

# The Founding Ideas of the Modern Cultural Horizon and the Meanings of Reason

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**Abstract.** The present text investigates the key ideas of the modern cultural horizon, and especially the meanings of what we call *Reason*. Modernity brings a certain understanding of Reason sought as the main human capacity. But this understanding took the shape of a belief, fact visible everywhere not only in the scientific investigation but also in other cultural forms, among which were philosophy and theology. And also became an ideology. Yet, the last century, especially in its second half, provided interpretative instruments and paradigms which made possible the recovery of the cultural perspectives and especially of the spirituality from the Eastern European area, which had other ground than the paradigm of the modern rationalism.

**Keywords:** Reason, Interpretation, Cultural Model, Eastern Christianity.

What are the founding ideas of the modern cultural horizon? This question cannot receive a simple answer. But it seems that one of the major themes of modernity is the insistence on what we call *reason* or, in other words, the privilege given to a human capacity, precisely to the rational capacity to others' detriment. This option is visible in the founding of the modern concept of science. As Michel Henry said, the type of science initiated by Galilei, the one which will dominate the scientific perception has as its founding act *the reduction of the sensitive and living qualities of the discredited bodies as appearance and illusion and their replacement with the mathematic knowledge of their abstract forms and relations.*<sup>1</sup> These forms and their relations could be known *only* through mathematics, meaning that the most authentic sense of reason must be bound to this way of knowledge. The direction of science begins

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Henry, *Întrupare. O filozofie a trupului (Incarnation. A Philosophy of the Body)*, Deisis, Sibiu, 2000, p. 153.

to take its first shape at the same time with Galilei's doctrine, a doctrine embraced by the post-modernity as *the only valid form of science*. Philosophy has also been under the influence of this perception, so that Galilei's doctrine proves to be one of the key sources of modernity. Until the XIX<sup>th</sup> century the modern interpretative horizon bore the mark of the ideological imperialism of the only way in which research was thought possible: the Galilean science and its instruments. The ideological character of this interpretative paradigm, which took the shape of a belief, was visible everywhere not only in the scientific investigation but also in other cultural forms, among which were philosophy and theology. The reason was offered by the practical productivity of this way of understanding and investigating the reality, precisely by the theological progress. But at the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century we begin to see the limitations of this perspective. Wilhelm Dilthey is the philosopher who will insist on the radical distinction between two ways of investigation, on the difference in essence between the natural sciences and the spiritual ones. If *explanation* is characteristic to the natural sciences, *understanding* is specific to the spiritual sciences. According to this division, Psychology is considered to belong to the natural sciences. The object of the spiritual sciences is *the living* and the only way to understand this is *reliving*.<sup>2</sup> Authors like Søren Kierkegaard and Henry Bergson have consolidated the opposition regarding the claims to exclusiveness of the Galilean descriptive-explanatory paradigm. But the massive reaction came from Existentialism and Hermeneutics, beginning with the '30s and the '40s of the last century. The existentialists stated the supremacy of existence over the essence as a protest to the essentialists' doctrine of Hegelian origin. But the starting point of their protest was the suffocation sensation given by a more aggressive technology regarding the everyday human life. About the same time Martin Heidegger writes a study on *the essence of technique*, in which he describes the incorrectness of the technical attitude towards nature, as far as it regards *an insistent delivery request* which man addresses to nature.<sup>3</sup> According to Hans Georg Gadamer, the philosophic hermeneutics will bring to our attention another capital deficiency of the cultural model imposed by the modernity: overlooking the intrinsic, specific and characteristics of every model and

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<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey, *Construcția lumii istorice în sfințele spiritului* (*The Construction of the Historical World Within the Science of the Spirit*), Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1999, p.78.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Originea operei de artă* (*The Origin of the Work in Art*), Humanitas, București, p. 139.

cultural movement.<sup>4</sup> The difference between the author's horizon and the interpreter's one, between the horizon and the mentality of an age and another's is unavoidable, and precisely the imperialist-ideological attitude of the classical research paradigm was the one which totally neglected such a distinction. The rationalism paradigm of Enlightenment origin considered that there cannot exist but only one perspective of truth and therefore, according to its own definition of what is true and real it judged and classified the entire cultural production of mankind. Having complete faith in its own categories, the rationalist investigation produced an entire series of "histories" of the cultural areas. The histories of philosophy are probably the clearest example of the interpretative products of this kind, because following the logic of *evolution* from simple to complex, from less to more, from primitive to evolved, they described the path of the philosophical reflection from the pre-socratics to the German classic philosophy as a transition from the *naivety* of the first philosophers to the *magnificent* progress of the modern metaphysical doctrine. The standard according to which was estimated the quality of the philosophical meditation was the Enlightenment perspective, which was applied without a difference to all periods and perspectives. It was necessary the appearance of Martin Heidegger's work, one of the most refined thinkers of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, who claims his understanding of the Being from the pre-socratic, for this interpretative form to radically prove its error. The philosophical hermeneutics will limit the interpreter's claims for understanding what he interprets to what has been called *merging of the horizons*, this meaning that you cannot claim for total and complete understanding of a cultural sign from another age, that there always must exist the awareness of limitation in understanding. Therefore, there was accepted the conscience of *difference*, in its most concrete meaning, the recognition of the intrinsic of another horizon or author, of the "data" of a cultural act which does not overlap our suppositions or expectations, which does not overlap our cultural imaginary.

In fact, the last century, especially in its second half, provided interpretative instruments and paradigms which made possible the recovery of the cultural perspectives and especially of the spirituality from the European area, which had other ground than the paradigm of the modern rationalism. This is firstly about the specific of the Eastern Christian spirituality, the one which was simply ignored if not disregarded by the Western authors from the XVII<sup>th</sup> and the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, a tendency

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<sup>4</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer, *Adevăr și metodă (Truth and Method)*, Teora, București, p. 640.

partially manifested in the last century. During Voltaire's time, the history of Byzantium was seen as an example of cultural awkwardness.<sup>5</sup> It was considered that the Byzantine period offers the measure for cultural motionless and sterility, an age of cultural frost, if not worse. The division into periods of history made from such a perspective considered the Byzantine period and the entire Christianity up to the XII<sup>th</sup> century as a dark age between two periods of cultural enlightenment, the Antiquity and the Renaissance. That is why this period has been named the Dark Ages, a period that could have only one merit at best: it was the rather accidental keeper of the Greek antique classicism values. This state of things influenced even the outlines of Christian attitudes and practice. In the 1800s and even in the beginning of the 1900s, no matter the Christian confession, it became obvious the capitalization of the Evangelic learning into what we call pietism and moralism. This attitude apparently formally correct and guarantor of salvation had a significant influence even in the Orthodox East, from Greece to Russia, although it received its form in certain Western spiritual movements. This presentation of Christianity matched perfectly to the modern cultural imaginary, the period in which it took shape. That happened because there were firm boundaries established between the cultural areas, so that philosophy and art, for example, did not have the same object or methods as theology. Theology received rather the proximity of Ethics, in its aspects that did not strictly belong to the Revelation doctrine. If the pietism psychologises the act of faith, the moralism reduces the meaning of the scriptural message to a set of behavioural rules, to an axiological model which carried out guarantees the "correctness" of faith. The second half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century records the appearance of a movement of returning to the authentic meanings of Patristics which was improperly named neo-patristic (because they were not looking for a new form of the patristic speech but to recover it for the modern horizon). This movement aimed the restoration of some profound meanings stated in the patristic period regarding the Evangelic message which corresponded to the true spirit of Christianity. Authors like Dumitru Staniloae, Iustin Popovici or Gheorghii Florovsky described the complete dimension of the Christian doctrine, which cannot be put into descriptive frames resulted from the cultural imaginary of a period. At the same time, philosophy also begins to realize the limitations of any philosophy founded on the narrow meaning of the ethics resulted from metaphysical speculations. This renewal of the patristic message took place in a

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<sup>5</sup> Alain Ducellier, *Byzantinii (The Byzantines)*, Teora, Bucureşti, 1997, p. 9.

conscience opened to the values and the paradigms of that period. In his translation of *Philokalia*, Dumitru Staniloae quotes Martin Heidegger in his footnotes. The reference to the most recent philosophy of that time actually means the silent recognition that these representatives of the movement for recovery of the patristic message give to the change of perspective brought by Existentialism, Hermeneutics and Phenomenology. This evolution of the Husserlian phenomenology within the French thought background is very interesting. From the beginning phenomenology intends to be a radical investigation of what we could name *phenomenon*, in the situation that the speech about being is entirely abandoned. For this reason the phenomenological speech is less susceptible not only to ideological interferences, but it also has a reserve towards the cultural imaginaries. The radical of this kind of investigation not of the phenomenon but of its phenomenalization led to results that spectacularly and rather unexpected approached to the Evangelic affirmations. Michel Henry confesses his surprise regarding the confluence of his research, which rigorously followed the phenomenological method, with the essential phrases of John's text.<sup>6</sup> For today French phenomenology, reaching the authenticity of the Christian message implies the analysis of meanings and implications of the Incarnation act as a phenomenal manifestation of the Absolute in temporality, in the world.

The conscience under which the present phenomenological speech takes shape is a sigh of cultural context extremely favourable to a mutual opening between the Orthodox spirituality of patristic origin and the research of today. This "sensitivity" to the danger presented by the interference of some mental constructions, which often took the shape of ideology and misled the spiritual exercise and also the scientific investigation from their true purpose, brought out a conscience which modernity did not possess until recently.

Even if some limits were overcome, limits imposed by the metaphysics to the ways in which the religious phenomenon could be perceived, there is still a long way to go towards the clarification of the position of Orthodoxy regarding the nature of Christian experience (The metaphysical doctrines from the inauguration of modernity and up to those belonging to the German classical philosophy had established some conditions according to which the religious phenomenon could have been accepted as having consistency only if it submitted to the principle of reason, meaning they imposed the demand to establish a concept and a

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<sup>6</sup> Michel Henry, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

cause for any reality having as a consequence the rejection of the revelation in the fullness of its meaning. In the German metaphysics the revelation does not escape from its metaphysical disqualification unless it strictly limits itself to what reason admits (Kant) or simply identifying with the effort of the concept (Hegel), in both cases it has to give up its specific: the one that announces an event, enounces a word that goes beyond the conditions of possible experience and have derogation from the requisition of the principle of reason.<sup>7</sup>) There is a difference between the contents of the Eastern Christian tradition and what has been imposed by modernity under the name of Theology. In its intentions to fulfil the rigours which reason, as described by the Enlightenment, should impose to any consistent speech, in modern times what bore the name of theology inclined more and more to become something *systematic*. There had to be enumerated and lined after a certain logic all the important aspects of the Christian doctrine, in separate chapters, beginning with what was thought to be most important towards what was considered to be secondary. This way of presenting the religion, and especially the Christianity, which dominated the Western speech, had a serious influence also upon the modern Orthodox theological speech. But this type of speech does not match the spirit in which the Eastern Christian tradition took shape: a simple review of the main works of this tradition indicates anything but a systematic approach. Sometimes we encounter fragmentation, which takes the form of *chapters* – short texts which condense the meditation upon a certain fact. In one place, Isaac of Syria (author from the VII<sup>th</sup> century) actually takes note of this attitude when he warns about the apparent disorder in subject presentation. It is important that this essential author, in the description of the mystical experience, offers a *justification* to this type of writing: the presentation of subject does not have an order belonging to the formal logic, but an inner one, of a reason imposed by experience. Nevertheless, this is the symptom characteristic to all the texts produced in the Eastern Christian horizon, which seems to be a sign for lack of maturity of this spirituality. However we, modern people, must reconsider this kind of interpretations made regarding the Orthodox spirituality, but this is possible only if we take into consideration the fundamental intention which dominated one type of writing: apart from the systematic inventory of the affirmations which could be made regarding different articles of faith, this is about the way in which was formed the practical experience of an Evangelic commandment, *someone's* concrete experience. This is the way

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<sup>7</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Vizibilul și revelatul, (The Visible and the Revealed)*, Deisis, Sibiu, 2007, p. 15.

through which what we call Tradition has crystallized – the accumulation of the testimonies of this practical experience. For our cultural exigencies this type of accumulation does not mean more than the filing of a subjective (or even submitted to subjectiveness) and random casuistry which could represent at the most a prime matter for further processing that could offer a coherent and systematic picture of this Tradition. This is precisely the thing we must resist to in order to reach the true spirit of this inheritance. It is necessary to accept the fact that not only our cultural model is not the supreme and ideal form of rationality, but also that in the European culture we must admit the existence of an at least another major cultural paradigm which established another type of relation between the human capacities of experience and understanding. Privileging a certain description of reason and the affirmation that the reason is the human capacity by excellence have decided the cultural evolutions of the modernity, but this radical emphasizing ultimately generated the crisis which crosses today cultural model.

We must acknowledge and recover the rationality which has articulated this European spiritual and cultural model that bears the name of Eastern Christianity, because it is indeed one that has specific and difference. More than this, it is the answer to the explanatory impasse of the rationalist model; however this does not mean a renunciation or an abdication of reason, but the rejection of a generalization of the role that formal reason has in knowledge. There are a few concepts that gave the specific to this Eastern cultural horizon, among which the one of *person* has a particular importance. It is Father Dumitru Staniloae's merit to have clarified the importance of this concept of person for the direction in which the patristic speech and later the one of the Orthodox Christianity were outlined. Along with its first specifications, Christianity has to clarify the way Revelation of God must be understood. As a radical novelty, in the description of what we call the Ultimate Reality or Existence or God, they resorted to Greek philosophic terminology. They had to describe one God who was Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and then they used a synonym in describing a difference: *ousia* and *hypostasis*, which were at one time synonyms, were used in order to describe the difference between what was common and distinct in Divinity.

For describing the Nature of the Supreme Reality they used the term *ousia* which was traditional in the Greek philosophy. But for the personal manifestation of Divinity, as for the personal dimension of the human individual existence, they had to find a word which could express

the complexity, the shades and the ineffable of the relation with nature, the answer being the use of the term *hypostasis*. The history of this term which fulfilled this role is quite complicated. Also different are the interpretations on the reason which determined the use of it by the Cappadocians. This term had been used during the Greek classicism as an equivalent to *ousia*, but in time it received a series of shades which strengthen a certain understanding of reality. What is certain is that in the patristic perspective the reality cannot have but a hypostatic dimension, there is no such thing as pure essence. The identification between *hypostasis* and *prosopon* has a major significance. Before we evaluate this equalization, we must specify the use of *prosopon* until that time. This term belongs to the vocabulary of the ancient Greek language, meaning that part of the head below the forehead, what we today call a face. But its major usage bore the meaning of *mask*, which was an accessory used by the actors of the ancient Greek theatre. According to Ioannis Zizioulas, the theatre and especially the tragedy is the place where the human liberty meets the necessity of the world, as seen by the ancient Greeks.<sup>8</sup> From the Greek philosophy perspective there cannot be found a reason for argumentation of a real existence of a human free act because for the mentality of the antic Greek world the dominant were the order and the harmony of a world that was by excellence *cosmos*. The order of the world is necessary under the power of an order determinist as perspective, an order that does not allow any deviation from the laws of the harmony of the whole. The Greek tragedy is the one which exploited the conflict between man's efforts to act according to his will, to go around destiny and to disregard the will of gods, although this attitude is necessary destined to failure, the end of the antic tragedy always recording the fulfilling of the necessity. This is what we would call a *limited liberty*, an expression which actually represents a logic contradiction. But the important thing is that the actor of the tragedy feels the significance of this state of liberty, he makes his way, even if limited and unsuccessfully, towards the assuming the state of *person*, with the characteristics of liberty, uniqueness and non-repeatability. According to antic tragedy the mask proves to be an over-added element and not something belonging to its true being. Nevertheless, this dimension of *prosopon* has been exploited by the Cappadocian Fathers in order to give the wanted dimension to understanding the personal way of existence of God as Trinity and of men.

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<sup>8</sup> Ioannis Zizioulas, *Ființa eclezială* (*The Ecclesial Being*), Ed. Bizantina, București, p. 25.

The turning point in reaching the patristic meaning of person was the identification of *hypostasis* with *prosopon*, by this giving an ontological dimension to “face” which was until then only a simple mask. In this way it is made a double and mutual specification of the meanings that those two terms should have in the new spiritual horizon. Moreover, there is also a semantic enrichment which transforms almost entirely the functions of *hypostasis* and *prosopon*. The later Eastern Christianity thought will deepen and give a new meaning to *prosopon* by emphasizing the etymological implications of this term. The Greek etymology indicates us its formation of *pros*, which means *towards, to, in a certain direction*, and *ops*, which means *look, eye, appearance, face*. By combining those two terms, the term that appears is *I have my eye, my face looking at something or at someone, I am face to face with something or someone*.<sup>9</sup> We find here the dimension of direct, immediate reference, the relation. From this point of view, as it is reinterpreted, *prosopon* excludes the possibility of understanding the person as individuality beyond and outside what we call relation. The depth of the personal existence way is indicated precisely by the *relation* as a specific difference, excluding any effort to static understanding of the human individuality. We can see that in this way there are described the frames of another anthropological model than the one about to be known by the Western thought, so bound to surprising an identifications assembly about the *nature* of the individual. In its most characteristic definition, the sense of *hypostasis* is *extasis* meaning leaving oneself. We can understand the hypostatic dimension of the human individual or God’s only as a permanent leaving and reference to another. It is characteristic to a person to always be outside herself, to constantly make her way towards something. As Christos Yannaras says, the ontological patristic content of the person is represented by the absolute alterity as an existential difference regarding the essence. The person is characterized by the absolute alterity, by uniqueness and non-repeatability, but this alterity cannot be expressed and integrated as a concept, the only way possible is the living of alterity as a concrete fact, as a non-recurring relation.<sup>10</sup> The other’s experience in the face to face relation is the only and exclusive way to knowing himself in what is most specific to him.

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<sup>9</sup> Ch. Yannaras, *Persoană și eros (Person and Eros)*, Anastasia, București, 2000, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

According to a well-known expression, in a simple way, the nature is contained by the person and the person is the existence of nature.<sup>11</sup> But in the Orthodox tradition the relation between the person and the essence contained by her is much more gradated understood. Any understanding must leave from the person, from the personal way of understanding God or man. A person from the East could not maintain a speech about essence and the search for the essence of things, of man or of God, from this spiritual point of view, is a non sense. Any created reality is understood in hypostatic dimension. Understanding the reality means realizing the always new and paradoxical situation of assuming by each person her own nature in a non-repeatable and at the same time complete, perfect way. The existence of each person means a recapitulation of existence in a way never met before. “As absolute ontological freedom, the person needs (...) a hypostatic constitution without ontological necessity. Therefore, her hypostasis must take roots and constitute herself in an ontological reality unaffected by the “creature state”. (...) Christology, as it has been elaborated by the Church Fathers, has but one simply existential purpose: to assure the human that the person, not as mask or “tragic character”, but as a real person, is not a mythical or a nostalgic search; she is a historic reality”.<sup>12</sup> As Dumitru Staniloae stated, for an Eastern person, the created world is not a *place* where we could meet other persons or especially where God the Person meets the man as person. The history of this outlining of the personal relation *has important consequences* on creation, a thing of special importance for the openings that could be established between the Eastern Christian perspective on the world and today scientific research. As time goes by, the world becomes more and more personalized and assumed by the persons as a way for deepening the communion among them. There is an endless process in knowledge as there is an endless progress in deepening the relation between persons, and we could never stop the act of knowledge. Moreover, the act of understanding being an attribute of the person who does not “stand”, meaning he does not find himself in a constant attitude towards the world but he is involved in a relation: this may also mean the failure of the authenticity of other one’s experience and does not necessary describe a progress but it has ups and downs. It can also get to losing the obtained meanings (of existentialist origin and not

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<sup>11</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit (The Mystic Theology of the Eastern Church)*, Anastasia, București, 1996, p. 152.

<sup>12</sup> Ioannis Zizioulas, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

informational) when someone deviates from the experience of communion through which he obtained a certain level of knowledge.

In this context, the history of the Eastern Christianity spirituality knew another understanding and another role for what we call *theology*. For the Byzantines it worked from the beginning a “strong” sense of the term, being the only one which will remain: a theologian is the one who talks about God, about what is specific to God-Trinity and not about His work regarding Creation. They were very few the ones who received recognition for this dimension in their works, precisely they were only three.<sup>13</sup> The other aspects of Fathers’ speech which we today also integrate in the theology area were then considered to belong to philosophy. This is a confusing integration for our times, but it has a justification in another meaning that Byzantines gave to term *philosophia* a meaning that emphasized the distance but also the closeness to the inheritance of the classic and helenistic Greek philosophy. The Evangelic message brings a great and radical difference in the way men understood the Supreme Reality, God and His relations to the world. If for the pre-Christian Greek horizon the major difference in the relation God-world was the one between *ungenerated* and *generated*, in the Evangelic text the difference between God and His creation is the one between *uncreated* and *created*.<sup>14</sup> This new understanding of the difference in nature between God and world was full of consequences for the way in which the possibility of knowledge was conceived. In the horizon before Christianity it was stated that the possibility of knowing the truth was offered by the co-naturalness of the human mind with God, because the world is not ontically different from God, but it is an emanation of Him. But the Christian doctrine brings the conscience of an unsurpassed abyss between the created mind and uncreated God and therefore it is impossible for the mind to find out on its own about God. For this reason they had to reconsider the acceptance of philosophy as a truth searching exercise. To philosophise could not any longer mean a rational effort to grasp the mysteries of reality. But they did not reject either the value of the classic philosophic exercise as made by Plato or Aristotle. But to this way of searching it was granted a preparatory role, but a very important one in the economy of searching the ultimate purpose of the philosophic exercise. It was called *exoterike*, however, this

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<sup>13</sup> They are John the Evangelist and Theologian, Gregory of Nazianz and Simeon the New Theologian.

<sup>14</sup> Nikos Matsoukas, *Introducere în gnoseologia teologică* (Introduction to the Theological Gnoseology), Ed. Bizantină, București, 1997, p. 124.

did not mean an inferior level but it pointed out that this is the maximum possible that the human effort could reach in knowledge; it is what we call the knowledge from the *outside*. This outside means the lack of something which can offer true and complete knowledge, meaning being outside the relation with what could deliver the truth. For the entire cultural history of the Christian East, especially in the Byzantine period, practicing this outside philosophy was not considered to be forming of the mind possibilities to discern, because any higher experience (which today we call *mystic*, but it did not have this name because it did not have the exceptional character we associate today to mystic experience, but it had a dimension of experience through which anyone could search the true path to Christ) has many dangers and the risk of falling in its own imaginary as long as the rational capacities are not completely formed. It has been considered that a solid instruction in the classic Greek philosophy texts could accomplish this formative task. For this spiritual horizon the truth is not something any longer but Someone and this generates the possibility to reach the truth to take the form of a personal relation with the Truth as Someone, as a person. It becomes clear that it can no longer be about an objective knowledge of the truth, but there is suspended the much used later difference of modernity between objective and subjectiv.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, there is an inner philosophy, *from the inside*, which received the name *esoterike* (and this beginning with the first specifications and references to the Greek philosophy, in the IV<sup>th</sup> century). This philosophy does not follow the rigorous of the Greek classic rationality: its specific is given by what is characteristic to each person in his opening for communion with the Logos, with God. This is the reason why in its intimacy this part of philosophy is situated higher than the speech, it names the depth of the personal relation between the Creator and the creature, a relation always unique and non-repeatable. Nevertheless, reason is not absent from this experience, but takes superior forms which cannot be simply placed in a discursive expression. But this is also the place where the paradox of this expression lays, an experience which does not go around reason but it cannot be put into words either. This is the most practical dimension of philosophy, one that involves the entire being, all the human capacities and has as consequence a change of man in his depth which received the name *metanoia* in the patristic works. It means a change of mind but not as in a modification of its function, a decrease or alteration of its rational

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<sup>15</sup> M. Costa De Beauregard, Dumitru Stăniloae, *Mica Dogmatică vorbită (The Little Spoken Dogmatics)*, Deisis, Sibiu, 1995, p. 86.

capacities, but an opening of it to understanding what is above the creation, a *participation* in the uncreated. Therefore, *metanoia* also means *theosis*, the Greek name for deification: the man is being deified, meaning that in some way he overcomes the limits of creation, and thus he has access to a knowledge that is beyond the world frames. But the consequences of this experience are much more ample, they imply the whole human being even the body. There are changes also in the references to the world, in the way we interact with it, so that we could talk about a *real* influence of man upon the world through his inner changes and not through the external direct actions or things. From this point of view we can even say that a subtle influence but which implies precisely the profound way of existence of the world is the consequence of the achieving of this *metanoia* rather than the outer interaction with the objectivity of this world.

Therefore, the meaning Eastern Christianity gives to the philosophical exercise distance itself from the meaning that modernity gives to this act: behind the modern cultural evolutions regarding the role granted to philosophy stands a premise of anthropological origin, that for obtaining the true knowledge it is necessary a dissociation of reason of the senses and of the entire body and of all that is sensitive in general. In the perspective of the Byzantine tradition the philosophic act is understood based on other anthropological suppositions, because it is said that the act of knowledge is the result of a conjunction of all human capacities, not only the ones of the mind, because the body does not play a role of less importance since it applies the knowledge. In this way it may be justified the interest which the patristic literature confers for the clearance of the body and of all the human faculties through what we today name asceticism. The ascetic exercise has nothing to do with the mortification of the body, as it has been sometimes understood by extrapolating the Indian ascetic practice, but aims man's preparation for accomplishing the experience of communion with the One who is above this world, a communion with radical and total consequences not only regarding a simple relation in a wish of salvation. This kind of necessity sends us to the idea of a virtual endless possibility of an inner transformation and to something of the way things are, an idea which was best represented by the Palamitic hesychasm from the XIV<sup>th</sup> century. In a controversy generated by the misunderstandings Barlaam had regarding the hesychast practice, Gregory Palamas will offer a series of formulations extremely important for the understanding the place from which *the path of peace* or *of the hesychia* was

practiced. Beyond other very significant aspects we resume to the affirmation according to which, from a certain step of his practice, he sees what is called uncreated energies with his *earthly eyes*. These energies are not a symbol nor an image in the mirror of divinity, but precisely the appearance of divinity. The uncreated energies are the manifestation of Trinity for ever, before creation. We cannot in any circumstances contemplate the essence of divinity; the divinity can only be known through her uncreated energies (this is a major difference in understanding the Eastern Christianity besides the Western one regarding the possibilities of knowing God). It is important that they can be grasped with the body senses, after they were of course cleansed through the ascetic exercise. Therefore, the creature opens not only for a contemplation of the uncreated, but to a dwelling of the divine in man (according to Staniloae's formulation). It is also implied that there is a possibility of reaching what is above the normal function of the senses and therefore that they modify accordingly, although they continue to have the same functions. It is a subtle modification which does not cancel the initial corporality status, it does not transform the man into superman, but it points out a notification of a more profound rationality of things beyond things. This opening is not only knowledge but also the possibility to exercise an influence, an interaction of the person with the created nature. It is what we could name a spiritualization of the matter. It is the ontological dimension of the liberty act, of the possibility to be free which is something characteristic to man.

# *Nihil est in intellectu quod non primus fuerit in sensu.* The limits of Gnoseologic Paradigm, from Aristotle to Locke

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**Abstract:** The limits of gnoseologic paradigm, from Aristotle to Locke. The effort here has its basis in the need to overcome limits of interpretation, tabulations and classifications that often accompany analyses on classic empirism, in general and his Locke, in particular. We try to find out in Greek philosophy the germs of moderat empirism. And if Aristotel is undeniable, such a possible start, will wonder, perhaps, Plato's thought.

**Keywords:** Knowing consciousness, Sensorial knowledge, Knowledge foundation, Experience, Perception.

## 1. Founding knowing consciousness.

It is said that only reading Plato's complete work leads us to conclude that "almost our entire intellectual culture is of greek origin"<sup>1</sup>... If we agree with Augustin, that Plato has outclassed all world philosophers, and then we will have to agree that "Plato is undoubtedly the biggest name in philosophy of history. For expressing this superiority it has gone up to writing, not without humor, that everyone else did nothing than to make notes in his basement pages' works."<sup>2</sup>

If Socrates determines the function of knowing conscience, on the one hand, and a unit of awareness on the other hand, Plato would complete this founding project of knowing consciousness.

*Platonician knowledge* or the theory of knowledge has its origin in criticism that the master, Socrates, did to doctrine of sophists. Yet the dialogue of *Charmides*, Critias appears as a supporter of Sophists School, which

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<sup>1</sup> Th odore Gomperes, *Les penseurs de la Gr ce*, Paris, Payot, 1928, vol. I, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> P.-M. Schuhl, *L'oeuvre de Platon*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1971, p. 5.

formed him, and whose doctrine he sets out very clearly. The problem is to define this virtue on which the Greeks called *sophrosyne*, wisdom practiced actually by directing action. For Critias, this is not differentiated knowledge of a determined object, but “knowledge of other types of knowledge and itself”<sup>3</sup>, a technique of techniques which may ignore the item, regarded as an outside element. Therefore the object covered by the supreme technique is inner: the agent himself and his own conscience capacities; knowledge such devised following God urge: “Know yourself”<sup>4</sup>. We, therefore, have to do with a purely formal knowledge: its content includes forms of knowledge or isolated by their subject, and, on the other hand, the agent in itself, as the subject of such knowledge and such intelligence, whose form is constitutes the object of this knowing of knowledge.

Socrates himself will criticize Critias for the formal character of this knowledge. It is like I sustained, says Socrates, the sight sees himself and the other sights, but could still not perceive any color, or that hearing could be heard himself and the other hearings, but could not distinguish any sound. I wonder whether this sight is not whole subject or colour. Or hearing is other than the sound, as is double of the whole half? Knowledge and the subject of knowledge are two elements whose association is inseparable. Therefore, if we admit that the subject of knowledge is knowledge itself, is that this knowledge means the subject of knowledge to be at the same time knowledge of anything else. In other words, cannot be conceived a *knowledge-form* whose content is not other than itself and that it is satisfied to mediate over its processes considered universal instruments. Therefore there is no knowledge without object.

But to support such a statement we should first combat the outlook of sofists under which formal knowledge is not completely devoid of content if we admit it has also covered the subject himself. If the argument would be with Protagoras’ dictum that man is the measure of all things, then, wrote Plato, knowledge should be defined as an individual experience obtained at the time when it occurred. It is time that Plato must explain the gnoseologic status of sensations. If today, general opinion is that any empirical knowledge depends on the sensation or derives from it, Plato would support that nothing of what derives from senses it is not worth called knowledge, and that the real knowledge is only one that is dealing with concepts. According to such conception  $2 \square 2 \square 4$  is also a mindset of real knowledge, when a sentence of some sort *snow is white* is so

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<sup>3</sup> Platon, *Charmides*, 166.c.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, 164. d.

affected by uncertainty and ambiguity that it cannot be found in the philosopher's truths.

A first response to this problem is offered by Plato in *Phaidon*: the feeling is based on the radical dualism of *ēvizibile* and *invizibile*<sup>5</sup>. But he knows that the body and senses, because their well-known relativity<sup>6</sup>, represent an obstacle to Invisible knowledge. And yet, contradictions themselves in the information provided by senses - equalities which are not always equal units, which are actually multiple, etc. reveal a perfect equality, of an absolute unit that drifts incessantly, without ever touching them.<sup>7</sup>

And yet, in his VIII book of the *Republic*, Plato exposes two possibilities of knowledge: in the first case the soul trusts the senses, regarded as an *objective* judge (for example, grace to sight, I can see my finger), and, secondly, feeling provides to the soul a series of contradictions (e.g my finger can be presented at the same time as hard and soft, large and small) insolvent because all these features may not be defined only in relation with their opposite. Moreover, in *Theaitetos*, Plato expressed a particular care not to prejudice empirist sentence, care which is noted in particular in the fragment called his *ēThe Protagoras Apology*<sup>8</sup>. Defining knowledge based on senses is not only attached to sofists' doctrine on *man-measure*, but also a more general doctrine whose expression is the most pure the heracliteism, and which is not opposed to eleatism. In fact, *ēon* sensitive matters, said Diogenes Laertios, Plato agrees with Heraclit<sup>9</sup>. The idea is that in *Cratylus*, referring to sensitive things Plato would say that *ēall these (sensitive things-Note.) move (...), and those who become are in constant movement and mixture, that nothing is ever as such, but everything becomes ever*<sup>10</sup>. Plato will emphasize that this becoming is valid only for objects collected by senses, but not for those of the true knowledge. But if this doctrine would be applied even only to objects perceived sensorially, it springs, where we begin with the definition of

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<sup>5</sup> Idem, *Phaidon*, 79 a-d.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, 65 a.

<sup>7</sup> We find here the idea of considering the actual acquirement of knowledge as a *remembering of knowledge (reminisance)* that our soul had before the association with the body, and that we forgot.

<sup>8</sup> Platon, *Theaitetos*, 166 a.

<sup>9</sup> Diogene Laertios, *op. cit.*, III, 8.

<sup>10</sup> Platon, *Cratylus*, 402 a-c, 411 a, 412 a.

knowledge as sensation<sup>11</sup>, we have our knowledge about what becomes, and not about what it is.

Plato tries a rescue of empirism showing that there was a different point of view than the reality or of the true knowing of the object: that of its practical value, social and human<sup>12</sup>. In this case, to distinguish between true and false will not be able to make but from the point of pragmatic view and only by worth judgments; knowing means indeed, to know yourself in regarding the circumstances of time, and studying the effects on the state will have on the individual or social action. This is the science of knowledge; art corresponding is similar to the doctor or grower; it is about Sophistics, the art of turning common harmful or ineffective representations in usefulness, or even effective, instrumental ones.

Plato would argue that empirism fails in this way to remove the distinction between true and false. He wonders<sup>13</sup> if it is permissible, for example, Justice, in a society depends somewhat circumstances which determine its usefulness, and not on an unalterable model? And then, determining usefulness necessarily implies the existence of calculating the likely consequences, the idea of competence resulting, which is totally different and more comprehensive than individual feeling, because it represents the last criterion. Therefore, not the man in general may constitute the measure, but the man who, through knowledge, has gained competence<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, writes Plato, if minds must drift with the flow of Becoming, it will not find fixed points of support but in language. But how can there be permanently in language, since it moved and changed without intermission?

We get to the final argument of Plato against identification of knowledge with sensation. Sensuality cannot constitute basic knowledge and, its quality to the radical empirism, he leads to a radical subjectivity, i.e the rejection of organized experience and of the language it expressed. Experience, our senses are without power in an attempt to get to know absolute, and knowledge cannot keep his personal opinion (doxa) as the truth cannot be subjective but it reports to an objective existence. For

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<sup>11</sup> In *Theaitetos* (151 d) there was a very precise question: knowlwdge is a sensation, if we admit this stays in perceveing what we know; here the result is that all things are what everyone of us believe that are in the moment he perceives. Platon understands dangers – subjectivity and relativity – this theory and he will come on it (157 d) but in an unconvincing way.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, 166 a.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, 171 d.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 177 c.

Plato, knowledge is not in the sensations, because they have an individual and momentary existence, nor in the opinion, because it is situated halfway between truth and errors<sup>15</sup>. The validity of human knowledge is given by his relationship with the essence of things, the essence of the Ideas' field, being objective, and as a result, there is not another knowledge than that which has the right ground as objective reality<sup>16</sup>. Perhaps in this context we find the reason why Plato feels the need to give senses a certain epistemic status. He considers the information provided by senses as false, but the world in which they can unravel is one of falsehood and the unauthenticity. Plato's true knowledge is based on Creature and depends on the Creature, a reality opposite of becoming and a reality that is stable to essence.

## 2. From basics to knowledge foundation

Once with Aristotle gnoseology comes to another era: of knowing, of knowledge. It was stressed by Noica: Platonism is a theme, Aristotileism is - or wants to be - truth<sup>17</sup>. For Plato, knowledge must be pulled to Becoming in order to focus on being. With Aristotle, writes Brunschvicg, the order of knowledge transforms into the ontology order. The philosopher of Aristotileic type is wondering what happens above him, before seeing how it is made up of himself<sup>18</sup>. The distinction is that Plato goes from ideas to things (inductively) and Aristotle of the things to ideas (deductively), which has led some commentators to say that Aristotle's philosophy has not been in any case one of spirit, but one of nature.<sup>19</sup> Noica, emphasizing the characteristic Greek thinking realism (except nominalism of sophists) will show this is complete in Aristotle's work.<sup>20</sup>

In the order of knowledge, Aristotle starts from determination to reach Identity getting later on, the possibility of knowledge.<sup>21</sup> For Aristotle, the Creature is truth, because it is a cause of truth. Therefore, any science

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<sup>15</sup> Léon Robin, *Platon*, ed. Felix Alcan, Paris, 1935, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> C-tin Noica, *Schișă pentru istoria lui cum e cu puținșă ceva nou*, Humanitas, București, 1995, p. 94.

<sup>18</sup> Léon Brunschvicg, *Le progrès de la conscience dans la philosophie occidentale*, vol. I, Alcan, Paris, 1927, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> C-tin Noica, *op. cit.*, pp. 94 and the following.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 98.

<sup>21</sup> Later, Kant will start, from determination of knowledge factors. The affirmation is of Herman Siebeck, *Aristoteles*, ed. a 3-a, Stuttgart, 1910, p. 90, apud. C-tin Noica, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

mission is looking up the Creature. This truth may be known only by two ways, through active intellect and science. Science, being demonstrative, may not know the principles, which are by nature intuitive, their knowledge being unable to achieve, but by the intuitive intellect, which, in fact, is, as the stagirit said, truer than science. This finding makes him say that "there is not a science of principles"<sup>22</sup>, because in their knowledge process cannot exist other principles nor demonstration. This is shown from the reason that demonstration is not the principle of demonstration as science is not the principle of science. Therefore, principles of science are known through the intuitive intellect, therefore it becomes "the principle of science, just as science is in a similar report to the whole things"<sup>23</sup> Aristotle will appoint this Faculty of knowing the principles directly: *noús* (intellect and intelligence), the factor where the soul thinks and conceives. Once *noús* is the principle of knowledge, it is *arché*, and as any principle, is a power, what would be translated by the intellect (as scolastics translated it: *intellectus*) but different of modern philosophy's intellect, as we shall see below.

For Aristotle, whether it is about the last-recognized principles through meditation purely theoretical and intuition-whether it is the sphere of scientific, so either in the case of mediated reflection or of the immediate one, the point of departure is the meeting between the knowing subject and the World of the individuals, and if it is about nature, the world of sensitive individuals. As it seems, writes Aristotle, no thing exists outside the mighty sensitive, measures, only in delicate forms exist the intelligible, whether there are the abstractions (mathematical), or it skills and effects of the sensible"<sup>24</sup>

The extension of sensitivity role lies in Aristotle's two fundamental sentences:

a. "There is no reflection than that thought in a material sensitive body: "the act of thinking cannot exist without a body,"<sup>25</sup>

b. and there is no reflection (on things) than the reflection of the bodies, so provided prior training of sensations: "nothing there is to know nor understand the absence of any sensation"<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Aristotel, *Analiticele secunde*, II, 19, 100 a.

<sup>23</sup> cf. The last sentence from *Analiticele Secunde*.

<sup>24</sup> Aristotel, *Despre Suflet*, III, 8, 432 a, 3-6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, I, 1, 403 a, 7-9.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, III, 8, 432 a, 7, (we find here the foundation of Locke's gnoseology, the antecedent of the cogitation *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*).

For Aristotle, the five senses would be sufficient to fully know the world. The authenticity of sensorial information, so contested since Parmenides, we have no reason to doubt, even if not absolute. Abilities of things are either of those charged through a single organ of sense, either through medium of collaboration between senses. Referring to common sense, Aristotle will emphasize that it is a special sense, but a unifying sensitive faculty, an elementary operation, concomitant with representation, in short sort such a mutual feeling<sup>27</sup> But this common sense should not be confused, as often happened, with representation, which, for Aristotle, is an intermediate function between sensitivity and reflection.<sup>28</sup>

In fact, for Aristotle, gnoseologic problem is: We know only through sensitive notes of individual (substance), but the universal is the subject of knowledge (form) which is intangible.<sup>29</sup> We know from the senses, which serve as the individual corporal, but knowledge lies only in concepts<sup>30</sup>, which have nothing in common with corporality. While the cognitive primar instrument gives us only the sensitive quality, we see the thing as a substance, the integrity of its materials and formal features<sup>31</sup>.

Was Aristotle, therefore, a radical empirist? “Yes, and two are the premises on which we are founding the statement:

a) material body consists of a combination of sensitive qualities, from an formal intelligible, and an universal substrate of materiality (intellectual) who, as an universal substrate, is not known<sup>32</sup>, but only by its sensitive, concrete hypostasis. If we bracket this universal substrate, it will remain to be known the intelligible and sensitive;

b) the only channel of communication between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge is one that reaches from one end its obiectual sensitive, and to other end, the organs of sense. Both the sensitive and inteligible, own to the object, are passing through the channel

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<sup>27</sup> L̃on Robin, *Aristote*, Paris, P.U.F., 1944, p. 185.

<sup>28</sup> For Aristotle, thinking, as a knowing function, regards more divisions. First distinguishes between *dĩanoia* (ration, discursive intellect) and *nõis* (intuitive intellect). *Dĩanoia* has as a result the reflection with full character, universal, in our judgement, while *nõis* has two functions: una active, the other pasive.

<sup>29</sup> “Existence had, in aristotelic letter and spirit, a constrain: it was only individual. Knowledge has one also: sees only thje universal”, cf. C-tin Noica, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle shows that experience is the instrument of starting individuale cases, but, from this reason, she cannot indicate but facts, without telling something about these cause.

<sup>31</sup> The entire becoming is explained by Aristotle by gaming two elements: *esence* or *form* and *matter*. Matter is pure posibilitaty by incorporating essence in matter, or *form* (called *universal*) it is realized by individual existences.

<sup>32</sup> “Matter, writes Aristotel, cannot be known”, *Fiz̃ica*, III, 6, 207 a, 25.

that is exclusively in the order of sensitivity. If the sensible things are simple, regarding the intelligible, they are less simple: bodies senses cannot take note of it, because they are not offered (as intelligible), and they have no access to intelligible. As it passes, however, it requires a natural conclusion: as a perceptive whole, the sensitive is in *its act*, and the intelligible *in potency*. But as the object, the intelligible (form) is in the act, shows that during the first time in the cognitive movement, lodging in the process of sensations, the object passes from act to potency.

It is necessary, in this moment of our analysis, to go back to the problematic *noûs*-meter, in order to understand how knowledge is carried out in the knowing matter. We saw that in order to make science possible, Aristotle introduces hypothesis of one active intellect, which provides knowledge. The intellect is not a separate body intended to explain everything, it remains unexplained, but it is considered a possibility that reach to be, by its function as active, as principles.<sup>33</sup> Everything that is corporal cannot exceed in us the level of sensitivity, *cannot pass in noûs*, because it has nothing to do with what is corporal. The passive *nous* (which may be similar to matter), can come in touch with the sensitive repected material. Because of his indeterminant note he has access to any formal determination, so what is, potentially, in its repected sensitive, and by its passivity (receptivity) he can effectively receive formal determination, now in potential state. Instead, the active *noûs* is reacting. Having as attribute the conclusive function, he is guided to what in the repected material, is around the determinative, i.e toward formal. As a principle for updating, he proceeds to the operation to pass the intelligible of potential condition to the current one. As a result, he acquires the *form* of the object. Now, it returns from the condition of potency to that of act. This, by two powers, that of the sensitivity to provoke, that capacity of active noûs to update the form, as also the last power which, though it is own to active intellect, does not come into action, but because of the disposition as "act of sensitivity".

In conclusion, for Aristotle, the entire field of knowledge based on experience, which begins in the sensitive data and ends with the reasoning, is the work of passive noûs. But, as we said, science assumed, by its very nature, principles, universal *eide* or *forms*.

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<sup>33</sup> Identification idea of *noûs* with *arabé* is not new to Aristotle. Anaxagoras also (that Aristotle cited) underlined this thing, showing that *noûs* is still power; *power of thinking* – will add Aristotle. cf. Ed. Zeller, *Die philosophie der griechen*, ed. a IV-a, Leipzig, 1921, vol. II, p. 566.

These are procured to passive intellect by the active one, and only through its first activity of the second gets intelligibility. Therefore, from the sensitive representations, the function of passive intellect forms abstract notions, and even if the essence (that gives intelligibility to these concepts) is seized intuitively by active intellect, □the soul never thinks without sensible images□<sup>34</sup>.

### 3. Empirist Paradigm: the origin of knowledge determines its extent

Locke will give particular attention to the problem of knowledge origin. But what is the motivation or special interest for this problem? Locke believes that only if we could determine how what he called ideas had taken birth, i.e the elements of knowledge, we can determine how far our knowledge can spread. The last question is one of the most important questions which a philosopher can ask, generally, and to which he is forced to find an answer. In order to reconcile with ignorance on those issues that are in principle inaccessible to our knowledge means, for the well-known English author, the beginning of wisdom, because determining limits of knowledge constitutes the most powerful obstacle so foolish, claims metaphysicians, as well as against radical scepticism. The only way to fix the extent of knowledge is another examination of how *ideas* are formed. Such an examination can show they are, generally, objects about which we have the well formed ideas. For Locke, all the ideas and, therefore, all our knowledge of the material world have their sources in their senses and feelings in our senses and mind operations' observation, forming complex ideas from the simple ideas that constitutes the first elements (atoms) of knowledge.<sup>35</sup> The author proposes the development of this thesis by a psychological research. Locke argues that mind is from birth an empty room or as it was said later, a blank page. The essay begins examining the criticism and the rejection of the view where inborn ideas live. Research that follows this criticism is one explicitly genetics. The author proposes to establish first, as the ideas enter in our mind. The beginning of this research is a point zero, the birth one, when mind is an empty place. Locke said that the intellect is fully passive to acquire first ideas, simple ideas. □that objects of senses, writes Locke, introduces certain ideas in our mind, either that we want or not, and the processes of mind gives at least some obscure concepts about themselves, not a man is able to ignore what he

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<sup>34</sup> Aristotel, *Despre suflet*, III, 7, 431 a, 16.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 83.

does when he cogitates. The intellect cannot refuse to have these simple ideas when he presents to his mind, not to modify them when they imprinted, to wipe out or to produce himself some new ones, more than a mirror may erase the images or ideas that give birth to the object in front of it<sup>36</sup>. The metaphor mirror expressed with clarity that externalist approach, which is the beginning of the empirism through the explaining knowledge formation. The first elements of our knowledge have their source of things in the action of things from outside world on senses. This approach is solidary with environmental considerations about the role of environment in shaping the individual and about the omnipotence of education, ideas that will mark, later, powerful lights philosophy. Primary sources of knowledge about our facts are, for Locke, impressions produced by the action of outer stimuli on senses. In the acquisition of the first ideas the intellect behaves entirely passive. Raw knowledge is given to us later by one observation on intellect operations, which processes the original matter. Locke □observation, pointing toward the outer sensitive objects, or on internal processes of our mind, at we sense and on which we reflect, is what all the elements of thinking will procure. These two are knowledge springs, where all ideas born, the ideas that we can or cannot have naturally.<sup>37</sup> If simple ideas born in the same way the result is that they cannot be wrong. The error occurs only when our intellect combines out simple ideas forming other more complex. As it was noted not only once, our assumption is that our sensitivity is the security of truth, and spontaneity of the intellect is one error source as a fundamental assumption of classic empirism. This presumption illustrates well the way in which a research on the origin of knowledge, of the steps by which is produced, can guarantee their value of truth.

No doubt that, if our entire knowledge were limited to the origin of experience, knowledge edges would be enough narrow and tight. But Locke gets rid of such radical conclusions admitting people possess besides knowledge by outside experience a knowledge he called intuitive, as well as a demonstrative knowledge. By experience we get only knowledge of outside nature. Intuitive knowledge is knowledge of our existence as spirits, and demonstrative knowledge recognizes the existence of God. The latter relies on the first one. Because human existence as a finite creature,

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<sup>36</sup> John Locke, Eseu asupra intelectului omenesc, trad. Armand Roşu și Teodor Voiculescu, an introductory study and notes by Dan Bădărău, ed. Științifică, București, 1961, vol. I, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, pp. 95-96.

endowed with intellect, believes Locke, could not be explained only if we admit the existence of eternal, omnipotent human beings. The unthoughtful matter could not produce a thoughtful creature. Locke, as the omniscient empirist of 18th century, including Hume, would not support the extremist sentence that what we know might be derived from experience. The controversy between rationalists and empirists in this era do not see the existence of “a priori” knowledge, but its spreading.

The thesis is sustained by the argument that only through senses we can come into contact with both the outside world, and our subjective world, and get such information about reality. For Locke the origin of our ideas is experience that he understood both the outern experience, and the intern experience, in other words, observation (knowledge) of what happens outside and what happens inside us<sup>38</sup>. Only experience, and nothing else, is the source of our ideas. Beside this, our counsciousness is *tabula rasa*.

External experience is not different, in Locke’s opinion, with *foreign perception* or *sensation*, and *internal experience* is the same thing with *reflection*. This means that, in the first case, we know by direct contact of our body senses with the object, i.e by seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. The contact forms impressions transmitted to the brain. This source of knowledge was considered by Locke as having greater importance than the second, which comes from the fact that reflection comes after (in temporal order) perception (sensation) so Locke formulated the principle of philosophical polemics of the second half of the XVII century not only, if we think that Kant himself would consider it: *There is nothing in the intellect, who have not been first in senses - Nil est in inteilectu, quod non-prius fueri in sensu*.

The philosopher notes, repeatedly, that □mind is that sheet of white paper on which there is nothing written and that ideas come from experience□<sup>39</sup>, that sensations are essential and decisive for knowledge and awareness. It is true, the other hand, implied that sensation and observation and attention, that the objects of senses communicate with one another and with the intellect. He emphasizes, however, the fact that he remains indestructible in conception, that: having ideas and perceiving is the same, or that wherever there are sensations or perceptions, there is an idea presented in real and present in intellect. Reflection is a cognitive process which has as material of its ideas obtained sensorially. It is a

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<sup>38</sup> R.S. Woolhouse, *The Empiricists*, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 84.

<sup>39</sup> J. Locke, *op.cit.*, vol I, pp. 94-95.

□perception of our internal processes of our own minds, when it is heading on the ideas it has acquired; it is an internal feeling □<sup>40</sup>.

Judging by these views it was natural that Locke considers that our ideas may not have a different source experience than, and their □truth cannot be established but through careful observation of things, the best way to reach the truth is to investigate things closely, as they are in reality and not to conclude that they are as we think or we were taught by others to imagine □<sup>41</sup> When asked when man starts to have ideas, Locke answered:

I think that the correct answer is as soon as he is having any sensation. Because, there is no idea in mind before the senses have brought any there, I imagine that ideas appear in the intellect at the same time as the sensation, which is that sensation or movement produced in any part of the body which leaves some perception in intellect.”<sup>42</sup> Here Locke refers to, in his own way, the link between sensibility and thinking, which would be determined, as the relationship of such separate processes in which the activity of the intellect is conditioned on the senses, but as identity. This disregard of the qualitative difference between the two activities, holding a specific relationship, is equivalent to cancellation of relationship itself. The metaphysical procedure to reduce the superior to inferior is thus imposed by Locke (appreciable contributions Hobbes had about this matter, also) and in theory of knowledge, which will not delay, leads to significant negative consequences. Consequently, the fundamental principle of empirist epistemology gets Locke to a memorable phrase: □to have ideas and to perceive is the same thing”<sup>43</sup>.

Giving to mind her first elements, *the sensation* is a prime source of knowledge. And whereas ideas received on this way relate to the outside world, this source of knowledge may be also called and felt outern. The *cognitive* value of these *ideas* is highest, since they correspond to things they cover.<sup>44</sup>

Determining sensation as the source of knowledge, Locke had to find soon that this one may not be the source of all ideas. Therefore, in the genesis explanation, intervenes a second source: internal reflection or sense, by which mind gets ideas reflecting its inner processes: □in time, says the author of the Essay, mind comes to reflect on her own processes

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<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, p. 82.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, p. 140.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, p. 94.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 85.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Ayers, *Locke. Epistemology and Ontology*, Routledge, London, 1994, vol I, p. 38.

relating to the ideas acquired by the sensation and face it out with a new group of ideas that he called ideas received by intellect.”<sup>45</sup> For Locke, these two sources are the only routes through which mind can get ideas: “I say that these two, i.e material things as objects of sensation and processes of our own minds inside as objects of reflection are for me the only originating items in which all our ideas find their inception“. In this way, the theory of inborn ideas’ lives is rejected in the most radical way, since, stresses Locke, “We have not remembered anything that does not come from one of these ways”<sup>46</sup>.

Founding knowledge on experience, Locke accentuated the weakness of national rationalism to replace an essential lack of modern philosophy until his time, that of not revealing the origin and mode of training our ideas. If is true that by founding of knowledge through experience empirism has opened new prospects to the problem solving regarding to it, as is true that *experience* the empirist approaches is as such as involves elements that are bound to lead the problems imposible to overcome by empirist minds.

These implications become obvious in a brief analysis of Loke’s concept of experience. In this concept enters what mind get through those two mentioned ways, i.e sensations (named by Locke ideas) - received by the external sense and ideas-produced by internal reflection or internal sense. If sensations have - just because they suppose external prototypes and therefore they can be corrected through repeated observations, a subjective character somewhat weaker, in exchange of reflection has not a pronounced subjective burden. It is because Locke’s reflection is not limited to sensorial data-processing, but covers a wide and heterogeneous range of all kind of intellectual elements and processes, some in part with cognitive value, others without knowledge activity of the intellect or even its opposite, though all are appointed by Locke as ideas. Thus, in the *Essay* it is said that on the path to reflection mind gets a second category of ideas (first is received by the way of sensation), formed how “ideas as perception, mentality, doubt, faith, reasoning, the act of knowledge, the act of will and all various actions of our own minds, from which we are aware of them and see them in ourselves, we get ideas in the intellect, so distinctive as ideas that we get from the bodies which impressed the senses”<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> J. Locke, *op.cit.*, vol I, p. 81.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*.

Delineated in this way, reflection turns experience “in the sphere which occupies an important place” in something quite subjective. Locke’s experience consists only of sensations and ideas of reflection. It is missing from it exactly what is really important to real experience: the side of objectivity. Referring just to the issues here, Hegel considers that then “when they talk that way, we do not understand anything by experience”.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4. Concluding

As a conclusion to the problem of investiture of knowledge on experience he required priority of two findings. The first brought huge input of Locke to clarify our knowledge problems origin. The second is the concept of Locke’s content of experience, a content with its pronounced of subjective nature and also contradictory (because of its elements of heterogeneous component), will determine a course of i.e debating issues tackled further in the Essay and even some unwanted conclusions by Locke himself.

In the effort to hear the details of organization modalities and knowledge, the foundation of the first sentence of Locke’s philosophy is, as we saw above, that mind is somewhat like a white sheet”. And yet, how does mind get to possess ideas? His answer is sharp: “of experience. This is what knowledge supports and of it comes, eventually, itself”<sup>49</sup>. But simple ideas are born of experience, which, on their turn, is based on perception’s faculty. For Locke, perception is seen in two ways: *sensation* and *reflection*.

The path of sensation is receiving the senses by external things, obtaining simple ideas about their sensitive qualities. These ideas may originate in a sense (ex: ideas about color, sounds, tastes, smells, solidity) or by collaboration of more senses (ex: ideas of space, spreading, form, rest and motion). In conclusion, sensorial knowledge involves the direct report between senses and external things. In the absence of any specific thing (object), we cannot form an idea about specific qualities.

For instance, who has not tasted “oyster or pineapples taste has no particular ideas about the special taste”<sup>50</sup>. Valid is also that: in the lack of any specific body sense the subject cannot form its corresponding ideas. A

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<sup>48</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Prelegeri de istorie a filosofiei*, trad. D.D. Roșca, Ed. Academiei, București, vol. II, 1964, p. 485.

<sup>49</sup> J. Locke, *op.cit.*, vol I, p. 82.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 84.

blind from birth has no ideas “about sun or light, orange or yellow”,<sup>51</sup> and a deaf “about sounds”.<sup>52</sup>

The other source of which experience draws out ideas is the perception of our own internal processes of our mind. This *spring*, Locke would appoint *reflection* and would show that he must *turn* thinking to the ideas it has acquired, becoming other category of simple ideas “which they could acquire only in the things outside; such ideas are perception, mentality, doubt, faith, reasoning, thirst for knowledge, the act of will”.<sup>53</sup> Locke added that reflection charged only “actions of mind regarding his ideas, but also some kinds of imminent emotional, born sometimes of them”<sup>54</sup>. We can say that the main inner processes subjected to reflection are cognitive processes (in particular the perception and thinking) but also act emotional. For Locke, they (along with the sensation) are the only authentic sources of all our ideas.

Given that in the definition of reflection Locke designated by idea, psihical processes through their variety, when knowledge is of such processes, we must understand that to him this term (*idea*) is a very comprehensive one. In a broad sense, he argues that the idea is thinking, object, ideas that are elements which “mind is heading during thinking”<sup>55</sup>, or argues that idea is “anything that mind perceives itself or what is a direct object perception, thinking or intellect”<sup>56</sup>. And yet, Locke distinguishes well between objects of thinking and knowledge of these objects, between process of knowledge and the results of this process. The more, he distinguished between qualities of simple things ideas and external objects and the simple ideas having as object these qualities. In other words, we should “make the difference between features of bodies and ideas produced by them in mind”. The idea, in the narrow sense, means for Locke only knowledge; after studying the origin of ideas, the British thinker has, in mind the origin of knowledge.

Locke believes that, although having distinct ways and having a distinct field of application, reflection is very similar to sensation as it may be called *internal sense*, because it is hypostases of the same faculty of perception. Reflection is a sort of perceiving the mind by the mind.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibidem, p. 70.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem, p. 97.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, p. 83.

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem, p. 82.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, p. 81.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, p. 111.

Moreover, Locke said that, finally, reflection does not occur irrespective of sensation, since mind cannot reflect on her void condition, in which it would not recognise anything, but only its processes, which are produced by sensation.

In this respect, he shows that genetically, man has simple ideas *as soon as he has some sensation* and only with time, *mind reaches enough to reflect on the ideas gained through senses*, enriching it with ideas acquired by reflection<sup>57</sup>. Locke stresses that only later, as the intellectual trials perfection and gets a relative autonomy, and reflection becomes relatively autonomous compared with the feeling<sup>58</sup>.

Referring to sensation and reflection, Locke issues the intellectual inputs on perception step. He claims that feeling is not reduced to a sensorial of pure own outer world, but involves *observation* or intellectual *attention* directed toward things to know<sup>59</sup>. In addition, it draws attention, from the beginning that the objects of senses *communicate among themselves out with the intellect*,<sup>60</sup> they open a way to remember that feeling, that sensation with cognitive value is □that impression or movement produced in some part of the body that leaves a certain perception in the intellect”<sup>61</sup>. Locke will consider reflection to require more intellectual attention, because internal processes are even less constant and full, to be imposed on them in the reflection. □The ideas coming on the path of reflection arrive later in mind because they require attention□<sup>62</sup> writes Locke. So, in order to become aware, sensorial opinion must be intellectually processed. In this regard there is no pure feeling, he argues that □having ideas and perceiving is the same thing□, the man starts to have ideas “once he has a sensation”, adding that everywhere there is a sensation or perception there is an idea really produced and presented in the intellect.

Although □the idea is the object of thinking and all the ideas come on the way of sensation or reflection□<sup>63</sup>, Locke distinguished idea

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<sup>57</sup> Ibidem, p. 117.

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem, p. 95.

<sup>59</sup> Here we should underline the fact that Locke never separated absolutely the reflection by sensation, but its *relation of autonomy*. Simple ideas of reflection do not assume, to English thinker, the loss of any relation with external experience. cf. Florica Neagoe, *Istoria filosofiei moderne. De la Spinoza la Diderot*, ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1970, pp. 52 și urm.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, pp. 82-83 și 95.

<sup>61</sup> J. Locke, op.cit., vol I, p. 84.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem, pp. 85, 25, 121.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem, p. 81.

(awareness) from processes and functions disorders. So, he distinguished between idea (knowledge) and sensorial unconscious data.

Here is what the Englishman wrote in this regard: "although people in the mind processes can only have clear and distinct ideas about them, however, if he did not contest thoughts out there and they are not examined carefully, he will have no clear ideas and distinct about all the processes of his mind about everything it can be seen there more than he had all the detailed ideas in some landscape or of parties and movements of a clock that will not cross the eyes to these and will not observe attentively all their parts. The view and the clock can be arranged in such a way that would stay on the way every day, but nevertheless he will have only a very blur idea about all parts of which they are composed, until it examines them atentively on each in side"<sup>64</sup>. In conclusion, because it occurs in mind, the element called by Locke *sensation or idea* is the sensorial knowledge of opinion, not this knowledge as such. Therefore, Locke is inclined to use the term impression for the unconscious sensitive elements.

Understanding this thinking on perception step, Locke will emphasize that the issue is somewhat active in this asset, although he says: "The intellect is usually passive in receiving simple ideas"<sup>65</sup>, and that "in pure and simple perception mind is usually only passive and what it perceives cannot be avoided by the perception"<sup>66</sup>. The British thinker will specify that it is the only place about passivity in the sense that the intellect may not form the simple ideas absolutely voluntary, but under exterior things and under the process of mind: "because the objects of senses, writes Locke, introduce certain ideas in our mind, either that we want or not, and processes of mind gives a little abstract notions about themselves, no man being unable to ignore what he does when he cogitates. The intellect cannot refuse to have these simple ideas when they submit to mind, not to amend them when they instil (...) How bodies around us impressed our various organs so differently, our mind is forced to receive ideas and cannot avoid to perceive those ideas which are tied of them."<sup>67</sup> But, claiming that mentality is active in the fact that it *examines something with a voluntary attention of a certain degree* (increased) and that perception requires, in turn, intellectual attention, Locke let us understand that perception requires a certain activism. The active nature of matter of epistemic subject

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<sup>64</sup> Ibidem, p. 84.

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem, p. 95.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem, p. 120.

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem, pp. 95-6.

is involved in form supporting that simple ideas are not only formed on their minds, which implies a transposition and a translation of the sensorial given cognitive fact.

Founding knowledge on experience, Locke says, in fact, that feeling is dependent on external objects and reflection is dependent on originating feeling, what they will call later as *moderate empirism*. Stating that the perception is the first simple idea produced by the way of reflection<sup>68</sup> Locke will emphasize that, however, perception is the way for acquisition of knowledge (...), and perception is the first step and the first way towards knowledge, and the way to enter all its elements<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, p. 120.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem, p. 126.