s. 401.

a úbohosť, ktorú samozrejme, vyjadrí formou svetelného opisu, ako sme u neho zvyknutí, respektíve v tomto prípade skôr nedostatku svetla:

*Predtým už Severus spísal tvoj život vo forme prózy,
neskôr blažený Paulín ho ospieval viazaným veršom.
Obaja zaznamenali tie príbehy rovnako skvelo,
no téma presiahla oboch, tak vzdali sa celej jej šírky.
Teraz sa ku veľkým svetlám ja temný pridávam drzo,
najmenší z najmenších skúšam o najväčšom povedať najviac.
Vždy sa však pri chôdzi potknem a skomolím všetko, čo poviem,
škriabem len podradné verše, keď snažím sa volačo zložiť.
Odpusť mi preto, prosím, že chválim ťa jazykom hriešnym,
nado mnou lútosti hodným sa zľutuj v lútosti svojej.
Keď príde na vzletnom tróne raz tento svet posúdiť vládár,
pamätaj, že si náš prečin³⁶ máš z pamäti úplne vytrieť.
Vtedy už pred Pánom zostaň len mojím zástancom dobrým,
sám som si nakopil viny, tvoj príhovor nech mi ich zmaže.
Pred tebou, vznešený patrón, dnes skláňam sa pokorne, aby
dúfať smel v spasenie biednych,³⁷ kus nádeje Fortunátovej.³⁸*

Mystický zážitok opísaný termínmi iskrivého svetla teda spôsobil, že básnik seba samého vidí ako „temného Fortunata“. Táto veršová sekvencia zároveň predstavuje zásadnú inováciu, ktorú epický žáner dovtedy nepoznal. Fortunatus vnáša do epiky silné osobné, možno až intímne zameranie.³⁹ Zatiaľ čo v klasickej epike sa dostával básnik do 1. osoby iba vtedy, keď žiadal Múzu o inšpiráciu, aby bol obejktívny, Fortunátus v *Živote svätého Martina* nájde priestor hneď pre niekoľko faktov z vlastného života: do písania eposu sa pustil preto, že ho o to požiadali Radegunda s Agnesou,⁴⁰ svojím spisom ďakuje Martinovi

³⁶ Nie je jasné, či týmto prečinom (*delictum*) mieni Fortunátus túto báseň, alebo ide o súhrnné označenie všetkých jeho hriechov. Keďže autor používa privlastňovacie zámeno v G. singuláru: *delicti nostri*, zdá sa nám pravdepodobnejšie, že má na mysli báseň.

³⁷ Meno Fortunatus znamená syn Šťasteny, šťastlivec, ten komu sa pošťastilo. Jeho túžba a prosba uvedená v tejto básni sa skutočne splnila, keďže Katolícka cirkev ho považuje za svätého. *Rímske martyrológium* o ňom v bode 9* dňa 14. decembra hovorí: „V akvitánskom Poitiers, svätého biskupa Venantia Fortunata, ktorý spísal životy mnohých svätých a oslávil svätý kríž skvostnými hymnami.“ *MARTYROLOGIUM ROMANUM ex Decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum*. Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2004, s. 672.

³⁸ FORT., V. S. M. II, 468-482. MGH AA 4/1, s. 329.

³⁹ POLLMANN, Das lateinsche Epos in Spätantike, s. 121.

⁴⁰ FORT., V. S. M. I, 29. MGH AA 4/1, s. 295.

za svoje uzdravenie,⁴¹ prosí svätca, aby sa zaňho prihovoril a Boh mu na jeho príhovor odpustil hriechy,⁴² a napokon zveruje celý epos svojim priateľom.⁴³ Autor sa tak stáva jedným z protagonistov deja, čím posúva epos takmer do pozície príležitostnej poézie, čo je rozhodne inovatívny prístup v epickom žánri.⁴⁴

Hrdina Martin teda už nie je nahliadaný striktne objektívne, očami inšpirujúcej Múzy. Fortunatov pohľad je subjektívny. Martin je videný očami autora, je delimitovaný jeho osobným vzťahom k hrdinovi. Fortunatus hovorí o Martinovi vo svojom mene. Nedopovedá vecne na otázku: „Kým bol Martin?“, ale odpovedá osobne na otázku: „Kým je pre mňa Martin?“ Akoby svojim eposom hovoril: „Tu som bez svetla, ale vedený Martinovým svetlom mám čas, ktorý musím využiť, aby som potom, keď sa čas preklopí do bezčasia, mal už len číre svetlo, aké má aj Martin.“ Táto lyrická inovácia v epickom žánri tak vytvára priestor aj pre komunikovanie osobného mystického zážitku, ktorý Fortunatus s Martinom prežil, prostredníctvom termínov času a svetla.

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⁴¹ FORT., *V. S. M.* IV, 700. MGH AA 4/1, s. 370.

⁴² FORT., *V. S. M.* II, 480. MGH AA 4/1, s. 329.

⁴³ FORT., *V. S. M.* IV, 702. MGH AA 4/1, s. 370.

⁴⁴ REYDELLET, M.: Venance Fortunat et l'esthétique du style. In: SOT, Michael, ed.: *Haut Moyen-Age: Culture, éducation et société*. Paris: La Garenne-Colombes 1990, s. 69.

Pseudo-Macarius and Mark the Monk on Opponents and Friends

Mariya Horyacha

This paper analyses representative passages from the writings of Pseudo-Macarius and Mark the Monk in friendly conversation with their disciples as well as in polemical exchange with their opponents or with others whose views differed from their own. The paper shows that both authors adopted a differentiated approach to their opponents and both cherished intimate relationships with faithful friends of God.

Keywords: Pseudo-Macarius, Mark the Monk, friends, opponents, heretics, ascetics, Messalians, Nestorians.

INTRODUCTION

Ancient monasticism has left us examples of both friendship and confrontation, sometimes even between the same people. The prominent pair of Jerome (347-420) and Rufinus (344-311) comes to mind. Starting as good friends, they became fierce opponents, wrote pamphlets against each other, and persisted in hostility until death. The case of Basil the Great (330-379) and Eustathius of Sebaste (+377) is another example of a rupture that turned friendship into opposition. Such examples, however, are rather exceptional. The history of monasticism provides us with many more examples of good and faithful friendship between monks. It will suffice to name a few pairs such as Anthony the Great and the two Macarii, Evagrius and the tall Brothers, Pachomius and Theodore, Basil the Great and the two Gregories, Palladius and John Chrysostom, Melania and Rufinus, Paula and Jerome, Abba Isaiah and Peter, Euthymius and Theoctistus, Sabba the Sanctified and Theodosius the Cenobiarich, Barsanuphius and John the Prophet, John Moschus and Sophronius of Jerusalem. Many of them still had to deal with external or internal opposition, either fighting heresies or experiencing persecution.

This paper draws attention to the two representatives of anchoritic monasticism who have usually fallen outside scholarly attention and who remain

at the margins of the main stream of research on ancient monasticism¹. Both writers are rather enigmatic figures. Our knowledge of them is scanty and limited to the evidence from their writings. The first writer is an anonymous ascetic known among scholars as Pseudo-Macarius or Macarius/Symeon. His homilies are preserved under the name of Macarius of Egypt², but they betray a Syro-Mesopotamian origin, a Semitic mentality, as well as connections with both the Messalians and the Cappadocians. The other author, Mark the Monk, is no less elusive, given that almost nothing is known about him except his name and writings³. The internal evidence of his works hints that he may have been at some stage the superior of a monastic community⁴ who later retired to the desert, “to the true labourers and athletes of Christ.”⁵ Numerous attempts have been made to fix the milieu of his activity, but the question still remains on the level of hypotheses⁶. His writings allude to anti-Nestorian and

¹ See, for example: Adele FISKE: *Friends and Friendship in the Monastic Tradition* (Cidoc Cuaderno, 51) Cuernavaca, Mexico: CIDOC 1970; B. P. MCGUIRE: *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience, 350-1250* (Cistercian Studies Series, 95), Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publication 1988; Caroline WHITE: *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, Cambridge, UK: CUP, 1992; Suzanne STERN-GILLET, G. M. GURTLER (eds.), *Ancient and Medieval Concepts of Friendship*, New York 2014; Claudia RAPP: *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: Monks, Laymen, and Christian Ritual*. Oxford: OUP, 2016.

² The Macarian writings are preserved in several collections. For Collection I (B) see: H. BERTHOLD (ed.): *Makarior/Symeon: Reden und Briefe. Die Sammlung I des Vaticanus Graecus 694 (B)* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte), 2 vols. Berlin, 1973; Collection II (H): H. DÖRRIES - E. KLOSTERMANN - M. KROEGER (eds.): *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios* (Patristische Texte und Studien, 4). Berlin, 1964; Collection III (C): E. KLOSTERMANN - H. BERTHOLD (eds.): *Neue Homilien des Makarios/Symeon aus Typus III* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur). Berlin, 1961; the Arabic collection (TV): W. STROTHMANN: *Makarior/Symeon. Das arabische Sondergut* (Göttinger Orientforschungen, 11). Göttingen, 1975. The English translation of Collection II (H) is by G. A. Maloney: PSEUDO-MACARIUS: *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*. Translation and Introduction by George Anthony MALONEY; Preface by Kallistos WARE (The Classics of Western Spirituality). New York, NY, 1992. The English translation of other collections (B, C, TV) is my own.

³ See MARC LE MOINE: *Traités I-II*. Introduction, texte critic, traduction, notes par G.-M. de DURAND (Sources chrétiennes, 445, 455). Paris: Cerf, 1999, 2000.

⁴ *Disputatio cum quodam causidio*. In: MARC LE MOINE: *Traités II* (SC, 455), pp. 26-92.

⁵ *Ad Nicolaum praecepta animae salutaria*. Ibid., p. 108. Transl. mine.

⁶ For a good survey of the different theories and hypotheses concerning the origin and milieu of Mark the Monk, see the introduction to G.-M. de Durand's critical edition (MARC LE MOINE: *Traités I*, ed. G.-M. de DURAND (SC, 445). Paris, 1999, pp. 13-35) and the introduction by K. Ware to a French translation of Mark's works. See K. WARE: Introduction. In: MARC LE MOINE, *Traités spirituels et théologiques*. Traduction, notes, index par Claire-Agnès ZIRNHELD (Spiritualité orientale, 41). Bellefontaine, 1985, IX-LI, pp. X-XV.

anti-Messalian discussions, which points to the time of the council of Ephesus⁷ and allows us to situate Mark the Monk in the generation after Ps.-Macarius. Both authors were ascetic rather than dogmatic writers; nevertheless both were engaged in ecclesiastical discussions concerning not only similar ascetic issues and but also dogmatic controversy: Ps.-Macarius defended the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and Mark opposed Nestorian views.

This paper considers from each author several passages that show how they regarded their opponents and practiced friendship. As to their attitudes towards opponents, the paper examines how the two authors used polemic and gentle corrective in order to reinforce monastic discipline, establish clear markers about which ideas were acceptable and which were not, and to diminish the influence of any ideas deemed threatening. Finally the paper considers some of these two authors' thoughts about relationships that might fall into the category of friendship and how these ideas shaped their attitude towards others.

PSEUDO-MACARIUS AND HIS OPPONENTS

In the Macarian corpus, we can trace many erroneous views and opinions that Ps.-Macarius refutes, condemns, or otherwise argues against. The proponents of such views can be classified in three categories: ascetics, determinists, and the Messalians⁸.

ASCETICS

To the category of ascetics belong those who opted for the monastic life yet in their practice of asceticism relied on their own achievements. These people were of two types: external ascetics and intellectuals.

The external ascetics denied that human nature is deeply injured by sin. They believed that after baptism evil had no place in the human heart and ope-

⁷ Mark's employment of the expression "hypostatic union", first introduced by Cyril of Alexandria in his second letter to Nestorius (430), indicates the *terminus post quem* (see: CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: *Select Letters*. Edited with Translation by L. R. WICKHAM [Oxford and Christian Texts], Oxford, 1983, pp. 1-11). The *terminus ad quem* is the year 534, the date of a Syriac manuscript containing the translation of a selection of Mark's writings (see: W. WRIGHT: *Catalogue of Syrian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Part II. London, 1871, pp. 634-635).

⁸ In this classification, I am closely following V. Desprez: В. ДЕПРЕ: Макариевский корпус. In: Патриарх Московский и всея Руси КИРИЛЛ (ed.): Православная энциклопедия, т. 42. Москва, 2016, 565-577, pp. 568-569.

rated from without. Ps.-Macarius enters into discussion with these opponents and argues as follows:

But if you insist that through the coming of Christ sin was condemned and that after baptism evil has no more power of suggestion within the human heart, then you ignore the fact that from the coming of the Lord up to this day the many who have been baptized, have they not thought evil things at some time? Have not some of them turned to vain desire for glory, to fornication, or to gluttony? Moreover, are all those who live in the Church, men of the world, are they endowed with the pure and blameless heart? Or do we not find after baptism that many commit many sins and many live in error? So even after baptism the thief has a holding and can freely enter and do what he pleases.⁹

The external ascetics stressed outer practices and believed that God himself would accomplish interior purification and sanctification. Ps.-Macarius sharply deprecates such views and states that if someone thinks perfect purity is possible without the help the Holy Spirit, that person is totally in error. He argues that unless one receives something different from one's own nature, namely, the power of the Holy Spirit, that person will never recover from the intoxication of materialism¹⁰. Therefore, people should not trust their own ascetic achievements but look for help from above. Ps.-Macarius likens those who rely on carnal justification to the fallen Adam who, though having made a covering for himself out of fig leaves, still did not save himself from the shame of poverty and nakedness. In the same way, the soul that does not have the divine garment of the Spirit remains naked and covered with the great disgrace of dishonourable passions; such a soul does not belong to God (Rom 8:9). Ps.-Macarius teaches: "If anyone takes his stand upon a righteousness and redemption of his own, not looking for the righteousness of God, which is the Lord, *Who*, it says, *became for us righteousness and sanctification and redemption*, he labours in vain and to no purpose. For the whole dream of a righteousness of his own is [going to be] exposed on the last day like filthy rags, as Isaiah the prophet says, *All our righteousness has become like filthy rags*" (Is 64:5-6)¹¹. Such ascetics are like the five foolish virgins, who were not allowed to enter the kingdom because of their laziness and carelessness. Due to their self-conceit

⁹ B 32:3 (2), H 15:14. Transl. Maloney.

¹⁰ H 24:5.

¹¹ B 12:1 (4); H 20:3. Transl.: A. J. MASON: *Fifty Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian*. London, 1921, p. 164, modified.

concerning their own righteousness, they fell asleep and failed to please the heavenly Bridegroom¹².

The second type of ascetics – the so-called intellectuals – hoped to come to the knowledge of God by means of rational study of the Holy Scriptures. Though Ps.-Macarius does not deny that revelation can be communicated to the soul through thoughts and the knowledge of the Scriptures, he also speaks of another kind of revelation that the soul can receive, namely, the direct knowledge of God’s mysteries through the Spirit. Ps.-Macarius does not oppose these two kinds of revelation (that of the Scriptures and that of the Spirit), but he holds that the Spirit is essential for the correct understanding of the Scriptures and that without God’s revelation, the word of the Scriptures remains incomprehensible¹³. Therefore, Ps.-Macarius often criticizes those intellectuals who dare to teach and interpret the Scriptures, yet who lack the Holy Spirit. Ps.-Macarius says that they are like a man who instead of bread eats hay, without taste and nutrition, or like a portrait on the wall that preserves the likeness of a man but cannot walk and move¹⁴.

DETERMINISTS

The second group of Macarian opponents can be defined as determinists. The representatives of this heresy combined the belief that matter is eternal with the Manichean dualistic view about the existence of two ontological principles – good and evil; in this view, evil is substantial¹⁵. Ps.-Macarius clearly identifies them as heretics, saying:

There are certain heretics who say that matter was eternal and that matter is a root and the root is where the power is, equal to God’s power. To such you can rightly reply: “Which power finally is the victorious one?” Without doubt it has to be the power of God. Therefore, in time or in power the one who is conquered can in no way be equal to God. Those who affirm that evil exists by itself (ἐν ὑποστάσει) are really most ignorant. For in God no evil

¹² B 49:2 (1).

¹³ See a detailed consideration of the relation between the Scriptures and the Spirit in: H. DÖRRIES: *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Dritte Folge, 103). Göttingen, 1978, pp. 265-283.

¹⁴ C 22:1,3; see also TV 12 and 23.

¹⁵ The Manichaeans were a real force in 4th-century Mesopotamia and Syria. See the commentary by G. Maloney in: PSEUDO-MACARIUS: *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, p. 280, note 58.

can exist by itself since he himself is not subject to passions and he possesses his divinity.¹⁶

Similar deterministic views also circulated among ascetics. Some of them believed that passions were natural and created by God and that people could do nothing good unless grace compelled them¹⁷. Others were convinced that people was so penetrated by sin that they could do nothing good at all (C 27:3), because evil reigns over humanity, and the adversary is much stronger than them (H 3:6). Both views, according to Ps.-Macarius, denied the freedom of the human will and eventually led to fatalism and moral laxity.

With the former, Ps.-Macarius is rather severe and clearly condemns their views, saying: “Whoever defends disgraceful passions as natural and not as accidental has *exchanged the truth of God for his own lie*” (Rom 1:25)¹⁸.

As to the latter, Ps.-Macarius enters into a discussion with them and argues against their beliefs. First, he defends human freedom by pointing to the changeability of human nature, thanks to which people are able to turn towards good or evil¹⁹. Second, he insists on the equality of powers between humanity and the evil adversary, arguing as follows: “Those who say that sin is like a mighty giant and the human soul like a child, speak wrongly. In fact, if things are so similar that sin is like a giant and the soul is like a child, then it is unjust for the Lawgiver to legislate that a person make war against Satan”²⁰. So human responsibility before God requires freedom. Ps.-Macarius also explains that the opposing forces as well as grace both act by enticement, not by necessity²¹; consequently people can freely choose whether to obey. They are responsible for their choices, decisions, and actions. Third, Ps.-Macarius opposes the view that people absolutely cannot perform anything good. He certainly knows the limits of the fallen state, but he still finds some space for exercising human freedom. Though people in the fallen state cannot perform great deeds, they can still concern themselves with the matters of life and take care of their own salvation.

Ps.-Macarius proposes three illuminating examples to explain this possibility of freedom. The first is the case of a seriously sick person who cannot perform the tasks of daily life but still take care of his health. For although the soul has broken away from God, is oppressed by wicked passions, and cannot free

¹⁶ B 46:1 (1-2); H 16:1. See also B 46:1 (11)-2 (1); H 16:6. Transl. Maloney.

¹⁷ B 40:1 (2). See also TV 10.

¹⁸ B 40:1 (10). Transl. mine.

¹⁹ B 32:8 (9), H 15:25.

²⁰ B 7:16 (8), H 27:22. Transl. Maloney.

²¹ B 6:4 (3); H 27:10.

itself from sin, nevertheless this soul has not yet died with respect to its own knowledge and discernment; it can still attend to the matters of this life, and it can still love, cry out to, and invoke the Healer²². Another example is that of an imprisoned person whose freedom is limited by the walls of the prison and by the length of his chains. Though such a person has not much freedom of action, the warden does not prevent him from repenting, reforming himself, and calling upon the Saviour. The freedom of caring for one's own salvation is always available and can be exercised even in the condition of captivity. The third example is that of a powerless baby that can accomplish nothing save crying and seeking its mother with pain and clamouring. The mother takes pity on the baby, picks it up, and feeds it with great love. In a similar manner, the soul even in the fallen state can still desire and cry out to the Saviour²³.

Though a person in the fallen state is limited as to action, like one who is imprisoned or sick²⁴, a fallen person still possesses free will to choose either good or evil; neither the state of slavery, nor illness from passions prevents such a person from making choices and decisions. This essential human freedom of the will is always preserved: it remains in the fallen state as well as in the state of grace. While determinists believed that human freedom is incompatible with the state of slavery to sin, Ps.-Macarius argued that human freedom remains, existing *alongside* this fallen state.

MESSALIANS

Ps.-Macarius probably had some contact with ascetics of Messalian views²⁵. Even his close associates were imbued with these ideas, and some of his disciples shared the popular Messalian views on prayer, spiritual struggle, perfection, and other ascetical issues. The Messalians denied the need for ascetical

²² C 26:3.

²³ H 46:3; C 27:3.

²⁴ H 2:2; C 26:3

²⁵ On Messalianism and the relation of Ps.-Macarius to the Messalians see: C. STEWART: 'Working the Earth of the Heart'. *The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to A. D. 431* (Oxford Theological Monographs). Oxford, 1991; K. FITSCHEN: *Messalianismus und Antimesalianismus: ein Beispiel ostkirchlicher Ketzergeschichte* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, 71). Göttingen, 1998; S. K. BURNS: *Pseudo-Macarius and the Messalians: The Use of Time for the Common Good*. In: R. N. SWANSON (ed.): *The Use and Abuse of Time in Christian History. Papers Read at the 1999 Summer Meeting and 2000 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Studies in Church History, 37). Woodbridge, 2002, 1-12; M. PLESTED: *The Macarian Legacy: The Place of Macarius-Symeon in the Eastern Christian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

practices, manual labour, and ministry, caring instead only for obtaining grace. They believed that prayer alone could drive the demon out of the heart and that the coming of grace brought *apatheia* and removal from struggle once and for all. In an effort to obtain grace, they were known to pray with the loud cries and tears.

Ps.-Macarius considers such ways of praying childish, and he calls on his disciples to progress beyond this primitive and immature way of praying: “Those who approach the Lord ought to pray in quietness, peace and great tranquillity. They ought to attend to the Lord, not using the uncalled for or disturbing outcries, but rather with attentive heart and controlled thoughts”²⁶. Here Ps.-Macarius wishes to show the advantages enjoyed by those who pray in tranquillity and peace, for they are a source of edification to all everywhere, while those who pray with great noises scandalize others and are a disturbance to themselves²⁷. Ps.-Macarius also rejects the view of some ascetics that the coming of grace brings *apatheia* and freedom from struggle. He considers such ascetics most ignorant, robbed and deceived by Satan. He repeats their words with some mockery: “I am rich, I require nothing more”²⁸.

Ps.-Macarius usually discusses such errors in the context of teaching his disciples. His main purpose in such contexts is to foster a correct attitude to the ascetical life among his own disciples. Therefore, his severest judgments were not directed to real opponents with the intention of insulting them or of measuring swords with them; rather, his aim was to protect his followers from false beliefs and warn against the dangers that could await them on their way.

When Ps.-Macarius personally deals with someone of the opposing view, his attitude radically changes. We do not see the slightest condemnation but rather a patient dialogue with much respect for the interlocutor. The series of questions and answers after some of the Macarian conferences contains remarkable examples of such an approach. In one of this sort, Ps.-Macarius has a discussion with a Messalian ascetic who believes that the coming of grace totally removes sin and struggle. For this Messalian, birth in the Spirit is incompatible with sin. So he asks: “Therefore, one who is born [sc. of the Spirit] does not have sin and the darkness of passions, does he?”²⁹ Trying to show

²⁶ H 6:1.

²⁷ H 6:1-4. See also V. DESPREZ: *Pseudo-Macarius, II: Spiritual Combat, Prayer and Experience*. In: *The American Benedictine Review* 46:2 (1995) 207-224, p. 216.

²⁸ B 34:10.

²⁹ B 2:7 (1). Transl. mine. Hermann Dörries considers this disciple to be a stubborn representative of the Enthusiasts' views. See H. DÖRRIES: *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*, pp. 234-235.

the Messalian that sin operates even in those who are born of the Spirit, Ps.-Macarius answers: “This darkness, which you also call the passions, is a lash and a rod for children. Another thing is this: even a slave beats his master, when he is a child, for the master’s good. You have to know one thing: if the soul truly loves God, all these seeming afflictions and wars with the passions are for its good”.

After a few lines, the conversation continues:

Question: So does one who is born is not at war, is he?

Answer: A king still goes off to war, if he was born to be great.

Question: So he’s not free (ἐλεύθερος)?

Answer: It is one thing to be born another to wage war, another to win, and still another to be free.³⁰

This dialogue shows how delicately and gently Ps.-Macarius can deal with a stubborn Messalian, trying to initiate him into the subtle matters of spiritual life and using the occasion to teach him and others concerning the important to spiritual progress and salvation.

In different contexts, the attitude of Ps.-Macarius towards his opponents can vary from patient dialogue to condemnation; the attitude is usually determined by the condition of his audience. When Ps.-Macarius sees that of some views pose real danger for salvation, he severely censures them. If the errors and false opinions betray merely a lack of knowledge and experience, he uses all his ability to teach and correct false ideas, appealing to arguments and convincing examples. In all this, Ps.-Macarius shows neither hatred nor disregard for his opponents, and he never mentions any of them by name. He simply defends the right faith and tries to protect the spiritual children for whom he felt responsibility before God.

But how did Ps.-Macarius behave when he himself became subject to attacks and opposition from a higher authority? In the corpus, we have some hints and allusions to a certain tension between Ps.-Macarius and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which was suspicious of his teaching³¹. In this case, Ps.-Macarius accepts such opposition with patient endurance, considering it as the unavoidable consequence of living in the truth. He believes that the indwelling of the

³⁰ B 2:7 (1) – 9 (1). Transl. mine.

³¹ Ps.-Macarius speaks of experiencing persecution at a time when the era of martyrdom had been over for several decades.

Holy Spirit prepares true Christians to suffer on behalf of Christ³². Persecution is inevitable for those who want to follow the Lord. For Ps.-Macarius, following the way of suffering is a clear sign of the presence of the Spirit and perseverance in the truth. So facing opposition is not merely a reality in which true Christians are destined to live, but a spiritual law: as the Lord was persecuted and crucified, so too must true Christians prepare themselves for suffering, since truth must be persecuted³³. Therefore, Ps.-Macarius believes that perfect Christians are continually dedicated to the cross of Christ; “they are consecrated and crucified”³⁴. The more sufferings true Christians undergo, the purer they become.

PSEUDO-MACARIUS ON FRIENDSHIP

Turning to the Macarian idea of friendship, one can only be surprised at how poor and limited the evidence in the corpus is. When the subject does arise, Ps.-Macarius usually deprecates carnal friendship in the world, opposing it to spiritual friendship. For him, the place for cherishing friendly relationships is not the material world but the spiritual one³⁵. So if he speaks of friends, he usually has in mind friendship with God and angels, or the rejection of friendship with demons³⁶. The only genuine and intimate friends whom Ps.-Macarius explicitly mentions are the Lord and the Holy Spirit³⁷. Reading these homilies, one can get the impression that Ps.-Macarius had no earthly friends at all. Such an impression, however, is misleading. Ps.-Macarius certainly had friends among the ascetics in his circle and in remoter areas. He too knew true friendship even in this world.

Ps.-Macarius speaks of friendship in the heavenly kingdom, where all citizens are friends. Because the righteous are all friends and companions of God, they are also friends with each other. Even in foreign lands, and not knowing each other, the righteous, upon meeting, easily recognize each other as co-heirs of the kingdom³⁸. True earthly friendship becomes possible on the basis of spiritual unity in Christ and sharing in the inheritance of the kingdom. There-

³² *EpM* 9:17.

³³ B 32:2 (1-2), H 15:11 (12).

³⁴ B 16:1 (1), H 17:1. Transl. Maloney.

³⁵ H 9:10.

³⁶ H 27:2; H 26:14; H 38:4.

³⁷ H 28:4.

³⁸ C 1:2.

fore, all genuine followers of Christ, and especially the “beloved bothers”³⁹, who have renounced the world and live in solitude, are good friends of Ps.-Macarius. He not only explains subtle matters of the faith to them but also shares with them his most intimate experiences of the heavenly mysteries, his personal visions, revelations, and insights. He teaches them how to become true friends of God and accompanies them on the way.

Ps.-Macarius also tries to foster true heavenly friendship among those who live in brotherhood. In a letter to a community of brothers, he teaches them to live together in love, unanimity, and sincerity, and he provides a detailed explanation of what this means in practice, including encouragement in the mutual exchange of gifts for the common good⁴⁰.

MARK THE MONK AND HIS OPPONENTS

Mark the Monk is another example of a hermit actively engaged in various polemical exchanges of his time. On the one hand, he seems to cherish indifference to his opponents. He clearly instructs his disciples, for example, to avoid discussions and concern themselves with righteousness: “Do not argue with people not under obedience to you when they oppose the truth; otherwise you may arouse their hatred”⁴¹. Elsewhere he can say: “If someone does not obey you when you have told him once, do not argue and try to compel him; but take for yourself the profit which he has thrown away. For forbearance will benefit you more than correcting him”⁴². He also teaches his followers to accuse no one – neither those who are above them, nor those who are below them. He writes an entire work, *Disputation against a scholar*, in which he argues that monks should avoid human judgment and not appear in civil courts. In his view, the authorities do not sin when they punish the guilty, but those who accuse the guilty in the court definitely sin, for they do not want to forgive and look instead for revenge through human means. Such people sin because they do not seek forgiveness of their own evil deeds, on account of which they have suffered certain afflictions, and because they implicitly accuse God of a lack of justice⁴³. Instead, the spiritual law requires patiently afflictions

³⁹ See especially B 54.

⁴⁰ H 3.

⁴¹ *De lege spirituali* 181. In: MARC LE MOINE: *Traités I* (SC, 445), p. 120. Translations of Mark’s writings are my own, unless otherwise noted.

⁴² *De his qui putant se ex operibus justificari* 200 (213). In: MARC LE MOINE: *Traités I* (SC, 445), p. 194.

⁴³ *Disputatio cum quodam causidico*. In: MARC LE MOINE, *Traités II* (SC, 455), p. 30.

and labouring in prayer, humility, and pure love for one's neighbour. Mark is convinced that such a disposition brings much more advantage to a person than arguing and defending oneself.

On the other hand, Mark himself was actively engaged in various controversies, and most of his works are written in a polemical style. He explains this deviation from his general rules in the following way: "When the evil conduct of one person begins to affect others, you should not show long-suffering; and instead of your own advantage, you should seek that of the others, so that they may be saved. For virtue involving many people is more valuable than virtue involving only one"⁴⁴. It is precisely this care for the good of the many that impelled him to enter into discussions with heretics and to take up the pen against them. In his treatise *Against the Nestorians*, Mark describes other reasons for undertaking this polemical task. He says that others were questioning him concerning the right faith, and he wanted to strengthen the faith of those who were in doubt or those who lacked discernment between good and evil. He was also inspired by the apostle Paul, who calls on Christians to learn the truth and struggle against *enemies of the cross* (Phil 3:18), not only the Jews but other heretics as well (#1-2)⁴⁵. When engaging opponents in discussion, however, one should adopt a correct attitude toward one's opponent so as not to suffer loss. "He who with the fear of God admonishes or corrects a man who has sinned gains the virtue that is opposite to that sin. But he who reproaches him out of rancour and ill will becomes subject to a similar passion, according to the spiritual law"⁴⁶.

In Mark the Monk's *oeuvre*, we can distinguish four kinds of heretics: Nestorians, Messalians, Melchisedekians, and Novatians.

NESTORIANS

In his dogmatic treatise *Against the Nestorians*, Mark explicitly accuses his opponents of heresy; he considers their arguments in detail and refutes them all. As he points out, he writes this work not for vainglory but for the good of

⁴⁴ *De his qui putant se ex operibus justificari* 201 (214). In: MARC LE MOINE: *Traité I* (SC, 445), p. 194. For the English translation of this treatise, see: G. E. H. PALMER – Ph. SHERRARD – K. WARE (trans. and eds.): *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, vol. 1. London; Boston: Faber & Faber, 1979, pp. 125-146.

⁴⁵ *De Incarnatione sive Adversus Nestorianos*. In: MARC LE MOINE: *Traité II* (SC, 455), pp. 252-315. See also: J. KUNZE: *Marcus Eremita. Ein Neuer Zeuge für das Altkirchliche Taufbekenntnis*. Leipzig, 1895, pp. 6-30.

⁴⁶ *De his qui putant se ex operibus justificari* 171 (183). In: MARC LE MOINE: *Traité I* (SC, 445), p. 184. Transl. Palmer et al.

the heretics (#10). He divides them into two kinds: the stubborn and the unsteady. The purpose of his treatise is, accordingly, also twofold: so that the former can be put to shame and the ignorant can come to the knowledge of truth and abandon heresy. Mark's attitude to these two categories of heretics differs.

The stubborn heretics are severely criticized. Mark accuses them of intentional apostasy and immorality; despite knowing the truth in their conscience, they deny it and do not stop disputes. Their aim is not the true faith but the approval of their own vainglory. Their investigations are contrary to the will of Christ, for if they were truly seeking Him, they would progress in His commandments according to their ability (#9). Mark does not skimp on harsh words for such immoral heretics, considering them "new Tertullians", "apostates", "workers of the evil one", "unfaithful", and "foolish ones" (#19, 20, 25). He compares them to adulterers, for having acknowledged in baptism the incarnate Word of God, they are now unable to explain how the unity of God and man is possible and thus do not remain firm in the faith (#16).

Mark argues that asking God "how" is blasphemy and "fighting against God" (#26, 29), because God, who is omnipotent, should not be asked "how". With such a question, the heretics only show their lack of faith in God's omnipotence. So Mark establishes the limits of theology and forbids going beyond them: "Do not dare to investigate in a natural way but believe that whatsoever God pleased to do, He has done (Ps 134:6). You must believe and not investigate 'how'" (#36-37). For Mark the correct disposition towards God is obedience, not investigation: "The faithful fulfil the commandments of Christ without investigating His nature" (#42).

As to the unstable heretics, Mark tries to persuade them by means of logical arguments. His primary task is to refute the main Nestorian error, which is the division of Christ. On the basis of the Scriptures and tradition, he defends two important statements: 1) that Christ is one and undivided, divine and human at the same time, and 2) that belief in the hypostatic unity of Christ is a necessary condition for salvation. The tone of the discussion with this group of heretics considerably from the tone he uses with the stubborn heretics. Mark passes from words of accusation for the latter to words of instruction and persuasion for the former. He says: "Since the Scriptures do not explain how, let us not investigate this either" (#37, 40, 47). In his efforts to convince his opponents, Mark uses numerous rhetorical questions and fully discusses the relevant arguments and counter-arguments. He even develops Nestorian teaching in order to show what he views as its absurdity and inner contradiction.

Mark intends not only to deny heresy but also to teach the truth. He induces and encourages the unsteady heretics by saying, "Let us follow the faith

of Peter”, and by appealing to the example of “the blind man who prostrated himself before Christ” and the example of “the woman with a haemorrhage who touched the Saviour with faith and was healed” (#38). He addresses the unsteady heretics with appeals such as the following: “Believe according to Scripture”, “Listen to what the apostle Paul says”, “Listen to what the Lord says to His disciples”, “Receive at least the testimony of the blessed Thomas about the truth” (#39, 44, 46). With such appeals, Mark wants, on the one hand, to bring from heresy to the true faith all those who are ignorant and deceived; on the other hand, he wants to strengthen in the faith those who are confused or lacking discernment. The treatise *Against the Nestorians* is the sharpest of Mark’s works with regard to his opponents. His other ascetic works, though polemical in style, are positive instructions rather than discussions with his opponents. These works are directed to concrete groups of ascetics in order to teach them and in order to correct some of their false views.

MESSALIANS AND ASCETICS SIMILAR TO THEM

In polemics with the Messalians or ascetics similar to them, Mark’s tone and style change considerably. Most of his works concerning the Messalian problems are more practical than polemical. In these works, Mark has three aims:

- 1) He refutes the view that salvation can be attained through works and merit.
- 2) He argues that in baptism a person receives freedom from sin and is responsible for falling into sin thereafter.
- 3) He denies that repentance is unnecessary for the perfect.

In fact, Mark dedicates a separate work to each of these points: *To Those Who Think They are Made Righteous by Works*⁴⁷, *On Baptism*⁴⁸, and *On Repentance*⁴⁹ respectively.

Among the more than 200 chapters of the first work, only a few really refer to ascetics who hoped to be justified by works; the rest of the treatise is a simple instruction on the ascetic life. This work resembles more a conference of the spiritual master with his disciples than a polemical tract against heretics. Mark’s target audience is not limited to such heretics but rather includes his own followers and disciples as well as a broader circle of ascetics. In fact, his teaching excludes nobody and is addressed to all Christians. Mark’s aim is not

⁴⁷ *De his qui putant se ex operibus justificari*. In: MARC LE MOINE: *Traité I* (SC, 445), pp. 130-200.

⁴⁸ *De baptismo*. Ibid., pp. 296-396.

⁴⁹ *De paenitentia*. Ibid., pp. 214-258.

so much to argue against the Messalians but to protect both Messalians and their antagonists from deviations and extremes. So he writes:

Those who, because of the rigor of their own ascetic practice, despise the less zealous, think that they are made righteous by physical works. But we are even more foolish if we rely on theological knowledge and disparage the ignorant. Even if knowledge is true, it is still not firmly established if unaccompanied by works. For everything is established by being put into practice.

Some, without fulfilling the commandments, think that they possess true faith. Others fulfil the commandments and then expect the kingdom as a reward due to them. Both are mistaken.⁵⁰

The Messalian errors, however, served Mark only as a point of departure for developing his teaching on a proper disposition and attitude towards the ascetic life. In other words, he not only corrects the false Messalian ideas concerning good works, he also shows the true meaning of righteousness.

Mark explains that good works are not done for the sake of repayment but to preserve the purity given to us (#22) and to restrain us from sin (#23). They are “a work within our natural powers but not something that buys us the kingdom” (#24). Without grace they cannot contribute to our sanctification (#23). Therefore righteousness is acquired not so much by deeds but rather through faith, grace, and repentance (#101). To be righteous not only requires doing good deeds but also covering them and not displaying our virtues to others (#126). Even that, however, does not suffice for righteousness. Mark says: “Having hidden your virtue, do not be filled with pride, imagining you have achieved righteousness. For righteousness is not only hiding your good actions, but also never thinking forbidden thoughts” (#127). For Mark, the sign of righteousness is not merely doing good to someone; it is also “when you endure without rancour the hostility that follows” (#128). In his teaching he intentionally blurs the difference between heterodox and orthodox ascetics, showing that both are still far from true righteousness. The Messalian errors, then, serve to increase the zeal of his own followers and to protect his own circle from those errors. Mark does not consider the Messalians to be his opponents but rather ignorant ascetics, whom he feels obliged to instruct and correct. He behaves like a spiritual master who cares for all and wants everybody to be saved.

⁵⁰ *De his qui putant se ex operibus justificari* 11-12, 17 (18). *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 134. Transl. Palmer *et al.*

The same intention and method are evident in two other works dealing with baptism and repentance. In the treatise *On Baptism*, Mark, as an experienced ascetic, shares with an immature interlocutor knowledge about baptismal grace, the sources of sin, and the role of the human will. In the work *On Repentance*, Mark refutes the view that the righteous and the perfect have no need of repentance. This opinion is for him an occasion to teach about the importance of penitence, which is not limited by time or actions and is fitting for all who wish to be saved, both for the sinners and for the righteous. Repentance is incumbent upon the righteous, if not for actual sins, then for former sins and for the sins of others. Mark argues that anyone who claims that repentance can be completed prior to death denies the commandment and becomes a transgressor of God's precepts⁵¹. He says: "Christ made himself a surety for us in exchange for repentance. Whoever abandons repentance renounces the one who became a surety"⁵².

A similar approach is used in Mark's polemic with the Melchisedekians⁵³ and the Novatians⁵⁴. In his *Disputation against a scholar* (against appearing in civil courts and on celibacy), Mark appears even more delicate and attentive to his disputant, using the discussion as an occasion to instruct both the scholar and his disciples about spiritual law. This work also gives us some idea as to how Mark understood friendship.

MARK THE MONK ON FRIENDSHIP

Mark does not speak of friendship explicitly. He prefers to consider human relationships in terms of love, or charity, without any elaborate classification of

⁵¹ *De paenitentiae* 10. Ibid., p. 248.

⁵² *De paenitentiae* 12. Ibid., p. 252.

⁵³ In his work *On Melchisedek*, Mark argues against people who thought that Melchisedek was an apparition of the Word of God before the Incarnation. He rejects their main arguments, introducing a distinction between an image and the reality behind it; he presents Melchisedek as the image of Christ. See *De Melchisedech*. In: MARC LE MOINE: *Traité II* (SC, 455), pp. 182-222.

⁵⁴ In writing against the Novatians, Mark takes issue with their interpretation of the Pauline words: "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened [...] and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance" (Heb 6:4-6). Like other Church Fathers (Athanasius the Great, John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrillus, John Damascene), Mark the Monk refers these words to the sacrament of baptism, and to certain converted Jews who abused the sacrament by receiving it a second time. See *De paenitentiae* 7 in: MARC LE MOINE: *Traité I* (SC, 445), pp. 234-238. For a more detail consideration, see the thesis of A. АШМАРИН: *Богословие преподобного Марка Подвижника*. Сергиев Посад, 2013 (summary: http://history-mda.ru/publ/avtoreferat-dissertatsiibogoslovie-prepodobnogo-marca-podvizhnika_3389.html).

their different types. Mark knows only two kinds of human relationships: those that arise from wickedness (κακία) and those that are based on love (ἀγάπη)⁵⁵. Both kinds lead to taking a neighbour's sufferings upon oneself – either by necessity (in the former case), or voluntarily (in the latter case). This teaching is based on Mark's conviction that any association (κοινωνία) among people is based on words and actions that derive from the thoughts preceding them. Therefore, it is primarily through thoughts that people come into association (κοινωνία) with each other, even with those whom they do not know. And associating with a neighbour brings sufferings into one's life, according to the words of Scripture: "if you have put up security for your neighbour, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger" (Prov 6:1). Therefore, everyone suffers not only for his or her own sake but also for the sake of one's neighbour, according to the origin of that relationship in either wickedness or love⁵⁶.

Friendship certainly falls into the second kind of relationship, namely, acceptance of a neighbour based on love. For Mark, the best examples of such fellowship are Jesus and the apostles. Mark argues that the Lord showed by his own actions that his followers ought to suffer for a neighbour out of love, even to the point of death. For our sake, Christ underwent temptation and suffered shame, mockery, betrayal, torture, crucifixion, and being pierced by the sword. He passed a law on to his apostles and disciples, saying: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13). The apostles, following Christ's command, taught the same: "Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters" (1 Jn 3:16). Like Christ, the apostles enter into communion with us through their thoughts, words, and actions. They offer us the Scriptures and prophecies; they pray and shed tears for us in their thoughts. Through their words, they teach, beg, assure, warn, and admonish us, professing and preaching Christ. The apostles also attest their friendship with us and their love for us by their actions, by being hungry and thirsty, homeless, persecuted, dishonoured, slandered, brutally treated, imprisoned, and killed for our sake⁵⁷.

It is evident that Mark's idea of a relationship based on love has little to do with affection, intimacy, or other criteria that usually determine human friendship. He speaks of disinterested and benevolent love towards a neighbour, which requires treating people equally. Friendship for Mark is primarily an action, not an affection. This conclusion, however, should not mislead us

⁵⁵ *Disputatio cum quodam cauidico* 18-20. Ibid., pp. 80-88.

⁵⁶ *Disputatio cum quodam cauidico* 18. Ibid., p. 80.

⁵⁷ *Disputatio cum quodam cauidico* 20. Ibid., pp. 84-88.

into believing that Mark refused all kinds of close relationships between two people. He certainly knew and practiced spiritual friendship, which we can detect in his master-disciple relationships or in spiritual kinship. Mark's correspondence with his spiritual son Nicholas, whom he addresses with tenderness as "my beloved son"⁵⁸, is indicative of a warm, affectionate relationship.

Mark's primary concern, however, was to exhibit the ideal in human relationships, an ideal towards which every Christian should strive without considering that ideal's secondary aspects or various modes of expression. The reason Mark did not discuss friendship as a special kind of Christian love that brings people to mutual intimacy, is that his aim was to emphasize love as a fundamental principle of every human relationship.

CONCLUSION

The authors examined here have a very similar attitude to their opponents, and it can be described as therapeutic. Their opponents were the heretics who, in the minds of these two ascetics, posed a real danger to their circles or to the church in general. Both Ps.-Macarius and Mark the Monk therefore stoutly defend the Orthodox faith, as they understood it, and clearly denounce those they deemed heretics. Both authors also differentiate their attitude to various types of opponents, but their motivation for such differentiation is diverse. Ps.-Macarius is preoccupied with protecting his followers from dangerous and heretical views. Therefore, heresies and errors that concern what is fundamental for salvation receive sharp criticism in his homilies, while smaller errors or false views that derive from ignorance or lack of experience, though such views may in the view of Ps.-Macarius be serious impediments to salvation, do not receive sharp criticism, but rather a patient explanation with argumentation aimed at persuasion. In Mark's case, the differentiated approach to his opponents is determined by his therapeutic aims. Distinguishing between real heretics and those misled by them, Mark diagnoses different sicknesses and applies different remedies as required by the ailment: the former are condemned as incurable, and the latter, judged curable, are to be healed through dialogue and persuasive argumentation. Mark's style is more polemical and radical than that of Ps.-Macarius, but in general the attitude of both authors is comparable: they are eager to save those who can be saved, to cut off all that is dangerous and harmful for the soul, and to correct those who are in error and bring them

⁵⁸ *Ad Nicolaum praecepta animae salutaria* 2, 5-6. In: MARC LE MOINE: *Traité II* (SC, 455), pp. 110, 124.

to the true faith. In these polemical efforts, neither author is determined by hatred for their opponents but rather by care for the salvation of many souls.

As to their attitude towards friends, Ps.-Macarius bases his friendly relations with others on his friendship with God, and Mark sees the ideal human relationship in the example of Christ, who gave his life for his friends. Both patterns of making friends are founded on unconditional love and therefore demand loyalty and fidelity, even unto death.

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Melancholic monk and the ‘Vagabond’ Demon: The feeling of sadness and the dangers of friendship in the Evagrius’ writings¹

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Evagrius, along with the other Desert Fathers, holds that there are two kinds of sadness. One is good and prompts the monk to repent and connect with God, while the other one is sinful and is a sign of monk’s remaining attachment to the world. Evagrius offers various remedies for sadness. However, one particular piece of advice stands out and that is: whenever a monk is struck by sadness he should not succumb to the need to go out of his cell in search for his fellow brothers or other people. To succumb to such need only means to fall into sin further. Evagrius’ take on the dangers of human contact is in accord with the Eastern monastic tradition that was generally skeptical of spiritual friendship (B. P. McGuire, 1989). In this paper I explore why this particular piece of Evagrius’ advice could have been very hard to follow, particularly when the monk is sad and when the feeling is strong. For this purpose I examine in which ways such a requirement for detachment from individual human relationships goes against the universal human psychological ‘need to belong’ (E. Staub 2003, R. M. Ryan & E. L. Deci 2017), the need that is fulfilled (among other things) when we know that we have close friends to console us in the times of trouble. In conclusion I suggest that this very need might have influenced the way friendship is understood in the Eastern monastic tradition in the following centuries.

Key words: Evagrius Ponticus, sadness, emotional reliance, the need to belong

According to Evagrius there are two kinds of sadness: the good one that prompts the monk to repent and connect with God, and the other one that

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is sinful and is a sign of the monk's remaining attachment to the world. The latter kind of sadness is in need of a cure. However, for Evagrius such a cure is not to be found in the company of other people: family, old friends, or fellow brothers. On the contrary, reaching out to them in the times of trouble is something Evagrius does not recommend since he sees such an attempt as dangerous. For him the human need to rely on others is to be avoided and overcome, because such need is a distraction on the monk's Godly path and can threaten the monk's call and his soul.

Evagrius' take on the dangers of human contact is in accord with the Eastern Christian tradition that was generally skeptical of spiritual friendship (for the review see B. P. McGuire, 1989, p. 1-38). In this paper my goal is to examine how hard it was for the monk not to seek the company of other people when he was struck with sadness and why Evagrius' alternative remedies for it most likely were not sufficiently effective. To do this I will first explore how Evagrius understands sadness. Then, I will present Evagrius' take on the role of human relationships in a monk's life and why such relationships are not helpful remedies for sadness. Finally, I will argue that emotional reliance on other people is crucial for our well being and that it is particularly hard not to seek human relationships even when our metaphysics, theology, or psychology tells us not to seek them. For this purpose I will use the contemporary psychological theory of universal basic human needs (Ryan & Deci 2017, p. 561-591) and some of their empirical findings. I will argue that Evagrius' requirement goes against the universal human psychological 'need to belong', the need that is fulfilled (among other things) when we know that we can turn to our friends to console us in the times of trouble. Such need is with us even when we do not value it and when we want to transcend it as Evagrius (along with other desert fathers) aspired to do. But, it is important to notice that Evagrius' stance is not without tension. Being such an extraordinary psychologist as he was, he seemed to be aware of the positive role that community plays in the monk's life even though he advised a melancholic monk not to succumb to the temptation of socializing with others. For him, community care was not to be asked for, but he did advise monks to pay attention to their fellow brothers and if they notice that somebody was melancholic to help him out and pray for him.

1. EVAGRIUS ON SADNESS AND THE DANGER OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

According to Evagrius² sadness (*lupē*) is one of the eight bad, generic *logismoi* (thoughts) that a monk can be tempted with in the desert. *Logismoi* has

² For the extensive discussion of the Evagrius' psychological, philosophical, and theological

been translated in more than one way and is often understood as: “thoughts, passions, demons, spirits or temptations” (Horiacha 2013, p. 3). Beside the thought of sadness there is gluttony (*gastrimargia*), fornication or lust (*porneia*), avarice (*philarguria*), anger (*orgē*), listless depression (*akēdia*), vainglory or vanity (*kenodoxia*), and pride (*huperēphania*). They affect different parts of the soul and can be categorized accordingly. Thus, gluttony, lust, and avarice affect the appetitive part of the soul. Anger, sadness, and listless depression are the thoughts of the spirited or hot-blooded part of the soul, while vainglory and pride are the sinful thoughts of the rational part (Horiacha 2013, p. 3).

So, how does a monk get to have such thoughts? Evagrius describes the mechanism behind their inception. He, like Origen, holds that bad thoughts are injected by demons (Sorabji 2000, p. 343 - 372). Demons prey on the monk and wait for the moment of his weakness to instill them. Once instilled a bad thought can lead to other bad thoughts. So, for instance if a monk succumbs to gluttony this can further lead him to lustful thoughts. Those in turn can make him feel avarice. Avarice causes anger. Once in anger a monk is in danger to fall into sadness and so on. So, the very thought of gluttony has the power to move him down the spiral of sin³.

The temptation of the bad thoughts is real and no matter what the monk does, such temptation is beyond his control. The very first thoughts (pre-thoughts, first movements) that are the result of such temptations are also beyond the monk’s control. Here we find Evagrius in agreement with stoics, but not Augustine (Sorabji 2000, p. 372-385). However, everything beyond the initial sting of a bad thought is up to the monk. He does have a say if he is going to indulge in the thought or fight it. What this means is that a monk is free to sin or to fight the sin. We all experience the pre-thoughts, but only if we follow up on those and let them lead us further we become sinners.

ideas see K. Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century* (2016); K. Corrigan, “Thoughts that Cut: Cutting, Imprinting, and Linger in Evagrius of Pontus” published in *Evagrius and His Legacy*, (2016, p. 49-72); A. Guillaumont, *Un philosophe au désert: Evagre le Pontique*, (2004); J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*, (2016).

³ “1] For it is impossible to fall into the spirit of adultery, unless one has succumbed to gluttony; 2] it is impossible to be agitated by anger, unless one covets and fights for food, or money, or fame; [3] and it is impossible to avoid the demon of sadness, unless one has been deprived of all he wants to obtain; [4] Nor will one escape pride, the first offspring of the devil, if one has not banished avarice, the root of all evils (i Tim. 6: 10), since, according to the wise Solomon, ‘poverty makes a person humble’ (Prov. 10:4).” *Peri logismon* 1 (tr. Sinkewics 2003, p. 153).

As we have seen in Evagrius' scheme of bad thoughts, sadness belongs to the thoughts of the spirited, hot-blooded part of the soul. Let me now take a closer look at how Evagrius describes sadness and what kind of situations he identifies as its causes. The following excerpts from Evagrius' writings are not meant to be an exhaustive list of his thoughts on sadness but three representative ones that illustrate his thinking on sadness.

In *On the Vices Opposed to the Virtues* Evagrius gives us a somewhat poetic description of how it feels to be captured by sadness, but he also identifies some of its causes and possible consequences.

“Sadness is one who dwells over loss, who is familiar with frustrated acquisition, a forerunner of exile, remembrance of family, a deputy of want, a kinsman of acedia, a complaint of exasperation, a reminder of insult, and a darkening of the soul, dejection in morals, drunkenness of prudence, a soporific remedy, [1144A] a cloud of form, a worm in the flesh, sadness of thoughts, a people in captivity.” (*De vitiis* 4, tr. Sinkewicz 2003, p. 63)

Evagrius tells us here that those who cannot get over the things and people that they left behind (*dwells over loss, remembrance of family*) and still have unfulfilled desires directed at the world (*who is familiar with frustrated acquisition, a deputy of want*) are prone to sadness. The same applies to those who think about past insults (*a complaint of exasperation, a reminder of insult*). He also outlines where the feeling of sadness might lead the monk: it can lead him into isolation (*forunner of exile*) and is often accompanied with listless depression or acedia (*a kinsman of acedia*). Sadness itself Evagrius describes as *darkening of the soul, dejection of morals*, and a *worm in the flesh*. It's a psychological state that has the power to skew the monk's view of the world and can prevent him from seeing the good in it. If the monk does not fight it there is a danger that he might forget the Godly path.

In *Praktikos*, Evagrius is more specific about the underlying psychological mechanism behind sadness.

Sadness sometimes occurs through the frustration of one's desires, or sometimes it follows closely upon anger. When it is through the frustration of one's desires it occurs in this way. When certain gain the advantage, they bring the soul to remember home and parents and one's former life. And when they observe that the soul does not resist but rather follows right along and disperses itself among thoughts of pleasures, then with a hold on it they plunge it into sadness with the realization that former things are no more and cannot be again because of the present way of life.. And the miserable soul, the more it allowed itself to be dispersed among the former thoughts, the more it has now become hemmed in and humiliated by these latter ones. (*Prakt.* 10, tr. Sinkewicz 2003, p. 98)

In this quote we can see what, according to Evagrius, gives birth to sadness. The main causes are frustrated desires. So, the monk starts to feel sad when he lets himself go back in time and imagine his friends and family: people that he cannot see now that he is a monk. He first remembers them and the memories give him comfort and pleasure. However, it won't be too long before he remembers that he cannot spend time with them anymore. This trip down memory lane escalates the sadness he feels. Evagrius' description of the emergence of sadness is something we are all familiar with even if we are not monks. Anybody whoever left home to live somewhere else or simply grew old in their hometown experiences similar nostalgia for the people who are far away, lost in the past, or both. In this way Evagrius' description strikes us as psychologically real and universal. Despite all the insurmountable differences between Evagrius' monk that he is writing to, and us, we cannot help but sympathize with the pains this monk is going through.

Finally, let us take a look at what Evagrius tells us about those who cannot feel sadness any more. In *On the Eight Thoughts*, Evagrius says:

An abstinent person does not experience sadness in the absence of food, nor does the chaste person experience sadness in the lack of a licentious pleasure; similarly, the person free of anger in not attaining vengeance, or the humble person when deprived of human esteem, or the person free of avarice when he suffers a loss—for such people have decisively turned away from the appetite for these things. Just as one who wears armour [1157A] is not affected by an arrow, so the person who has attained impassibility will not be wounded by sadness. (*De octo spiritibus malitiae* PG 79, 1156D-1157A tr. Sinkewicz 2003, p. 82)

In this quote, again, we can see what the usual causes of sadness are. Sadness comes from 'frustrated appetites': for food, for sexual pleasure, for vengeance, for human esteem, and for possessions. In a nutshell, it comes from the frustration of any worldly pleasure. But, those who don't have any such appetites cannot feel sadness. Thus, for Evagrius, attachment to the world is the main cause of sadness. In this way demons can only play with and drag down those who are still not fully detached.

The question, of course, is: How can a monk achieve the state without sadness, the state in which he is invincible to it? If we just briefly analyze what we do when we feel sad we can see that we often turn to close friends and family to help us out. It is particularly hard on us if there are none around⁴.

⁴ In the next section I will say more about the empirical findings that support our intuitions about such emotional reliance.

But, for Evagrius this is not an open venue for a monk. The monk is told that he needs to forget people close to him in times of sadness since they are part of the world that he needs to leave behind. He is told that only if he becomes entirely detached from the world and the people in it he can be safe from sadness. Thus, becoming detached from the world is high on the priority list for the monk.

But, can his fellow brothers at least help him out to achieve this goal? Evagrius will say that the monk needs to be cautious when it comes to such relationships, too. To see why this is the case let me briefly take a look at what Evagrius says about human relationships.

In the *Foundations of the Monastic life*, Evagrius says:

If you have friends, avoid frequent encounters with them, for if you meet with them at long intervals you will be truly helpful to them. But if you think that harm may come to you through them, do not go near them at all, for you should have helpful friends who contribute to your way of life. Avoid also encounters with evil and quarrelsome people and do not dwell with any of them. Rather, shun their wicked purposes, for they have no relationship •with God, [i 26oA] nor do they abide with him. Have peaceful men as your friends, spiritual brothers, and holy fathers. For the Lord spoke of them in this way when he said: ‘These are my mother, my brothers, and my fathers—those who do the will of my Father in heaven’ (Matt. 12: 49–50). Have no dealings with distracted people and do not frequent their table, lest they drag you into the midst of their own deceits and lead you astray from the science of stillness, for this is the passion within them. Do not bend your ear to their words and give no reception to the thoughts of their heart, for they are harmful indeed. (*Rerum monachalium rationes* PG 401257D, tr. Sinkewics 2003, p. 8)

Here we see Evagrius starting off by saying that people that were involved in our previous life need to be forgotten which is consistent with what we have seen so far. If such people are good and decent people the monk is allowed to see them, but not very often. Evagrius hints that the monk can be of most help to his worldly friends if their encounters are rare, but does not elaborate how exactly. Instead, he proceeds to warn the monk to entirely break the contact with those people that could endanger his Godly path and advises him to socialize only with those who share his goals and beliefs, i.e. with his fellow brothers. However, Evagrius is quick to say that the monk needs to be careful even when he is around his new friends and that he should not spend too much time with them. Along these lines he says:

But if one of those who walk according to the love of God comes to invite you to eat with him and you want to go, go then but return quickly to your cell. If possible, never sleep outside of it, so that the grace of stillness may

abide with you always and you will serve your purpose there unhindered. (*Rerum monachalium rationes* PG 40 1257D tr. Sinkewics 2003, p. 8)

To sum up, in these paragraphs, Evagrius acknowledges the friendship among like-minded and fellow brothers but warns the monk not to spend lots of time with them. But, why is spending time with others dangerous?

In *Thoughts*, Evagrius says that the company of others can open the door for bad thoughts such as lust and anger which are then followed by sadness when frustrated. The temptation to spend time with others he relates to the Vagabond demon that is, in a nutshell, the demon of socializing:

There is a demon called the Vagabond who presents himself to the brothers especially about the time of dawn; he leads the mind around from city to city, from village to village, and from house to house. The mind arranges so-called simple encounters, then meets with acquaintances, holds longer conversations, and corrupts its own state with these associations, distancing itself little by little from the knowledge of God and from virtue while it forgets even its profession. (*Peri logismon* 9, tr. Sinkewics 2003, p.159)

When the Vagabond demon takes over he makes the mind of the monk vulnerable to other temptations: “the mind”, Evagrius continues, “inflamed by these things and intoxicated by these many encounters, immediately falls prey to the demon of fornication or anger or sadness.” (*On Thoughts*).

But, if the monk is to avoid other monks and other people because of the dangers of socializing and if such socializing is not a cure for sadness, what is? In *Praktikos*, Evagrius simply advises the monk to become even more detached from the world.

One who flees all worldly pleasures is a citadel inaccessible to the demon of sadness. For sadness involves the frustration of a pleasure, whether actually present or only hoped for. And so if we have an attachment to some earthly object, it is impossible to repel this enemy, for he sets his snare and produces sadness precisely where he sees we are particularly inclined. (*Praktikos* 19, tr. Sinkewics 2003, p. 101)

In *Eight Thoughts* he elaborates:

11. He who has gained control of the passions has gained control of sadness, but one who has been defeated by pleasure will not escape the fetters of this vice.

16 The person who loves the world (cf. i John 2: 15) will experience a lot of sadness, but one who disdains the things of the world will always know gladness.

17. An avaricious person who has suffered a loss will be bitterly saddened, but he who disdains riches will be free of sadness.

18. One who values esteem will experience sadness when dishonor comes upon him, but the humble person will welcome it as a familiar friend. (*De octo spiritibus malitiae* 1157B tr. Sinkewics 2003, p. 82)

Here Evagrius attempts to cast more light on the way sadness relates to other bad thoughts so that the monk can become aware of such connections. This is to enable him to better fight them. The ultimate goal in this fight is to become insensitive to everything of this world. Such insensitivity is the only real defense from sadness:

13. (i 2) A shield is a soldier's safety, and a wall a city's, but for the monk impassibility offers a greater safety than both these. For often a whizzing arrow passes through a shield and a throng of attackers demolishes a wall, but sadness cannot overcome impassibility (*ibid.*).

Finally, beside these psychological insights into the nature of sadness Evagrius offers a prayer as the key remedy to it. Prayer is, after all, a universal cure; "Prayer is a defence against sadness and discouragement." (Sinkewics 2003, p. 194)

So, even though Evagrius discourages the monk to rely on his fellow brothers when he feels sad, he does offer his own thoughts on sadness and advises a monk to pray in his fight against it. However, asking the monk not to seek fellow brothers when he needs them might turn out to be too much of a requirement. As we will see shortly this requirement goes against the basic human 'need to belong'. I turn to this topic in the next section.

2. THE NEED TO BELONG

A number of empirical studies have indicated that human beings have the basic psychological need to care and be cared for and that they suffer if such a need is not met (Ryan & Deci 2017, p. 561-591). Studies that are of the most importance for us here are those done by Ryan, La Guardia, Solky-Butzel, Chirkov, and Kim (2005, p. 145-163).

What Ryan and colleagues wanted to show is that people have the tendency to share their emotional experiences with their family and friends. Such experiences could be positive (joy, excitement) or negative (sadness, anger, fear). They hypothesized that this act of sharing or emotional reliance on others would help individuals regulate their emotions and connect and feel intimate with others. Of course, Ryan and colleagues were aware that such a need for emotional sharing, despite probably being universal, is not universally acknowledged across cultures. Cultures have different norms regarding emotional expressions and emotion sharing, and while some cultures enforce

it, some suppress it. As we have seen Evagrius is describing the norms of one such community that aims at the suppression of emotional reliance.

So, the first thing Ryan and colleagues examined is how different in their emotional reliance are individuals from the following four countries: South Korea, Russia, Turkey, and the United States. They found the most emotional reliance in Russia, followed by the United States, while the least was found in South Korea. This variability was to be expected. But, their next question was: do those who rely on others report an increased sense of well-being regardless of what their societal norms tell them. The results were striking: no matter what the norms say, the more people rely on others, i.e. the more they share feelings with them, the stronger their mental health is as well as their sense of well-being. In other words, emotional support and reliance might not be valued by the society but people feel better when they can get it.

The results that Ryan and colleagues received in their studies can help us understand better the hardship of the monastic, solitary life in the desert. In light of those results, we can now see how hard it must have been for the monks to follow Evagrius' advice and remain isolated when they were stricken by sadness. However, it is important to note that Evagrius himself seems to have been aware of human basic need to emotionally rely on others, as he did not endorse the lack of communal support entirely. On the contrary, even though he warned his fellow monks not to ask for it, (because of all the dangers such contact might bring), he did advise fellow brothers to be observant and help those who seem to be falling into depression. He says:

“Let no anchorite take up the anchoritic life with anger or pride or sadness, nor flee his brothers while troubled by such thoughts. For attacks of folly arise from such passions, when the heart moves from one mental representation to another and from this to another and from that to still another, falling little by little into a pit of forgetfulness. We have known of many among the brothers who fell afoul of this shipwreck, whom the others brought back again to a humane life with tears and prayer. But some who were caught in an irreversible forgetfulness no longer had the strength to lay hold of their first state, and till this day we in our humility behold the shipwrecks of our brothers... Therefore it is necessary to take up the anchoritic life with much humility and gentleness and to encourage the soul of this fellow with spiritual words and to speak to him the words of holy David: ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his recompenses, who shows great mercy for all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from corruption, who crowns you with compassion and mercies’ (Ps. 102: 2-4). These are the sorts of things you should say to this fellow, like a mother who seeks diligently for her child at a festival for fear that some malefactor seize and make off with him; and especially through intense prayer ever invite his soul to turn to the Lord.” (*Peri logismon* 23 tr. Sinkewics 2003, p. 169)

To conclude, we can say that Evagrius' advice to a monk to avoid fellow brothers in times of trouble was too hard to follow. Furthermore, it is likely that this advice rendered his other remedies for sadness ineffective (or less effective). However, Evagrius seemed to be more than aware of the importance of the community of brothers in the monk's life. He did believe that the community of brothers needs to be proactive and needs to reach out to the melancholic monk before it's too late. Further research would be necessary to identify the sources of this tension in Evagrius' writings and how it can be overcome. Finally, it is interesting to note that the monastic communities in the Eastern monastic tradition did loosen the rules on friendship over the centuries (B. P. McGuire 1989, p.1-38). In light of these contemporary psychological findings it is not unreasonable to assume that the basic human need to care and be cared for played a role in such a transition. Given the importance of such needs for daily human functioning it would be very useful to study further how such needs have been and are met in past and contemporary monastic communities. I believe that such research would be crucial for better understanding of the needs, mental health, and general well-being of monks.

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Ljiljana Radenovic

L'evoluzione del concetto del genere: tra le istanze della teoria del gender e l'ortodossia cattolica

Krzysztof Trębski

The evolution of the concept of gender: between instances of gender theory and Catholic orthodoxy

Gender theory expresses the idea that each person's gender is socially and culturally built on the basis of differentiated social roles and stereotypes. In this perspective, the physical difference, defined as sex, is minimized, while the purely cultural element, called gender, is emphasized to the maximum and considered primary. The theory holds that a person can be born with a body that does not correspond to his/her "perceived" male or female, or rather unspecified, identity. Consequently, gender identity depends on the subjective mindset of each person, which can also change over time. Gender theory, with its conceptual and interpretative system, has turned into an ideology, capable of transforming gender issues into the international political agenda.

The article, starting from the roots of gender theory, highlights the influence that socialist ideology, feminist thought and post-structuralist philosophy have had on this theory. In the last part, the article presents the teaching of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, which looks at gender theory as a kind of new ideological colonization which, by denying the difference and reciprocity in the nature of a man and a woman, threatens the anthropological basis of the family.

Keywords: gender theory/ideology, gender agenda, judgment of the Catholic Church.

INTRODUZIONE

La distinzione fra il sesso biologico (ingl. *sex*), determinato da genotipo e fenotipo, e il genere (ingl. *gender*) sta alla base della teoria del gender (ingl. *gender theory*), che mette in evidenza una possibile discontinuità tra il corpo con cui si nasce, l'immagine che si ha di sé (come ci si sente) e i ruoli stabiliti da altri (gli stereotipi di genere). Questa teoria, che sfocia in un'ideologia, afferma che l'idea di essere maschio e femmina non ha un significato intrinseco ma piuttosto socio-culturale, che l'identità sessuale può essere definita indipendentemente dai caratteri sessuali e che le differenze fisiche tra uomini e donne sono in definitiva irrilevanti in un più ampio orizzonte dell'intimità affettiva e delle scelte degli stili di vita.

1. EVOLUZIONE STORICA DEL GENDER

Il termine inglese “gender” dà il nome alla teoria, che descrivendo lo sfondo socio-culturale della differenza di caratteri sessuali umani, giustifica il superamento del binarismo di genere. Le radici di questo pensiero si possono scorgere già nell’ideologia socialista e, in particolare, nelle idee del filosofo tedesco Friedrich Engels¹ che fa coincidere la prevaricazione sulla donna nella storia con lo sviluppo dell’antagonismo uomo-donna nel matrimonio monogamico, e collega la prima oppressione di classe con quella fatta dall’uomo sul sesso femminile. Va ricordato che Engels, assieme a Marx, diventano in seguito dei promotori del materialismo dialettico di cui espressione storica è la lotta di classe a causa della disuguaglianza.

Un’ulteriore spinta verso la nuova visione del genere l’ha fornita il fondatore della psicanalisi Sigmund Freud che, pur dichiarando che la differenza di genere è radicata nella biologia ed è immodificabile, ha affermato che la consapevolezza dell’identità di genere si acquisisce superando il complesso di Elettra/Edipo, dalla cui risoluzione deriverà la successiva struttura psicosessuale dell’individuo (a prescindere dal sesso biologico) e conseguentemente l’identità sessuale adulta.

L’altro filone della nuova percezione del genere è legato al pensiero filosofico e al movimento femminista. La filosofa esistenzialista e femminista francese Simone De Beauvoir, analizzando la condizione della donna attraverso i dati della biologia, il punto di vista psicanalitico e quello del materialismo storico, parla del destino femminile scandito da un’identità di genere inferiore, subordinata e dipendente rispetto a quella maschile, dove il maschile è assunto quale prototipo di umanità. La De Beauvoir² ribadisce il diritto all’autodeterminazione femminile e pretende che la donna venga integrata nella società con gli stessi diritti e doveri dell’uomo e pertanto con tutte le conquiste che ne derivano.

La lotta per i diritti delle donne, dei lavoratori e delle minoranze, assieme ai cambiamenti culturali avvenuti dopo la seconda guerra mondiale, cominciando negli anni ‘50 dagli Stati Uniti d’America, hanno creato un clima favorevole per un radicale cambiamento del paradigma sociale di cui parte essenziale è la nuova accezione di genere. Già dai lavori di John Money e dei

¹ ENGELS, F.: *Les origines du mariage et de la famille*, Genève-Paris: Cherbuliez/Fischbacher, 1884.

² DE BEAUVOIR, S: *Le Deuxième Sexe*, tomes I et II, Paris: Gallimard, 1949.

coniugi Joan e John Hampson³ emergeva la necessità di scindere il concetto del “sesso” dal “genere”, prendendo in considerazione il fatto che il primo veniva riferito prevalentemente al proprio corredo genetico-biologico, mentre il secondo era connesso a un complesso di meccanismi strettamente correlati ai rapporti interpersonali.

Dalla metà degli anni ‘60, con le proteste in America contro la guerra del Vietnam e, in Europa, con i cambiamenti politici nei paesi dell’Est (la “primavera di Praga”), le contestazioni studentesche in tutt’Europa, alle quali si aggiungono le proteste degli operai, cambiano radicalmente il clima sociale, aprendo la strada alla modifica dei costumi sociali e alla messa in discussione delle rigide norme comportamentali esistenti. Questo contesto storico, con una forte spinta emancipatoria e femminista, influenza la percezione sia comune che scientifica del “sesso” e del “genere”. Il binomio viene investigato negli anni avvenire e vengono prodotti grandi quantità di studi. In una carrellata, riportiamo alcune prese di posizione, che diventano in seguito il retaggio storico del pensiero gender.

Particolarmente pregnante si rivela il pensiero femminista di Shulamith Firestone, che nel suo libro “The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution” pubblicato originariamente nel 1970, spiega la necessità di liberarsi non unicamente dal privilegio maschile ma anche dalla distinzione stessa fra i sessi, in modo che nessun essere umano sia più giudicato dai genitali che possiede e indica come fine ultimo della rivoluzione femminista la stessa cancellazione delle distinzioni tra i sessi.⁴ Queste affermazioni sembrano confermare la tesi che il concetto di genere rappresenta una cristallizzazione, un frutto maturo del pensiero femminista, da esso depositato nella cultura contemporanea.⁵

Da apripista al dibattito sulla fluidità del genere fa Robert Stoller, che partendo dalla definizione del genere come somma della mascolinità e della femminilità che si trova in una persona, in seguito introduce la distinzione tra il ruolo di genere (*gender role*) e l’identità di genere (*gender identity*) e ribadisce con forza che il comportamento sessuale (ruolo) e la propensione sessuale (identità) non necessariamente corrispondono tra di loro.⁶

³ Cfr. MONEY, J., HAMPSON, J., HAMPSON, J.: Hermaphroditism: Recommendations concerning assignment of sex, change of sex, and psychological management. In: *Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital*, 4/1955, p. 284-300.

⁴ Cfr. FIRESTONE, S.: *La dialettica dei sessi. Autoritarismo maschile e società tardo-capitalistica*. Firenze-Rimini: Guaraldi, 1974, p. 11-12.

⁵ Cfr. PICCONE STELLA, S., SARACENO, CH. (eds.): *Genere: la costruzione sociale del femminile e del maschile*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996, p. 12.

⁶ STOLLER, R.: *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity*, New York: Science House, 1968, p. 9.

La stessa pista calca Ann Oakley⁷, studiosa femminista inglese, che pur ricordando che abitualmente il sesso viene giudicato attraverso l'evidenza biologica, rimarca che il genere non lo si può giudicare per la stessa via: i criteri sono culturali e variano con l'epoca e il luogo. Asserisce che la persistenza del sesso va ammessa, ma altrettanto bisogna fare con la variabilità del genere.

L'influenza decisiva dei fattori socio-culturali nella formazione del genere è sottolineata dall'antropologa statunitense Gayle Rubin⁸, che attingendo dalle intuizioni del filosofo strutturalista Lévi-Strauss⁹ e studiando a fondo il sistema sex/gender della società, nella sua ricerca constata il divario esistente tra il sesso (sex), visto come qualcosa di naturale, e il genere (gender), vissuto come divisione imposta socialmente dei sessi, frutto di una cultura.

Il ruolo dell'impronta culturale nella formazione del genere è descritta da Judith Butler, filosofa post-strutturalista statunitense, che nel suo libro "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity"¹⁰, attingendo dall'eredità intellettuale di alcuni autori come De Beauvoir, Freud, Lacan, Derrida e Foucault, argomenta:

“Il genere non andrebbe concepito come mera iscrizione culturale di significato su un sesso già dato (concezione giuridica); il genere deve anche designare quell'apparato di produzione per mezzo del quale vengono istituiti i sessi. Ne consegue che il genere non sta alla cultura come il sesso sta alla natura; il genere è anche il mezzo discorsivo/culturale con cui la «natura sessuata» o «un sesso naturale» vengono prodotti e fissati in quanto «pre-discorsivi», precedenti la cultura, una superficie politicamente neutrale su cui agisce la cultura”.¹¹

Il genere viene quindi sempre più visto come costruito sociale, una ripetizione nel tempo di atti corporei stilizzati. In questa contrapposizione tra natura e cultura, le proposte “gender” confluiscono nel “queer”, cioè in una dimensione fluida, al punto da sostenere la completa emancipazione dell'individuo da ogni definizione sessuale data a priori, con la conseguente scomparsa di classificazioni considerate rigide. Si lascia così spazio a sfumature variabili

⁷ OAKLEY, A.: *Sex, Gender and Society*. London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1972.

⁸ Cfr. RUBIN, G.: The traffic in women: Notes on the 'political economy' of sex. In: REITER, R. (ed.): *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975, p. 157-210.

⁹ LÉVI-STRAUSS, C.: *Antropologia strutturale*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1966.

¹⁰ BUTLER, J.: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 1990.

¹¹ BUTLER, J.: *Questioni di genere. Il femminismo e la sovversione dell'identità*, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2013, p. 13.

per grado e intensità nel contesto, sia dell'orientamento sessuale, sia dell'identificazione del proprio gender.¹²

Tale trasformazione del significato del genere non è stata conseguenza diretta del permissivismo, ma piuttosto di un movimento attraverso il quale la sessualità intesa come fissità è stata soppiantata dalla identità sessuale definita e strutturata dalla scelta personale, dove la scelta sessuale diventa uno dei molti elementi del proprio stile di vita.¹³ Questo orientamento, oggi di gran lunga dominante, tende a privilegiarne le dimensioni soggettive e private, ponendo la vita sessuale in relazione con l'esercizio dell'autonomia e con la realizzazione del benessere personale.

2. PROMOZIONE DELL'AGENDA GENDER E LA SUA CRITICA

La discussione sulla tematica del genere si sposta sempre più sull'arena internazionale. Esiste l'agenda gender, che cerca di promuovere l'inserimento del concetto di identità di genere nelle leggi antidiscriminatorie in tutto il mondo.

Il Parlamento Europeo, il 24 maggio 2012, ha approvato la Risoluzione sulla lotta all'omofobia in Europa (Parlamento Europeo 2012) nella quale si esortano gli Stati membri e la Commissione a condannare con fermezza i reati di odio basati sull'orientamento sessuale, l'identità di genere e l'espressione di genere (art.1), e si sprona la Commissione a stabilire una tabella di marcia globale che assicuri l'uguaglianza senza discriminazioni sulla base dell'orientamento sessuale e dell'identità di genere (art.2).

L'ONU da tempo sta adottando la prospettiva di genere, sostenendo finanziariamente i piani esplicitati nelle Conferenze del Cairo (1994) e di Pechino (1995)¹⁴ e promuovendo la diffusione dell'agenda gender a livello politico.¹⁵

Si stanno prendendo dei provvedimenti opportuni, soprattutto nel campo dell'istruzione, per modificare i modelli di comportamento di uomini e donne e per eliminare i pregiudizi e le pratiche tradizionali basate su ruoli stereotipati

¹² Cfr. ZAMMUNER, V. L.: Identità di genere e ruoli sessuali. In: BONINO, S. (ed.): *Dizionario di psicologia dello sviluppo*, Torino: Einaudi, 2000, p. 339-344.

¹³ Cfr. HAWKES, G.: *A Sociology of Sex and Sexuality*, Buckingham-Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1996, p. 135-136.

¹⁴ All'art. 124 comma K della Piattaforma di Pechino si legge: "Adottare tutte le misure appropriate, soprattutto nel campo dell'istruzione, per modificare i modelli di comportamento di uomini e donne e per eliminare i pregiudizi e le pratiche tradizionali basate su ruoli stereotipati maschili e femminili".

¹⁵ Cfr. GLENDON, M. A.: *What happened at Beijing, January 1996*. [online] In: <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1996/01/005-what-happened-at-beijing> (Accesso 15. 05. 2020)

maschili e femminili. L'Istituto internazionale delle Nazioni Unite per la ricerca e la formazione del progresso delle donne (United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women o UN-IN-STRAW) indica la direzione di questo cambiamento con le seguenti parole: "adottare una prospettiva di genere significa (...) distinguere tra quello che è naturale e biologico da quello che è costruito socialmente e culturalmente, e nel processo rinegoziare tra il naturale - e la sua relativa inflessibilità - e il sociale, e la sua relativa modificabilità".¹⁶

Di fronte a questi fenomeni si è levata la critica dell'agenda gender da parte dei suoi oppositori. Dale O'Leary, collaboratrice del National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), nel suo libro "The Gender Agenda: Redefining Equality"¹⁷ prende gli spunti dallo scontro politico avvenuto nella Conferenza mondiale sulle donne a Pechino del 1995, quando l'uso della parola "gender" da parte di associazioni per i diritti delle donne e delle persone LGBT era stato contestato dai molti gruppi nati a difesa della maternità e della famiglia, oltre che della Chiesa cattolica. La O'Leary indica le tre forze principali impegnate nella promozione dell'agenda gender: gli ambienti femministi radicali di ispirazione marxista, che utilizzano le conferenze ONU per far progredire i loro programmi, poi le organizzazioni abortiste, prima fra tutte la International Planned Parenthood, e, infine, i gruppi che spingono per il controllo demografico, impegnati nella diffusione di aborto e contraccezione. Secondo l'autrice, i loro obiettivi principali mirano a riscrivere le leggi sui diritti umani utilizzando un linguaggio che le renda funzionali alla promozione dell'agenda di genere, i cui punti principali sono: la separazione del genere come ruolo socialmente costruito dal sesso biologico, l'ampliamento dei diritti umani per includere i diritti sessuali e riproduttivi, l'eliminazione del disturbo dell'identità di genere dall'elenco dei disturbi psicologici, includere nelle leggi antidiscriminazione la tutela dell'orientamento sessuale e dell'identità e manifestazione di genere e, inoltre, favorire il ricorso alla chirurgia del cambiamento di sesso.¹⁸

Secondo Enrica Perucchiatti e Gianluca Marletta¹⁹, la rapida diffusione dell'agenda gender fu promossa grazie all'imponente contributo economico

¹⁶ UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN: *Gender Concepts in Development Planning: Basic Approach*, Ser.B/50, Santo Domingo: INSTRAW, 1995, p. 11.

¹⁷ O'LEARY, D.: *The Gender Agenda: Redefining Equality*, Lafayette: Vital Issues Press, 1997.

¹⁸ Cfr. LA NUOVA BUSSOLA QUOTIDIANA, *O'Leary: il gender, rovesciamento della realtà*, 12. 04. 2013, [online]. In: <http://www.lanuovabq.it/it/oleary-il-gender-rovesciamento-della-realta> (Accesso 25. 04. 2020)

¹⁹ PERUCCHIATTI, E., MARLETTA, G.: *Unisex. La creazione dell'uomo «senza identità»*, Bologna: Arianna Editrice, 2014.

e politico delle più potenti lobby dell'Occidente e imposta attraverso i media, la cultura, lo spettacolo e le legislazioni. Perucchiotti e Marletta indicano le tappe salienti di questo processo: dalle origini dell'ideologia di genere all'omosessualismo militante, dal progressivo sdoganamento della pedofilia all'invenzione del "sesso X"; in un percorso che ha, come fine evidente, la creazione di un uomo nuovo "senza identità".²⁰

3. POSIZIONE DELLA CHIESA CATTOLICA NEI CONFRONTI DELL'IDEOLOGIA GENDER

La posizione della Chiesa Cattolica nei confronti dell'ideologia gender emerge nei vari documenti che già alla fine del XX secolo esplicitavano le perplessità circa la sua pervasiva aggressività. Importante è il parere del Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia, che vede la teoria del gender come un tentativo ideologico di svalutare la differenza e la complementarità dei sessi, contribuendo così alla graduale destrutturazione culturale e umana dell'istituzione matrimoniale.²¹

Un'altra autorevole opinione è stata espressa nella "Lettera ai Vescovi della Chiesa Cattolica sulla collaborazione dell'uomo e della donna nella Chiesa e nel mondo" firmata dall'allora Prefetto della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, Cardinale Joseph Ratzinger, che riflette sulle conseguenze antropologiche della teoria del gender rivelatesi nocive per la famiglia²² e fa notare che

“per evitare ogni supremazia dell'uno o dell'altro sesso, si tende a cancellare le loro differenze, considerate come semplici effetti di un condizionamento storico-culturale. In questo livellamento, la differenza corporea, chiamata sesso, viene minimizzata, mentre la dimensione strettamente culturale, chiamata genere, è sottolineata al massimo e ritenuta primaria. L'oscurarsi della differenza o dualità dei sessi produce conseguenze enormi a diversi livelli. Questa antropologia, che intendeva favorire prospettive egualitarie per la donna, liberandola da ogni determinismo biologico, di fatto ha ispirato ideologie che promuovono, ad esempio, la messa in questione della famiglia, per sua indole naturale bi-parentale, e cioè composta di padre e di madre,

²⁰ Cfr. FUSINA, A.: *Unisex: la creazione dell'uomo senza identità*, 12. 03. 2014, [online] In: <https://it.zenit.org/articles/unisex-la-creazione-dell-uomo-senza-identita/> (Accesso 18. 05. 2020)

²¹ Cfr. PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO PER LA FAMIGLIA: *Famiglia, matrimonio e "unioni di fatto"*, Città del Vaticano, 26. 07. 2000. n. 8. [online] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_20001109_de-facto-unions_it.html (Accesso 14. 05. 2020)

²² PRIULLA, G.: *C'è differenza. Identità di genere e linguaggi: storie, corpi, immagini e parole*, Milano: Franco Angeli Edizioni, 2013, p. 116.

l'equiparazione dell'omosessualità all'eterosessualità, un modello nuovo di sessualità polimorfa".²³

Il Cardinal Ratzinger, dopo l'elezione al Soglio pontificio come Benedetto XVI, nel Discorso alla Curia Romana in occasione della presentazione degli auguri natalizi del 22 dicembre 2008 dichiarava che "è necessario che ci sia qualcosa come una ecologia dell'uomo, intesa nel senso giusto. Non è una metafisica superata, se la Chiesa parla della natura dell'essere umano come uomo e come donna e chiede che quest'ordine della creazione venga rispettato. Ciò che spesso viene espresso e inteso con il termine "gender", si risolve in definitiva nella autoemancipazione dell'uomo dal creato e dal Creatore".²⁴

Lo stesso Pontefice nel Discorso alla presentazione degli auguri natalizi alla Curia Romana del 21 dicembre 2012, riferendosi alle parole di Simone de Beauvoir "Donna non si nasce, lo si diventa" ("On ne naît pas femme, on le devient"), ha ricordato che

"in queste parole è dato il fondamento di ciò che oggi, sotto il lemma "gender", viene presentato come nuova filosofia della sessualità. Il sesso, secondo tale filosofia, non è più un dato originario della natura che l'uomo deve accettare e riempire personalmente di senso, bensì un ruolo sociale del quale si decide autonomamente, mentre finora era la società a decidervi. La profonda erroneità di questa teoria e della rivoluzione antropologica in essa soggiacente è evidente. L'uomo contesta di avere una natura precostituita dalla sua corporeità, che caratterizza l'essere umano. Nega la propria natura e decide che essa non gli è data come fatto precostituito, ma che è lui stesso a crearsela. (...) Dove la libertà del fare diventa libertà di farsi da sé, si giunge necessariamente a negare il Creatore stesso e con ciò, infine, anche l'uomo quale creatura di Dio, quale immagine di Dio viene avvilito nell'essenza del suo essere. Nella lotta per la famiglia è in gioco l'uomo stesso. E si rende evidente che là dove Dio viene negato, si dissolve anche la dignità dell'uomo."²⁵

²³ CONGREGAZIONE PER LA DOTTRINA DELLA FEDE: *Lettera ai Vescovi della Chiesa Cattolica sulla collaborazione dell'uomo e della donna nella Chiesa e nel mondo*, Città del Vaticano, 31. 05. 2004, n. 2. [online] In: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_it.html (Accesso 23. 05. 2020)

²⁴ BENEDETTO XVI: *Discorso alla Curia Romana in occasione della presentazione degli auguri natalizi*, Sala Clementina, 22. 12. 2008. [online] In: http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/speeches/2008/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20081222_curia-romana.html (Accesso 18. 05. 2020)

²⁵ BENEDETTO XVI: *Discorso alla presentazione degli auguri natalizi della Curia Romana*, Città del Vaticano, Sala Clementina, 21. 12. 2012. [online]. In: http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121221_auguri-curia.html (Accesso 13. 05. 2020)

Tracciando il nesso tra l'ideologia del gender e vari tentativi di indebolire l'istituto familiare tradizionale, nel suo discorso alla plenaria del Pontificio Consiglio "Cor Unum" del 19 gennaio 2013 lo stesso Pontefice ha ricordato che "la Chiesa ribadisce il suo grande sì alla dignità e bellezza del matrimonio come espressione di fedele e feconda alleanza tra uomo e donna, e il no a filosofie come quella del gender si motiva per il fatto che la reciprocità tra maschile e femminile è espressione della bellezza della natura voluta dal Creatore".²⁶

Anche il Papa Francesco non è indifferente all'ideologia del gender, che percepisce come vera e propria colonizzazione ideologica, e spesso ne parla, specie nei temi inerenti alla promozione e alla difesa della famiglia. Tracciamo a mo' di cronaca questa tematica in alcuni suoi pronunciamenti.

Nel suo discorso durante l'incontro con i giovani sul Lungomare Caracciolo a Napoli (21 marzo 2015), riferendosi alla crisi della famiglia, ha indicato l'influenza infausta delle "colonizzazioni ideologiche sulle famiglie, modalità e proposte che ci sono in Europa e vengono anche da Oltreoceano. Poi quello sbaglio della mente umana che è la teoria del gender, che crea tanta confusione. Così la famiglia è sotto attacco".²⁷

In occasione dell'Udienza Generale di mercoledì 15 aprile 2015, abbozzando la fisionomia del gender, il Papa si è chiesto "se la cosiddetta teoria del gender non sia anche espressione di una frustrazione e di una rassegnazione, che mira a cancellare la differenza sessuale perché non sa più confrontarsi con essa. Sì, rischiamo di fare un passo indietro. La rimozione della differenza, infatti, è il problema, non la soluzione".²⁸

Nella Lettera Enciclica *Laudato si'* sulla cura della casa comune del 24 maggio 2015, il Pontefice ha sottolineato l'importanza e il valore della corpo-reità nella vita relazionale, che si pone in netto contrasto con le istanze dell'ideologia gender, dicendo:

"Imparare ad accogliere il proprio corpo, ad averne cura e a rispettare i suoi significati è essenziale per una vera ecologia umana. Anche apprezzare il

²⁶ BENEDETTO XVI: *Discorso alla plenaria del Pontificio Consiglio "Cor Unum"*, Sala del Concistoro, 19. 01. 2013. [online] In: https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/speeches/2013/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20130119_pc-corunum.html (Accesso 23. 05. 2020)

²⁷ FRANCESCO: *Discorso durante l'incontro con i giovani sul Lungomare Caracciolo*, Napoli, 21. 03. 2015. [online] https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2015/march/documents/papa-francesco_20150321_napoli-pompei-giovani.html (Accesso 23. 05. 2020)

²⁸ FRANCESCO: *Discorso durante l'Udienza Generale*, Piazza San Pietro, 15. 04. 2015. [online] http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150415_udienza-generale.html (Accesso 23. 05. 2020)

proprio corpo nella sua femminilità o mascolinità è necessario per poter riconoscere se stessi nell'incontro con l'altro diverso da sé. In tal modo è possibile accettare con gioia il dono specifico dell'altro o dell'altra, opera di Dio creatore, e arricchirsi reciprocamente. Pertanto, non è sano un atteggiamento che pretenda di cancellare la differenza sessuale perché non sa più confrontarsi con essa.²⁹

Nel Discorso ai Vescovi di Porto Rico in visita “Ad Limina Apostolorum” in Santa Marta (8 giugno 2015), il Pontefice si è soffermato sul valore della complementarità tra l'uomo e la donna che

“è oggi messa in discussione dalla cosiddetta “ideologia di genere”, in nome di una società più libera e più giusta. Le differenze tra uomo e donna non sono per la contrapposizione o la subordinazione, ma per la comunione e la generazione, sempre a “immagine e somiglianza” di Dio. Senza la reciproca dedizione, nessuno dei due può comprendere nemmeno se stesso in profondità.”³⁰

Papa Francesco ha presentato la stessa linea di pensiero nell'Esortazione postsinodale *Amoris Laetitia*³¹, indicando le varie forme di ideologia gender come una sfida antropologica emergente. Nel suo insegnamento il Pontefice percepisce come fatto inquietante il tentativo di quest'ideologia di imporsi come un pensiero unico che determini anche l'educazione dei bambini e ribadisce che “sesso biologico (sex) e ruolo sociale-culturale del sesso (gender) si possono distinguere ma non separare.”³² Sottolinea che una cosa è comprendere la fragilità umana o la complessità della vita, altra cosa è accettare ideologie che pretendono di dividere in due gli aspetti inseparabili della realtà. Ricorda, inoltre, che l'uomo non può sostituirsi al Creatore e che è chiamato

²⁹ FRANCESCO: *Lettera Enciclica “Laudato Si” sulla cura della casa comune*, Città del Vaticano, 24. 05. 2015. n. 155. [online] In: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (Accesso 23. 05. 2020)

³⁰ FRANCESCO: *Discorso ai Vescovi di Porto Rico in visita “ad limina Apostolorum”*, Città del Vaticano, Domus Santa Marta, 8. 06. 2015. [online] In: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2015/june/documents/papa-francesco_20150608_adlimina-porto-rico.html (Accesso 23. 05. 2020)

³¹ FRANCESCO: *Esortazione apostolica post-sinodale “Amoris Laetitia” sull'amore nella famiglia*, Città del Vaticano, 19. 03. 2016. [online] In: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia.html (Accesso 23. 05. 2020)

³² Cfr. XIV ASSEMBLEA GENERALE ORDINARIA DEL SINODO DEI VESCOVI: *Relazione finale, La vocazione e la missione della famiglia nella Chiesa e nel mondo contemporaneo*, Città del Vaticano, 24. 10. 2015. n. 58. [online] In: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20151026_relazione-finale-xiv-assemblea_it.html (Accesso 22. 05. 2020)

a custodire la propria umanità: ciò significa anzitutto accettarla e rispettarla come è stata creata.

Durante il viaggio in Polonia (27 luglio 2016), il Pontefice, rivolgendosi ai Vescovi polacchi, ha ricordato le “vere colonizzazioni ideologiche” in Europa, in America, in America Latina, in Africa, in alcuni Paesi dell’Asia e ha precisato:

“una di queste - lo dico chiaramente con “nome e cognome” - è il gender! Oggi ai bambini - ai bambini! - a scuola si insegna questo: che il sesso ognuno lo può scegliere. E perché insegnano questo? Perché i libri sono quelli delle persone e delle istituzioni che ti danno i soldi. Sono le colonizzazioni ideologiche, sostenute anche da Paesi molto influenti. E questo è terribile. Parlando con Papa Benedetto, che sta bene e ha un pensiero chiaro, mi diceva: “Santità, questa è l’epoca del peccato contro Dio Creatore!”. È intelligente! Dio ha creato l’uomo e la donna; Dio ha creato il mondo così, così, così..., e noi stiamo facendo il contrario. Dio ci ha dato uno stato “incolto”, perché noi lo facessimo diventare cultura; e poi, con questa cultura, facciamo cose che ci riportano allo stato “incolto”! Quello che ha detto Papa Benedetto dobbiamo pensarlo: È l’epoca del peccato contro Dio Creatore!”³³

Anche durante il suo viaggio apostolico in Georgia e Azerbaijan, nel discorso nella Chiesa dell’Assunta a Tbilisi (1° ottobre 2016), il Papa ha espresso il suo parere a proposito dell’ideologia gender, quando rispondendo alle perplessità espresse da una giovane mamma ha detto in maniera molto chiara: “Tu, Irina, hai menzionato un grande nemico del matrimonio, oggi: la teoria del gender. Oggi c’è una guerra mondiale per distruggere il matrimonio. Oggi ci sono colonizzazioni ideologiche che distruggono, ma non si distrugge con le armi, si distrugge con le idee. Pertanto, bisogna difendersi dalle colonizzazioni ideologiche”.³⁴

Il 27 ottobre 2016, rivolgendosi alla comunità accademica del Pontificio Istituto Teologico “Giovanni Paolo II” per le scienze del matrimonio e della famiglia, il Papa Francesco ha precisato:

“Il riconoscimento della dignità dell’uomo e della donna comporta una giusta valorizzazione del loro rapporto reciproco. Come possiamo conoscere a fondo l’umanità concreta di cui siamo fatti senza apprenderla attraverso questa differenza? E ciò avviene quando l’uomo e la donna si parlano e si interrogano, si vogliono bene e agiscono insieme, con reciproco rispetto

³³ SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE: *Dialogo del Santo Padre con i Vescovi della Polonia*, Kraków, 27. 07. 2016. [online] In: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2016/08/02/0568/01265.html#it> (Accesso 25. 05. 2020)

³⁴ FRANCESCO: *Discorso durante l’incontro con sacerdoti, religiosi, religiose, seminaristi e agenti di pastorale*, Chiesa dell’Assunta, Tbilisi, 1. 10. 2016, [online] In: https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco_20161001_georgia-sacerdoti-religiosi.html (Accesso 25. 05. 2020)

e benevolenza. È impossibile negare l'apporto della cultura moderna alla riscoperta della dignità della differenza sessuale. Per questo, è anche molto sconcertante constatare che ora questa cultura appaia come bloccata da una tendenza a cancellare la differenza [ndr: teoria del gender] invece che a risolvere i problemi che la mortificano".³⁵

Nel discorso ai partecipanti alla XXIII Assemblea Generale dei Membri della Pontificia Accademia per la Vita (5 ottobre 2017), il Sommo Pontefice, alludendo a una vera e propria rivoluzione culturale in atto di cui l'elemento importante è l'ideologia del gender, ha ribadito che la Chiesa, per prima, deve fare la sua parte:

“Un nuovo inizio dev'essere scritto nell'ethos dei popoli, e questo può farlo una rinnovata cultura dell'identità e della differenza. L'ipotesi recentemente avanzata di riaprire la strada per la dignità della persona neutralizzando radicalmente la differenza sessuale e, quindi, l'intesa dell'uomo e della donna, non è giusta. Invece di contrastare le interpretazioni negative della differenza sessuale, che mortificano la sua irriducibile valenza per la dignità umana, si vuole cancellare di fatto tale differenza, proponendo tecniche e pratiche che la rendano irrilevante per lo sviluppo della persona e per le relazioni umane. Ma l'utopia del “neutro” rimuove ad un tempo sia la dignità umana della costituzione sessualmente differente, sia la qualità personale della trasmissione generativa della vita. La manipolazione biologica e psichica della differenza sessuale, che la tecnologia biomedica lascia intravedere come completamente disponibile alla scelta della libertà - mentre non lo è -, rischia così di smantellare la fonte di energia che alimenta l'alleanza dell'uomo e della donna e la rende creativa e feconda”.³⁶

Al Papa Francesco è caro il destino delle famiglie, oggi minacciato dalle nuove colonizzazioni ideologiche che si sono sostituite alle vecchie ideologie totalitarie. Come rimedio a questo emerge sempre più il ruolo dell'educazione responsabile che non nega la differenza del genere, la creaturalità dell'uomo e la sua dipendenza da Dio, non annulli il primato educativo dei genitori e non distrugga i valori spirituali che la famiglia vuole salvaguardare. Durante

³⁵ FRANCESCO: *Discorso alla comunità accademica del Pontificio Istituto “Giovanni Paolo II” per studi su matrimonio e famiglia*, Città del Vaticano, Sala Clementina, 27. 10. 2016. [online] In: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco_20161027_pontificio-istituto-gpii.html (Accesso 25. 05. 2020)

³⁶ FRANCESCO: *Udienza ai partecipanti alla XXIII Assemblea Generale dei Membri della Pontificia Accademia per la Vita*, Città del Vaticano, 5. 10. 2017. [online] In: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2017/10/05/0667/01469.html> (Accesso 25. 05. 2020)

la conferenza stampa di ritorno da Panama, il 29 gennaio 2019, il Papa Francesco ha sviluppato questo pensiero dicendo:

“Credo che nelle scuole bisogna dare l’educazione sessuale. Il sesso è un dono di Dio non è un mostro. Bisogna offrire un’educazione sessuale oggettiva, senza colonizzazioni ideologiche. Perché se nelle scuole si dà un’educazione sessuale imbevuta di colonizzazioni ideologiche, distruggi la persona. Il sesso come dono di Dio deve essere educato, non con rigidità. Educato, da “educere”, per far emergere il meglio della persona e accompagnarla nel cammino. Il problema è nei responsabili dell’educazione, sia a livello nazionale che locale come pure di ciascuna unità scolastica: che maestri si trovano per questo, che libri di testo... Io ne ho visti di ogni tipo, ci sono cose che fanno maturare e altre che fanno danno. Dico questo senza entrare nei problemi politici di Panama: bisogna avere l’educazione sessuale per i bambini. L’ideale è che comincino a casa, con i genitori. Non sempre è possibile per tante situazioni della famiglia o perché non sanno come farlo. La scuola supplisce a questo, e deve farlo, sennò resta un vuoto che viene riempito da qualsiasi ideologia”.³⁷

In linea con la dottrina di Papa Francesco, la Congregazione per l’Educazione Cattolica della Santa Sede ha pubblicato, il 2 febbraio 2019, il documento “*Maschio e femmina li creò*». Per una via di dialogo sulla questione del gender nell’educazione”³⁸, che invita ad affrontare il tema del gender nel campo educativo con un approccio dialogico. La via del dialogo proposta dalla Chiesa cattolica nei confronti della teoria/ideologia gender sembra essere utile per creare un ambiente relazionale più aperto e umano. Gli educatori e insegnanti cattolici, animati dalla loro fede, percorrendo i sentieri dell’ascolto, della ragione e della proposta cristiana, nonché testimoniando con le modalità della propria presenza la coerenza tra le parole e la vita, sono chiamati a trasformare positivamente le sfide che pone la teoria/ideologia gender in opportunità di conoscere e far comprendere agli alunni la visione cattolica della questione e chiarire le proprie posizioni in merito. Il confronto positivo con la teoria del gender può dare un importante input alla riflessione teologica e contribuire a offrire una visione antropologica armonica e completa della persona, che non riduca il ruolo della corporeità e della differenza sessuale alla sola sfera

³⁷ FRANCESCO: *Conferenza stampa durante il volo di ritorno da Panama*, Volo papale, 29. 01. 2019. [online] In: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2019/january/documents/papa-francesco_20190127_panama-volo-ritorno.html (Accesso 25. 05. 2020)

³⁸ CONGREGAZIONE PER L’EDUCAZIONE CATTOLICA: «*Maschio e femmina li creò*». Per una via di dialogo sulla questione del gender nell’educazione, Città del Vaticano, 2. 02. 2019, [online] In: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20190202_maschio-e-femmina_it.pdf (Accesso 26. 05. 2020)

biologica, ma la estenda a tutti gli aspetti della personalità dell'individuo, accompagnandolo nella crescita intellettuale, psicoaffettiva e spirituale.

Riassumendo quanto detto è doveroso sottolineare che il Magistero della Chiesa cattolica, espresso nell'insegnamento dei Pontefici e dei dicasteri vaticani, rifiuta decisamente la visione dell'ideologia gender, secondo la quale l'identità sessuale, influenzata dalla cultura corrente, sia decisa dalla singola persona in base a come si percepisce, con la possibilità di variare nel tempo. Ribadisce l'uguaglianza della donna e dell'uomo sul piano ontologico e quello della dignità, sottolineando il carattere complementare di entrambi i sessi dal quale nasce la naturale inclinazione tra di loro a creare una famiglia e generare la prole. Esprime, inoltre, la preoccupazione che l'ideologia gender, quale specie di "colonizzazione ideologica", possa intaccare le fondamenta naturali dell'istituto familiare e influire negativamente sull'educazione delle future generazioni.

CONCLUSIONE

La teoria del gender mette in evidenza le tensioni tra due concezioni antropologiche diverse. Da un lato, emergono le istanze dell'"essenzialismo" naturale, convinto della struttura duale di base dell'essere umano a livello biologico e psicologico: in sede teologica si basa sull'antropologia biblica secondo la quale l'"immagine" di Dio nell'umanità è nel suo essere maschio e femmina e, quindi, nella capacità generativa che continua l'opera del Creatore (Genesi 1,27). Dall'altro lato, affiora il "costruzionismo" socio-culturale, convinto che le differenze di genere siano frutto di un'elaborazione della comunità sociale e culturale.³⁹

La teoria del gender, con il proprio sistema concettuale e interpretativo, si trasforma in un'ideologia. Con la propria visione dell'umano, promuovendo valori come parità, equità, autodeterminazione e autonomia nelle scelte dei ruoli sociali e comportamenti sessuali, lotta alla violenza e alla discriminazione, gode crescente compiacimento di tante istituzioni transnazionali e acquisisce una forte valenza simbolica tra le giovani generazioni. È diventata capace di tramutare le istanze di genere nell'agenda politica internazionale.

La Chiesa cattolica respinge le istanze dell'ideologia gender, secondo le quali la natura umana non avrebbe in se stessa caratteristiche che si imporrebbero in maniera assoluta: ogni persona potrebbe o dovrebbe modellarsi a suo

³⁹ Cfr. Ravasi, G.: *Sesso e gender senza pregiudizi*, Il sole 24 ore, 18. 10. 2015. [online] In: <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/cultura/2015-10-18/sesso-e-gender-senza-pregiudizi-081712.shtml?uuid=ACC1DfIB> (Accesso 17. 05. 2020)

piacimento, dal momento che sarebbe libera da ogni predeterminazione legata alla sua costituzione essenziale⁴⁰, ribadendo che Dio ha creato le persone come maschio o femmina (dato ontologico) e che la differenza sessuale non è un incidente o un difetto, ma un dono di Dio. Per l'ortodossia cattolica l'eguale dignità delle persone si realizza come complementarità fisica, psicologica ed ontologica, dando luogo ad un'armonica "unidualità" relazionale, che solo il peccato e le "strutture di peccato" iscritte nella cultura hanno reso potenzialmente conflittuale. Per questo motivo la Chiesa suggerisce di affrontare con un approccio relazionale, non concorrenziale né di rivalsa, quei problemi che a livello pubblico o privato coinvolgono la differenza di sesso.

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⁴⁰ Cfr. CONGREGAZIONE PER LA DOTTRINA DELLA FEDE: *Lettera ai Vescovi della Chiesa Cattolica sulla collaborazione dell'uomo e della donna nella Chiesa e nel mondo*, Città del Vaticano, 31. 05. 2004, n. 3. [online] In: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_it.html (Accesso 28. 05. 2020)

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