

AXIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF HUMAN BODY, SPIRIT AND SOUL COMPOSITION

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SUMMARY

The theme presented is aimed at attempting to perceive the fundamental qualities of the man's personality (body, soul and spirit) from the philosophical, anthropological and theological point of view and, at the same time, to establish the value reflections towards its (current and universal) existential orientations.

Namely, today's experience shows us that tendencies with notable prevailing of corporality over the other constitutive properties of the human being are constantly getting stronger. The body cult is vigorously stressed: body building and fitness clubs, as well as special gyms and wellness facilities (saunas, hydro massage baths, tepidariums are advertised, which should satisfy the increased corporal-hedonistic and corporal-aesthetic motives.

This disturbing of the essential and human structure established by God demands the return to the original settings of Christian trichotomy (not serving the body but serving of the body), whereby a balanced and harmonious relationship between the body, the soul, and the spirit is developed by equally bearing in mind all three areas on which all three "gymnastics" are tuned and effectively performed, which leads to overall development and fulfilment of a human being.

Key words: valuation, body, soul, spirit, harmony

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INTRODUCTION

It is certain that we live in times of extremely fragmentary world and life where, whether we want it or not, the meaning of the essence and totality of all the living things is slowly getting lost. One forgets that "the truth is the whole" (Hegel) that is, one should consider "the whole and not the fragments" as our Orthodox Bishop St. Nikolai advised. To draw certain "extracts" from the real world, emphasize their priority and place them into the focus of events and evaluations and at the same neglect their connection with the entire existing world is a mistake which takes us away from the true understanding of human existence. There are numerous such examples but here, we can discuss the basic attitudes towards established determinants and qualities which constitute human being as well as their ontological and axiological associations and relations.

The very experience and determined values of modern living indicate that nowadays, in specific sense, has become the times of the body. It can be seen that human physicality has increasingly prevailed in relation to other values. This can be easily found (and proved) in the means of mass communication which offer their interested customers an everyday broad array of various programmes and prescriptions promoting the cult of body. They advertise body building and fitness clubs, special gyms and wellness facilities (saunas, hydromassage tubs, tepidaria), give advice on how to "diet" and feed the body, etc.) which should satisfy enlarged physically-hedonistic and physically-aesthetic appetites. A 24-year long research (conducted by the psychologist Pam Spar) has shown that for women, achieving perfect body shape is more important than emotional life.

Physical narcissism has long been found in sport and everyday life whereas a psychiatric disease known as bigorexia has recently occurred in body building.

In the paper, we first of all wish to determine true ontology of physicality and its interaction with the soul and spirit composition based on the combination of the "secular science" anthropological constants and theology. In other words, we wish to apprehend the true nature and meaning of human biological physical features which are important not only in everyday life but also in participation in sports (physical strength and power, speed and agility, power of movement, body communication, body aesthetics, etc.) but also to indicate the historic struggle for dominance between the body and the spirit without neglecting justified efforts (particularly in theology) to bring their relation in accordance.

ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF BODY

The very approach to the concept and content of human physicality from the point of view of modern science leads us primarily to what we call the physical

foundation of human nature. It is about biological physical existence which is constrained in space and directly connected with earth, nature and wildlife, the laws of which it is inferior to. At the same time, concepts of the body and physicality indicate man's sensual, sexual, somatic as well as gender and age characteristics. In terms of anatomy, the body is made up of bones and muscles (musculoskeletal system). Human body is made up of 200 bones and 434 muscles in total. Muscles are attached to bones by tendons more than directly by muscle fibres.

Human physical-organic existence completely depends on natural requirements. Human biological programme of living is cyclic in real time and it is determined by stages such as: conception, embryogenesis, birth, physical and psychological maturation, aging and finally death by natural causes.

Physical aspect drives people to strive to live and protect themselves from premature death or being killed. They are focused on themselves and their everyday needs while at the same time struggling to survive and reproduce. In their life, humans face their own end and death sooner or later. Death represents an end of any changes happening both in space and time in human body. Death means a human being ceases to exist in the traditional sense. It is an absolute end from the secular point of view. However, Christian learning and Christian religion overcome the fear. He who believes in the Savior and eternal life is calmer in front of inevitable physical death.

HUMAN PHYSICALITY AND THE MEANING OF LIVING

In fact, any approach to the meaning of living is related to the concept of death. Approaches range from those which establish the awareness of nihility and inanity of life to those which promote life. In our world, "there is only one thing cared of - our death" (M. Meterlink). Contrary to this, Spinoza suggests in his *Ethics*: "Man's wisdom is meditation of life, not of death."

Any of those (and similar) approaches can be classified in different categories: nihilistic (which denies the meaningful value of human life and the world), pessimistic (which view life from its ugly side), then those which are characterized by the philosophy of absurd (since we are all going to die, nothing else matters - A. Camus) and those which treat resurrection as the victory of life over death - Christian belief.

From the point of view of theories and history, the meaning of life could also be found in "participation in contemporary beat of history", in free creativity (artistic, political, scientific) whereas it has recently been searched for in the area between "balance of terror" and rationalistic programmes of "global happiness" and establishment of a "paradise on earth".

Although the aforementioned approaches are not always and solely based on the human physicality aspect it can be seen that this concept is given the advantage as an apparent characteristic of our life. Of course, basically man is neither limited to physicality nor his body exists in a separate condition but they are in the interaction and united with the soul and the spirit. Physicality is only a "foot" of human existence and life on earth. Man does not grow up and develop physically but also "grows" and ascends spiritually and mentally.

Each historic period has generated particular approaches and established different system of values.

HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO PHYSICALITY

In ancient Greece, competitions between the body and the spirit were promoted in the full sense of life philosophy. There lived those who gave priority to physical strength and victories in the athletic events but also those who promoted the spirit as the most essential among virtues. As the philosopher Xenophon says "not excellence of body in respect of beauty, but of the soul as regards virtue."¹

With regard to this, the spirit of ancient Greece developed the concept of harmony as the key characteristic of cosmic and human existence and being both in philosophy and culture. Measurement was considered as a guiding principle for all things, which also served as a base for establishing rules for mathematical standards to express the relations. Perfect proportions of human body were also based with regard to this. Human body was studied in detail from the geometric point of view, which resulted in specified body proportions and ratios.² However, the beauty of the body was not the goal in its own right but it had to be in accordance with spiritual values (the concept of *kalokagathia*)³. An unbreakable union of the physical and spiritual gymnastics (physical and mental balance) pervading solid ethical principles was established, which provided the base for the entire educational system (*paideia*).

¹ Đurić, M. *The History of Hellenistic Literature*. Belgrade, 1972, p. 138-139.

² In ancient Greece, male beauty contests (the *euandria*) were held in honour of Athena. The victory was won by the tribe who presented the most beautiful and the strongest young men and adults. (See: Radoš, J. *The Philosophy of Sports*, p. 22).

³ Plato established the concept of *kalokagathia* (from the Greek words *kalos* = beautiful and *agathos* = honest, good, noble) which prescribed that one had to strive for physical strength and endurance but also for spiritual intelligence in order to have knowledge. In addition, one had to aspire to moral perfection. This concept is nowadays applied through forms of university sports competitions and Universiades.

In the transitional period between Antiquity and the Middle Ages, "separation" in the appraisal of the body and the soul occurred under the influence of Christianity. Human body is "a temple of the Holy Spirit" but the temple is ruined by sin that is, spoiled by atheism and subject to lust and hedonistic pleasures. Since the spirit was given the advantage, icon presentations of the holy saints in medieval arts are characterized by big eyes and lips symbolizing the essence of the spirit and discreet bodies in order to indicate insignificance and contempt of muscles. Female body was particularly "resented". A woman was treated as "a jar full of sin", embodiment of debauchery, obscenity and the devil. At the same time, Holy Mother of God was represented with unearthly powers, beauty of motherhood and mystic meaning of the female origin to the world. The approach towards "asceticism" changed. The Greek word "asceticism" denoted primarily physical exercising, endurance and devotion to the agonistic and Olympic competitions whereas in the Middle Ages Christianity the word "ascetic" denoted "victory" of the body through renunciation of the body needs with the main purpose of strengthening the spirit.

The Renaissance was characterized by revived interest in human body mainly as an object for autopsy study. The body therefore was no longer secret, hidden and mysterious. Later, in the Age of Industrialization and then in the age of technological revolution such approach shifted to the perception of a human being as a machine. The body, as anything else, can be repaired. Having freed himself from the rules of the natural and the divine Absolute and cleared the world of anything mysterious man claimed the right to act like God that is, according to his aspirations and needs. So, if the body is not perfect - it can be repaired and modified.

HUMAN BODY TODAY

Modern times are largely times of biotechnology which, in addition to bringing satisfaction for successful treatment of many diseases and extension of human lifespan, can cause great concern and angst at the same time. A form of dangerous and arrogant self-deception is hidden beneath the external scientific arrogance (that there is an answer and a solution to any question). There is no doubt that it is already possible to manage fertility, create life in a laboratory, scan genes of not only an adult but also of an embryo, estimate and choose the offspring according to genetic criteria, enhance strength and endurance of muscles, replace parts of the body with natural or artificial parts, change gender, and the like. Injections of growth factor genes can soon be used for the treatment of muscular dystrophy and muscle weakness in old age. This is also of interest for sports coaches and body builders. However, all these improvements cause justified concern in a part of mankind for the following reasons: there is no

biologically active product used for genetic engineering which is absolutely safe; these modern resources are not equally available to everyone, which violates the principle of equality of people; then, there is interference with God's established order as well as unaesthetic behaviour apparent or implied in many situations in life.

MEANING OF CHRISTIAN TRICHOTOMY

The body therefore is not "an easy puzzle" nor can it be reduced to simple anatomic or mechanic features. It may not be absolutized in terms of its dominance in solving vital issues. For every person is more than simple physicality. Materialistic attitude which reduces the body to mere physical mass must be therefore overcome. Christian trichotomy indicates that man is the body and the spirit and the soul. Those notions and concepts are usually connected with St. Paul the Apostle (1 Thess. 5, 24), according to whom their interrelation should be considered in man's aspiration of comprehensive development and fulfillment. He says that a perfect man is made up of: the body, the soul and the Holy Spirit:.....Your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5,23). For him, *physical* or *spiritual* man is a complete reasonable living being made up of the spirit and the body yet deprived of energy of the Spirit. Therefore, those who obey the man and those who obey the Holy Spirit should be distinguished. Spiritual man has freedom and aspiration of moral perfection through solemn and mental contents (which belong to God) "for the Spirit explores all things, even the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2,7 -10). Thus, the Spirit defines the principles of contemplation and action so one should improve spiritually and aspire to stay pure.

The soul is an immaterial, invisible principle of life for man, the soul which is rooted in and connected with God. It revives the body and inspires it. The body is a home of the soul and the soul is a home of the spirit. The soul is "a temporary breath" whereas the Spirit is given to man to enable him to reach perfection and immortality.

There is a widespread wrong belief that Christianity completely rejects the body and physicality. It does not preach either the cult of body or its numbness. For, a decrepit body is not only a numb body but also a holy temple of God and a part of Christ's body. The body composition is called upon to take part not only in the life on earth but also in life after death. However, "the Christian life concept promotes not service to the body but service of the body."⁴ The body is the dust

⁴ Spektorsky, E.V., *Christian Ethics*, Vrnjačka Banja, 1999, p. 60.

on earth but it directs the path through the soul to the spirit. It is a duty of man to preserve the body given to him until his death. Thus, the significance of body should not be questioned but the body should be given due care and nurturing through sport exercises and other forms of care about physical strength and health. Paul the Apostle also suggested that the body should be taken good care of in order to have good life: "After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church" (Eph. 5, 29). Food needed for diet, clothes and house needed to keep warm are requirements for physical living and biological minimum for survival. But any exaggeration, any maximum in meeting those requirements represent a physical challenge distracting man from the right way. And on the way, there is a struggle against sins and evils which lead to death. Evil cannot be found in meeting physical needs but in the way they are met. If man primarily turns to "the body" and surrenders to physical pleasures he chooses that what is earthly and leads to death. Therefore, the body should not have ultimate advantage in one's entire living, as it used to be or was implied in certain times. In the thirties of the last century, the philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset foresaw: "Superiority of physical sport full of muscular pleasure may be a sign of the future face of life".⁵ The still present tendency which means aspiration of complete superiority of physicality and strength over the spirit and mind certainly violates the God-given balance between the soul and the spirit for, as Jesus Christ says, "for what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul" (Matthew, 16).

Conclusions and guidelines can be drawn about man's everyday efforts to establish a concord of the body, the soul and the spirit. This is particularly important because people merge in everyday life and neglect or abandon spiritual life. Therefore, all the mentioned principles should be subject to particular practicing and renunciation in order to enhance their links and relations in compliance with the divine Providence on man. It is therefore also necessary to think of the "body hygiene" and the "soul hygiene" (St. Nicholas Orthodox Bishop). "One's interiority should be particularly hurt and upset to keep it watchful" says St. Theophan the Recluse for it sometimes happen that the soul "comes deep into contemplation and wanders due to negligence and absurdness" and it needs to be "warned". The spirit can also come into particular moods, even in monks, that is, the spirit can become dispirited, tired, inert and ill-tempered (St. John Climacus). With regard to this, many dangers from the world require particular care of "everything that threatens the body and health" and

⁵ Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Spectator*, Clío, Belgrade, 1998, p. 61.

"everything that threatens spiritual life or faith and salvation".⁶ And sin is the one thing which interferes with the union of the spirit, the soul and the body. It is therefore necessary for man to live by faith and love and follow the Holy Spirit.

So, man is not merely and exclusively biological being but he also has his interiority (that is, the invisible, immaterial soul and spirit composition), which requires equal treatment of all the three areas of his being through appropriate and devoting "gymnastics" leading to desired harmony of personality.

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АКСИОЛОШКИ АСПЕКТИ ЧОВЕКОВОГ ТЕЛЕСНОГ, ДУШЕВНОГ И ДУХОВНОГ СКЛОПА

САЖЕТАК

Предочена тема има за циљ да са филозофско-антрополошког и богословског становишта покуша да перципира фундаментална својства човекове личности (тело, душу и дух) и да, истовремено, успостави вредносне рефлексије према њеним (актуелним и универзалним) бивственим усмерењима.

Наиме, данашње време нам искуствено показује како стално јачају тенденције у којима се уочава превласт телесности над осталим

⁶ St. John of Shangai, *Biography, Miracles, Sermons and Morals*, Beograd, 1998, p. 380.

конститутивним својствима људског бића, Нападно се потенцира култ тела: рекламирају се боди билдинг и фитнес клубови, специјалне теретане и *welnes* садржаји (сауне, хидромасажне каде, петидаријуми), којима треба да се задовоље нарастали телесно-хедонистички и телесно-естетски мотиви.

Ово нарушавање суштаственог и од Бога успостављеног човековог склопа, захтева враћање ка изворним поставкама хришћанске трихотомије (не служење телу, него служење тела), при чему се гради уравнотежен и хармоничан однос између тела, душе и духа, тако што ће се подједнако имати у виду сва три подручја, на којима се усаглашено и делотворно обављају све три „гимнастике“), што води целовитом развићу и испуњењу људског бића.

Кључне речи: вредновање, тело, душа, дух, хармонија

АКСИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ АСПЕКТ ТЕЛЕСНОЙ, ПСИХИЧЕСКОЙ И ДУХОВНОЙ УСТАНОВКИ ЧЕЛОВЕКА

АННОТАЦИЯ

Представленная тема направлена на попытку осмысления фундаментальных качеств личности человека (тела, души и духа) с философской, антропологической и богословской точек зрения и, в то же время, на установление ценностных рефлексий по отношению к его (современным и универсальным) экзистенциальным ориентациям.

А именно, сегодняшний опыт показывает, что тенденции с заметным преобладанием телесности над другими конститутивными свойствами человека постоянно усиливаются. Бодро подчеркивается культ тела: рекламируются бодибилдинг и фитнес-клубы, а также специальные тренажерные и оздоровительные залы (сауны, гидромассажные ванны, тепидарии), которые должны удовлетворять возросшим телесно-гедонистическим и телесно-эстетическим мотивам.

Эта вызывает тревогу и человека, созданного Богом, требует возвратиться к первоначальным настройкам христианской трихотомии (не служить телу, но отдельным связанным с ним составляющим), при которой сбалансированные и гармоничные отношения между телом, душой и духом развиваются в равной мере, принимая во внимание все три сферы, на которых все три "гимнастики" настроены и эффективно выполняются, что приводит к общему развитию и самореализации человека.

Ключевые слова: оценка, тело, душа, дух, гармония.

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