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THE ONTOLOGICAL FUNCTOR AND SIGNIFYING RATIONALITY: THE SACRED AND THE LIMITS OF COMMUNICATIVE MEDIATION IN AUREL CODOBAN'S THOUGHT

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Abstract
This article examines the relationship between the ontological function of the sacred, signifying rationality, and the thematization of communication in two works by Aurel Codoban: *Sacru și ontofanie* and *Semn și interpretare*. The research question concerns the conditions under which symbolic mediation participates in the constitution of religious reality without reducing the sacred to the circulation of signs. Through textual analysis and comparative hermeneutics, the study argues that the relationship between ontology and communication cannot adequately be described in terms of chronological replacement. Signifying rationality and communicability are already constitutive of the analysis of religious experience, while the difference between the sacred and the Absolute precludes identifying manifestation with its referent. The proposed contribution lies in articulating an interpretation of constitutive but nonreductive mediation, supported by three analytical conditions: referential differentiation, interpretive coherence, and existential engagement. This reading preserves the tension between the ontological orientation of religious experience and the postmodern model of the signifying surface. Dialogue with the hermeneutics of the symbol and the critique of the simulacrum delineates the possibilities of interpretation, while research on online religious practices illustrates the need to distinguish symbolic mediation from technological mediatization. The result is not a theory of the disappearance of the traditional sacred, but an explication of the conditions and limits of its communicative intelligibility.

Keywords: sacred; ontophany; ontological functor; signifying rationality; hermeneutics; communication; Aurel Codoban.

Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies, vol. 25, issue 75 (Winter 2026): 96–112
ISSN: 1583-0039 © SACRI

1. Introduction: the problem of a mediation that does not exhaust its object

In Aurel Codoban's philosophy of religions, the question of the sacred concerns the constitution of experience, existential orientation, and the possibility of a shared world simultaneously. These registers do not succeed one another as independent stages; rather, they converge in the analysis of how human beings interpret what manifests itself to them. *Sacru și ontofanie* situates religious experience within the domain of signifying rationality and acknowledges its ontological stakes: not merely the representation of an object, but the establishment of a relation to reality that engages the interpreter's existence (Codoban 1998, 42–44).

A difficulty arises here: if religious experience is constituted through interpretation, what prevents it from being equated with any production of meanings? And if access to reality presupposes signs and communication, can the sacred still designate something other than the efficacy of a discourse? These questions do not call for a hasty choice between a transcendence accessible without mediation and an arbitrary construct of language. They call for an examination of the relationship between the conditions through which the sacred becomes intelligible and the status of what is recognized as sacred. Mediation can make a relation possible without, by its mere existence, producing the truth of every claim formulated within that relation.

The problem already has an interpretive history. Sandu Frunză discusses Codoban's philosophy of communication in relation to the construction of reality, weak transcendence, and transformations of religiosity in mass culture (Frunză 2011). The association between communication and the dialectic of the sacred is therefore not, in itself, a new contribution. The present inquiry seeks a more precise delimitation: identifying the conditions under which this association remains compatible with the conceptual differences and reservations articulated in the analysis of religious experience.

The central question is as follows: under what conditions is the ontological function of the sacred articulated with signifying rationality and communication, without reducing religious experience to an effect of discursivity? The answer is developed through three subordinate questions: what it means for reality to be constituted through the sacred; how religious experience acquires communicable coherence; and where a communicative interpretation encounters a limit that it cannot remove without altering its object.

The thesis advanced here is that this relationship can be reconstructed as constitutive mediation. This formulation designates the interpretation proposed in this article, not a doctrine that Codoban himself names in these terms. Mediation is constitutive because religious experience involves interpretation, symbolization, and, at the communal level, communication. It is nonreductive insofar as it preserves the difference between the sign of the sacred and what it indicates, between the coherence of a lived world and the mere circulation of representations. This interpretation does not presuppose that every position in the two volumes can be reconciled: the tension between ontological reference and the autonomy of signification must, on the contrary, remain a problem.

This delimitation also changes the meaning of a possible shift from the ontological functor to signifying rationality. The two terms do not designate alternatives situated on the same plane: the first names a function in the constitution of religious reality, the second a mode of intelligibility. Their relationship therefore cannot be settled simply by choosing one at the expense of the other. The productive question is how the ontological function is exercised through interpretation and what limits it imposes on interpretation's autonomy. Communication becomes relevant within this relationship, not as the necessary destination of a progression that would leave ontology behind.

2. The sacred as an ontological functor: from category to the constitution of a world

2.1. The indicator of the real is not identical with the Absolute

Codoban's starting point is not an inventory of supernatural entities, but the possibility of religious experience. Within this experience, the sacred occupies a position comparable to that of a transcendental category, although the Kantian analogy is corrected in phenomenological and hermeneutic terms. The subject is not merely a knowing consciousness: it is the human being engaged in an experience that articulates interpretation, value, and conduct. The sacred makes the religious ordering of meanings possible; it does not simply designate an object alongside other objects (Codoban 1998, 61–65).

The expression *ontological functor* must be read within this configuration. It appears in an argument concerning competing modes of constituting reality. Against the exclusivity of causal explanation, the author sets the possibility of signifying interpretation; against the exclusivity of contractual relations, he sets communal participation. What is defended is not the replacement of all experiences by religion, but the recognition of a

type of reality and the distinctive way in which it becomes accessible. The term indicates the function of constituting and orienting experience, without the text assigning it a mathematical formalization (Codoban 1998, 43).

A second occurrence clarifies the provenance of the problem. Codoban locates in Eliade the transformation of the numinous feeling described by Otto into an ontological functor, that is, an indicator of the real (Codoban 1998, 71). His contribution must therefore be sought in his elaboration of the relations between this function, interpretation, and experience, not in a claim to an absolute break with religious phenomenology. In the same account, Otto is not reduced to irrationality, nor is Eliade confined to cataloging sacred objects: manifestation is already inseparable from the way consciousness relates to the world (Codoban 1998, 58–60).

A close analysis of these occurrences shows that the phrase does not name an efficient cause that would manufacture things, but the principle through which they are recognized within a particular register of reality. The distinction is decisive: the constitution of a religious world is not equivalent to the physical production of the universe by consciousness. A mountain may remain the same object of observation while acquiring, within religious experience, an orienting function that reorganizes its relations to human life. Codoban himself specifies that hierophany changes not what can be established experimentally about the object, but what appears in interpretation (Codoban 1998, 78).

This interpretation would nevertheless be inadequate if it identified the sacred with an arbitrary convention. Codoban distinguishes between the Absolute, as the presupposed ultimate referent, and the sacred, as that which makes experience possible. Mystery does not fill a gap in knowledge that could be eliminated by technical means; it marks the impossibility of identifying the referent with its manifestation. The sacred points toward the Absolute but does not reproduce its presence exhaustively. At the same time, its ontic grounding is sought in human finitude and self-transcendence, rather than demonstrated through the empirical observation of a transcendent entity (Codoban 1998, 65, 72–74).

A twofold delimitation follows. The sacred can be equated neither with the object in which it manifests itself nor with the Absolute it indicates. Its ontological function operates precisely in the interval between these impossible identifications. We may call this interval referential difference: religious experience relates to something that representation does not exhaust. This formulation does not prove the existence of the referent; it makes explicit the structure of a relation that, to remain religious in the

terms of this analysis, cannot regard its own sign as the ultimate horizon of experience.

2.2. Hierophany, cratophany, and ontophany

The distinction between hierophany and cratophany does not divide the sacred into two impermeable domains. The former designates an emphasis on form, the latter on power; each manifestation may contain, in a secondary capacity, what the other foregrounds. Codoban thus narrows the use of Eliade's term *hierophany*, which, more broadly, can designate any manifestation of the sacred. An icon, for example, may possess symbolic solidity and be recognized by the believer as bearing power. The difference has analytical value; it does not presuppose an actual separation of form from force (Codoban 1998, 59, 70, 77–78).

Ontophany, a term whose Eliadean origin is explicitly acknowledged, concerns the manifestation of the sacred in its aspect as reality. It is not merely a hierophany enlarged to a cosmic scale. What is at stake is the overall configuration within which particular manifestations are integrated into a world and the relation between the sacred and the profane acquires solidity. On page 114, Codoban explains this difference by noting that the world includes the manifestations of the Absolute and a gradation of reality; it does not simply coincide with the Absolute (Codoban 1998, 113–114).

We therefore do not have a sequence of four entities—the Absolute, hierophany, ontophany, and the functor—arranged on the same ontological scale. The Absolute designates the referential pole; the sacred functions as a principle within experience; hierophany and cratophany differentiate manifestation; and ontophany concerns the constitution of a world. Conflating these levels would turn a relational analysis into a conceptual mythology. The proposed interpretation preserves these differences to show how ontological orientation can be realized through meanings without being identical to their mere accumulation.

3. Signifying rationality and the existential density of the symbol

The distinction between operational and signifying rationality is already formulated in the 1998 volume. The former privileges the coherence of operations, determination, and explanation; the latter attends to the coherence of meanings, symbolization, and understanding. Codoban relates them to the anthropological polarity between gesture and word and describes modernity in terms of the predominance of operationality. Yet he regards a human being confined to a single rationality as incomplete. The

difference does not warrant a periodization in which technique belongs exclusively to the past and interpretation exclusively to the present (Codoban 1998, 14, 32–34, 42).

From this perspective, interpretation is not an optional operation applied to an experience that is already fully constituted. It participates in determining what human beings experience as relevant and how they understand themselves. An action can be described in terms of its material efficiency and, simultaneously, the meaning it acquires within a tradition. Neither description automatically replaces the other. It is precisely this plurality that makes it necessary to specify the level at which an explanation claims validity.

Codoban's statements about the inadequacy of operational knowledge in relation to religious experience are sometimes categorical (Codoban 1998, p. 34). They must be retained as the author's philosophical position, but not turned into a blanket prohibition on empirical research into religions. One can examine the social distribution of religious practices without claiming that such an explanation exhausts the lived meaning of prayer. The distinction upheld by the present study is between explaining the conditions of an experience and exhausting its meaning through those conditions.

The symbol makes this difference intelligible. In Codoban's analysis, developed in dialogue with Eliade and Gilbert Durand, it is not a replaceable label that transparently designates a content. Sensible form provides access to a meaning that cannot adequately be presented as an object. The symbol's polysemy integrates heterogeneous realities without canceling their differences, while its existential function relates individual experience to the configuration of a world (Codoban 1998, 79–85).

Ricœur makes it possible to specify the limit of an exclusively linguistic interpretation. In *Interpretation Theory*, symbolic meaning is accessible through the primary meaning without being fully translatable into a conceptual formula. The analysis distinguishes the semantic dimension from the symbol's rootedness in experiences and practices that are not language alone. The surplus of meaning thus designates not an additional quantity of signs, but the impossibility of exhausting the symbol through a single explication (Ricœur 1976, 54–59).

The comparison supports a limited inference: symbolic mediation can be constitutive of understanding without being self-sufficient. This parallel neither equates the two philosophers' projects nor makes every concept in Codoban a borrowing from Ricœur. It provides a criterion for reading: wherever a symbol refers to an experience, the analysis must also attend to

how that experience sustains it. Surplus of meaning, polysemy, and self-referentiality are not synonymous. The first two can keep the interpretation of a relation to the world open; the last designates the closure of reference within the circuit of signs, when the referent no longer matters to the circuit's functioning.

The bodily dimension, in turn, prevents the reduction of signifying rationality to discourse about discourse. In his analysis of ritual, Codoban describes an operation enacted in meaning, yet through gestures and conduct: relations between symbols are transposed into relations between human beings, objects, and the divine. Ritual thus articulates signification and action without being merely the practical application of a theory. The body nevertheless remains bound to the demands of adaptation to its environment, which explains the dual coherence of ritual conduct, both in meaning and in function (Codoban 1998, 105–108).

We can clarify the consequence through an analytical distinction. Repeating a movement may fulfill a technical rule; the same movement, situated within a religious practice, may actualize a relation of recognition and belonging. The difference lies neither exclusively in the geometry of the gesture nor solely in the participant's mental representation, but in the relation between gesture, context, and meaning. Interpretation therefore cannot be opposed to the body as though meaning inhabited a separate space. To understand the sacred, the question is not only what a symbol means, but also what form of life makes it possible to embrace its meaning.

Nor is symbolic openness without risks. Codoban discusses how a symbolism is blocked by being reduced to a single sign, and the sign to a single meaning. When a manifestation claims the full authority of the Absolute, mediation is canceled through the absolutization of the mediator. At the opposite pole, the multiplication and attrition of symbols can diminish their existential relevance (Codoban 1998, 88–89). Signifying rationality must therefore not be celebrated as unlimited proliferation; its problem is the relationship between the plurality of meanings, coherence, and the engagement of life.

4. Ontophany and communicability: from expression to the shared world

A decisive passage links ontophanic elaboration to decreasing ambiguity and increasing communicability. Codoban shows that, relative to particular manifestations, ontophany presupposes stricter determination: myth and ritual enter into precise relations, while hierophanies and cratophanies limit one another (Codoban 1998, 113–114). This observation precludes

identifying the constitution of the world with an undifferentiated expansion of meanings. A world is not merely a reservoir of semantic possibilities; it presupposes relations stable enough to make orientation possible.

The analysis reveals a productive tension. On the one hand, the religious symbol preserves its openness and cannot be reduced to univocity. On the other, experience cannot become an order of life if every meaning is perpetually equivalent to every other. Communicability requires selection, correlation, and stabilization. Multiple meanings are not necessarily abandoned; rather, their relations are specified. A symbol can bring together birth, death, and regeneration without every use of it meaning all possible things in every context.

The distinction proposed here is between *integrative determination and mutilating reduction*. The former organizes meanings into an intelligible configuration that can be shared; the latter confines them to a partial function that claims to exhaust them. This distinction renders two of Codoban's observations compatible without conflating them: ontophany increases determination, whereas the modern restriction to partial meanings can erode the symbol (Codoban 1998, 114, 176). The criterion is not the number of meanings preserved, but the way limitation sustains or destroys the relation between experience and world.

This problem receives an explicitly communicative formulation in the analysis of the transition from religious experience to religion: "Religious experience finds expression in ontophany but is communicated as ontology; religion arises at the level of this communication" (Codoban 1998, 153). The statement does not describe the belated intervention of communication in an experience hitherto alien to signs. It distinguishes the expression of experience from its intersubjective stabilization. The transition from "I" to "we" changes the point of reference against which interpretation acquires solidity.

Communication here is not merely the transport of identical content from one individual to another. To be recognized in common, experience must be articulated in shared relations, practices, and criteria. Codoban defines religion through the communal constitution of individual experiences and assigns intersubjectivity the function of regulating and limiting interpretation (Codoban 1998, 156). We may infer that the shared religious world does not result from the mere summation of interiorities: mutual recognition changes the conditions under which an interpretation can be sustained.

An objection immediately arises: if communal agreement stabilizes reality, does the sacred not become the product of consensus? The answer

requires separating two issues. Consensus can explain the collective recognition of a world without demonstrating the existence of the Absolute toward which it is oriented. In turn, reference to the Absolute does not remove the need to analyze who interprets, how they transmit, and through what practices they sustain meaning. Community is a condition of religion's communicability, not sufficient proof of the metaphysical truth of all its representations.

This clarification also opens up the problem of interpretive authority. Communal regulation can protect the continuity of meaning, but it must not be idealized as agreement free of constraints. Codoban discusses dogma in relation to the fixing of interpretation and the prevention of slippages deemed dangerous to spiritual experience (Codoban 1998, 164–165). For philosophical inquiry, the stabilizing function and the question of legitimacy remain distinct. The fact that a community preserves a symbolism does not settle who may interpret, what differences are tolerated, or when protecting meaning becomes closing it off. Intersubjective coherence must be examined alongside the possibility of critique, not taken as an infallible guarantee of truth.

Tradition intervenes precisely at this juncture. It establishes modes of mediation and gives symbols meaning within a sphere of life; detaching them from that context can change their meaning (Codoban 1998, 160–161). The practical dimension of communication follows from this as well: meanings are preserved not only in propositions, but in relations between word and gesture. Describing a ritual is not identical to participating in it, even though both presuppose interpretation. Religious communicability thus has a communal and bodily density that the model of information transmission, taken alone, cannot describe.

5. The thematization of communication and the sacred's resistance to reduction

In *Semn și interpretare*, Codoban presents the thematization of communication in a radical formulation: the real becomes coextensive with what can be signified or communicated. As Codoban notes, "there is nothing except what is expressed, communicated, signified" (Codoban 2001, 7), and once communication is thematized, "what exists becomes coextensive with language, with the communicable" (Codoban 2001, 7). This is not merely an observation about public visibility, but a diagnosis of a philosophical regime of intelligibility. In the final section, the model of the signifying surface is characterized by the exclusion of transcendence, origin, and depth in favor of difference: "it is primarily about excluding any

transcendence and refusing any ontological model of origin or depth" (Codoban 2001, 131), giving rise to an "ontology of the 'signifying surface' without transcendence, without even the weak form of depth or origin, and articulated according to the principle of difference" (Codoban 2001, 131).

A comparison with the 1998 volume brings to light a difficulty that continuity of vocabulary cannot eliminate. Codoban draws a parallel between religious experience and the reception of a message, but rejects its complete superimposition onto the schema of the communicative situation. The reason is the presence of the sacred, defined as a category of interpretation that is ontically grounded and functions ontologically. The analogy is thus both affirmed and limited in the same passage. Retaining only the first move would transform a controlled parallel into an identity that the text rejects (Codoban 1998, 44).

A close comparative analysis makes it possible to distinguish three propositions. Religious experience is accessible through interpretation; religion presupposes communication and communal recognition; religious reality is not, merely by virtue of the first two claims, reducible to the existence of communication. The first propositions indicate modes of access and constitution; the last would require a conclusion about the exhaustion of the object through these modes. The inference is not necessary. The fact that a message is a condition for understanding an experience does not prove that the experience is reducible to the message.

It is important at this point to distinguish the senses of immediacy as well. When Codoban contrasts individual access to the sacred with access mediated by other members of the community, the distinction concerns the intersubjective organization of religion (Codoban 1998, 156). It does not cancel the characterization of individual experience as a symbolic relation (Codoban 1998, 43). An experience can be lived as immediate while still having symbolic conditions of articulation. Consequently, the opposition between immediacy and mediation does not coincide with that between the absence and presence of technology. To claim that only people in a world of screens interpret, whereas traditionally religious people had encountered only unmediated presences, would render the very structure of the symbol unintelligible.

There is nevertheless a real tension between the defense of this ontological remainder and the possibility of signification without transcendence. One reading may privilege the program of the philosophy of religions, treating communication as a mode of articulating experience. Another may radicalize the semiotic model to the point of suspending any

reference that would exceed the relations between signs. The present study adopts the first possibility as an interpretation of nonreductive mediation, but does not claim that the second is absent or definitively superseded. The two books do not provide sufficient grounds for proclaiming a synthesis without remainder.

Moreover, irreducibility must not be confused with the requirement of an exclusively vertical transcendence. In a passage late in the 1998 volume, Codoban discusses the possibility of preserving the intentionality of the sacred within different ontological models, including in relation to immanence. He contests the transformation of the sacred into mere perceptual content and preserves its function as a mode of relating to the real (Codoban 1998, 180). The relevant difference is therefore drawn not only between a world here and a world beyond, but between an interpretation that confines itself to the available representation and one that involves transcending this availability.

In this sense, constitutive mediation names a condition of reading, not a metaphysical solution imposed from outside. It holds together the necessity of the sign and the impossibility of deducing its self-sufficiency from that necessity. The result is a relational conception: experience, interpretation, and communication condition one another, but do not become interchangeable. Only by preserving these differences can the transformation of the sacred be discussed without deciding in advance that transformation must mean disappearance.

6. Dialogue with postmodernity: operationality, weakening, and simulacrum

The comparison with Lyotard introduces a first test. In the analysis of the status of knowledge in *The Postmodern Condition*, computerization is associated with the translation of knowledge into information and with the transformation of the conditions of its production and circulation (Lyotard 1984, chap. 1). For the present problem, the interpretive consequence is that the intensification of communication does not automatically entail the predominance of signifying over operational rationality. Communication itself can be organized according to criteria of use, performance, and calculation.

This contrast requires separating two claims often brought together too hastily: the human world is mediated through signs; the human world gives priority to understanding meanings. The first does not guarantee the second. In terms of the distinction developed earlier, an increase in the possibilities of transmission says nothing decisive about the depth of

existential relatedness. A system can transmit religious formulas very efficiently without that efficiency indicating the intensity of participation or the capacity to transform life. Making room for interpretation therefore does not mean attributing a hermeneutic virtue to every communicative infrastructure.

Vattimo offers a different contrast. In Bubbio's reading, secularization and *kenosis* gradually articulate a religious orientation within weak thought; the interpretation of Christianity and the problem of metaphysical violence are central to this development (Bubbio 2025). A parallel with Codoban can be traced in the refusal to identify a religious relation with the possession of a fully available foundation. The comparison nevertheless remains limited: the Christian genealogy of weakening examined by Bubbio does not coincide with the project of a philosophy of religions that begins from the plurality of experiences and the category of the sacred.

This difference precludes two simplifications. The weakening of a metaphysical claim cannot, without a further argument, be presented as the fulfillment of any religion; conversely, preserving an ontological reference does not inevitably entail the exercise of violent authority. For the proposed analysis, the question is how interpretation acknowledges its limits. A representation becomes problematic when it confuses its own determination with the totality of what it claims to manifest. The critique of the absolutization of the sign can thus remain distinct from the denial of any experience of the sacred.

Baudrillard makes it possible to formulate the most demanding objection. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, simulation designates more than the distortion of a preexisting reality; it raises the question of the production of the real through models and of the difference between concealing a reality and dissimulating its absence. The analysis of religious images calls into question the very power of representation to replace the referent it claims to manifest (Baudrillard 1994, 1–6).

In relation to ontophany, the objection can be formulated as follows: how do we know that the stabilization of a symbolic world is an opening toward the real rather than merely the self-sustaining effect of representations? The difference from the camouflage of the sacred is essential. In Codoban's schema, camouflage preserves the possibility of a manifestation that conceals precisely what it reveals; radical simulation contests the necessity of that referent. The phenomenal similarity between two circuits of images cannot, by itself, decide between these interpretations. For this very reason, the circulation of signs cannot be used as sufficient evidence of an ontophanic function.

A limited response can be formulated from within Codoban's argument. Symbolic coherence must be examined together with existential engagement, tradition, and the way representation maintains its distance from what it indicates. These relations allow for analytical distinctions, not experimental verification of transcendence. Hermeneutics neither automatically refutes the critique of the simulacrum nor guarantees the recovery of authenticity. It can, however, prevent the unwarranted identification of all mediations with simulation. Significantly, Codoban specifies that the dialectic of the sacred does not automatically establish meaning, but opens up the search for and hope of meaning (Codoban 1998, 171).

7. Symbolic mediation and mediatization: conditions for a contemporary extension

The implications for interpreting contemporary culture must be formulated without turning a philosophical possibility into a sociological finding. Codoban does indeed discuss the sacralization of celebrities and political figures, integrating these examples into his analysis of the redistribution of values (Codoban 1998, 174). Their presence in the text justifies examining the hypothesis; it does not exempt the inquiry from the need for demonstration. Intense admiration, the repetition of certain behaviors, or the existence of a fan community are not, individually, sufficient criteria for identifying a religious experience.

Before extending the analysis to media, the two senses of camouflage must also be distinguished. Codoban separates the concealment involved in any manifestation of the Absolute from historical changes in the forms in which the sacred is recognized (Codoban 1998, 172–173). The former concerns the relation between manifestation and what it cannot fully present; the latter concerns shifts of emphasis within a concrete collective life. This distinction allows us to avoid attributing to technology what belongs to symbolic structure and to avoid treating as invariable what depends on history. A new medium can alter the accessibility or authority of a representation without bringing the problem of mediation into existence for the first time.

We propose three analytical conditions for investigating a possible ontophanic function. *Referential differentiation* concerns how a sign indicates something that is not exhausted by its immediate use, without imposing a single model of transcendence. *Interpretive coherence* concerns the integration of meanings into a world that provides orientation, with recognizable modes of validation and transmission. *Existential engagement*

concerns the relationship between interpretation, conduct, and participation. These conditions are instruments of inquiry derived from the preceding analysis, not a universal definition of religion or a procedure that certifies the existence of the sacred.

They make it possible to construct a hypothetical comparison between a religious celebration transmitted online and a celebrity's digital appearance. The identity of the technological medium does not establish the identity of the experiences. The participants' orientation, the norms of recognition, the relation to tradition, and the practical consequences must be investigated. The presence of a religious theme does not guarantee participation, just as the use of a screen does not exclude it by definition. The analysis thus shifts from the medium's supposedly sacred properties to the relations within which the medium is used.

Campbell's study of 100 Christian blogs provides a relevant counterexample to the thesis that the internet necessarily dismantles authority. The study distinguishes roles, structures, beliefs, and texts as forms of authority and finds affirmation of traditional sources more frequently than challenges to them in the material analyzed (Campbell 2010). This finding cannot be generalized to all digital communities, but it shows that a change of medium does not impose a single direction on religious transformation.

A complementary limitation appears in the findings summarized in the abstract of Dein and Watts's study: interviews with 13 participants in two virtual religious services in Cambridge reveal difficulties concerning participation and the sense of belonging, as well as the importance of ritual materiality to the Eucharistic experience (Dein and Watts 2023). These findings concern participants' experiences; they do not constitute a theological verdict on the sacrament. For our argument, they support the need to distinguish access to the representation of a ritual from the fulfillment of all the conditions of participation.

The proposed conditions nevertheless encounter a difficulty: a political or artistic community, too, may possess coherence, existential commitment, and symbols that exceed immediate utility. Their application therefore requires further investigation of the status accorded to ultimate orientation and of how participants recognize the relation between representation and reality. Religious self-description is relevant, but it does not replace analysis; in its absence, the interpreter must argue all the more carefully for the attribution of a religious function. When the evidence supports only fascination or solidarity, an analogy with sacrality remains the appropriate formulation. An ontophanic hypothesis becomes productive not through its

capacity to explain everything, but through the possibility of distinguishing cases in which its own conditions are not met.

It follows that symbolic mediation and technological mediatization must be analyzed in relation to one another, but at distinct levels. The former concerns the constitution and interpretation of meaning; the latter concerns the technological and social conditions of circulation, visibility, and participation. Neither the preservation nor the erosion of a religious function can be deduced solely from the existence of mediatization. This plurality of possibilities remains compatible with Codoban's refusal to describe the dialectic of the sacred as a strictly linear history or a simple cyclical return (Codoban 1998, 184–185).

The question of technology can thus be placed in critical continuity with an earlier observation in the book: the proliferation of mediators risks shifting attention from the end to the means and eroding symbolic efficacy (Codoban 1998, 174–176). This observation offers a research hypothesis, not an advance condemnation of all intermediation. In each configuration, it should be examined whether multiplying access supports participation or replaces it with the consumption of representation. The possibility of erosion is not exclusively digital, and the continuity of a symbolism does not depend solely on preserving its material support. What must be examined is the relationship between access, orientation, and practice.

8. Conclusions

The relationship between the ontological functor and signifying rationality can be understood as an articulation of levels of experience, not as the successive replacement of ontology by communication. The analysis first showed that the ontological function of the sacred concerns the constitution and orientation of a religious world, without identifying the sacred with the Absolute or with the object of manifestation. It then showed that ontophany presupposes a determination of meanings, while the constitution of religion adds the dimension of communication and communal recognition. Finally, the confrontation between the parallel with communication and the ontological reserve of religious experience delineates a tension that a shared vocabulary alone does not resolve.

The study's interpretive contribution lies in formulating constitutive but nonreductive mediation through referential differentiation, interpretive coherence, and existential engagement. These conditions make it possible to examine the relations between the sacred, symbol, and communication without turning all signification into religiosity. They neither demonstrate the existence of a transcendence nor eliminate the objection posed by the

simulacrum; they specify what must be analyzed before a configuration of signs can be described as a world oriented by the sacred.

The limitations of the result are those of a conceptual inquiry based on two works and selected comparisons. An exhaustive account of the development of Codoban's philosophy has not been established, and the digital examples do not empirically validate the proposed model. They show only why transmission, recognition, and participation cannot be treated as equivalent operations. Extending the analysis to other traditions and practices requires examining their own contexts, not mechanically applying a terminology.

From this perspective, the question of the sacred remains bound to the capacity of human beings to live in a world that speaks to them without becoming fully available. The sign can open up this world, but it can also close it off when it claims ultimate sufficiency for itself. What is philosophically at stake in mediation is not the disappearance of distance, but the possibility of a relation that traverses it without abolishing it. The search for meaning thus retains its demanding character precisely where communication is not confused with possession of what it communicates.

***AI Use Statement*:** I used Gemini (Google AI Plus, accessed between October 19, 2026 and October 27, 2026) for documentation, translation and language revision. All generated suggestions were critically reviewed, verified against the cited sources, and revised by the author. The author assumes full responsibility for the final manuscript.

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