SPIRITUALITY IN CRITICAL EPIDEMIC CONDITIONS

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SUMMARY

Spirituality can be important in various types of stress because it significantly contributes to a person’s well-being, affects the overall quality of life and acts proactively, accelerating person’s cognitive development by seeking different answers to a new situation. With a retrospective view of the spiritual and creative space at the time of COVID, we can say that this is a period of increased self-actualization of people, in which they manifested their absolute potentials as individuals. Although COVID left people without liturgical celebrations in certain periods, the living space did not have to remain spiritually empty, since the faithful could express their spirituality through their own prayer in their homes. These were modified conditions in Christian spirituality, where prayers represent an ecclesiastical act that connects the praying person with the community, conditions in which participation of an individual in the prayer of the church community that keeps and nourishes Jesus’ prayer was hindered. The newly-established conditions opened up specific mental states in which people turned their attention to various non-religious forms of spirituality close to them: writing poetry, reading, painting, composing music, and thus new creative/artistic opuses were created that marked and are still marking this period. The books and songs ‘at the times of COVID’ were created, which represent a living and lucid document of time and a personal, authentic comment of an individual on one of the most unusual situations in which humanity has found itself in the last few decades. Painting studios have become a kind of quarantine in which painters stand behind their easels and in which the art world lives, transferred to the canvas in various techniques, waiting for its first exhibition entitled: ‘From the times of COVID’.

Keywords: spirituality, religion, art, pandemic

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1. INTRODUCTION

"I do not think that cases in which science and religion are in natural opposition are necessary. In fact, I think there is very little to do between the two. Further, I think that science without religion is lame and, conversely, that religion without science is blind. Both are important and that is why they should work hand in hand ", warned Albert Einstein! During the Corona virus epidemic, people found themselves in difficult situations where they had to listen to the recommendations of science and professionals, which were often an obstacle to the realization of their religious devotion to God. Is it possible to achieve a dialogue between science and religion, taking into account that science and religion are two different paths, which harmonized can contribute to the development of the human spirit. They cannot do without each other, some authors claim. Religion can be useful to science in that it opens new unknown fields of human experience, which constantly points to the limits of science and its methods. The line between science and religion is historically variable, which does not mean that it can disappear, because religion is not a form of underdeveloped science, but an independent way of thinking, believing and operating, by which the believer solves his/her problems, those he/she cannot solve by science and its methods.

Perhaps absence of a unified response of science and religion in the epidemiological situation was to be expected if we know that their basic starting points on the origin of man are different. Evolution presupposes the spontaneous origin of life, while creationism advocates a claim to the origin of life created by God. Science is one of the most successful intellectual achievements. Religion is also highly respected. Scientists have proposed a slow evolutionary model of origin, while the Bible speaks of Creation by God. The search for an assessment of both models started with an interesting, controversial, and sometimes deceptive course. Various concepts have been proposed to reconcile these two basic models of origin, but such compromises have not worked well. Many wonder if they can find the ultimate truth in science or religion. However, this question does not have an easy answer according to Roth. Faith in God may or may not have to do with the scientific knowledge of a naturalist, because that faith always goes through a personal, immediate decision. Whatever the views of positive biological science, they should not negatively affect theology. On the contrary, due to its openness, theology should always accept and understand the latest scientific achievements in its own way. The essential difference between a theological and a scientific approach is in the perspective from which one wants to reach the truth. Theology comes to the truth from the future from the perspective of the Kingdom of God.

through which everything acquires eternal meaning. Biology, science seeks the truth about the man in the past, in his origin and development and in himself.\(^2\) The pandemic of the Coronavirus in the spring of 2020 also found itself on such historical paths of religion and science. "The history of the human race, full of great forward and backward leaps of civilization, shows man’s constant aspiration for constant progress, but also his restlessness with which he awakened his agony and desire for constant struggle. In this way, depending on his place on the social ladder, the man managed to satisfy his ego and give it the opportunity to feed on the deeds that gave him pleasure."\(^3\) The eyes of the religious community, at the beginning of the declaration of the pandemic in Serbia, were focused on the leaders and officials of the Serbian Orthodox Church. In one of the first press releases, issued on 16\(^{th}\) March 2020, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church tried to reconcile the recommendations of the medical profession and science, without denying the Holy Communion to its congregation, as well as the grace of its Holy Mysteries and all its gracious action. Among other, the address states the following: "The Church, always serving God, also serves salvation and every good of its believers and of all other people, our neighbors, especially in these difficult days." Respecting the importance and achievements of medicine, which are considered a great gift of God and a great human accomplishment, the Church offers its believers a unique cure for immortality, the Holy Communion, as well as the grace of its Holy Mysteries and all its graceful effects."\(^4\) The same statement expresses condolences to the families, relatives and friends of the victims of the virus who died, calls for increased prayer for the sick, for doctors and medical staff, and calls for medical preventive measures not to be avoided. After the first announcement of the Serbian Orthodox Church, it seemed that in real life it would be possible to continue practicing religious customs in the traditional way and at the same time respect all the recommendations of the medical profession. As the time went on and the epidemic flared up, the questions arose: will Orthodox churches throughout Serbia be left empty for the Easter because believers will not attend the liturgy? As a consequence of the state of emergency in that period, the Orthodox were divided into those who peacefully accepted the recommended measures and those who protested because no one could deny them the right to attend the morning service and asked to be excluded from the curfew. Should the communion be performed with the same spoon? How to limit the number of people in churches and at funerals? Numerous questions

\(^2\) http://www.cps.org.rs/Cks12/cks12.html


\(^4\) http://www.spc.rs/sr/saopshtenje_za_javnost_svetog_arhijerejskog_sinoda_2
arose that may have confused some believers, but on the other hand people came to a state of consciousness where special importance was attached to the development of their own spirit and found different ways to keep that spirit from being held back by the Coronavirus. The statements of the believers that church life can take place at home as well, because every family is a small church, were noted. Families gathered to read the morning and evening prayers. Serbian Patriarch Irinej served the Holy Hierarch's Liturgy without the presence of people, but with the message that in our homes, which represent the Church in a small way, we should intensify prayerful addresses to the Lord.\textsuperscript{5} Some temples, priests administered communion to believers in the yard, and in some places they went to homes of believers and performed communion there. At the height of the epidemic, an acceptable solution was sought between the Serbian Orthodox Church, the state and the medical profession, which mainly resulted in the state not issuing orders but well-intentioned recommendations for its believers, and the Serbian Orthodox Church trying to show a high degree of social responsibility. On 16\textsuperscript{th} March 2020, Patriarch Irinej said: "Let's be disciplined, let's listen to what experts suggest to us"; on 17\textsuperscript{th} March 2020, His Holiness Patriarch of Serbia Irinej received an expert team of Serbian doctors at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade, and realizing the seriousness of the situation, he met the requests of the infectologists and epidemiologists regarding the pandemic, and called on all citizens of the Republic of Serbia to strictly adhere to prescribed measures to protect against coronavirus. On 18\textsuperscript{th} March 2020, the schedule of the evening services in Novi Sad temples was moved to 5 PM, due to the measures of the Government of Serbia related to restrictions on freedom of movement, which were introduced in order to protect human lives and prevent the spread of dangerous coronavirus infection. Among the numerous changes offered to the faithful, caused by the coronavirus, were the Internet processions on the official website of the Serbian Orthodox Church, one of which was called: Bishop Joanikije – The isolation is an opportunity to find ourselves and connect with the loved ones, 6\textsuperscript{th} April 2020.

The clergymen of the Serbian Orthodox Church stayed with their people, finding ways to nurture the spiritual life of their religious community in the best possible way, which will be remembered in the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church during the Coronavirus pandemic period and the victims of the epidemic, which included its leader, Patriarch Irinej, and Bishop Amfilohije. Two years of fighting the Coronavirus affected all segments of people's lives – some people

died, some were temporarily stopped or reduced in their quantity or quality, all but spirituality – Religious devotion to God may have been "closed" in small family temples, prayers may have been said in churchyards and under masks, some may not have been said in funeral processions, but it is precisely these difficult moments that paved the way Orthodox believers walk – it is narrow and full of suffering, but only that path is the one that leads to the joys of the Resurrection and bliss in the Kingdom of Heaven. The facts of everything that happened in the religious spiritual life during the Coronavirus pandemic will be recorded in history, as special relations between the medical profession, the state and the church, changed conditions of liturgies, communions and funerals, absence of church weddings, postponement of baptisms. What is important for understanding spirituality is that during the pandemic it became clear that these were not acts in themselves but had deeper meanings, and secular and material acts remained behind spiritual, intangible and moral living, but we cannot say that the Coronavirus won the victory over the spirit, because as His Eminence the Bishop of Šumadija John says: before God there are no dead, God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living.

2. EPIDEMIC IN SONGS

"Why poets in times of indigence?" was the rhetorical question of the German poet Friedrich Helderlin. The Coronavirus pandemic has given rise to numerous answers to this question, two years ago and the answers are still coming. The latest event in this area arrives in the form of the winning song of Serbia for Eurovision, which revives the ideals of Hellenic culture, the ideal of paideia and kalokagatia, speaking in a specific way about the importance of balance between body health and spirit health. Although the artist emphasizes in her verses the importance of having a health insurance card as a potential condition for receiving official medical care, the verses also address God: "God, give us health", "Sad soul in a healthy body", "Frightened mind in a healthy body" and "What are we going to do now?"6

"The troubles that came with the Coronavirus pandemic have encouraged many artists in the world, including Serbia and other countries in our region, to pay attention to these troubles, to react to them in their own artistic way.7 When it comes to Serbia and neighboring countries, with good will and effort to respond creatively to the appearance of the Crown, poets, various types of poets, from

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respected writers to songwriters, rappers, hip-hoppers and folkers, stood out. Some have sought to share with the audience they address a sense of frustration brought on by life in fear of the virus and imposed isolation, not paying much attention to what the authorities say and recommend to say about the epidemic. provoked traditional spirituality in people as a process of re-formation with the aim of restoring the original form of man, the image of God, placed emphasis on subjective experiences, the deepest values and meanings by which people live, including personal growth and transformation. Poetry writing has the memory of the unremembered. Poetry carries the energy of multiplied love. Creative energy needs freedom to be broadcast, but not freedom of movement, freedom from isolation or "lockdown" because man becomes free when he gets used to living in himself with the love he has received. The Coronavirus united people, reminded us of the equality and unity of our souls. The virus has aroused inspiration in a wide variety of personalities. From Minister Rasim Ljajic, who calls the citizens to avoid physical contact in the verses, “Just a little more patience / Without touching and hugging / Socializing from a distance /”8 The Coronavirus threatened all of humanity in the same way, and human souls responded each in their own more or less creative way, with prayers, music, images or words, in different languages and dialects. Verses from the poet Sladan Ilić arrived from the southeast of Serbia: Regardless of the pluralism of artistic responses to the Coronavirus, according to Čolovic, they can be thematically classified, so in addition to the verses of Minister Rasim Ljajic, other authors such as Neno Belan, Tijana Dapčević and others deal with propaganda of recommended protection measures in their poems. Poems of patriotic motives deal with the theme of war against an invisible enemy, such as the author Milica Stanković: “Listen to the doctor’s advice, do not go where you don’t have to / Be proud of your people, so that there are no deaths / Do not pretend to be a selfish villain, listen to the doctor extraordinarily, we will only win together”; some verses address the local population, some are international and deal with the world health of the entire population. A special thematic group consists of songs of rebellion against hygienic measures, such as police measures and against the ruling regimes. In this group, the verses are perhaps the most provocative and can be found from those interwoven with mild humor to those with threatening and vulgar rhetoric. “God kill the Corona and China / I’ve been in quarantine for three days / Every day people listen to the news / I run away from the Chinese on the road /... They don’t let me pass at the border / Who knows when I’ll come by truck / If I get the Corona / I’ll kill myself in the truck” (Bojan Lukić). With a retrospective review through spiritual poetic expressions in this area in the time of the Coronavirus, we can conclude that in times of crisis, everything is allowed in poetry. The poetic

8 https://www.6yka.com/cyr/novosti/ivan-colovic-virus-u-pesmi
expression changes depending on poets’ inspiration and currently trending circumstances. Fusion of versatile approaches is present. ‘Corona rhymes’ appear, in decasyllabic verse, as well as free verse. The specific way of expression came alive in the periods of isolation, so that people could transfer messages from their souls, as messages of love were transferred to gods or rulers through history. It is early to point what artistic forms will remain as material evidence of the state of spirit of the humankind in the crisis years of the Coronavirus in 21st century. It could be compared to us, reading about the spiritual growing up in the heroic epic of Gilgamesh today, six millennia later, and of his experience of death in this oldest know epic. The spiritual experience of the Coronavirus will certainly remain written forever in some of the artistic expressions.

3. ART IN THE AGE OF THE CORONAVIRUS

The global epidemiological crisis has redefined art by highlighting the contextual rather than aesthetic properties of art. The Coronavirus created a specific historical and social context in which works of art were created and consumed. According to the American aesthetician Arthur Danto, a work of art can be anything that appeared under certain conditions of history. is, art, culture, or society, if on the social scene it is recognized and interpreted as a work of art. "In an encounter with a work of art, the first thing we notice is that it does not spring from nature and the world, but that it is "placed" in the world and appears opposite to it, which can be understood "as a mimesis (representing the world with what is not the world) both as a composition (arrangement in the world) and as an expression (inscribing in the world, leaving a trace in the world, but also as a provocation of the world) and as a construction (creation / making of an artificial world) and as “performance” (intervention in the world, provoking events), etc.”9 In the period of the world epidemiological crisis, in accordance with the first part of Milan Radovanović’s definition, artists surfaced who opposed their works against the current virus – "From the Age of Coronavirus", such as the architect and painter Nebojsa Šćekic, who says his studio is his quarantine and to turn to the sacred side of isolation, which is art.10 "Inscribing in the world and intervening in the world" in the time of the Coronavirus was done by many artists, some generations of artists were crowned with a diploma paper: The final exhibition of works by students of the Department of Fine Arts entitled

9 Radovanović, Milan. Defining the concept of art, Alpha University, Academy of Arts, Belgrade, DOI 10.5937 / kultura1547068R UDC 7.01, 2015.
contemporary art of Vojvodina at the end of 2020. The Jewish History Museum, in its building in Knjeginje Ljubice Street, organized an exhibition entitled: "In the Age of COVID". The announcement states: "Some experienced love in the time of cholera, and some made an exhibition in the time of COVID. The Academy of Vocational Studies of Southern Serbia is opening an exhibition of works by students and professors of the Department of Technological and Artistic Studies entitled: "Art in the Age of COVID ". The exhibition "Belgrade in the Age of COVID " was opened in the Belgrade Youth Center. The Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade is opening an exhibition of drawings by Veljko Mihajlović, cycle: "Winter at the time of COVID". The History Museum of Serbia has launched a project in the form of a photo competition, entitled "Life in Serbia in the Age of COVID." Throughout Serbia, the region and the world, artistic souls have sought salvation in their works life crisis caused by Coronavirus. Exhibitions were held: in Valjevo, entitled: "Valjevo artists in the era of the coronavirus"; "Tivat in the time of COVID", by Dalibor Ševaljević; Heroes of the community - chroniclers in the time of COVID, in Kragujevac; "Art in the Age of COVID ", exhibition in Jagodina; "Loznica in the time of COVID" in the gallery of Mina Karadžić in Loznica; "Culture in the Age of COVID" at the House of Culture in Gračanica; "Tuzla in the Age of COVID", exhibition by Samir Mujakić; "Art in the Age of COVID", EGS Nikola Tesla in Jagodina; "States" at the time of COVID, in the gallery of the National Museum in Vranje; "Moments" - state of emergency, exhibition at the Majdanpek Cultural Center, etc. There is a long list of countries, cities, museums, galleries and schools in which artistic opuses were created during the crown, which will be a witness to a difficult period for humanity. It is clear that quantitatively the topic of Coronavirus is very common, but we were interested qualitatively in what is happening in human souls in such times of crisis. According to psychotherapist Ivana Paunović: "Art inspires us, it invites us to walk the paths of our emotions. It helps us express ourselves, discover and travel with the soul. It can be our ink for writing our life story." A power that is available for self-inspiration but also for the inspiration of others. Creativity moves both the mind and the body and seeks a complete immersion in an activity: to sing, write, compose, dance, paint ... there is a new freedom where a person can fully express himself without any restrictions.

4. CONCLUSION

The Coronavirus has affected humanity at a time when human health and health care have become a kind of religion of current life. While ancient thinkers,

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11 https://jimbeograd.org/
seeking the meaning of human life, said that man was created for truth and good, and that the idea of good is at the top of all ideas, as Plato says, today's man would probably answer before COVID that he was created to be good, to be healthy, eternally young and beautiful. At the historical moment when modern man made an effort to establish life habits and obligations for regular visits to fitness and spa centers, an epidemic occurs that disrupts all defense mechanisms against the body that modern man thought he had set up. Epidemic has cruelly reminded humanity that perfect health does not exist and that disease and health are two faces of the same coin - the medal of life. "Health is a broader concept than healing, it includes the overall harmony of a person, relationship with the world in which he lives, while healing is an act or a series of acts that lead to that harmony. The most important question is how to achieve complete harmony in and around oneself, so that talking about the health of an individual becomes a speech about his longings, desires, dreams and utopias. The longing for health becomes the longing for a full life, and the longing for a full life is the longing for what theology calls salvation. The spiritual life of people in the times of COVID confirms redefining of people's attitude towards their own health, at the advantage of emphasising the significance of, the spiritual life, i.e. the harmony of spiritual and bodily health which is in line with the aspirations of the authentic Christian life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

LITERATURE

5. Momčilović Iljić, Gordana. Topics: Aljazira, 2020
ДУХОВНОСТ У КРИЗНИМ ЕПИДЕМИОЛОШКИМ УСЛОВИМА

САЖЕТАК

Духовност може бити значајна у различитим врстама стреса јер у великој мери доприноси благостању особе, утица на укупан квалитет живота и делује проактивно, убрзавајући когнитивни развој особе тражећи различите одговоре на новонасталу ситуацију. Једним ретроспективним освртом на духовни и креативни простор у доба короне, можемо рећи да се ради о периоду појачане самоактуализације људи, у коме су испољили своје апсолутне потенцијале као личности. Иако је корона оставила народ без литургских славља у одређеним периодима, животни простор није морао оставити духовно празан већ су верници могли изражавати своју духовност сопственом молитвом у својим домовима. То јесу измењени услови у хришћанској духовности где је молитва црквени чин који молитеља повезује са заједницом у којима је учешће појединца у молитви црквене заједнице која чува и храни Исусову молитву било онемогућено. Новонастали услови отворили су и специфична душевна стања у којима су људи своју пажњу усмерили на различите блиске им не-верске облике духовности: писање поезије, читање, сликање, компоновање музике, те су тако настали нови стваралачко-уметнички опуси који су обележили и још увек бележе овај период. Настале су књиге и песме „у доба короне” које су жив и луцидан документ времена и лични, аутентични коментар појединца на једну од најнеобичнијих ситуација у којој се човечанство нашло у последњих неколико деценија. Сликарски атеље су постали својеврсни карантини у којима се стаји за штафелјијама и у којима живи уметнички свет, пренесен различитим техникама на платно чекајући своју прву изложбу под називом: „Из доба короне”.

Кључне речи: духовност, религија, уметност, пандемија
ДУХОВНОСТЬ В КРИТИЧЕСКИХ ЭПИДЕМИЧЕСКИХ УСЛОВИЯХ

АННОТАЦИЯ

Духовность может быть важна при различных видах стресса, поскольку она вносит значительный вклад в благополучие человека, влияет на общее качество жизни и действует проактивно, ускоряя когнитивное развитие человека путем поиска различных решений в новой ситуации. При ретроспективном взгляде на духовно-творческое пространство в период КОВИДа, важно отметить, что это период повышенной самореализации людей, в котором они проявили свои абсолютные личностные потенциалы. Принимая во внимание, что в определенные периоды КОВИД оставлял людей без литургических торжеств, жизненное пространство не должно было оставаться духовно пустым, так как верующие могли выражать свою духовность посредством проведения молитв в своих домах. Это были измененные условия христианской духовности, которые затруднили молитву, представляющую собой церковный акт, соединяющий молящегося с общиной, условия, в которых отдельный человек участвовал в молитве церковной общины, хранящей и питающей молитву Иисуса. Вновь создавшиеся условия открыли специфические психические состояния, при которых люди обратили свое внимание на различные близкие им нерелигиозные формы духовности: писали стихи, читали, рисовали, сочиняли музыку, и таким образом были созданы новые творческие/художественные опусы, которые ознаменовали и продолжают ознаменовывать этот период. Были созданы книги и песни "во времена COVID", которые представляют собой живой и ясный документ времени и личный, подлинный комментарий отдельного человека к одной из самых необычных ситуаций, в которых оказался человечество в последние несколько десятилетий. Живописные студии стали своего рода карантином, в котором художники стояли за своими мольбертами и в котором жил мир искусства, перенесенный на холст в различных техниках, ожидая своей первой выставки под названием: "Во времена КОВИДа".

Ключевые слова: духовность, религия, искусство, пандемия

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