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ONTOPHANY, SPIRITUAL SOLITUDE AND THE RESTORATION OF BEING

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Abstract: The study investigates *ontophany* (Aurel Codoban) against the background of *hierophany* (Mircea Eliade), with the purpose to emphasize the characteristics of the former. The correlation of ontophany with human singularity and solitude is capitalized as an enhancer of the perceptions of the divine, considering the "singularity" of human consciousness. Acknowledging the anthropological, historical, social, and philosophical aspects in the constitution of the ontophany, the phenomenological dimension is valued as most important. Divinity, the sacred and the existence supervene clearer in solitude, which implies a spiritual and contemplative exposure to oneself, to otherness and to Being. Interpreting ontophany in Aurel Codoban, via the relation of the sacred, mystery, human singularity and solitude, we situate the human being as a privileged creative, cultural and spiritual being, also the unique ontological cultural mutation in the universe, as in Lucian Blaga. The underlying sacrality of the existential fabric is an ontological experience explored and valued by man in his various revealing journeys into mystery and confrontations with the deeper layers of existence. The role of solitude in acknowledging ontophany (the manifestation or revelation of being) is discussed in this respect: solitude acts as the essential phenomenological clearing that dissolves systemic noise, allowing the fundamental reality of existence to reveal itself, recognizing in solitude the "I am," as the ontophany of the self (the "singularity" of man), the others and the Cosmos. Individual authenticity regained in acknowledging singularity (enhanced by solitude) and it is interwoven into the authenticity of intersubjectivity and togetherness, in the "restoration" of being as well as the creative affirmation and communication of being.

Key words: ontophany, hierophany, cratophany, sacred, profane, human singularity, affirmative and creative solitude, the restoration of being.

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1. INTRODUCTION. ONTOPHANY AND HIEROPHANY

The study correlates and differentiates *ontophany* (Aurel Codoban) and *hierophany* (Mircea Eliade) in order to set the path towards their correlation with solitude as an enhancer of the perceptions of the divine, sacred and existence for the human beings. However, the existential fabric that involves at the same time ontophany and hierophany as experiences of the sacred and the inherent human solitude, interwoven within human consciousness—and, more specifically, within the singularity of human consciousness—presents anthropological, historical, social, and philosophical aspects.

Divinity, the sacred and the existence supervene clearer in solitude, as exposure to the individual being, which inspire the contemplation of existence and transcendence as well as a sensitivity to the manifestation of the presence of the Sacred and of Being. A human being by herself, as an explorable universe, opens intentionally toward the profound structure of reality and existence confronted with the reality of being and the ephemeral theatrical everyday life. Contemplation and the acuity of consciousness take place in solitude as detachment from the daily routines and interactions brings the human being in front of the deeper layers of existence, in pensive, serene and eventually creative solitude, facing the existential: this is *ontophany* (*ontos*, existence, and *phainein*, manifestation). (Codoban 1998).

Hierophany, in the perspective of Mircea Eliade (Eliade 1978, 10-14) is a term formed from *hieros* (sacred) and *phainein* (manifestation) and it refers to the irruption of the sacred within the prophane existence through a mundane object. A banal physical object gains another meaning: a fire may send to the burning bush of the Bible or a tree may present as the majestic Tree of Life. Solitude is not compulsory for the experience of existence, of ontophany or hierophany, but one may be more sensitive and more open to such an experience in the serene, spiritual context of solitude.

In *Sacred and Ontophany*, Aurel Codoban succinctly defines “ontophany” as “the finality and fullness of religious experience”. (Codoban 1998, 153) Ontophany opens up for examination the world of religious experience with its specific categories, but Codoban emphasized the symbolical and analogical traits of the religious experience, with the nuance that *ontophany is not solely religious experience*, but the “crowning” of religious experience, as access to the Absolut, starting from the worldly symbolism. In Codoban, „the sacred exists in our consciousness as a trace of the Absolute”. (Codoban 1998, 153) As if the subject becomes transposed into an intersubjective relation of a higher level, via the religious experience, the expression of the Absolute creates the newer level of trans-subjectivity, allowing the communication with the Absolute, with the symbolical

support. Communication is sharing and, thus, the "I" of the symbolic experience becomes the "us" of the religious experience in a communicative communion with the Absolute that includes the I, the others, the world. A profound existential union is restored.

Codoban proposes explicitly a conceptual scheme of the religious experience included in the paradigm of Platonic ontology and clarifies that while the Absolute remains at the level of transcendence and the world at the contrasting and „disjunctive" level of existence, at the level of the religious experience the level of the manifestation of the Absolute of hierophany and cratophany meet and infuse the being. In this perspective, the religious being is placed "at the limit of the individual and collective religious experience", there where myth (found as a „continuation of hierophany and religious symbol") and ritual (at the "extension of cratophany and magical thought") also meet.

The concept of hierophany leads to the sacred-profane division of the world, while the concept of ontophany sustains the real-illusory distinction. Comparing hierophany and ontophany, central to hierophany is the sacrality of the manifestation, while the centrality of ontophany lays in the absolute reality, the durable foundation in stark contrast with the ephemeral traits of the daily human life In Eliade's perspective the sacred opens up the reality as an *alter ontos* of another order than the current, "immediate" one. From this perspective hierophany is ontophany. It *seems* that there is a synonymy between the two concepts, but they significantly differ: the main consequence of hierophany is the presence of the sacred, which is only the transient presentation of the Absolute manifested in ontophany. Results that hierophany is rather in a relation of metonymy with ontophany.

2. THE CONCEPT OF ONTOPHANY. ANTHROPOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS

The concept of ontophany represents our main focus in this investigation, starting from the definition and theoretical distinctions proposed by Aurel Codoban.

Ontophany is conceptualized in correlation with the origin of religion and the religious experience. In Codoban, the origin of religion is carefully addressed, avoiding "projections" or "metaphysics", in the sense that the origin of religions, cannot be identified as a historical origin. Although the study of the history of religions emphasizes the succession of religions since the ancient times and the fact that religion accompanied the existence of man, as if a painting of the superimposed succession of religions was recorded as a palimpsest, their intertextuality is genuine. In philosophy, in psychology, or in sociology the explanatory origin is found in a myth of

origin, a principle with functionality of origin. However, in the history of religions one cannot get to a kind of "religious Big Bang", similar to a referential point in epistemology or in the evolution of sciences.

Codoban shows that, following the theoretical steps taken in these disciplines, this role might be reserved for the factors or situations that seem convincing in describing the reasons triggering the human religious attitude toward the world, which could be considered the foundational principles in the explanation of the emergence of religion. In contrast, Mircea Eliade used the explicative lenses of evolutionism to indicate a vertical architecture, a quasi-progression within the universal history of religions (from pre-animism, to animism, to polydemonism, to polytheism, to monolatry, and to monotheism). Codoban recognizes the Hegelian view in this type of approach, by which (in Mircea Eliade) the true historian of religions arrives at comprehension through the comparison of disparate phenomena, pertaining to different spaces and times to identify the common traits on which to build afterwards the understanding of the religious phenomenon, in its specificity. Stating that "the sacred is not a historical category; it possesses no historical origin in time, just as it has no end—other than the end of human consciousness itself" (Codoban 1998, 151), argues that in Eliade's framework, the dialectic between the sacred and the profane define the specific religious form. Eliade's hierophanies are inscribed in the dialectic of the sacred and the profane, as varied forms, in an irreversible sequence. Dealing with history, the history of religions investigates *religious facts* on their specific plane of manifestation, which cannot be otherwise than historical, concrete, and existential, while the religious facts that manifest through events that are "neither *always* nor *entirely* reducible to history." (Codoban 1998, 152) In other words, if all human facts are historical, there is a historical conditioning of the religious phenomenon, this is undeniable and it is what the historian can investigate. At the same time, although the historical conditioning of the religious phenomenon is significant for the investigation of the religious phenomenon it is so from the perspective of the historian and this perspective does not exhaust the religious phenomenon. This is the reason why Eliade is preoccupied also with revealing "what a historical fact reveals of the trans-historical through the medium of history." (Codoban 1998, 152)

Codoban turns the focal interest towards the sacred, too. The very definition of "ontophany" is found in the correlation with the category of the sacred. Since the sacred is not a historical category, the historical origin for religion is highly elusive. The role and scope of history is not to capture a moment of transition from an a-religious state of humanity to a religious one and construe a specific theory around it, describing *the origin,* but to record narratives of the manifold *hierophanies* and *cratophanies* and their accompanying events and transformations of manifest religiosity.

Eliade and Codoban employ different vocabularies and frameworks. By reclaiming the structural existential load of religious experiences, Eliade's framework aims to capture the architecture of the Absolute. In his studies of the history of religions and anthropology, Mircea Eliade in *The Treaty of the History of Religions* (Eliade 1949) explains „cratophany" or "kratophany" ("kratos", force and „phaneia", manifestation) as the tremendous and overpowering manifestation of the sacred, of something magic, transcendental and powerful that used to be hidden and becomes impressively present. The studies often make the connection with *mysterium tremendum* (Rudolf Otto 1958, 12-24). However, the central concept in Eliade's vocabulary is *hierophany*, the manifestation of the sacred through profane objects, functional in the dialectic split *sacred vs. profane*. The former is the absolute reality, endowed with power, meaning, and order, while the latter is defined by space (unmitigated, chaotic even) and linear time as opposed to *illo tempore*, the "time of the beginnings" primordial, reversible, not necessarily linear. Also, the ontological communication with the divine is ensured by the *axis mundi* symbolically revealed via a sacred mountain, a pillar or the human being. An important concept is as well *coincidentia oppositorum*, a feature of the divine, by which all contradiction and separation are reunified.

Aurel Codoban's conceptual vocabulary is founded on a turn to semiotic mediation, reinterpreting Eliade's descriptive categories via renewed, *postmodern semiotic lens*, analyzing the capacity of religious language to structure human perception, instead of searching for an objective, hidden spiritual "essence". The already mentioned central concept, "ontophany" captures the movement forward of existence, its manifestation, as a structured web of meaning. Thus, we capture the reality as communicable rather than radically separate. This way, cratophany becomes in Codoban not a terrifying irruption of the divine as in Eliade, but the basis of magical thinking, a lively network within which signs act through *metaphor* and *metonymy*, as operations of signification. In Codoban, religious phenomena are complex symbolic and linguistic structures so that hierophany is fundamentally a *mediation* or a *translation* mechanism that converts raw spiritual experiences into stable, readable human signs, which further diversify beyond stable (stagnant) archetypes into symbols and communicative forms that continue to evolve and lively adapt to the changing cultural contexts. While Eliade explores via spiritual and structural lens what the sacred *is* and how it anchors human existence in absolute reality, Codoban investigates how the sacred *communicates* and how its structural grammar shapes human interpretation via analytical, textual, and semiotic instruments.

Ontophany represents the finality and integrative whole of religious experience (its "crowning"), transcending the diffuse level of religiosity, as

both promotor and generator of religion. The disclosure that takes place through ontophany represents the framework for analysing the secondary categories of religious experience. At this stage, simple religiosity is overcome, beyond, religious life takes place and religious consciousness is manifest, without any historical determinations. "Thus, if at a first level we can operate universally with hierophany and cratophany, with religious symbol and magical thinking, with myth and ritual, for the second level of analysis, specific categories are required—such as those employed in our previous analysis, which distinguishes between Greek, Jewish, and Christian religious homologies, or between Christianity and the ideal type of Asian religions. In the transition from ontophany to archaic and religious ontologies, the Absolute, the World, and the relationships between them emerge here with the greatest possible clarity." (Codoban 1998, 152)

Religious experience is unveiled as a symbolical and analogical experience, which implies that ontophany is also symbolical and analogical. As the "crowning" of the religious experience, ontophany conveys what is "the Absolute in Relation to the World for a certain subject". (Codoban 1998, 153) This analogy is based on the existing symbolism constitutive to the World, which invites "the Sacred into human consciousness as a trace of the Absolute". (Codoban 1998, 153)

Ontology develops and unfolds the religious experience further into the plane of life, into a plane of inter-subjectivity that makes it possible to conceive and construe a lived and experienced plane of trans-subjectivity central to the religious experience where the transition "from mere expression to communication" is manifest and experienced.

This is how the connection between ontophany and ontology is created. While religious experience finds expression in *ontophany*, it is communicated as *ontology* and it is through this communication and at this level of communication that religion emerges. Codoban shows that at this level of communication both the Absolute and the World acquire "the consistency of reality". (Codoban 1998, 154) Through communication the subject of religious experience shares meanings with the "we" allowing to shift from the "I" to *"I" of the inter-subjectivity*, as in Husserl (1989, 201, 230). Through communication and "subjective coherence" the Absolute and the World receive "the consistency of reality" is most symbolic, and, in our view, totally indebted to religious consciousness of man. The conceptual scheme of religious experience unfolds from the symbolism of the world, one type of fact of consciousness, to the analogies that describe the Absolute (the traces of the Absolute in human consciousness), to religious experience, taking place in the consciousness and finally gives way to religion. This is how we can follow the "film" of the emergence of religion from religious experience, watching a religious scheme that is purely conceptual and belongs to Platonic ontology, as the author explains.

In Codoban's conceptual scheme the transcendence including the Absolute and the Worldly planes are in "total disjunction". Within this scheme we conceive a plane of individual religious experience which includes an *apparent plane of the Absolute*, which is the plane of hierophany and of cratophany, too.

Situating the religious human being at the boundary between the plane of individual and collective religious experience means to situate man within a realm of shared symbols and meanings, the realm of myth with its specific exemplary and explanatory discursivity, which gives way to cratophany. Myth is in Codoban the extension of the hierophany and the religious symbol, while the ritual is an extension of the cratophany and magical thinking, thus, the two are kindred and closely related in the religious experience and in the reality of religion. One may recognize here an analysis of the situation of human being "*in* mystery and *for* revelation" as in Lucian Blaga (1985, 473-475; 2018, 99).

However, Codoban distinguishes the religions of myth, with a mystical religious experience, within a "via negativa", interpreting the Absolute at the other radically different and transcendent level, from the religions of ritual, with an ontology following a "via analogica", where the interpretation of the Absolute remains of *this world*, in the terms of this world, still constituting itself as a religious ontophany of affirmation and "positive" revelation (as in the religious formula of Christianity). In contrast, the theology of apophatic orientation accentuates the aspect of mystery in the Absolute. Nevertheless, this is a type of withdrawal, an individual religious experience that allows or induces the path of a parallel religiosity possibly one of heresy and of the schism.

The main distinctive factor in the matter of the orientation of religious experience remains whether expression or communication are prevailing, whether it is a predominantly individual or a predominantly collective interpretation of the sacred.

There is a logical distinction in the emphasis placed either on expression or on communication—that is, whether the interpretation of the sacred occurs on an individual or a collective plane, whether we have religiosity or religion, but, Codoban emphasizes, there is also a historical aspect and a historical validity in place. As religion constitutes a collectively validated religious experience of the divine it implies that this type of experience is regulated by a series of social and historical forms of constraint. Every man is subject to religiosity by the very prerogatives of human consciousness, while not every man is subject of religion.

Within the theoretical framework of the social sciences and humanities, the analysis of the transition in religious experience takes many forms: a social form, a "movement" from the individual and subjective stage to the collective and intersubjective one; a communicational form, from the

expressive to the communicable; a semiotic kindred communicational aspect, taking place from a "hermetic semiosis" to a circumscribed interpretation.

There is also a historical and anthropological form of transition, from community to society. Codoban emphasizes in fact a *sociological turn*, taking place from the anthropological to the sociological. Philosophically, the thinker captures a turn from the analytics of religious experience toward a cultural-religious phenomenology of the sacred.

While mysticism marks a return, a "moment" prior to the religious experience, the situation at the individual level entertains an opposite "movement" to that of the religious constitution of the religious dogmas and cults; a transformation is unfolding from myths and rituals "backwards" to the hierophanies and cratophanies emerging at the level of religious symbol and magical thought.

Thus, in order to define religion with a higher degree of scientific precision one should consider all these distinctions and all these "turns". Not to insist disproportionately on the aspect of religion as social institution with moral impact nor on its historical genesis nor on the ideology, what is of paramount importance in defining religion is, first, the fact that it has the origin in the individual religious experience and, second, the aspect of communalization of individual religious experiences. The process by which individual religious experiences become a collective religious experience is central to defining religion. The limited aspect of individual religious experience is clarified by the limitation of the scope of one's own individual life, so that the interpretation of the sacred acquired in individual religious experience is thus limited. Religion as the communal interpretation of the sacred embraces the scope of collective life and it offers an experience enhanced by the intervention of intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity is prompted by human sociality, to a certain extent. The implicit theoretical background that explains this transition from the individual stage to the collective stage of intersubjectivity, in general, and in a subtle manner also in the religious experience is the social and political philosophy of the human being as *zoon politikon* and sociality, from the Aristotelian political principle that man is a zoon politikon, endowed with *logos* (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a) to Hobbes, stating that man is a being better off within the social contract, away from the vicissitudes of the "state of nature" (Hobbes 2008), then Locke, with his thesis that man is a free social being endowed with natural rights and who has to consent to government and legitimate it (Locke 1988). Rousseau considered that man becomes corrupt within the social realm and the accordance to "general will" and the "common good" are the solutions for good society and good life (Rousseau 2004), but for Kant man is the "asocial social being", prompted by the social competition to enter in a "race" of talent and

culture development (Kant 2007). Hegel saw man caught between *Anerkennung*, recognition, and *Sittlichkeit*, ethical life, both shaping human self-consciousness, able to become free only by ethical life, and participation in social institutions – family, civil society, the state (Hegel 1979). Marx stated that people's consciousness does not determine their being, but is their social being that determines their consciousness (Marx 1996) and Honneth showed that intersubjective recognition conduced people to law, while love and solidarity constituted sociality (Honneth 1996).

However, intersubjectivity has a phenomenological dimension, in recognizing others as other consciousnesses that are related to our consciousness, as well as relevant and significant to our consciousness instilling the idea of a common world beyond the individual one. Edmund Husserl, through his concept of *Einfühlung* (empathy), explained the phenomenology of an act of experiencing the other as consciousness, thus, as subject and subjectivity characterized by intentionality and a specific view of the world. (Husserl 1989, 255) Edith Stein took the conceptualization further in *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*, investigating the *structure* of empathy as *experience of the* feeling of what is the other living, or experiencing, in this sense, one becoming receptor of the other's lived experience not as a simple mirroring or mimicry of what the other lives and experiences, but actually sharing the other's experience, the meanings conveyed and the states communicated by it. (Stein 1964) Max Scheler also considers the concept of fellow-feeling (*Einfühlung*) and that we can perceive *unmediated* joy, pain, love (the "ingredients" of the religious experience, too), as people are not objects, we are not opaque in regard to experience and feelings and we transmit them to the other human beings. (Scheler 1954) In Heidegger, *Dasein* is accompanied by *Mitsein* ("*Dasein*-with") to be-together-with-others which is in our nature and present in our human existence, too. (Heidegger 1962) As a consequence, intersubjectivity is nothing else but a fundamental structure of human existence. Merleau-Ponty although talks about corporeality or *Leib* shows that intersubjectivity is experienced even at a pre-reflexive level through one's own body. (Merleau-Ponty 2013; Codoban 2000b, 92) So, in his view, intersubjectivity is pre-conscious, but this means that it is deeper and somewhat of an objective naturality, as the cultural and social world has a carnal basis for the interconnection, inter-communicational reversibility of feeling by which the self and the other intertwine, thus proposing the stronger possible concept of intersubjectivity.

In our view, social (and political), phenomenological and ontophanic considerations regulate (and limit) the individual and the collective interpretation in the religious experience making it deliverable, conveyable and communicable. In Codoban, in community religion, the access to the

sacred is not direct as in the case of the individual, but mediated by the other members of community. At the level of individual religious experience, we have a "feeling", while at the level of the community religious experience we have "knowledge", resumed to a certain particular meaning, that of "recognition". Not only that we recognize each other as parts of community, but we recognize collectively the fact and form of the Sacred – the *ontophany that makes existence real*.

Codoban emphasizes that archaic ontologies deem the effective constitution of the world an intersubjective act. Our brief social, political and phenomenological incursion into the history of thought shows that intersubjectivity is always at the foundation of the ontology of a common world in any epoch. In any epoch, the world exists *with us and by us*: to the extent that we are, the world is. Even when the world is imagined it is brought into present existence with a sense of the possibility of fictional existence of (a kind of) "us" within that imagined world.

Intersubjectivity should consider also a dialectics of the sacred and the profane triggered by the myriad meanings of existence and the consequences and imperative of adaptative life, the latter, much more accentuated at the collective level. The philosopher of religions explains that adaptative life becomes very demanding at the collective level, in terms of intersubjective adaptation and in terms of adaptations to nature, as a group. Codoban states that community and society require by regulative discourse ad by the forms of constraint (also, by the forms of compulsion and coercion) attention to meanings (in our view, out of the compulsory attention to social order). But the author notices that by this society requires attention to meanings by the deprivation of meaning which may come from the sphere of religion. Thus, the delimitation of the social sphere and the religious sphere are very important. (Codoban 1998, 156)

The very principle of religious existence is found by Codoban in the depths of the mutual demarcation between the realms of the sacred and the profane, considering the emergence of religion out of religiosity as a crucial articulation of the sacred - profane dialectic. When the sacred is delimited and defined as the divine, its meanings are fixed and the religious community is reformulated as a Church. From this perspective, the Church could be understood as an artificial community that preserves the sacred and its vitality by restricting it to the "Divine" and regulating its meanings via ritual: "The Church thus becomes a sort of relatively living museum of religious forms that once existed, fully immersed within the broader fabric of the community's life. Religion acts as a brake, slowing the movement of society away from the sacred and toward the profane." (Codoban 1998, 157) By these "movements", the Church and religion factor into the quality and meanings of community, togetherness and solidarity.

Myth and ritual, via "religious culture", take part in the dialectics of the sacred and the profane. (Eliade 1959, 12; Codoban 1998, 144, 153) Found side by side with culture in the dialectic of the sacred and the profane as products of this dialectic, both of them situated in the realm of meaningful rationality, religion is part of culture itself with a paradoxical regulative claim above and beyond culture. It cannot deem everything to be "religious" and has to accept distinct degrees of religiosity emerge, in contrast with aspects of an individual's or a community's life that are, some, truly non-religious. By the "conservative, museum-like effort of religion—which seeks to keep the forms of the sacred alive against the entropy of time" religion fights the predominance of the profane, but this is "nothing more than a cooled, cryptic form of the sacred". (Codoban 1998, 157)

3. THE HIEROPHANY-ONTOPHANY-SOLITUDE APPROACH

Demonstrating the philosophical role of solitude and its importance in the existential forge of authenticity and access to the Transcendental, to Being – as in ontophany –, can be only a philosophical "demonstration", built in connection to the interpretation of human condition. From the Stoic internal sanctuary (a person find a more peaceful and trouble-free retreat than in his own mind), to the Heideggerian situatedness away from *das Man*, a different ontological space than that of the utilitarian gaze and doxa, within the "ontophanic" space of *thauma*, to the Existential forge of authenticity, and to the Transcendental return to nature, we find reflective solitude as *the state* uniquely favourable for all the grand existential questions, for contemplating the *Why is there something rather than nothing?* aspects of *existence* and for conceiving the profane itself: in Codoban, described as "nothing more than a cooled, cryptic form of the sacred". (Codoban 1998, 157)

Solitude and the silenced *das Man* – "they", the world (Heidegger 1962, 164), or, the rejection of the utilitarian "immediate" (Blaga in Botez et al. 2018, 99) is providing specifically the conditions for the human being "awakenings" to the profound structure of reality and existence (to the sacred infusing existence in ontophany). Facing oneself as part and facet of Being, man pervades into the sacrality of the existential fabric, as first ontophanic site recognizing in solitude the "I am" as the ontophany of the self (the "singularity" of man), the others and the Cosmos. Voluntary spiritual solitude is in our interpretation characterizable as deliberate, chosen and freely embraced (a type of "alonewardness"), different from isolation, loneliness, mysticism and existential singularity. (Stern 2023, 89-103) However, existential singularity, contemplative solitude and the symbolic-interpretative perception of the sacred form a profoundly

intertwined existential reality pregnant in existential philosophy and modern phenomenology. They all contribute to capturing the journey of the human consciousness from recognizing its ultimate isolation to discovering profound, transcendent meaning (not confined to the mystical meaning or to the religious meaning), as well as the meanings of togetherness.

Singularity, as uniqueness of the man's consciousness (Blaga in Botez et al. 2018, 99-103) creatively responsible for its own existence, a burden solved culturally, implies a necessary detachment from the comfort of ready-made meanings it is reasonably predicated upon reflection. Thus, spiritual solitude becomes the adequate "crucible" to "melt" and "forge" newer, deeper and revelatory thoughts, embracing existential singularity creatively. Thus, the consciousness stops merely *reacting* to the world and starts *opening* to it, communicating and perceiving *the world anew*. The sacred is part of communicating oneself and the world to oneself moving from object to mystery interpretatively and symbolically. Paradoxically, while one realizes singularity of being as unique situatedness in disconnection it approaches it culturally, interpretatively, metaphorically, by creating meaning thus perceiving the sacred, underlying unity to all things. As in Codoban, the world is not a collection of cold, mechanical objects anymore, but a deeply meaningful and sacred whole. Ultimately, the philosophical sense of solitude is a vindication of ownership over one's consciousness.

Thus, solitude may be or not found in isolation and it is usually defined as a state of self-chosen, restorative, pensive, introspective and often creative aloneness either physically or mentally, or both, but not accompanied by the negative feelings of loneliness. With this working definition in mind, the correlation of hierophany, ontophany and solitude is intricate, philosophical and existential, describing a privileged space for the exploration and revelation of Being. Henry David Thoreau emphasized the clarity found in (idyllical) solitude within nature (Thoreau 2008), Daniel Defoe explored physical solitude prompting enhance self-awareness and ingenuity (Defoe 2015), Friedrich Nietzsche endorsed solitude as vital for the creative authenticity of the self, "regaining", or "finding the self" (Nietzsche 2023), Albert Camus promotes in solitude the benefits of emotional detachment and alienation as a beneficial distancing from the social absurd constraints (Camus 1946), Edward Engelberg (Engelberg 2001) explored the dramatic aspect of self-confrontation in solitude interpreting this aspect in Virginia Woolf, Thomas Mann, and Samuel Beckett, while Robert Coplan talks about the "joy of solitude" found in quieting emotional tension and disarray generated by the generalized obsessive connection in digital times. (Coplan 2025)

Solitude tunes down the interferences of the mundane and the illusory

impact of the daily life pales. "Silencing" the world solitude creates the favourable conditions for ontophany. Religious experiences, mystical experiences, shamanic experiences are predicated upon a preliminary state of physical and mental withdrawal; allowing the installation of serenity which invites the sacred into the field of consciousness. That serenity, the "zero-point of Being" sets in contrast the human being and the abyss. The sacred and the human being is restored as *axis mundi* though a phenomenon which can be described as religious experience or as spiritual actualization that prompts further spiritual becoming (followed by new possible actualizations and further becoming) facing a plenitude of Being as a human being embracing existence and embraced by existence.

We interpret solitude as a precondition or a catalyst for the perception of ontophany, with the consequence of increased metaphysical openness and sensitivity, ultimately, spiritual human being filling the solitude with the awareness of Being, functioning as the connection with the Reality itself, the "ultimate" Reality. In this respect, we may interpret solitude as a laboratory, an experiential space with ontological specificity, where the conscious experience of hierophany is not only possible, but also felt and lived. The essence of being is no longer disconnected from the essence of Being (Kierkegaard 1980). However, for an existentialist such as Sartre the disconnection is still present in the accompanying feeling of abyss and nothingness (Sartre 2018), or, for the existentialist-nihilist such as Cioran the connection remains an unfulfilled promise that becomes the confirmation of the human being cruelly cast into a limiting existence, which is a constricting enframing, an imprisonment. (Cioran 1991, 192; Cioran 1990, 67)

4. HUMAN SINGULARITY AS SOLITUDE – MEDIUM AND VECTOR OF HIEROPHANY AND ONTOPHANY

Related to the philosophical framework of Lucian Blaga, we interpret reflective *solitude as both the cause and the consequence of human singularity* (alienation from nature and existence into revelation and mystery). Culture is not just existential decoration for Blaga (Botez et al. 2018, 99-103); it is our existential (medium created in) response to solitude. We are singular because we alone possess the awareness of mystery, and we are solitary by this uniqueness (singularity) because that very awareness severs our connection to both the divine and the purely natural worlds. Ultimately, human dignity shines brightest in this loneliness: unable to touch the absolute, the human being "naturally" creates art, philosophy, and myth.

However, human singularity is allowed as well by ontophany, by human unique possibility of catching glimpses of Being, an idea ensued by the

understanding of the concept in Codoban. The cultural and revelatory situation of man is uniquely favored by ontophany, which is perceivable in spiritual solitude. The reflective human being revealing meanings is the *human* being worthy of this name. The human being as ontological mutation unique in the entire universe by this uniqueness and (the blessed) cultural-ontological solitude is allowing for the development of an existential spiritual-aspirational dimension favouring the transcendent ontological embrace of the Sacred, via meaning, as in Codoban.

Since the human being is central to Lucian Blaga's philosophical system, in which creation and culture are foundational. The human agent is a creative agent of privileged metaphysical, ontological, experiential and epistemological access, one who also creates history (Blaga 1977). Philosophy means metaphysics and knowledge and creativity; *noology* (Blaga in Botez et al. 2018, 105), the intellectual systematic exploration of the unconscious mind engages the uniqueness of man's knowledgeable creativity and becomes apparent in the human being's metaphorizing nature. As in Codoban, any spiritual aeon finds at its core the human being, the cultural values and creations imbedded into the revealing metaphors of art and knowledge of human explorations of mystery, via organized of limitations and openings provided by the stylistic matrix via the "divine differentials" (the generator engine of Blaga's metaphysical construction), set in motion by the "Great Anonym" (Blaga in Botez et al. 2018, 45-62) the metaphysical centre, in order to forbid men advancing too much into the metaphysical realm and becoming gods. Transcendental censorship is the phenomenon preventing this and the stylistic matrix is the consequence. Thus, mystery remains and ingredient of human existence, in knowledge, in history, in creation, in culture and science.

In this perspective, human singularity is accompanied by the "feeling of ontophany" revealed under different aspects in all the existential and specific human processes of metaphorizing. As the human being is the metaphorizing being, producing revelatory metaphors, attempting to comprehend, convey, translate, reduce or increase and radicalize the mystery, she creates language and representations beyond the existent ones, and by this privilege man has a special relation with existence itself, in the genuine spirit of ontophany. Even man's stylistic categories that permeate the unconscious mind of the human being describe a particularity, which we may term "ontophanic nature" (Codoban 1996) governed and stimulated by an abyssal categorical sum of functions, forming a particular noology: another expression for the idea that man is an ontological mutation, unique in the entire universe, radically different from the angels and the beasts. (Blaga 1996, 190)

Thus, man is an ontological mutation, not only an expression of structural and biological mutations. In our interpretation, this translates

into the description of a being able to entertain an ontophanic feeling, which is capitalized into various creations of metaphysical, existential, cultural, artistic or scientific type. As a consequence, the human being capitalizes ontophany through revelatory metaphors which are actually the fruit of the hierophanies experienced. Lucian Blaga shows that man is destined to a creative destiny, of a completely singular situation and ontological dignity in the universe. (Blaga in Botez et al. 2018, 50) Broadly speaking, this destiny is determined by the fact that man exists differently than the animal: the very situation of man is within the horizon of mystery and for revelation.

In Blaga, in *Horizon and Style*, cultural creations have with and in them, via their style, depth and a 'categorical' sense, and with that, also, the character of horizon, of an axiological atmosphere, of orientation, of form. (Blaga in Botez et al. 2018, 105-128) Although stylistic elements do not exhaust creation they are one of the "signs" associated to the singularity of man. The substance of man's cultural creations, includes the substance of real things but also the substance always stands for something else – the *metaphorical*, the mystery, the revelation, the sacred. As in Blaga, the "metaphorical" aspect is not entirely stylistic adornment it "speaks" – and here lays an importance consonant aspect with the vision of Codoban – it conveys and communicates the ontophany. This is the role of revelatory metaphors explained in *The Genesis of Metaphors and the Meaning of Culture*: unlike the manufactory metaphors produced by the alignment of similar facts, both from the world or from the belonging to the given and experienced world or from the imagined world, the "revelatory metaphor" increases the signification of the objects it refers to, in Codoban's terminology, increasing their ontophany.

The revelatory metaphors bring to light something hidden, not temporarily as in a hierophany or a cratophany, but they permanentize a manner of working with mystery that has epistemological impact and not only a cultural or religious one. Hence, Blaga and Eliade do not open "equivalent itineraries towards mystery". (Codoban 2000a; Codoban 2000b) Revelatory metaphors use what is at our disposal in the concrete world, to capture more of the ontological fabric of the world and a novel deeper stratum of reality. Revelatory metaphors are the symptoms of the human being specific mode of existence, which is revelatory, creative and cultural.

Revelatory metaphors "signal" that man becomes "Man" ontologically described by the work with mystery, and the situation within the horizon and the scope of mystery. (Blaga in Botez et al. 2018, 98-103)

Thus, we may conceive singularity as either medium or vector of hierophany and ontophany, hence, optimal for the manifestation of the sacred, respectively of the being. Human consciousness functions as the horizon of being witnessing existence by the creation of meaning, in Blaga's

terms, by "metaphorizing" in a revelatory manner remaking a transition from being to Being and thus replenishing the human being prone to spiritual awakening. The unique horizon of consciousness reunites the transcendent axes of spirituality, sacred, mystery with the horizontal axis of human temporality, constituting the human being as unique medium for revelation and for the meditation upon ontophany, not a mere spectator of incidental hierophany. This makes the human being, a central topic in Lucian Blaga's metaphysical systematic thought.

The human being is not a frontier for the mystery and the sacred, but a medium for the sacred and an "ontophanic universe", recognizing herself as Being, a vector of ontophany (and hierophany).

5. CONCLUSION. ONTOPHANY AND THE METAPHYSICAL ASPIRATIONAL EMBRACE OF SOLITUDE

Ontophany is distinguished from hierophany and Eliade's framework and conceptualized in this study as the meaningful manifestation of Being and Reality. Codoban does not see the world as a reality with a binary character sacred vs. profane. The sacred and the profane come together and co-exist in ontophany, but not as fixed and immutable datum, but within the dialectics that allows the phenomenological dynamics appearance - hidden (a dynamic dichotomy sacred-profane). Solitude as the spiritual, reflective and privileged situation is part in the specificity of the human being seen in the horizon of mystery. In Codoban, ontophany is the gateway through which the mystery of the sacred and the Absolute are revealed into created meanings, and, in Blaga, with the option to intensify and increase mystery. (Blaga in Botez et al. 2018, 71-87) The historical, anthropological, sociological, phenomenological, cultural and philosophical institutions of reality for the human being find in ontophany an interesting nodal point. As the traces of the Absolute in human consciousness open the being to the revelation of mystery and for the reality instituted by ontophany, the solitude inherent in human singularity conceivably restores the plenitude of human being via the wealth of the experience of mystery and of the sacred, with cultural creative outcomes (by the creation of meanings).

The philosophy of ontophany acquires the dimension of a philosophy of contemplative consciousness. Hierophany, ontophany (Codoban) and spiritual and reflective solitude are describing human singularity (Blaga) of human consciousness and its horizons, as they all meet and factor in the sacred spiritual-ontological embrace conceived clearer in solitude.

AI Use Statement: No generative-AI tools were used in preparing this manuscript.

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