

## **Religious Dualism: Some Logical and Philosophical Difficulties**

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### **Abstract**

In our study we intend to clarify the significance of the phrase „religious dualism” and to find in which situations it can be used appropriately. In this regard, we took into consideration first the meaning of such phrases as „dualism”, „religious dualism”, „cosmogonic dualism”, then the idea of religious dualist invariants (Ugo Bianchi) and that of absolute dualism (Mircea Eliade, J. Martin Velasco). We presented some apparent dualisms (discussed by Ioan Petru Culianu). The concept of radical or absolute dualism involves many logical and philosophical difficulties: a) it leads to confusion among such terms as opposition, contradiction and contrariety; it may appear as a *contradictio in terminis*, b) in a cosmogonic order, it indicates the suspension of the original process of creation; the relation between the two original principles becomes completely unintelligible. Consequently, we consider that we cannot speak about a really original cosmogonic dualism (in other words, no religion can be completely dualist). We also introduced the idea of unilateral dualism (being inspired by one of Constantin Noica’s philosophical studies), an idea which can be used in the interpretation of some cosmogonic myths and stories.

### **Defining the concepts of „dualism” and „religious dualism”**

It is generally accepted that religious dualism, the cosmological one, involves the cooperation of two principles or primordial forces in the process of world creation. In our opinion, this is a highly debatable point. However, in order to

define cosmological dualism, we need to offer a general definition of dualism<sup>1</sup>.

A dualistic perspective is one which refers to two opposing principles, which are defining for the existence or the evolution of a totality. If these principles are considered to be primordial, the dualism is of a metaphysical or religious nature. The terms which can denote opposing principles are, for example, spirit and matter, body and soul, good and evil, etc. The opposing terms form a duality, which means they have a dual correlation. Several types of dualities were defined: symbolic duality (light - darkness), anthropological duality (man - woman), cosmological duality (day - night, summer - winter), ontological duality (spirit - matter), etc. As a rule, a duality is semantically different from a dyad, the latter denoting the correlation of two different terms which originate from the same unity<sup>2</sup>. In the ancient Pythagorean school, the dyad was considered to be the principle of multiplicity. The idea was revived by Plato, who opposed the dyad to the Oneness; it denotes, in some cases, a negative tendency, such as the tendency towards excess (through a dyad, something becomes „more or less than normal“). Unlike a dyad, the unity

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<sup>1</sup> As we know, the term „dualism“ derives from the Latin dualis, meaning „double“, „dual“, „twice“. The most common sense of dualism is that of opposition between two distinct tendencies (in the form of principles, energies, properties, as well as opinions or beliefs). This common meaning is still unclear, generating much confusion. Antony Flew makes two important observations: the terms of a duality indicate different natures and they are irreducible to each other. If they are reducible (like the different substances to which George Berkeley refers), we have a form of pluralism, not of dualism (Antony Flew, *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, Pan Books Ltd. © Laurence Urdang Associates Ltd., 1979, the study „dualism“).

<sup>2</sup> The misuse of such terms as „duality“, „dyad“, „opposition“, „antagonism“ etc. can create innumerable confusions and ambiguities in our speech. In this regard, it is significant what Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny write: „The Language offers us the conceptual resources, but it does not determine how they have to be used. The word „earth“ helps us to think about „The Earth“, but it does not indicate the fact that it is flat. Once we have words such as „God“ or „sacred“, we can have religious thoughts, but we can end as atheist. The radically different philosophies of Descartes and Derrida have both been written in French (Michael Devitt & Kim Sterelny, *Language and reality. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*, Blackwell Publishers, 1999, § 10.2).

represents the tendency to restore the balance or the original identity.

Furthermore, the relationship between the One and the dyad is deeply explored in Plato's metaphysics. This relationship could explain the reality itself of the state of things. Therefore, the dyad is defined not only negatively (as sensible matter or as a multiple tending towards excess), but also positively (as „intelligible matter” or as a principle of the multiple and real states of things).

Cosmological dualism is considered to be part of many ancient religions and mythologies. One of them is Zoroastrianism, a widely spread religion in ancient Persia. It has been stated that this Oriental religion illustrates a radical/absolute case of dualism, which we will discuss later in this paper.

However, the term *dualism* was used around 1700, to describe the above-mentioned religion. In his work, *The Dualist Gnosis of the Occident*, published in 1990, Ioan Petru Culianu devotes a whole chapter to the modern research on dualism: *The Stage of Researches on Dualism*<sup>3</sup>. The author opts for an ontological description of dualism, which is understood as “the opposition of two principles”. The two terms – „opposition” and „principle”- always require a clear semantical definition. „«Opposition» involves antagonism, while «principle» points to the origin of a certain thing. Therefore, we have two distinct entities, each of them generating its own creation. This observation involves, besides the basic ontological dualism, a cosmological dualism expressed, at the level of creation, by those parts of the world which reappear in the work of each principle. Similarly, the antagonism of the two principles sometimes has an ethical expression, firstly reflected at a cosmological level and secondly at the level of human morals. In other words, one of the principles is, in most cases, «the

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<sup>3</sup> The ideas from this writing, will be reiterated in Ioan P. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism*, San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1992. The first chapter is entitled „Dualism: a chronology”, the other chapters, referring to the great Gnostic myths and religions (Marcionism, Manicheism, Paulicianism, Bogomilism, the Cathar doctrine), focus both on dualism and its historical or religious forms.

good» while the other one is «the evil». Consequently, the former will be responsible for a „good” creation, the latter for an „evil” one, and man, as an individual or as part of a community, will have to choose between them”<sup>4</sup>. He will focus on the older assumption that Iran could have been the native country of religious dualism<sup>5</sup>. However, he realises that this hypothesis is difficult to prove (taking into consideration the research conducted by specialists such as Carsten Colpe, H. M. Schenke and Gilles Quispel). There is also made an assumption that the dualist representations are in direct relation with the religious history of Judaism<sup>6</sup>. Dualist concepts and representations were observed, on the one hand, in the ancient Greek or Mediterranean culture and, on the other hand, in the Indian culture<sup>7</sup>. A provisional conclusion is that dualist representations can be found in many cultures, none of them having directly influenced the others.

In another work, *The Dictionary of Religions*, conceived by Mircea Eliade and completed by Ioan Petru Culianu in 1990, it is stated that the term „dualism” does not characterise only one Iranian religious doctrine or another. „Later on, scholars discovered that dualist myths are spread worldwide and suffer innumerable changes at all cultural levels and in a great number of religions, from those studied by ethnology to the „great religions” such as Buddhism, Christianity, Greek religion, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism etc.”<sup>8</sup>. A generally accepted definition of dualism is: “an opposition of two principles”. It is mentioned that this formula „involves judgement based on moral values (good/evil) and a hierarchical organisation of reality at all levels: cosmological, anthropological, ethical etc”. We also find that „two types of religious dualism have been traditionally recognised: the *radical* dualism, which states the existence of two co-eternal principles, responsible for the whole creation; and the *moderate* or *monarchical* dualism (which does not question the monarchical authority of a supreme creator), supporting the idea that the second principle appears later and has its

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<sup>4</sup> Ioan P. Couliano, *Les gnoses dualistes d'Occident. Histoire et mythes*, Plon, 1990, chap. I, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, chap. I. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, I.6.

<sup>8</sup> Mircea Eliade, Ioan Petru Couliano, *Dictionnaire des religions*, Plon, 1990, § 12.1.

origin in an error of the system set off by the first principle"<sup>9</sup>. We will also mention other types of dualism, such as the relaxed/ weak one or the unilateral one. So far, we could admit that the dualism exists naturally whenever we have a real bi-polarity of essential tendencies in a state of things.

### **Invariants of dualist religions (Ugo Bianchi)**

An important stage in the study of religious dualism is represented by Ugo Bianchi's work *Il dualismo religioso*, 1958. Some of the ideas in this book were developed later in a number of articles. As the author states, his starting point in the study of religious dualisms is represented by Platonism, a doctrine in which he tries to find a radical dualist vision<sup>10</sup>.

The sense of „dualism“ in this case is closer to the one used by the history of religions and completely different from „a doctrine which sustains transcendence, being opposed to «monism» and «pantheism»“<sup>11</sup>. He will define dualism in a manner which helps him to oppose Hermann Langerbeck's criticism aimed at those who understood Gnosticism as anti-cosmic dualism (as Hans Jonas did). In fact, Langerbeck considers „dualism“ a pseudo-concept“, like „pessimism“, unable to explain something real; dualism was born out of the gross evolution of scholarly gnosis, as a vulgar perspective and a distortion of Platonism<sup>12</sup>. According to Bianchi, „a definition of dualism which seems completely adequate and which is quite popular in the history of Greek philosophy as well as in other religions and philosophical trends, is the following one: the dualist doctrines and myths are those which accept two principles – either co-eternal or not – as the basis of world

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<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Ugo Bianchi, *Selected Essays on Gnosticism, Dualism and Mysteriorosophy*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1978 (the study Gnosticism, Anthropologie et conception du mal. Les sources de l'exégèse gnostique, published in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 25, 1971), p. 313.

<sup>11</sup> It mentions in the same place that „„the radically dualist character of Platonism contradicts the thesis of an essential harmony between Platonism and Christianity“. The thesis denied by Bianchi has a Nietzschean origin and it leads to the conclusion that the very Christian doctrine could be dualist in its essence.

<sup>12</sup> Ugo Bianchi refers to Hermann Langerbeck's work *Aufsätze zur Gnosis*, in «Abhandl. d. Akad. D. Wissensch», Nr. 69, Göttingen 1967, pp. 61 sq.

creation”<sup>13</sup>. According to this definition, not only Zoroastrianism and Gnosticism are dualist, but also Platonism (as radical dualism), since it “explains the eternal and irreducible nature of the universe through the doctrine regarding the idea, as well as through the doctrine of *chora* (and *ananke*), a theory of the cosmic cycle of existence attached to them”<sup>14</sup>. Bianchi considers that in Platonism we find a metaphysical and dialectical dualism, that is a cyclical one. He explains this by connecting the doctrine of ideas with the doctrine of the „metaphysical place” (*chora*, meaning place or receptacle) and with a vision of the cosmic necessity (*ananke*); the latter one being a doctrine of materiality as an irreducible and eternal element of cosmogony<sup>15</sup>. The doctrine of *chora* and *ananke* explains the fall of the pre-existent souls and the tripartite structure of the soul. As the Gnostics accepted and developed this doctrine, getting to a radical anticosmism, they are considered „radical and irreducible dualists”<sup>16</sup>. They differ from „the Christian eschatologism and from the dramatic conception of the soul’s spiritual fights”<sup>17</sup> in what concerns the idea of soul salvation.

As we can see, dualism is characterised by the coexistence of two principles which are able to found the existence of all the things in our world. If one of these cosmogonic powers does not function as a principle which founds the existence of

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<sup>13</sup> This definition given by Ugo Bianchi to dualism is already used in the introductory section of his study, where he also mentions that the existence based on the two assumed principals may be real or apparent. Discussing Marcion’s doctrine, Bianchi re-uses the previously defined sense of dualism, varying it slightly. He will refer to „the proper sense of the term which cannot be mistaken for other „dualisms”, that is a historical-religious sense. He adds, in a footnote, that he refers to dualism using the proper sense of a terminus technicus „when this world, or some parts of it, is the creation of a being or a force which limits in a positive way God’s universal power and creativity; if this being or this force is considered to be inopportune or obviously malevolent and if they have an essential, constitutive influence on the structures of this world, then we can speak about anticosmic dualism: such as the Gnostic dualism” (*ibidem*, p. 320, footnote 2).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 313-314.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Platon, Timaios, 47e – 48a, 48e – 49a, a synthetic idea mentioned in 52a – b.

<sup>16</sup> Ugo Bianchi, *Selected Essays on Gnosticism, Dualism and Mystieriosophy*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1978, pp. 314 -315.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 319.

things, we do not have a real dualism. In other words, if the power which opposes the divine force in the process of creation does not function as a principle, the dualism is only apparent. In another study, Ugo Bianchi offers a slightly different definition of dualism. „Dualism appears when two (or more) «superhuman and pre-human beings which govern the world» are conceived of as opposites and evil in their intrinsic nature and possibly responsible for an act of creation or for a domain which is reserved to them”<sup>18</sup>. The idea of opposition between the two founding principles, which seems to be absent in the first definition, is obvious in the second description of dualism. As Bianchi says, the powers governing the world must be conceived of as antagonistic „in their intrinsic nature”. He adds an important observation: these powers must be „responsible for an act of creation or for a domain which is reserved to them”.

The Italian scholar’s obvious intention is to offer a thorough presentation of religious dualisms or of any other type of dualism. With a view to this goal, he will focus on a series of features or invariants which characterise any dualist conception. We refer to several aspects which are able to determine the existing dualisms: the pre-existing sin (before the creation) and the original sin (typical of the Adamic being), an anticosmic or pro-cosmic tendency, the idea of *salvator salvandus* or *salvator salvatus*<sup>19</sup>. For example, if the two cosmogonic principles are co-eternal, their dualism will be considered a radical one; if one of the principles, such as the negative one, is a consequence of the „pre-existing sin”, the dualism is a moderate (or monarchical one). Similarly, if the positive principle wins and re-establishes the original order, the dualism is eschatological and linear; in the opposite case, when the confrontation between the two principles is repeated endlessly, the dualism is cyclic or dialectical. Taking these dichotomies into consideration, Zoroastrianism, for example, may be considered radical, eschatological and

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<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ugo Bianchi, Cf. Ugo Bianchi, *Prometeo, Orfeo, Adamo. Tematiche religiose sul destino, il male, la salvezza*, Edizione dell’Ateneo e Bizzari, Roma, 1976, pp. 48-53.

procosmic; Gnosticism develops a moderate dualism, being both eschatological and procosmic; Manicheism is radical and anticosmic; Bogomilism is moderate, eschatological and anticosmic; the Cathars' conception has a radical and a moderate form, both of which are anticosmic<sup>20</sup>. The distinction between eschatological and cyclic dualism leads to another couple of opposites, namely procosmism (when the world is essentially good) and anticosmism (when the world is essentially evil). Naturally, the latter invariant (procosmism-anticosmism) is related to man's attitude towards the existent values. We may discover a positive attitude, when salvation is considered possible, or a negative one, when the traumas of creation and of human life are considered insoluble and the great conflicts of existence - endlessly repeated.

The Italian scholar also considers that the myths which have a very special protagonist, named Trickster, are dualist. This idea was developed and explained by Ioan Petru Culianu. „A Trickster is a sly character, either a human being or an animal, who is able to change its appearance, a practical joker who is often tricked. This figure appears in myths created by peoples all over the world, at any stage of civilization. Sometimes he plays the part of a god or demigod, like Seth in the Egyptian religion, Prometheus in the Greek religion or Loki in the Scandinavian one. Most Tricksters are male characters, but there are also some typical myths, in many parts of the world, which have female Trickster characters”<sup>21</sup>. Why should this figure be typical for dualist myths? Because this character interferes in the process of world creation, having a considerable influence on it. ”In a whole class of myths, the Trickster – male or female - acts as a second creator of the world, or of a part of it, and his role is to alter the supreme creator's work, bringing all the misfortunes to the mankind: the pains of childbirth, mortality, grief and sorrow. In general, these are

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<sup>20</sup> Also see in Ioan P. Couliano, *Les gnoses dualistes d'Occident. Histoire et mythes*, ed. cit., § II, 7. Ioan Petru Culianu displays a reserved attitude towards these dichotomies which describe the main forms of dualism,. He concludes that”especially at the micro-level, there appear many other indispensable dichotomies”. However, there are many particular dualisms which should be examined through other features than those mentioned by Ugo Bianchi.

<sup>21</sup> Mircea Eliade, Ioan Petru Couliano, *Dictionnaire des religions*, ed. cit., § 12.2.



mythical episodes belonging to the radical dualism"<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, the Trickster appears in some mythical situations either as "a second creator of the world or of a part of it" or as a power "altering the supreme god's creation"; in both cases he plays a demiurgical role.

The dualist religions mention the existence of a negative god, such as Angra- Mainyu in Zoroastrianism. This type of god opposes, periodically or constantly, either to the world creation or to some gifts offered by gods to the mankind (growing crops, keeping animals, the secret of fire, the positive communication, the power of knowledge, etc). As we could see, the sense of this opposition may vary „from anticosmism (the world is bad) and antisomatism (the human body is bad) to procosmism (the world is good) and prosomatism (the human body is good)"<sup>23</sup>. From this perspective, Zoroastrianism can be considered a „dualist, procosmic and prosomatic religion; Orphism is an anticosmic and antisomatic dualist religious trend; Platonism is an antisomatic but not anticosmic conception; other religions such as Gnosticism, Manicheism, Paulicianism, Bogomilism and Catharism, have always been studied as a distinct group, dependent on Christianity, as they have been interpreted as Christian heresies"<sup>24</sup>.

#### **An extreme representation: „the absolute dualism"**

It is often considered that Manicheism, the most influential Gnostic religion, represents a radical, absolute dualism. Probably this is true if we take into consideration the way in which the created world is seen, as a mixture of Light and Darkness. In *The History of Religious Ideas and Beliefs* (II) § 234, Mircea Eliade uses, almost unexpectedly, the expression „absolute dualism". He refers to Manicheism – a doctrine which he considers to be completely pessimistic. „In fact, there is a similarity between Manicheism and scientific materialism (old and modern): for both of them life, the universe and the human being were

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*. It is considered that, in the Book of Genesis, the role of the Trickster is played by the snake which reveals sexuality and power to the human being, thus producing a whole series of falls: the banishment from Heaven, the pain of childbirth, the toil of labour, oppression, death.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, § 12.2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, § 12.3.

created by chance. Even the conflict between the two Principles broke out because of an accident: The Prince of Darkness had been very close to Light, because of what Alexander from Lycophron calls the «disordered movement» of the Matter. As we have seen, all the «creations», from the creation of the universe to the creation of the human being, are nothing but defensive gestures made by one protagonist or another<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, if everything – the world, the human being, life, cosmic or human conflicts – appeared purely by accident, then we could speak about an absolute dualism of the two cosmogonic principles. Eliade emphasizes the idea that such a dualism seems to be absolute only in our interpretation (the human, logical interpretation), but, in fact, it represents a *mysterium tremendum*. Therefore, the accident which would lead to “absolute dualism” must not be misunderstood as a mere natural accident.

Secondly, Eliade wants to emphasize the dramatic character of the vision represented by Manicheism. Such dramatism results from the acosmism of this vision. „Rarely has a philosophy or an acosmic gnoseology reached the level of pessimism which characterises Mani’s system. The world was created starting from a demonic substance, the archons’ bodies (even if the cosmogonic *act* was performed by a divine creature). Man is the work of the demonic powers in their most repugnant embodiment. It is hard to imagine a more tragic and humiliating anthropogonic myth. (We can observe an analogy with Freud’s theory according to which cannibalism and incest contributed to the creation of the human being as it is today)”<sup>26</sup>.

This interpretation might be a bit exaggerated, as it describes in deeply negative terms the Manicheist cosmic scenario. “The human existence, as well as the universal life, is nothing but the stigma of a divine defeat. Indeed, if the primordial Man had been a success from the very beginning, neither the Cosmos nor the life or the human being would have existed. The cosmogony is a desperate gesture made by God in his attempt to save a part of Him-self, just as the creation of man is a desperate gesture of the Matter trying to hold the particles of light in captivity. In spite of his ignoble origin, man becomes the centre and the stake in the drama, as he bears a tiny part of the divine soul”<sup>27</sup>. Yet, he observes that the transcendent God is still interested in man’s soul, that is the divine part of the human

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<sup>25</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, Payot, Paris, 1978, II, § 234.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

being. God tries to save that has a divine origin („this is God’s effort to save Him-self; and, in this case, we may speak about a «saved Saviour»”). The image of a God trying desperately to save Him-self may seem questionable: what kind of God is this, what do his omnipotence and absolute freedom consist in?

Apart from these possible difficulties in understanding Manicheism, its dramatic character and pathetic description are obvious. The Prince of Darkness’ deeds and terrible strategies, his endless efforts are the best – known aspects. „That is what makes the Manicheist literature so pathetic, especially the hymns describing the fall and the tribulations of the soul. Certain Manicheist Psalms are absolutely beautiful, and the image of Jesus Patibilis is one of the most deeply moving creations of human piety”<sup>28</sup>.

The Manicheist vision is impressive, especially because the opposite forces represent two cosmic principles. “Since the body has a demonic nature, Mani recommends, at least for the «chosen ones», the most rigorous asceticism, and, at the same time, it forbids suicide. Once we have accepted the premises – the two Principles and the primordial aggression of the Evil -, the whole system seems based on sound judgement. What belongs to God’s enemy: Nature, Life, human existence cannot and *must* not have religious value. «The real religion» consists in escaping from the prison built by the demonic forces and contributing to the final destruction of the world, of life and of the human being”<sup>29</sup>.

Starting from Eliade’s observations, we may tend to believe that the Manicheist dualism is indeed an absolute one. Yet, this dualism is subsequent to the original creation, that is to the divine act which precedes and makes possible any cosmic power, the two powers in cosmic confrontation included. Also, as long as this cosmic confrontation has a positive ending which involves the idea of salvation, the absolute dualism disappears and its relativity becomes obvious. In the end, Eliade makes a very interesting observation: „a certain «Manicheist tendency» is part of our European spirituality”<sup>30</sup>. If Manicheism is considered a „complete heresy”, then we could deduce that the European spirit includes a radically heretical tendency. In other words, the European

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem.*

individual may unexpectedly display a deeply heretical attitude. Manicheism – this „absolute dualism” - has been criticised violently by the representatives of all the other religious traditions: Christians, Jewish, Muslims, Magi, and even Gnostics (such as the Mandeans). Traditional philosophy, such as the one represented by Plotin and his followers, displayed the same critical attitude.

**Logical difficulties of any „radical dualism”**

If we return to the concrete scenario of a dualist religion, such as Zoroastrianism, we could make several eloquent observations about its possible „radical dualism”<sup>31</sup>. The Zoroastrian dualism is a radical one only if we do not take into account the fact that the two opposite cosmic powers, Ahura – Mazdah and Angra – Mainyu, were born by one and the same divinity, Zurvan, a primordial divinity which signifies more than destiny itself or the original time. Also, the positive principle (Ahura – Mazdah) dominates the negative principle throughout the four ages of the current world; in this way, the created world may exist and last for a long time, and the good creations become real / possible: things and living creatures useful to people, the fertile land, the domestic animals, the beneficent waters, the necessary fire, truth, wisdom, charity,

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<sup>31</sup> Zoroastrianism existed in the ancient Iranian territory since the early I millennium BC. The sacred Zoroastrian texts are included in the codex called Avesta, attributed to the mythical prophet Zarathustra. The whole scenario of the Avestic religion is dominated by the fight between the principles of Good and Evil. These two principles are represented as two imposing gods Ahura - Mazdah (the Good) and Angra – Mainyu (the Evil). Ahura – Mazdah, the god of wisdom, appears in the Greek texts with the name of Ormazdes (Ormuzd). This god leads an army of spirits (*ahura*), opposing to the principle of evil. In fact, Ahura – Mazdah and Angra – Mainyu are the two sons of a primordial god, called Zurvan, who represents the original Time. Ahura – Mazdah, leaving behind his initial, atemporal inertia, creates the whole world. In this way, he disturbs Angra – Mainyu, breaking out a real cosmic confrontation. It is a confrontation similar to the one between light and darkness, between creation and destruction. This fight lasts for 12000 years, that is 4 epochs. In the 4th epoch a saviour named Saoshyant will come, considered the successor, the reincarnation of Zarathustra (the great prophet who brings a new law to people in the third epoch). Ahura – Mazdah will fight with Angra – Mainyu and, in their last fight, the evil god will be destroyed and thrown away into the abyss.

even if all of them have a temporary character. Thirdly, even this religion, considered profoundly dualist, accepts a positive meaning of time: the appearance of a Saviour, essential reforms and, finally, the eschatological war, in which the evil principle is thrown away into the abyss. This implies that no dualism is a completely radical one.

Anyway, in a cosmological order, radical dualism does not exist. If it did, the positive principle would be as powerful as the negative one, like in the logical formula  $A = \text{non } A$ . But, if the two principles had equal powers, World creation would become impossible. The logical formula  $A = \text{non } A$  represents, as we know, a pure contradiction. Its cosmological expression would imply a total and constant opposition between the two powers, in which case nothing could be formed, created or discovered. It is a situation in which the creation of the world would remain a mere possibility as long as the opposing principles would have equal power and significance.

Sometimes the term „dualism” is misunderstood. More exactly, a mere opposition (which could signify a relation of contrariety) is interpreted as a relation of contradiction. However, not any opposition leads to a form of dualism, and not any opposition implies contradiction; the rules of logic make a clear distinction between opposition as a generic term, contrariety, on the one hand, and contradiction, on the other hand. The philosophical sense of the term "dualism" is more important when we refer to the opposition of two completely different things: spirit and matter, soul and body, shape and matter, etc. But the opposite principles which support a dualist vision can not be united in a rational or discursive way; as they are opposites by origin or by nature, the two elements can not be united in an essential way.

From a different perspective, an anticosmic attitude, such as the Manicheistic one, suggests the idea of a pure, perfectly transcendent divinity, beyond the dualities of the created world and of the process of creation. And the Light from the skies descends upon the most obscure form of the Matter; it can be noticed in the smallest creature or thing, such as a leaf of grass. This is something which makes everybody - even the Manicheists - experience a feeling of veneration for the created

world and admit that there is a real epiphany of light in nature<sup>32</sup>. Their radicalism is seriously diminished, at least by this veneration for the created universe. Therefore, the religious dualism cannot be historically identified with one religious tradition or another. This is one of the reasons why Ioan Petru Culianu considers the religious dualism more as a system of thinking, able to produce innumerable variants than as a religious doctrine<sup>33</sup>. "The study of this process represents the object of our research. To describe it, we need to use binary oppositions at various (innumerable) points of the mythical story. At the end of our research, we will observe that «the dualisms of the Occident» represent only a part of the alternatives which they had at their disposal. Modern times seem to have done the rest"<sup>34</sup>.

Here we have to make another observation. As it is known, there is an eloquent work for the Cathar doctrine, *Liber de duobus principiis* (*The Book of the Two Principles*) which consists of seven volumes elaborated under the influence of Ioan de Lugio, who became the bishop of the Cathar church in Bergamo in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. *The Book of the Two Principles* refers to two cosmic principles, the Good and the Evil. Ioan de Lugio's epigones could not accept the idea of a single cosmogonic principle, as long as the evil exists in our universe (death, suffering, pain, failure, sin, falsity, decay and monstrosity). They could not accept the existence of an indeterminate principle in our logical categories. If there is a primordial, cosmogonic principle, this must be either good or evil; from their point of view, there was no principle beyond good or evil. A good principle could not generate the evil. An

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Mircea Eliade, Ioan Petru Couliano, *Dictionnaire des religions*, § 12.6.

<sup>33</sup> Ioan P. Couliano, *Les gnosés dualistes d'Occident. Histoire et mythes*, chap. I, 7. Regarding Culianu's perspective on this matter, cf. Georgian Sas, *Romanian Bogomilism? Dualist Aspects in the Medieval Romanian Literature*, in *Orma Magazine of Ethnological and Historical- Religious Studies*, nr. 7, 2007, pp. 117-124. The author insists on Ioan Petru Culianu's criticism of the historical perspective on religious dualisms (Benedetto Croce, Ugo Bianchi) and of some different approaches (Wilhelm Bousset, H. H. Shaeder, Hans Jonas, Mircea Eliade, and Claude Lévi-Strauss). In fact, he comments on the idea of some invariants of dualism and on the diffusionist theory, which refers to the evolution of dualisms as a consequence of their historical diffusion.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

evil principle could not generate the good. Yet, as we can see, both the good and the evil exist in our world. Consequently, we cannot speak about a single principle; two of them are always necessary. "In the honour of the Holy Father, I want to begin my exposition regarding the two principles by rejecting the theory of the unique principle. If there was an only principle, as the ignoramuses state, it must be either good or evil. It couldn't be evil, because, if it were so, it would produce only evil things"<sup>35</sup>. As we can observe, the authors of this paper need to clarify a logical difficulty. They want to „elaborate a model endowed with more coherence, therefore with more reason"<sup>36</sup>. But this logical difficulty is connected with a rigid, formal way of thinking. If our current reality is governed by two cosmogonic principles, how do these principles interact? How could they produce a single unitary world if their action was independent? After all, why shouldn't we accept the idea of a single principle whose „logic" would go beyond the formal or dichotomic logic based on such disjunctions as good-evil, true-false etc? The Albigent Cathars try to overcome a logical difficulty, but they produce greater logical difficulties.

As we have seen, some Gnostics and dualists try to understand the evil in our world using human criteria and a logic whose validity is limited to particular human circumstances. They do not accept the idea that there could be another type of logic applicable to situations beyond the particular human circumstances. Therefore, they do not accept a ternary or triadic logic, more flexible than the dual dichotomic one<sup>37</sup>. They also deny the apophatic way of thinking which admits the incomprehensible and ineffable nature of the supreme divinity. "Dualism is a tool used to conciliate the existence of a good Creator with the imperfections of the human world and existence. Obviously, this is an insoluble problem as long as we do not use a certain

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<sup>35</sup> Apud Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, *The Philosophy of the Romanian Cosmogonic Legends*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, p 54.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 55. „In this way, the dualists deviated from the canon, not offering more truth but more internal order".

<sup>37</sup> Regarding the limits of bivalent logic, cf Botezatu, Petre – *Introducere în logică [Introduction to logic]*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 1997, pp 34-40.

type of definition for God, called *apophatic* (a term derived from the Greek word *apophasis*, meaning «refusal, denial») or negative – a definition which characterises God as unfathomable, beyond any positive attribute such as «good» or «omniscient». Only this position, beyond good and evil, offers God the possibility to originate events like death and suffering, which people – in their limited understanding – consider to be full of pain and sorrow<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, the use of a bivalent logic in response to a theodicy which does not accept apophatism, leads to insoluble logical difficulties.

### **Apparent dualisms**

In some situations, the religious dualism is only apparent or superficial. Let us consider a special problem – whether Bogomilism is a dualist heresy or not.

In *The Dualist Gnososes of the Occident*, chapter IX, Ioan Petru Culianu expresses his doubts concerning the Bogomilist dualism. The very title of this chapter underlines the idea that Bogomilism represents „a pseudo-dualist mythology”. These pages reappear in *The Tree of Gnose*, chapter VIII (*Bogomilism: a pseudodualism*). His arguments refer to the only direct source regarding Bogomilism, entitled *Interrogatio Johannes*, already discovered in 1190. This text mentions the idea that Satan, although a „high rank angel”, „is not the author/creator of the inferior world, but its *demiourgos*, the craftsman who models pre-existent elements”<sup>39</sup>. In one of the variants of this myth, God appears as the real creator of the seven superior levels and of the seven inferior levels of the universe. Therefore, even if Satan is the *demiourgos* or the architect of this world, he does not appear as a real cosmogonic principle. In other words, he represents a power subordinated to God, playing his part only with God’s permission. If he creates some plants and animals from basic elements (water, air, earth), these primordial elements have already been created by God. Ioan Petru Culianu concludes that Bogomilism cannot be considered even a moderate type of dualism. More precisely, Bogomilism is not a dualism. This conclusion complicates the theory about

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<sup>38</sup> Ioan P. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism*, § I. 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, § VIII, 7.



Bogomilism and its relation with the Marcionite Gnosticism, on the one hand, and with Paulicianism on the other hand. Gnosticism may be considered a dualism, and Paulicianism a radical dualism<sup>40</sup>. Compared to the latter, Bogomilism, even if it is an original mythology, cannot be considered dualist. The interpreter considers that, from a Bogomilist perspective, the only evil aspect is represented by concupiscence, which has diabolic origins. But the real creator of the universe is God, he represents the only complete and perfect will in the whole world. The Bogomilists' pseudo-dualist attitude led to ideas and methods different from the Gnostic ones. For example, their anticosmism, as well as their reversed exegesis, displays many differences from the early gnosis.

If this is true, then the relation between Bogomilism and the dualism which characterises the Romanian cosmogony is to be conceived from a more cautious perspective.

#### **Philosophical difficulties of „religious dualism”**

Starting from some cosmogonic myths and legends, Gheorghe Vlăduțescu proposes a real historical geography of dualism, from ancient Egypt up to the present<sup>41</sup>. He devotes a whole chapter to the Romanian cosmogony, discussing its obvious monist and dualist tendencies. At the same time, he offers some possible explanations for the cosmogonic dualism. As he says, the dualist tendency of a cosmogony is never exclusive. „If we emphasise the original matter, we will discover the monism in cosmogonic legends; on the contrary, if we focus on the cosmogonic process, then the dualism is more obvious. However, as it is impossible to separate the formal principle and the matter of creation, we cannot speak about monism *or* dualism; we must refer to monism *and* dualism. There is not a disjunction but a conjunction; they do not

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<sup>40</sup> „In Gnosticism, the matter of the world does not have divine origins, or, if it has, it consists in negative emotions or remains. Marcion also considers matter to be negative and non-divine. The Manicheist darkness is a negative principle, a co-participant to eternity. In spite of its exciting myth of creation, the Bogomilism is far from these old forms of dualism. Could Bogomilism derive from Paulicianism? This seems to be impossible. Paulicianism supports the radical dualism of two gods and two worlds, just like Marcion; ironically, this perspective does not imply the repudiation of the body” (*ibidem*).

<sup>41</sup> Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, pp. 30-63.

reject but complete each other"<sup>42</sup>. As a rule, dualism becomes obvious in the anthropomorphic visions, in which the cosmos and its creation is explained by means of categories defining human behaviour. "From an anthropomorphic perspective, the world seems to have been created like any man-made thing. The dualism characterising the *demiourgos*' work is expanded to the whole universe. But there is something more about it, the difficulty of expressing the bivalence of the principle in an intelligible way. Philosophers have faced this difficulty for a long time, being hardly able to overcome it"<sup>43</sup>.

However, the dualism of certain cosmogonic legends is, in some cases, questionable. For example, it is hard to sustain the idea that "the devil is co-eternal with God", and, consequently, "it does not depend on Him ontologically"<sup>44</sup>. Such a non-dependence would place the devil in a world completely separate from that created by God. Let us remember that, for the Christian fathers, eternity does not always appear as a determination of God. From an apophatic perspective, God is neither eternal nor non-eternal, he is beyond these criteria, the Creator of both eternal and temporal things. Vladimir Lossky revives an older idea, stating that, from the point of view of apophatic theology, eternity itself was created by God<sup>45</sup>. In fact, even if we understand eternity as an unlimited period, *aion*, it still represents a determination. Or a determination is a manifestation of the divine creative power. In other words, eternity originates in the divine act of creation, it represents a manifestation of the divine creative power. Lossky restates an observation made by Saint Maxim the Confessor, that eternity defined in opposition with time is still a determined eternity. It

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p.104. The idea is developed with further details. „All these aspects characterise the same anthropomorphic vision which function in strict spatial coordinates: a particular place of the genesis is located in the vicinity, a certain real or imaginary character looks like the local people, etc. The cosmos is modelled twice: firstly, it behaves like people in general, secondly, like the people living in a determined time and space" (*ibidem*, p. 118).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 112, with reference to a cosmogonic legend mentioned by Tudor Pamfile in *The Tale of the Old World based on Romanian Folk Beliefs*, edited and prefaced by Antoaneta Olteanu, Paideia Publishing House, p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Vladimir Lossky, *Écrites théologiques* (the study *Création: temps et éternité*), Edition du Cerf, in the collection *La vie spirituelle*, nr. 677, tome 141, 1987, pp. 562-581.

is characterised by immobility, invariability and immutability (as opposed to time which involves motion, change and variability). This is a static eternity, like the one we find in Plato's intelligible world. "If God lives in eternity, this live eternity must overcome the opposition between the mobile time and the immobile eternity"<sup>46</sup>. The eonic and intelligible eternity would rather characterise the angelic world. "Both angels and people participate in time and eon, but in different ways. While the human condition is temporal, but in a time made intelligible through eon, angels only had free choice when they were created: an instantaneous temporality which they leave behind for an eon of faithful service and praise to God or, on the contrary, of hatred and rebellion"<sup>47</sup>. As a result, live, creative eternity is proper only to God. The devil, even as a fallen angel, like Lucifer, could only experience a static eternity. But this type of eternity belongs to the category of created reality, which is deeply affected by the event of the „fall“.

Which means that, speaking about God and the devil as co-eternal powers represents a great risk, translating into the created world something which is beyond creation. However, Gheorghe Vlăduțescu adds something which can be accepted unconditionally: „The defeat of the devil involves submitting him to order. Yet, he does not disappear as the primordial force always strives to escape“<sup>48</sup>.

J. Martín Velasco also makes some interesting observations on religious dualism in his work *Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion* (1997). Starting from Ugo Bianchi's distinction between monarchical dualism (non-absolute and non-symmetrical) and absolute dualism, J. Martín Velasco observes that not even Zoroastrianism represents an absolute dualism. „Ahura Mazdā is beyond the contradiction

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 564.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 566.

<sup>48</sup> Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, p. 112. The idea is reiterated somewhere else in his study. „The devil, together with his angels - a symbol of disorder, or of an older, imperfect order- rebels against the new order, like irrationality against rationality. This destructive element swallows the moon and the sun, produces eclipses and earthquakes and haunts man, bringing about suffering and pain. All his actions are the result of malefic thoughts and, in general, because it is an irrational and aberrant power, it cannot carry out its projects (*ibidem*, p. 114).

represented by the twin genii; it is clear that the evil genius, Angra Mainyu, does not oppose his counterpart, Spanta Mainyu. The ethical dualism to be found in this double principle eventually compromises Zarathustra's monotheism. He «combined monism with a strict dualism» so that «the monotheist tendency in Zarathustra's doctrine can not be supported, as it is hindered by the dualism which clearly opposes it»<sup>49</sup>. Absolute dualism seems to appear in the Mazdeist tradition, which succeeded Zoroastrianism and Manicheism. The two principles which confront each other in Mani's religion appear as eternal not created principles, most often called Light and Darkness. These principles do not have an obvious common origin, and their confrontation seems to be endless. Nevertheless, Manicheist dualism is not radical in all its aspects. As Velasco observes, „radical dualism displays a certain inconsistency, as Augustin's opponent confesses, «in our explanations one can never hear the names of two gods; it is true that we admit the existence of two principles, but only one of them is called God; the other is called matter or demon». This is clearly a weakened dualism (regarding the representation of the first principle) as compared to Zurvanism, in which Ahriman is considered not only a demon but a real God to whom people offer sacrifices”<sup>50</sup>. In general, the second power, which announces the existence of dualism, involves a context of creation and a really original creative power.

However, dualist systems evolve in time and they may change significantly. “The more symmetrical a dualist system becomes, the less likely the supposition that the main creator co-exists with a secondary *demiourgos*; therefore, the dualist system gets closer to monism: the two principles become a single one, in which they co-exist or from which they derive. In general, we believe that facts confirm Bianchi's statement about the «monist vocation» of dualist systems”<sup>51</sup>. The opposite power tends either to condition the supreme divinity or to submit to its cosmic project. „In the first case, «the transcendence of the good in relation with the embodied evil tends to eliminate the transcendent distinction between God and the good creatures». In other words, transcendence does not refer to God in relation with his creation or with man, but to *Pneuma*, the spiritual part

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<sup>49</sup> J. Martín Velasco, *Introducción a la fenomenología de la religión*, Ediciones Cristiandad, S. L., Madrid, 1978, § II, 2b. The author quotes from Ugo Bianchi's paper *Monoteismo e dualismo in Zarathustra e nelle tradizione Mazdaica*, published in “Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni”, vol. XXVI, pp. 83-105.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

as opposed to the material one. In the second case, we observe a transition to a monist representation. Thus, the dualist representation of divinity is incompatible with the representation of the divine Transcendence in relation with the universe. The religious dualism compromises the idea of the absolute superiority of divinity, offering us the vision of a man unable to accept unconditionally this absolute superiority<sup>52</sup>. At a certain point, he seems to accept the idea that even the absolute dualism has different variants. („Manicheism offers us a clear example of the most radical form of absolute dualism”<sup>53</sup>). As we have previously noticed, Velasco observes the difficulty implied by the concept of absolute dualism, making reference to some of Ugo Bianchi’s arguments. In fact, a dualism may be considered radical only if it admits the existence of two original powers, as prime roots of any reality. If these roots do not have a common source, we may speak about a pure radicalism of the dualist vision. But this is an unlikely – if not impossible – situation.

#### **A hypothesis of “unilateral dualism”**

In his study, *A Consideration of Traditional Philosophy*<sup>54</sup>, Constantin Noica suggestively entitles two sections: *The Ethos of Neutrality* and *The Ethos of Orientation*. It is an older idea which he supported in his works and in his commentaries on some classics’ philosophical works. He says that the 21<sup>st</sup> century and, partially, the 20<sup>th</sup> century are dominated by „a certain ethos of neutrality”<sup>55</sup>. This is especially obvious in the way human reason is used; it decides, „weighs, estimates and assigns logical value to things”, but it does not indicate or assign meaning to them. When it discovers a duality, such as the particular- universal one, it tries to equalize the terms, considering them only contradictory and irreducible. Or it

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*. He supports this idea with an observation made by Saint Augustin. „In *Contra Faustum*, the Manicheist adversary of Saint Augustin says: „I consider that there are two principles: God and the matter. The matter is full of malefic powers; God embodies the beneficent powers.”

<sup>54</sup> This study is included, as the first volume, in the work *Devenirea întru ființă* [*Becoming within Being*], The Encyclopaedic and Scientific Publishing House, Bucharest, 1981, edition to which we will refer in the following part of our article.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 110.

simply does not try to overcome such dualities, „in this case, try to find how the particular could be universal at the same time”<sup>56</sup>. This is exactly what philosophy must do, namely to see beyond these dualities. „And we know this valid philosophical method: it means to admit that the particular leads to the universal, that the antitheme invokes the theme, which it will contradict, but which will not be contradicted by it. This is the recognition of the fact that, in fact, inside the philosophical reasoning there is only unilateral contradiction”<sup>57</sup>. In other words, the contradiction which is proper to the existent things in their meaningful evolution is the unilateral one. Therefore, the terms of a duality (unless they are abstract, logical or formal dualities) are never equal. On the contrary, “one of the terms is weaker than the other”<sup>58</sup>. Consequently, a duality is dynamical, processual and oriented, never neutral. And its orientation expresses the tendency of the existent things to evolve into the complete, perfect being. As Noica repeatedly stated, evolution takes place from the least determined being towards the most determined one (neither from non-being to being, nor from chaos to cosmos, as it is often said).

Back to the natural inequality between the terms of a duality, we could say that only one of its terms contradicts the other, not the other way round. For example, the particular may contradict the universal, but the latter does not contradict the former; it tries to raise the particular to a universal level, offering it the possibility to become universal. Similarly, the non-being contradicts the being, but the being may not contradict the non-being; the evil contradicts the good, but the good does not contradict something less complete than itself. Noica also makes another observation, namely that “a term is contradicted only by an affirmation, not by a negation; the world seems to be, from this perspective, a rising line, a sequence of positive answers - *yes*”<sup>59</sup>. This is the reason why *yes* means more than *no*,

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 112.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 118. The Romanian philosopher develops this idea. The universe obtains more than it expects, it gets something different. The universe is not complete from the very beginning, but it creates itself. By asserting, not denying itself, one term opens to the other, which it will contradict. This contradiction involves affirmation, not negation; increasing

“therefore it is essential to imagine *yes* as vaster than *no* and not as a term which generates the latter”<sup>60</sup>. This is what Noica does when he refers to the possibility of an oriented thinking/ reasoning, both towards a sense of evolution and an ethos of orientation<sup>61</sup>. In other words, human thinking – and man himself with all his behavioural acts – is defined through a certain position “towards the being”. But this being does not have an immediate character. „In a certain sense, we *are* this being, but in the complete sense we only try – through knowledge and spiritual life- to be. In other words, we exist as if we were “being”. The philosophy of the spirit has shown that this is the condition of thematic dialectics: to place the theme at the beginning and at the end of a dialectic development. If the “being” is not something immediate, which means that it is a theme, this implies that our reasoning, also placed inside the “being”, will be constantly oriented towards it”<sup>62</sup>.

The idea developed by Noica in these pages is able to clarify the type of duality in which are placed the two cosmogonic principles: God and his opponent. We know that many of the variants of the cosmogonic myth narrate the cooperation between these principles in the process of world creation. It has been observed the visible dualism of the cosmogony imagined in this spiritual space. Also, different explanations have been offered: the influence of the Bogomilistic dualism, the spreading of some Oriental dualist myths (such as those typical of Zoroastrianism), the presence of a radical and irreducible dualism (in relation with some essential aspects of the people’s mentality in this part of the world) etc. Obviously, we can discover other interpretations of mythic or religious dualism, like the one which refers to the way in which the human mind works in its simple, binary

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not decreasing. The dialectics of circles expresses the act of life in its rich growth. What would be the use of a dialectics if not to offer a growing / developing world?” (*ibidem*, p.118).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 119.

<sup>61</sup> „It looks like the aspiration for being could be finally perceptible in the contemporary consciousness, in a positive or negative form, on an inferior or adequate level. The feeling of responsibility assigned to philosophy points out to the essence of the being (*ibidem*, p. 125). An adequate commentary on these ideas is offered by Sorin Lavric in *Noica’s Ontology (An Exegesis)*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2005, pp. 120-132.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 125-126.

operations<sup>63</sup>. If we take into account Noica's arguments regarding the unilateral contradiction, we find enough reasons to speak about a unilateral dualism. Such a dualism should be admitted at least when the cosmogonic duality (God – his opponent, Creator – *demiourgos* etc. ) represents a correlation of profoundly unequal terms. It is an inequality manifested in multiple plans, both in the pre-cosmogonic (when a separate entity, different from the supreme divinity, is only possible) and in the cosmogonic plan (only the supreme divinity creates the pattern of this world and its primary data). Such an inequality is repeated in the temporal evolution of the existent things. Consequently, we cannot speak about a bipolar or bilateral contradiction. In this way, man can estrange from God and may deny him, but God will never deny man as if he were his opponent. It is written in a verse from *Timothyti*, II, 13: „If we are not faithful to Him, He is faithful to us, as he cannot deny Himself. „Consequently, if God means love and faith, then He cannot oppose, like in a relation of contradiction, to the human being, created after his own image. In extremis, the devil may contradict God's work, but God does not contradict any of his creations, on the contrary, he offers them the possibility to overcome their own condition. In other words, God can not be conceived as an opponent, as a term in a relation of adversity. What characterises him never implies contradiction or exclusion of anything in his creation.

We can observe this if we focus on one variant of the cosmogonic myth or another. Thus, in the variant presented by Elena Niculiță-Voronca in *Romanian Customs and Traditions, Collected and Presented in Mythological Order* we can easily notice some situations which describe such a partial, unilateral dualism<sup>64</sup>.

„At the very beginning everything was covered by waters; only God and the Evil One were walking on the water. When they see each other

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Ioan P. Couliano, *Les gnosés dualistes d'Occident. Histoire et mythes*, division I, 9.1 (*The Bicameral Brain*).

<sup>64</sup> Voronca, Elena Niculiță – Datinile și credințele poporului român, adunate și așezate în ordine mitologică [*Romanian Customs and Traditions, Collected and Presented in Mythological Order*], Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 1998, p 23.



God asks the Evil One: «What's your name?». «Nifärtache»<sup>65</sup>, says the Devil. «What's your name?», asks the Devil. «My name is Färtache», says God. «Let's make the earth», says God. «Let's do it», says Nifärtache. «Dive into the sea and take some soil for me», says God. Nifärtache does so and says: «I will take soil for me, not for you». When he took his hand out of the water, it was empty, the soil had been washed away. «You see, says God, you took it for you, not for me. Dive again». But God covered the water with ice; before he could break the ice, the soil had been washed away. «You see, says God, you didn't do as I said!». » First, the Devil stood in the water up to his knee, then up to his waist, now up to his neck. «Take care, God says, you're going to drown! » But the Devil did not listen to him and again got ice in his hand. When he was up again and he saw that his hand was empty, and he was going to drown, the Devil said: «OK, let it be his, too». And, when he said this, he kept some soil under his nails and brought it to the surface. God took a straw, cleaned the soil from the devil's nails and made a flat cake, put it in his hand, blew over it, then patted it with his palms. When he opened his hands, there was a bed of soil. Then he put the cake on the water: «Now we have enough ground to sleep on it tonight», says God. It is getting dark, they go to sleep, but Nifärtache keeps pushing God into the water all night long. The next day, there was as much land as there is today, it kept spreading under God”.

We can notice that God and the Devil tell us their names openly. From a religious point of view, these characters' names represent their essential power. God calls Himself “Färtache” (a positive term), while the Evil One uses a negative name (“Nifärtache”). In fact the Devil's name consists in a negation in order to underline his adversative role. After they announce their names, they manifest their power in the next stage, in which they create the earth and the other elements. God takes the initiative (“Let's make the earth”, God says). The same character presents the initial project of creation (“Dive into the sea and take some soil for me/ on my behalf”, says God). The expression “for me/ on my behalf” is absolutely essential in the act of creation; nothing can be created without his initiative, everything is created on his behalf. Yet, the Devil, according to his adversative nature, does not respect God's order (“I will take soil on my behalf, not yours”, he says when he dives into

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<sup>65</sup> „Nifärtache”, as proper name, in ancient Romanian language, designates the opposite of brother, and “Färtache” designates the brother himself.

the sea). As he wanted to take soil on his behalf, the Devil could not bring "the seed of land" from the bottom of the sea. Only when he dived for the third time, and when he accepted to take soil on God's behalf, could he carry out the order. The fact that he dived three times already indicates an initiatory quest, a quest which begins with the initial misunderstanding of the divine order and ends with its execution.

There is another significant episode for this type of unilateral duality. Sitting on the piece of land, God and the Devil were resting after a day's work. In fact, God's rest represents his complete satisfaction with his creation, while the Devil's rest is an interval in which he could fulfil other selfish and vain aspirations. As the mythical story tells us, the Devil wanted to be alone on the piece of land, the only master of what had been created. That is why he tries to push God into the sea and to drown him, as the narrator says: "but Nifärtache keeps pushing God into the water all night long. The next day, there was as much land as there is today, and it kept spreading under God". Therefore, Nifärtache's opposition continues to exist. But God never answers back. He never appears like a will opposing to another will, he is never described as an opponent or as an enemy. On the contrary, he seems to be absent, withdrawn in his own peace and perfection. Only the other one, the Devil could believe that God was fast asleep, not feeling anything, indifferent to what was happening in the world. Nifärtache's negative will has, due to God's power, a positive effect: the land expanded and then it was large enough for all the created beings and elements. But this was possible because the act of creation was made in the name of God.

Such mythical situations make us believe that cosmogonic dualism has an original form. It is not an absolute or radical dualism. It is not a closed dualism, as in the case of an endlessly delayed orientation towards creation. On the contrary, it is a unilateral dualism, explicitly manifested from one single part. In other words, Nifärtache opposes the divine power, as long as he is allowed to do it, but God does not oppose any forces or elements belonging to the world which He Himself has created.

### **Conclusions**

Consequently, we have grounds to express our reservations regarding the existence of a radical religious dualism. If there were an absolute dualism or a perfectly radical one, in which case the two primordial powers would be equal and with opposite sense, the creation of the world would not be impossible. Therefore, the concept of radical dualism can be accepted in very few situations and only for some cosmogonic sequences. As we have observed, some religious trends, such as Bogomilism, do not even represent a proper dualism, much the less a radical dualism.

A much more reserved perspective on dualism can be found in Mircea Eliade's works. He supports the important idea that the dualist mythical variants (sometimes dramatically dualist) are usually late versions and subject to many transformations; the archaic variants are rather pre-dualist<sup>66</sup>.

Regarding the dualism of the folk cosmogony in the Romanian spiritual space, we formulated a hypothesis inspired by Constantin Noica's study *A Consideration of Traditional Philosophy* from the volume *Devenirea întru ființă* [*Becoming within Being*], 1981. In this study Noica refers to a unilateral contradiction and to an ethos of orientation (different from the ethos of neutrality, which is proper to an antagonistic, bilateral contradiction). Starting from this hypothesis and from an observation (that God's cooperation with some beings or with his opponent regards not the original creation as a model, but the continuous creation process, its temporal and spatial expansion), we consider that we can speak about a unilateral dualism in Romanian cosmogonic myths. The relation between God and his opponent can be described as a unilateral duality: the adversary can oppose to the divine power, as much as he is allowed to do it in the creation process, but God does not oppose to any beings or powers belonging to the world he created in its original form. Unilateral dualism can be also called, according to the aspect we focus on, univocal dualism

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. Mircea Eliade, *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan.*, Payot, Paris, 1970, division „*La structure et la signification de l'immersion cosmogonique*”.

(which is produced by a single term of the duality), di-symmetrical dualism (when the two powers are not equal from an ontological and cosmogonic point of view) or oriented dualism (implying the idea that the confrontation between God and his opponent has an evolutionary sense, which God himself offers to his creation).

From the above mentioned aspects, it results that there are many types of dualism (more precisely, many dualist interpretations of genesis). But these dualist interpretations do not necessarily refer to the concept of original creation of the world, such as the creation *ex nihilo*. At the same time, it is not easy to distinguish a radical form of dualism. As we have already mentioned, the radical dualism (especially the absolute one) can simply deny the idea of creation. A phrase like "radical cosmogonic dualism" may sound like a contradiction in terms, as radical or pure dualism does not make the creation possible. Nevertheless, we could accept the concept of radical dualism if we refer not to the world creation (different from its *making* and its continuation in time), but to the creation of some concrete, particular or well- determined realities. In other words, a radical dualism may exist, regarding some sequences or moments of the cosmogonic process. In this case, radical dualism can explain, for example, the persistence of evil in the human world, the extension of conflicts and traumas, some failures in the process of creation, forms of cosmogonic failure, the wicked side of some powers or elements, etc. Radical dualism refers to some particular data of the existent world, not to its original creation, in the testamentary sense of the word.

*(translated by Antoanela-Alina Crăciun-Ștefăniu)*

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