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MAN'S THREE FAR-AWAY KINGDOMS: ASCETIC EXPERIENCE AS A GROUND FOR A NEW ANTHROPOLOGY

The modern situation of the world and humanity is marked by crisis and catastrophic trends. Few people would deny it now: this view is not only stated in expert assessments, but has already taken deep roots in mass consciousness. For instance, in Russia in 1999, according to opinion polls, 59% of citizens considered the situation in the country and world to be “catastrophic”, 32% to constitute a “crisis” and only 8% to be “normal”. Clearly, this state of things demands analysis and comprehension on many levels. Philosophical and religious consciousness puts in first place the problem of the *nature and roots* of the situation: in which horizon of reality and in the sphere of which phenomena are its sources and supporting factors located? Entering upon this problem, a philosopher soon comes to discover an essential new feature. It has always been generally accepted that global crisis and catastrophic phenomena can be of dual nature in their sources: these sources may be either in the environment (such as natural disasters, epidemics, etc.) or in the social sphere (such as wars, troubles, the downfall of kingdoms). Undoubtedly, the roots of today’s crisis include natural factors (pollution, exhaustion of resources, destruction of ecosystems) as well as social ones (ethnic and confessional conflicts, civilization tensions, etc.). However, both these kinds of factors are noticeably starting to lose their directing and dominating role. Let us take a look at the visiting card of our days, suicide terrorism. It is a certain kind of suicide, i.e. suicidal practice of the Self; and such phenomenon cannot be considered as a natural or social one in its essence: it is an anthropological phenomenon, in the first place. The same can be said about all practices of transgression, which are so varied and widespread today, and many other crisis phenomena of nowadays. Global crisis takes on a new anthropological nature, and its sources are to be found on the anthropological level, in processes taking place in anthropological reality. These processes start playing the decisive role in the global situation and dynamics, since they can no longer be considered to be determined by social or historical processes. They start to belong to things *explanans*, instead of *explanandum* and they take the form of abrupt and radical changes.

The experience of the new epoch, that of the turn of the millennium, revealed the utmost – indeed, the unlimited – changeability and plasticity of man’s nature: his nature itself, and not merely some of its accidentals or attributes. The famous line by T.S.Eliot: *The centre does not hold*, that was applied to so many aspects of modern times, seems to find its most profound sense when applied to man: it is his centre that turns out today to have fallen apart and be absent. In recent experience a new face of man emerges: the new *anthropological reality free from any unchangeable essential core*. This face is in striking contrast to the traditional European view of man. The man of the turn of the millennium, times of psychoanalysis and the Internet, formed by the experience of totalitarianism, radical psychotechniques, psychedelic and virtual practices, gender revolutions – this man can in no way be identified with the classical subject of traditional European anthropology and metaphysics. And if old concepts do not explain actual anthropological processes, it means that there is a pressing need for a new approach to the phenomenon of man and new principles for both philosophical and cultural anthropology.

The topological intuition of man's centre evoked by poetry may still be useful in this anthropological quest. Classical European anthropology founded by Aristotle is basically essentialist metaphysics which treats man as an essence and a system of diverse essences and tries to single out the fundamental principles or basic elements of man’s nature: a kind of immutable generating core that determines the complex diversity of human being in all its manifestations. This approach to man correlates naturally with the intuition of a centre; it assumes the existence of some

essential centre of human being and is oriented towards the search for and study of it. As said above, the recent experience of mankind questions (if it does not flatly deny) the existence of such an immovable essential centre, and so the problem of man can no longer be stated as the problem of the search for and study of his centre. However, the intuition of a centre immediately suggests an alternative to itself. If man cannot be characterized by the “centre”, he should be characterized by the “periphery” or, more precisely, the “border”. The last characteristic cannot be absent and, in addition, it is certainly no less determinative than the “centre”. By the classical philosophical argument, a general way to give definition to an object is to identify its Other that is different from it and *eo ipso* constitutes its limit or border. Hence it follows that anthropology can develop as the description of an “anthropological border”, i.e. the border of the sphere of all manifestations and capacities of man, the border of the horizon of human existence.

This reorientation of anthropology, from the essential centre which became fiction, to the Border of Man, is not just logically possible: it is insistently dictated by modern experience. So far there is no clear-cut concept of the “Border of Man” in modern thought, but nevertheless the words “border” and “limit” appear constantly and hauntingly when it deals with leading trends and the most characteristic manifestations of modern man. One can say by right that Man’s stubborn and irrepressible striving towards his Border is the principal and defining feature of the present anthropological situation. In light of this, our previous conclusion can be made more precise: the urge and problem of the epoch is now not just a new anthropology, but more precisely the “anthropology of the Border”, as distinct from the former “anthropology of the Centre”.

The advancement to the anthropology of the Border needs a certain initial representation or at least intuition of the Border, which should not be attached to old discredited anthropological discourses. Rejecting old anthropology which develops the description of man in terms of essences and substances, we should not represent the Border of Man as an essentialist concept or construct based on laws and principles inherent in these essences and substances. We should start *ab ovo*, avoiding any metaphysical postulates.

In traditional representations, the Border is something belonging to an object (or subject) and separating it from everything that is surrounding, external, or “other”. Hence, in its semantic structure, the Border is a certain “Third” with respect to the dyad “Object and its Other” that for this dyad serves as something intermediate and separating (but also at the same time uniting). Dealing with the Anthropological Border, we should address these notions. First of all, it is undesirable from the very outset to define Man, whose philosophical status is yet to be found, by the old metaphysical notion of object (or subject, for that matter); the discourse of Man developed as a subject-object discourse might be an unfounded restriction of the anthropological discourse. What is more, the philosophical object discourse is basically a discourse of static entities and hence it is hardly suitable for the current anthropological reality characterized by sharp dynamics and radical changes. Modern anthropological experience records all the diverse manifestations of man and places at the forefront, as the most important and specific, a certain kind of manifestation usually described as «extreme expressions», “border phenomena”, “phenomena of transgression”, etc. The criteria, by means of which such manifestations can be identified, are not however precisely formulated. They are, as a rule, vague and semi-intuitive, but nevertheless they possess some consistency: one can see that the “extreme” or “border” nature of human manifestations is always understood to signify the departure from the sphere of “usual”, “normal” empiric human existence towards the sphere of manifestations, in which some or other determinative characteristics or predicates of such existence disappear or are changed.

These experiential attitudes are valuable for us as reference points. They suggest that in the dyad “Man and his Other”, man can be present not as an object (or subject), but as a “horizon of existence” identified by means of a certain set of basic features and predicates (such as the presence of consciousness, finiteness, mortality...), while the Other will be grasped with respect to this set. In

this case, the Border of Man, being the “Third”, “intermediate and separating-uniting” for this dyad, will be described in terms of manifestations of man: it will be formed of the same “extreme expressions”, put to the forefront in the modern experience, and their likes, -- i.e. of such human manifestations, in which some determinative characteristics and predicates of human existence disappear or are changed and which can be considered, for this reason, to be manifestations not only of Man as such, but also of his Other. Thus a preliminary working notion of the Border of Man emerges: *the Border of Man (Anthropological Border) is the full set of Man’s extreme manifestations.*

Obviously, Anthropological Border treated here not substantially or essentially well as not in any abstract metaphysical way; it is formed by definite human manifestations. Hence it is human manifestations that serve as a basic starting notion for developing anthropology of Border. To avoid all arbitrary postulates, restrictions and reductions characteristic to old anthropology, this notion should be interpreted in a maximally broad and general way. In our study we do not predetermine any image of Man, but we know for sure that Man is so complex, many-dimensional and polyphonic that his expressions and manifestations constitute an extremely rich, variegated and mobile element. We know, in particular, that very characteristic feature of anthropological reality is the presence of subtle effects similar to those of the “flap of butterfly’s wing” type in physical systems, when most insignificant and barely perceptible manifestations may produce most important consequences, including the spurt to the Border. Hence it follows that we must rank among “human manifestations” not only completed or fully formed *acts* of man, but also all sorts of incipiative, embryonic human expressions, all urges, designs, inner movements, which represent just *germs of acts* and may as well never grow into full-fledged acts.

The great attention to these subtle human expressions is cultivated since ancient times in mystico-ascetical, or spiritual practices. These practices assert the utmost importance of such expressions for anthropological reality and elaborate refined techniques for watching, controlling and governing them. Therefore anthropology of Border in its approach to Man reveals an affinity to spiritual practices and this affinity is profound and far-reaching, as we shall see. Spiritual practices represent rich experiential anthropology with long tradition and it is their data, besides with those of the recent experience, that prove to be most topical and valuable in the modern situation of the anthropological crisis and quest. Our times and these practices draw closer to each other as two areas, where *nonclassical treatment of Man is developed*, which finds extremely subtle and limiting human manifestations to be crucially important. Below we shall discover as well some profound divergences between these areas, however. Next, one can note one more affinity or parallel: anthropological approach basing on “human manifestations” is to some extent similar to the approach basing on man’s actions or deeds, many-sided human practice. Various forms of such an approach were developed in XX c. in psychology (behaviorism and other schools), and social philosophy (soviet and Yugoslavian neomarxism, etc.) and some of them gained popularity. This parallel is not too close, however. As said above, the categories like act, action, activity or practice (in the sense given to it in Western philosophy) are more superficial and indiscriminate characteristics of human being and existence than those subtle “human manifestations”, on which spiritual practices and anthropology of Border are based: in the comparative perspective, the discourse of manifestations can be seen as a kind of *micro-analysis of anthropological reality.*

Obviously, the first task of anthropology of the Border is conceptualization of the sphere of “human manifestations”. Here the experience of spiritual practices is again a reference point, and the school of Eastern Christian asceticism known as hesychasm turns out to be especially important. Far-Eastern practices like yoga, tantric buddhism, etc. are using specific discourses of Eastern thought, in which all basic notions, their relations, rules of consideration and conclusion are radically different from the European tradition. In this regard, hesychasm seems to be a unique example, in which “micro-analytical” anthropological approach inherent in spiritual practices is developed within the European discourse. In particular, from ancient times hesychasm has accepted an universal collective term for all kinds of manifestations of man: they all are called “energies” of

man. More precisely, “energy” is the term for any of the simplest or elementary human expressions, so that an arbitrary manifestation is composed, generally speaking, out of many various energies and thus represents a certain “energetic configuration”. This basic term establishes a connection between the practical or descriptive study of human manifestations and European philosophical discourse. This connection is initially of only a vague and intuitive character, however, since in asceticism energy is not a philosophical, but operational concept, a kind of working tool. Therefore, when the language of energies is used for human manifestations, it should be carefully conditioned in order to bridge the gap between the ascetical empirical word-usage and philosophical treatment of energy. Proceeding in such a way, we can transform the experiential discourse of human manifestations into that of philosophical anthropology.

The adoption of the language of energies for the description on Man, including his extreme expressions which form the Anthropological Border, is fraught with many consequences. First of all, if the Border phenomena, as said above, can be considered as manifestations of not only Man, but also his Other, then the language of energies is naturally and unavoidably transferred to these manifestations of the Other. As a result, the Border phenomena appear as a unique kind of phenomena, in which energies belonging to Man meet and interact with some different energies, “energies of the Other”. The fundamental and determinative property of these different energies is that their source cannot be identified anywhere in the horizon of human existence. Clearly, such characterization of the Border phenomena implies a parallel between anthropology of the Border and theory of physical open systems. In such systems the main factor determining their behavior is the interaction between their internal energies and external ones, which can go through the system due to its openness. Accepting – on the basis of some or other experience, religious-mystical or modern limiting one, -- that Man does not possess any immutable nature and may change however radically, we *eo ipso* suppose anthropological reality to be open reality and suppose Man to be an “open system”. In physical open systems there exist various types or mechanisms of the interaction between their energies and external energy belonging to some outer source; and a special role among these mechanisms is played by so called synergetic mechanism, or synergetic paradigm. The essence of this paradigm, in a somewhat simplified way, is as follows. If a system is prepared specially, namely, it is removed as far as possible from the region of its usual stable regimes and brought to a state, which is very far from equilibrium (this preparatory procedure is called “shaking” of the system), then the flux of outer energy through the system may produce not destructive, but structuring effects. Spontaneous processes of self-organizing type arise, which generate hierarchies of more and more complicated dynamical structures and may bring the system to a radically new form. Obviously, paradigms and mechanisms of anthropological changes taking place in the Border phenomena are of paramount interest and the physical and system-theoretical parallel proves to be quite useful in understanding these paradigms. We shall see below that the synergetic paradigm has profound correspondences in spiritual practice and, in particular, in the paradigm of synergy (*συνεργία*) developed in Byzantine theology on the basis of hesychast experience. The terminological closeness is here not accidental at all. On the other hand, to avoid the physicalistic reductionism, it should never be forgotten that the validity of the parallel is very restricted, since the language of the description of physical systems is surely only to the little extent valid for anthropological and especially spiritual reality.

The horizon of human existence is a many-aspect, many-dimensional, heterogeneous reality. Hence the Other of Man is diversified too; with respect to different fundamental predicates of the horizon in question, different predicates and kinds of the Other are constituted. For example, by the very definition, the unconscious is the Other to consciousness, and if we list the possession of consciousness among the fundamental man’s predicates (which is generally and firmly accepted), then the unconscious is also the Other to Man: a definite kind of the Other, which does not exhaust its sphere. Hence it follows that Anthropological Border as the Third and separating-uniting entity with respect to the dyad Man – his Other is a structured formation: each kind of the Other constitutes a certain kind of the Border, or better – if we prefer to preserve the notion of border in

the topological discourse – a certain region or *areal of the Border*. As soon as the Border has a certain structure or topography, the first large problem of the anthropology of the Border consists in the reconstruction of this topography.

As we have seen, one of the areals of the Border of Man is generated by the unconscious. It is formed by human manifestations which are induced by the presence of the unconscious and in which human energies meet and interact with the energies of the unconscious. It is easy to see that one more (at least) areal should exist, which is directly related to Man's ontological status. In the ontological approach to the phenomenon of Man, Man is considered as a certain mode or horizon of being. A classical modern example is Heidegger's philosophy, presenting Man as a "being-presence", *Dasein*; a classical ancient example is Christian thought, for which Man is the "creature", a mode of being created out of Nothing. In this case, the Other of Man is a different mode or horizon of being, *Anderssein* (*Sein* in Heidegger and God as Three-Hypostatic being in Christian thought; i.e. we mean the literal rather than exact Hegelian sense of the term). The Border of Man grasped as the energetic Third for this dyad is then the set of such human expressions, in which Man's transformation into a different horizon of being is approached. Such a transformation means ontological transcendence, i.e. actual change of ontological, in the exact sense, characteristics of Man, which include, in the first place, fundamental predicates of finiteness and mortality. (E.g., in Orthodoxy the destination of Man is defined as deification (*θέωσις*), or union with God in His Energies, approached in the summit of the way of spiritual ascension; whence it can be said that Orthodoxy sees the Border of Man as ontological transcendence thematized in forms of hesychast practice and theology of deification). This new areal of the Border is deeply different from the areal defined by the unconscious ("topography of the unconscious"). The unconscious is not claimed to possess the status of an authentic horizon of being and so the Border of Man constituted by it is not an ontological border separating different modes of being: it lies entirely in the ontological horizon of the empirical human existence, which is called usually "present being", or "being-there", or else the sphere of "essence" (*Seiende*). Following Heidegger's distinction between the categories of being and essence as, resp., ontological and ontical categories, we shall call the topography, or areal of the unconscious *ontical* Anthropological Border, while the Border constituted by the different horizon of being is, evidently, *ontological* Anthropological Border. We shall see below that the canonical dyad ontological—ontical may be complemented, since there exists (and is most important in our times!) a kind of reality that can be identified neither with being nor with essence: it is virtual reality that represents incompletely actualized essence. There exists also a large class of human manifestations, in which the goings-out to virtual reality are performed. With respect to the horizon of human existence they are extreme manifestations, which means that virtual reality also generates a certain areal of the Border, or the "topography of virtuality". It will be shown, using the interpretation of the Border in terms of inner and outer energies, that these three topographies exhaust all the Border.

At first sight, the structure consisting of only three areals does not seem to be particularly complicated or diversified. It is so only at superficial sight, however. In fact, the arising model represents Man as a strikingly polyphonic being, capable to change in an extremely wide range and be drastically different in all possible aspects. It should be taken into account that former anthropological conceptions always assumed (although implicitly in most cases) that the Border of Man is something unstructured, consisting of some single topography. But the distinctions between different topographies are radical. Man's relation to his Border is constitutive for the self-identity of a man and therefore each topography generates its own type or model of man's identity¹. Analysis of these types of identity in their constitution is the most systematic strategy in the search for the alternative to the long criticized Cartesian concept of the subject and the answer to the sacramental question: *Who comes after the subject?*² Like identity, many other basic characteristics of human

¹ The models of man's identity corresponding to different topographies of the Border are analyzed in our cycle "Six intentions on ontological alternative" (*Zhurnal nablyudenii*, Nr. 1, 2001, pp.57-108; in Russian).

² Cf. *Who comes after the subject?* Ed. by E.Cadava, J.-L.Nancy, P.O'Connor. N.-Y. 1991.

existence – for instance, the type and constitution of temporality – are also deeply different in different topographies. One needs careful examination to see clearly the image of Man emerging in *energetic anthropology of the Border* that we outline here.

Constitution of the ontological Border

Undoubtedly, the analysis of the Border of Man should be started with the ontological Border determining Man's orientation in being. The very existence of this Border presents a problem: what is the "transcension" of Man? isn't it just a fiction, a linguistic phantom or epiphenomenon of the metaphysical discourse?

The theme of ontological transformation, striving after the change of one's horizon of being and ontological status comes forth from the very "basic constitution" (Grundverfassung) of human existence: it is rooted in man's mortality and basic elements of man's relation to death. This relation generates vast and diverse economy, the core of which is the elemental and deep-lying negative reaction of the human consciousness and organism, of the whole human being, to its impending annihilation. It is a primordial, organic and involuntary impulse of repulsion and denial (or, more precisely, inacceptance) of death as one's own absolute non-being, the total and final annihilation of the subject world; and we shall call it the "Primal impulse of the denial of death". *Ex definitione*, what this Primal impulse strives after is the deliverance from the described prospects, i.e. the "overcoming of death". (Manifestations of the Primal impulse take many forms including perverted ones, which look like striving for death, but one can always identify such forms, including those related to the so called "death instincts", as inversions of an original repulsion.) But this object of the Primal impulse cannot be constituted as a well-defined phenomenon of consciousness, since it can in no way be present within the horizon of lived experiences (Erlebnisse): already "my" death, not to mention the overcoming of it, cannot be present in this horizon. Moreover, the consciousness in its usual routine activities is not inclined to make the primal impulse more explicit and bring to light its object and its sources; it has been repeatedly demonstrated (the analytic of "Sein und Zeit" is the best example) that the consciousness dominated by stereotypes of everyday routine life tries to evade the experience of death, to repress it or reduce it to marginality. As a result, in usual regimes of human existence the primal impulse of the denial of death remains very vague, and its object, the overcoming of death, still more so.

Nevertheless one can see clearly that the constitution of the Primal impulse and the character of the processes in which it actualizes itself show common features with drives (Triebe), as they are described by Freud and Lacan. According to their theories, the object of desire or drive turns out to be inaccessible (except for the category of empirical objects, which are accessible, easily changeable and replaceable). This cardinal inaccessibility is a direct consequence of the genesis of the drives which are rooted in the unconscious. In its turn, it becomes one of the principal preconditions of the generation of a large repertoire of specific structures of the consciousness and behavior (neuroses, complexes, etc.) which are identified and studied by psychoanalysis as a science and which psychoanalysis as a therapy tries to monitor and deconstruct. Now, the constitution of the Primal impulse also shows the inaccessibility of the object. Clearly, human existence as it is does not lead to any actual and factual, ascertainable and non-illusory "overcoming of death", and due to this, the destiny of the Primal impulse turns out to be similar to that of drives: like them, it realizes itself in processes representing cyclic repetition of certain dynamic stereotypes or patterns (repetition being one of the "four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis", according to Lacan). But now the psychoanalytic paradigm (represented symbolically by Lacan as a cyclic motion around the voidness of an absent object) does not exhaust the phenomena and processes initiated by the Primal impulse.

The repeated non-achievement of the fulfillment or "satisfaction" of the Primal impulse produces not only those effects (chiefly of the frustration type) which psychoanalysis associates

with drives. It is fully evident and amply demonstrated by philosophy, psychology and arts that the experience of death is the only kind of experience which is unavoidable for each and everyone and is at the same time ontologically pregnant, confronting one with man's being as a whole. As stressed especially in the existential analytic, the phenomenon and experience of death take a unique place in man's situation; they are related directly to the ontological status of man, since they provide the principal manifestation of the fundamental predicate of finiteness which determines the ontological horizon of man's being (being-there, Dasein). The consciousness in its higher activities, those of the mind, notices this unique role and, as a consequence, besides the tendencies to the repression of the experience of death, opposite tendencies are being formed too, prompting the comprehension of this experience. However these tendencies may and do develop in two different ways.

In one of these ways, the consciousness puts in the centre of its comprehending work mortality itself, i.e. unavoidable death as the limiting phenomenon of human existence which has and provides meaning(s). One sets the task of grasping the human existence in the light of this phenomenon: the task of *approaching the meaning of life through the meaning of death*. This is an ancient way originating in archaic cults and going from orphism to Platon and platonism and then to later philosophy right up to Heidegger. Its motto is the famous maxim in "Phaedon": "To be engaged in philosophy means doing exercises in dying" (Phed 67 e). Thus man's attitude to death becomes here the object of special "exercises", which turn out to coincide with philosophizing. Following P. Hadot, we can say that the consciousness adopts here the strategy or paradigm of "spiritual exercises", aimed at "the contemplation of time and being in their wholeness ... elevation of thinking to the level of the universal"³. – But what is the destiny of the Primal impulse in this paradigm? It is easy to see that "spiritual exercises" imply its taming or deconstructing: by means of the "elevation of thinking" "I should curb my initial organic inacceptance of death and transform it into a "philosophical acceptance"⁴. Clearly, what we witness here is a kind of sophism, an attempt to stifle and change to the opposite an organic and authentic impulse of human nature. Hence, it is not surprising that despite all the support of philosophy the paradigm of spiritual exercises could never develop into a full-fledged anthropological strategy.

In the other way, on the contrary, consciousness puts at the centre and starts to look for the meaning not of death but of the denial of death. Now a different logical scheme is put forward which perhaps interprets man's situation more profoundly. Death as such is just something natural and self-evident: *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt*, this is all too comprehensible! -- but what rouses an acute puzzle is this denial of death which has its seat so deeply and ineradicably in me. The philosophizing paradigm of spiritual exercises treats it slightly, the inacceptance of death is there itself subjected to inacceptance: it is claimed to belong to the sphere of the unreasonable, "wild" in man, and man ought to reject or repress it. But when it comes to the test, this philosophical verdict turns out to be too hasty, it overlooks an alternative. If the consciousness decides to take seriously its own inacceptance of death, the relevant conceptual structure becomes not dual (Man and his Death), but triple: Man – his (unavoidable) Death -- his (ineradicable) Denial of death. The knot of the problem of death (or mortality) is shifted: the consciousness now tends to see it less in death as such than in its own denial of death. It starts with the awareness of the conflicting and frustrating situation, in which the immanent presence of the ineradicable Primal impulse is combined with the permanent non-satisfaction of this impulse, non-achievement of its aim and object. This situation makes it to put the Primal impulse into focus and question its status. If the Primal impulse never gets fulfilled, what is it for and where is it from in me? Is it true that it is

³ P. Hadot. *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*. Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes 1981, pp.54,56.

⁴ Here the antique and especially late-antique typology of the paradigm of spiritual exercises is strikingly seen. The ideal of man's attitude to death is conceived here according to the stoical dialectics of domination vs. slavery and barbarism vs. education: the "elevation of thinking" is available to everybody including even a slave; and a slave (a mortal) who elevates his thinking achieves equality with and even superiority over his master (death). But this dialectics was unable to stop the downfall of slavery and in the same way the paradigm of spiritual exercises as a model of man's attitude to death never became too popular.

rooted only in the unreasonable, in the “wild part of a human being” (Platon)? and eventually it is nothing but an eternal vain craving doomed in advance, a kind of my failure inherent in my nature itself? Can it get fulfilled if only theoretically, “in principle”? -- All these questions mean that the consciousness realizes an intentional relation to the Primal impulse, turning the latter into an intentional object. Evidently, it is a specific object given only incompletely, as noted above, and this intentional relation cannot produce a full-fledged intentional act in the Husserlian sense. But in no way is it fruitless.

First of all, putting the Primal impulse into its focus, the consciousness can advance (though not to the very end) in the constitution of its object and aim. It becomes clear that the fulfillment of the Primal impulse cannot be identified with simple removal or absence of death, i.e. the indefinite prolongation of biological existence dragging on indefinitely in the same forms. What can be said to be necessarily demanded by the Primal impulse is not so much the *absence* of death as the *change of the nature* of death, the overcoming of the end-as-annihilation of human personality. Such a change can be described generally as an end-as-transformation. Certainly, one cannot fully make explicit the contents of such a transformation, if only for the reason that this task involves the solution of cardinal problems of formulating a definition of self-identity of personality and criteria of the preservation of self-identity: which problems are still extremely vague for both philosophy and psychology. However, the kind of transformation is evident: the “change in the nature of death” is nothing but a change in the fundamental predicates of the horizon of man’s being, a genuine *ontological* transformation. Hence a further conclusion follows necessarily: the actual fulfillment of the Primal impulse is achievable only if this impulse is not subjected to these predicates, i.e. if it is not just spontaneous and independent of my will and reason, but actually originates “out there” and “beyond there”, has its source outside the world of lived experiences and horizon of being-there. In other words, it is the impulse of the “*Source-Beyond-There*”, of a “different nature”, and if it is really so, then following such an impulse a priori is capable of bringing about the actual change in my nature, “change in the nature of death”.

Thus an important new concept emerges and we should describe it as clearly as possible. One cannot say that we arrive at perceiving the Source-Beyond-There in an intentional act or deduce the Source-Beyond-There by means of logical conclusions. *Per definitionem*, what is beyond the horizon of the consciousness and lived experiences cannot be either perceived or deduced. By means of my intentional relation to the Primal impulse I in no way perceive the Source-Beyond-There itself, but only ascertain the following statements related to it: a) I cannot identify and localize the source of my Primal impulse anywhere within the horizon of my consciousness and, in this sense, it is a “source in the without”, or “source-beyond-there”; b) the fulfillment of the Primal impulse is possible only in the case when its source is *ontologically* beyond-there: in order to “change the nature of death” it is necessary to “change the nature of life” or, more exactly, to achieve an ontological transformation; and to this end an ontologically different acting factor or “energy” is needed, i.e. energy belonging to a source which is ontologically beyond-there; c) I cannot either perceive or prove that the source of the Primal impulse is, indeed, ontologically beyond-there, but nor can I either perceive or prove the opposite.

In order to see what conclusions my consciousness draws from these data, one more result of the intentional relation to the Primal impulse should be noted. It is easy to see the crucial role of the consciousness in the fulfillment of the Primal impulse, irrespective of the exact nature of its source. The Primal impulse is acting in my consciousness, hence its fulfillment can be implemented only via the consciousness. *The consciousness is the only immediate agent of the Primal impulse*. Since the fulfillment of the Primal impulse is an ontological transformation, the consciousness should become the agent of this ontological transformation, i.e. global transformation of man’s being-there. Following and obeying the Primal impulse, the consciousness should get transformed itself and, in addition, it should work out and carry out the strategy of this global transformation, which is, obviously, also a global, all-embracing activity. In other words, *the fulfillment of the Primal impulse*

is conceivable only if the consciousness is entirely directed to following the Primal impulse and wholly concentrated on its fulfillment.

It is clear now that in the usual mode of existence, without adopting this special strategy, the fulfillment of the Primal impulse is certainly impossible, but in the case of its adoption this impossibility cannot be established. The attitude of the consciousness with respect to the source of the Primal impulse is clear too. Should the consciousness accept this source as one which is ontologically “beyond-there”? -- In any case, the complete concentration of the consciousness on the fulfillment of the Primal impulse is the precondition of this fulfillment. The other precondition is that the source of the Primal impulse should be ontologically “beyond-there”. Whence it follows that concentrating on the fulfillment of the Primal impulse makes sense for the consciousness only if the consciousness considers this last precondition as satisfied. Summing up, the fulfillment of the Primal impulse demands that my consciousness should concentrate entirely on this fulfillment and, in addition, the consciousness in all its strategy should treat the source of the Primal impulse as the Source-(ontologically)-Beyond-There. Obviously, it is the situation of the choice, or bifurcation for the consciousness, since a priori this nature of the source can in no way be verified. (But it does not mean that there can be no verification a posteriori.)

Another significant conclusion provided by the intentional relation to the Primal impulse refers to the structure of the consciousness. The impulse aiming at the ontological transformation should identify and discern fundamental predicates of man’s being-there, which means that it should act, in the first place, on the higher activities of the consciousness, on man’s mind. In this case it should be articulated and audible to the mind, i.e. intelligible, which properties of the Primal impulse make it possible to characterise it as a *call* or *appeal* of the Source-Beyond-There. This dialogical terminology proves to be most adequate for the processes we discuss.

Thus the Primal impulse of the denial of death should be a call of the Source-Beyond-There. This is its necessary property, but it does not yet secure the fulfillment of the Primal impulse. Any advancement to the fulfillment can take place only if the call is apprehended -- and evokes an agreeing response – and what the call appeals to starts to get done. But this call appeals to something utterly unique, the ontological transformation. If the consciousness has apprehended and accepted the call as originating from the Source-Beyond-There, then such an appeal is not a priori absurd and impossible anymore, but even in this case following the call is an absolutely special and unique task. First of all, this following should be global, all-embracing: being perceived, in the first place, by man’s mind, the call appeals, however, to man as a whole, in its entirety. Hence following the call concerns the whole human being. This being is structured hierarchically, including many levels of composition, organization and activity and, generally speaking, each of these levels should undergo a certain transformation of its own. As a result, the following of the call proves to be a process involving all the human person in its entirety, in other words, it is a certain all-embracing, holistic anthropological strategy. Being directed to the transformation of man’s being-there, this strategy is incompatible with the usual, “natural” mode of human existence, which reproduces man’s being-there and does not accept the Primal impulse as the call of the Source-Beyond-There. The total following of the call is an alternative, or “counterprogram” to the natural order of existence, based on the Primal impulse of the denial of death as on a cornerstone.

Thus, putting the Primal impulse into focus of the consciousness and establishing an intentional relation to it, we do not conclude that it is rooted wholly in the “wild” and unreasonable or that its fulfillment is a priori absolutely inachievable. But equally we do not conclude that this fulfillment can be achieved. The output of our quasi-intentional act is of a different kind: we discover a certain specific strategy or paradigm of human existence which is radically distinct from the “usual” (i.e. not accepting the Primal impulse as the call of the Source-Beyond-There) paradigm and the realization of which is the advancement “in the direction of” the fulfillment of the Primal impulse. One cannot state that in this strategy the fulfillment is unachievable nor can one state that in this strategy the fulfillment will be achieved. This means that it is an anthropological strategy with an open outcome.

The overall conclusion can be formulated as follows: there is a certain class of human manifestations, which are rooted in man's relation to death and represent a holistic anthropological strategy oriented to the ontological Border of Man. Let us call it the strategy or paradigm of *Spiritual Practice*. It is not evident from this definition that it refers to the same manifestations that are traditionally called "spiritual practices", but we can check this. Comparative analysis of the principal world traditions of spiritual practice made in our book "On Things Old and New" (St Petersburg, 2000) resulted in a general descriptive definition of spiritual practice. Comparing this empiric definition with the philosophical and deductive one given above, we make sure that both definitions single out the same anthropological phenomenon. (In fact, two principal features of the philosophical definition, the holistic character of the strategy and its orientation to the Border, come out quite explicitly in most schools of spiritual practice). Thus the significance of spiritual practices for anthropology of the Border is now clarified completely: it is spiritual practices that form the most important areal of the Border of Man, his ontological Border. The two definitions characterize this Border in different aspects, thus complementing each other: relating spiritual practices to the Primal impulse of the denial of death, the philosophical definition reveals the genesis of these practices, while the empirical definition describes their structure, thus presenting the Border in more detail.

This detailed presentation shows that anthropological strategies oriented to the ontological Border are provided with highly universal structure. Any strategy of this class is holistic practice of the Self, having the stepped character: the set of all man's energies is transformed successively, going through a number of steps, a kind of a ladder, ascending to the Border. The structure of this Ladder of Spiritual Ascent always includes three main stages. The initial stage is the emerging and forming of the practice as an *alternative* or *meta-anthropological* anthropological strategy, the goal, or *telos* of which does not lie within the horizon of empirical human existence, but belongs to the different horizon of being. The main task of this stage is to express with maximal force the radical breaking-off with all the habitual order of man's existence and all the strategies of the usual stable life. As a rule, this task is accomplished by means of various methods of *preparatory purification*; in hesychast practice the main part of the initial stage is the repentance. The next stage, the central one, is the core of the practice: here its unique dynamics should be formed, a kind of "ontological engine", which produces the ascent by the Ladder and a real advancement to the ontological Border. As stressed above, it is only the energy of the Source-Beyond-There that can be a motive force for the ascent to a meta-anthropological telos. The experience of the practice finds, however, that the dynamics of the ascent includes not only the action in a man of this "outer" (by its source) energy, but also the action of "inner" energies which have their source within the access of the consciousness and can be operated by the latter. The inner energies must get oriented to the outer energy, must coordinate themselves with it and reach full accordance, harmony and coherence with it. This accordance of the two energies of different source and status plays a key role in the ontological ascent, and Byzantine theology has expressed it with a special paradigmatic notion "synergy" mentioned above. Thus it can be said that the task of the central stage of the practice is to create the conditions for synergy. Concretely, it is achieved by means of the union of two activities: one is the direct response to the Call, intense address and appeal to the telos of the practice, having the form of meditation and/or prayer; the other is the protecting and guarding man's orientation to the telos by means of the concentration of attention. In hesychasm these two activities constitute the famous ascetical dyad Prayer—Attention (*προσευχῆ—προσοχῆ*). Finally, if the dynamics of the ascent was created, the practice enters into the highest stage. Here the anthropological process approaches the Border and some perceptible manifestations of a fundamental transformation of a man begin to appear. As shown by experiential data of many different practices, the transformation involves, in the first place, the sphere of perceptive modalities. This fact reveals the logic of the process: one can expect that in the strategy oriented to a different horizon of being a man must achieve, in the first place, a radical re-orientation of his perceptions since he will need to perceive radically different things. In perfect accordance with this logic, the data mentioned show that on the higher steps of the practice radical changes of man's perceptive system and formation or "opening-

up” of some new perceptions take place. In the practices of the Late Antiquity epoch and then in hesychasm these new perceptions were called the “intellectual feelings” (*νοερά αἰσθησις*).

The structure described shows quite noticeable resemblance to processes following the synergetic paradigm. The ladder of the steps of spiritual practice corresponding to definite types of the organization of man’s energies can be interpreted as a hierarchy of dynamical structures, arising in the self-organization process triggered by the outer energy, namely, the energy of the Source-Beyond-There, when it is acting in a man. A certain affinity of the synergetic paradigm and the ascetical and theological paradigm of synergy is evident too. One can find more elements of the resemblance of the two paradigms; for instance, the initial stage of spiritual practice, especially in the hesychast form of the repentance, represents a parallel to the same stage of the synergetic paradigm, i.e. the violent shaking of a system bringing it to a state removed far from the equilibrium.

Constitution of the ontical Border

So far we have established only the existence of the ontical Border, accepting the existence of the unconscious as an ascertained element of the phenomenon of Man. The unconscious is the ontical Other of the consciousness, and horizon of human existence and there must be a certain class of extreme manifestations of Man, associated to the dyad “the consciousness – the unconscious”: manifestations, which are generated by the existence of the unconscious and on which the presence of the latter tells in some or other way. Now we should identify these manifestations and present their concrete description. In contrast to the case of the ontological Border, we do not need now ontological analysis relating the manifestations in question to the fundamental elements of man’s situation in being. The study of the ontical Border is restricted to the sphere of essent and so our discussion can proceed in the usual discourse of phenomenological science (*not philosophical phenomenology!*), based on experiential data and their generalization.

Experiential data relating to the ontical Border are abundant. Phenomena generated by the unconscious constitute the area of psychoanalysis and in the XX c. the latter became the most popular and dominating of all discourses, which have formed the modern image of Man. It is long since the main kinds of these phenomena were identified and studied in great detail; they include complexes, perversions, neuroses, psychoses, manias, phobias... Sometimes another collective term is used for these phenomena: the “phenomena of madness”, with “madness” conceived in a wide and universalized sense, following Jacques Lacan. But in our approach the “man of psychoanalysis” is not accepted as representing the whole of Man. The topography of the unconscious is only a part of Anthropological Border and the phenomena of the unconscious (or madness) are here put into a wider context of anthropology of the Border, which makes us to look at them from a new angle.

Treating the phenomena of the unconscious as Border phenomena, we should, in the first place, discover their inherent mechanism of the going-out to the Border, i.e. mechanism of their genesis and formation. We find that this mechanism bears the strongest stamp of its source, the unconscious: it is the unconsciousness that is its principal property. The phenomena of the unconscious have many specific distinctions and a definite characteristic structure (namely, they represent, for the most part, various cyclic patterns of the consciousness and behavior), but nevertheless they emerge unnoticeably and unintentionally, without man’s will and awareness. *It is unconsciously that one gets into the topography of the unconscious.* This basic property of the phenomena of the unconscious makes them polar opposite to spiritual practice, the start of which is maximally conscious, as it is the “conversion”, a special act of man’s will and mind. The same stamp of the unconsciousness marks usually all the course of the process: though the phenomena of madness are holistic, like spiritual practices, and the mind and consciousness take part in them, performing definite functions, but this participation includes neither the control nor the comprehension of the process. As a result, these phenomena, in contrast to spiritual practices,

cannot be considered as human *strategies*: they are just “patterns” or “figures” (“figures of the unconscious” is the term coined by C.G.Yung) or “regimes” of man’s consciousness, behavior and activity.

These key properties of the topography of the unconscious can be understood on the base of the usual metaphor of the *vertical hierarchy of the consciousness levels*. It is always accepted in descriptions of the activity of consciousness that the latter is organized vertically so that “higher” and “lower” levels can be distinguished clearly and, in addition, higher levels are endowed with the axiological priority: they include more complex, perfect and highly organized activities and regimes, while the activities and regimes belonging to lower levels are more primitive or deficient. What are the concrete criteria identifying “higher” and “lower” activities and functions, is a special and intricate problem. It is indisputable, however, that higher levels should correspond to the regimes, in which all the abilities of consciousness are maximally actualized and alert, “switched-on” (not necessarily functioning, but accessible to the monitoring). This implies that spiritual practice involves, first of all, the activities of higher levels: man’s relation to the ontological Other is manifested in the activation of higher levels of consciousness and then, via these levels, of all the human person. It is clearly seen in the constitution of the ontological Border: at the start of spiritual practice the Primal impulse of the denial of death is transformed into the call of the Source-Beyond-There, perceived and interpreted by man’s mind and then, as a response to the call, appealing for the transcending of man’s being-there, a holistic anthropological strategy gets formed. And it is again man’s mind that builds up this strategy; it acts as a general coordinating and controlling centre and it must use to this end all the abilities of consciousness. Such role of the mind was firmly stated in hesychast practice and St. Gregory Palamas has expressed it by means of the paradigmatic image of the “Mind-Bishop”: “By means of our mind acting like a supervising bishop, we prescribe laws to each ability of our soul and each member of our body... He, who will achieve this, will gain and behold in himself grace”⁵. Here we see that the appearance of the Mind-Bishop is considered as one of manifestations of God’s grace, i.e. as a phenomenon of the ontological Border. It can be said, as a result, that the ontological Other manifests itself in Border phenomena as acting “from above” (and putting the Mind-Bishop), so that the Source-Beyond-There is here the “Source, acting from above” or “Supra-Source”. Thus we see the vertical metaphor of the consciousness to be in accordance with the basic vertical metaphor of the religious discourse (God(s) as “dwelling on high”).

On the contrary, patterns of the ontical Border show the intimate connection with lower levels of the consciousness. In the book “On Things Old and New” we give reasons for the viewpoint that the specific distinction of these levels should be seen not in poor structure or small informative capacity or underdevelopment of articulative and discursive aspects, but, first of all, in the destroyed or non-achieved integrity and connectedness of the consciousness. (Whereas the specific properties of higher levels are exactly integrity and global connectedness, coordination and coherence of all spheres of the consciousness; the notion of “higher psychic functions” widely used in psychology – e.g. in Piaget and Vygotsky – takes these properties as its basis). In the regimes belonging to lower levels different spheres of the consciousness function in an incoherent and uncoordinated way, as if separated by some barriers. In the visual discourse this property might be described as *opacity*; but the most adequate is topological characterization: in the regimes of lower levels the consciousness represents a *unconnected manifold in the energetic dimension*. In most varied forms, this property is always found in phenomena of the unconscious and is one of their specific distinctions. That is how Lacan characterizes the sphere of psychoanalytic theory: it is “the theory, the field of which embraces a certain amount of human realities, chiefly, psychopathologic ones: subnormal phenomena, which are of no concern for usual psychology: dreams, blunders, failures, which violate so called higher functions”⁶.

⁵ St. Gregory Palamas. Triads in the Defense of the Saint Hesychasts. I. 2,2.

⁶ J. Lacan. Seminars. Book I. Moscow 1998, p.161 (in Russian).

This description confirms both our points: the field of psychoanalysis, i.e. that of the phenomena of the unconscious, is here characterized exactly by the topological effects of the destroyed connectedness of the consciousness (for “blunders and failures” have clearly topological nature, they represent all sorts of breaks, rents, gaps, muddles, etc.); and these topological effects are, in their turn, characterized in terms of the vertical metaphor as “subnormal”, i.e. inherent in the lower levels. Destroyed connectedness of the consciousness – and hence the activity of the lower levels of the latter – is very markedly at work in such typical phenomena of the unconscious as the construction of isolated “worlds of madness”: these worlds can be extremely elaborate and organized with perfect logic (like, e.g. in paranoia), but in some aspects they are in radical discord with the empiric world, and special mechanisms block activities of the higher levels, which try to break the isolation and integrate the “world of madness” into the actual world. Often such worlds are built up on the basis of *drives* and help to reproduce cyclic process, in which a drive realizes itself. Obviously, in all such phenomena the unconscious acts as the Source-Beyond-There for human expressions, in which activities of the lower levels of the consciousness predominate. In other words, it represents the Source-Beyond-There, “acting from below”, or the Sub-Source-Beyond-There. The fact that the constitution of its phenomena typically includes violations or switchings-off of various levels and functions of the consciousness is reflected in the direct connection between the phenomena of the unconscious and the illness, anomaly. From its origins, psychoanalysis always claimed to be both the science studying a definite class of phenomena and the therapy engaged in their liquidation. We shall see below that the same task of the liquidation of the phenomena of the unconscious is set, with different motivation and different means, in spiritual practice and all the sphere of religious life.

As it was the case with spiritual practices, the presence of the Source-Beyond-There which induces the generation of definite dynamic structures provides the ground for the comparison with the synergetic paradigm. In this case the parallel is not so obvious, however. In typical processes displayed in psychoanalysis the outer energetic factor induces cyclic patterns which resemble the circling around an attractive centre rather than spontaneous generation of an hierarchy of dynamical structures. On the other hand, ascetical practice has long ago discovered spontaneous stepped processes in the genesis and development of so called passions, working out an elaborate system of notions for the steps of these processes (like *προσβλή, συνδυασμός, αιχμαλωσία*, etc.⁷). Passions belong to the phenomena of the unconscious (see below), but the processes in question are very little studied in psychology and the possibility of their synergetic interpretation is not elucidated so far. It is not clear a priori whether the ability of drives to accumulate energy follows the synergetic paradigm and on the whole, synergetic parallels of the topography of the unconscious need more detailed analysis.

Constitution of the virtual Border

Philosophical and especially ontological understanding of virtual phenomena is rudimentary so far. Any generally accepted fundament of such understanding is virtually absent and our discussion of the relation of these phenomena to Anthropological Border will be based on our own treatment of virtuality presented in the book “On Things Old and New”. Analyzing basic examples of virtual reality (in the first place, the earliest conceptions of virtuality developed in classical and quantum physics, but also psychological virtual reality), we have outlined there general concepts of virtual event and virtual reality. We found that the principal distinction of virtual phenomenon is its privative character with respect to “actual” empiric phenomena: it is characterized by the lack of some or other determinative features (dimensions, structural elements, basic predicates, etc.) of the latter and due to this it has only partially actualized, «under-» or «not-quite» embodied or else, in the metaphor of the light, “twinkling” kind of existence. A priori any kind of privation is thinkable

⁷ Cf. e.g. T. Špidlík, S.J. *La spiritualité de l’Orient Chrétien. Manuel systématique*. Roma 1978, pp.236-237.

in any empiric phenomenon: any of dimensions or predicates of the latter may be underbuilt or underactualized and any of laws, restrictions or relations involved in it may be lifted; and it means that we must conceive any “actual” phenomenon as well as all the “actual” empiric reality surrounded by its “virtual shell”, i.e. an infinite set of all its incomplete, privative actualizations. (The notion of the virtual shell is a direct generalization of the quantum-theoretical notion of the “cloud of virtual particles” that is supposed to surround any real, or “physical”, quantum particle). We substantiated also that since it has privative constitution, i.e. is determined not by any authentic predicates of its own, but only privatively, as incompletely actualized essent, “virtual reality does not represent an autonomous mode of being or ontological horizon... it is not a mode, but an “under-mode”, a defect of being”⁸. It has no authentic forms of its own and it is not able to create such forms.

These theses are of direct importance for the constitution of the virtual Anthropological Border. We see, first of all, that human manifestations representing virtual phenomena, or goings-out to virtual reality, must be ranked among extreme manifestations with respect to the horizon of human existence: this horizon belongs to the sphere of essent, whereas any virtual phenomenon is deprived of some determinative features of the phenomena of this sphere. It means that “anthropological virtual phenomena”, or man’s goings-out to virtual reality, do belong to Anthropological Border and in their totality they form a certain areal of the latter or the “virtual Border”. Next, we discover that this new areal in its constitution and nature has cardinal distinctions from both the ontological and ontical Border. Not representing an autonomous mode of being, virtual reality *eo ipso* does not represent the ontological Other of being-there (for the Other to a definite mode of being is itself a certain mode of being). It cannot also be conceived as a certain region of essent or present being, since its defective actualization means that it is “under-present” and “under-essent”. Hence it follows that anthropological virtual reality is neither the ontological nor ontical Other of the horizon of human existence and so the characterization (given above) of limiting human manifestations as those representing manifestations of not only Man, but also his Other is not valid for the phenomena of the virtual Border. By the very definition, the Other of an object or concrete essent is autonomous with respect to it, but the “virtual shell” of a phenomenon that is that same phenomenon taken in its modality of under-actualization is secondary to and dependent of the original phenomenon: so that it is not its Other. This remark is not a formal correction of the word-usage: it makes it possible to notice an important property of the virtual Border. All our discussion proceeds in the discourse of energy or “being-action” and we could already see clearly that in this discourse the Other of the horizon of human existence is also presented by its energies or manifestations: namely, as the energetic Source-Beyond-There, providing for the constitution of the Border phenomena. However, there is no Other, and therefore no Source-Beyond-There associated with the virtual Border. Hence its constitution has no parallel to the synergetic paradigm of the structuring and form-creating action of an outer energy, and its phenomena do not possess any special energetic source of their own. Because of this, in these phenomena there is no generation of specific new types of anthropological dynamic structures, analogous to the patterns of the unconscious and steps of the ascent in spiritual practices. Phenomena of the virtual Border belong to virtual shells of usual, non-extreme human manifestations and therefore they all are just incomplete actualizations of some or other phenomena of “actual” empiric reality.

On the other hand, the lifting of restrictions and laws inherent in “actual” phenomena may change the appearance and development of the latter to any extent strikingly and profoundly. Hence phenomena of anthropological virtual reality (virtual practices) seem to a man no less genuine and radical alternative to the common way of existence than phenomena of the ontological and ontical Border; and the striving after the Border dwelling in a man may lead him as well to the virtual Border. For hosts of Internet adepts the Web is nothing but the “kingdom of liberty”. But still, abandoning himself to virtual practices, a man would unavoidably discover their dependence and

⁸ S.Horujy. On Things Old and New. St.-Petersburg 2000, p.345 (in Russian).

secondariness to “actual” reality and hence the incomplete character of the alternative to this reality achieved in them. Such discovery introduces elements of frustration into psychology and emotional world of the “virtual man”. When he finds in virtual reality only the same forms – though scattered, disassembled, unfinished – as in “actual” reality, a man realizes that his liberation, his going-out of this reality is only relative and conventional and due to this, his striving after the Border is not satiated. The consequences of this can be very different, as virtual practices are extremely diverse; but obviously, man’s reaction gravitates necessarily towards either acceptance or unacceptance. In the case of unacceptance, the attitude of virtual reality to actual one is close to the paradigm of the “revolt of the oppressed”. Actual reality is perceived as dominating and oppressing and ineluctable dependence on it generates protest and craving for revolt; and, since there is no creation of new forms in virtual reality, the protest and revolt can only be destructive. It is one more reason of the fact that the most popular virtual practices belong to the virtual shell of destructive, pathological or criminal manifestations. (Still more obvious reason is that such practices provide an outlet for latent negative propensities of a man). Virtual rebellion against actual reality and virtual destruction of all its forms and norms is nearly all the substance of the whole sphere of collective rites of today’s mass culture and the ecstatic gesture of a rock-singer raising high and breaking his guitar could be the symbol of this attitude of virtual revolt. As for the acceptance reaction, it is realized mostly in the paradigm of carnival. In this case a man becomes reconciled with the conventionality of his liberation from reality of being-there, universalizing the conventionality, i.e. representing it as a global and inevitable predicate of man’s situation and claiming the world to be just a carnival world: a place of total conventionality and conditionality, to which the only adequate attitude is that of mockery, play and fun. Evidently, as a global thesis on man’s situation, this carnival postulate is false, since other areals of the Border of Man, besides the virtual one, certainly do exist.

On the whole, the virtual Border, embracing all the sphere of anthropological virtual reality, is very badly surveyable so far. There is no overall description of it and no criteria, by means of which its phenomena could be identified with any certainty. We only know for sure that these phenomena are of enormous diversity: they include virtual communications in the Web and many other forms of the dwelling in cyberspaces (in particular, inhabiting cybertowns with the population of many thousands), rites of the rock and pop culture, various models of psychological virtual reality, phenomena of cyberculture, among which virtualizations of practically all forms of cultural and artistic activity can be found now... With the regard of this, it is not surprising that all discussions of the virtual reality show the strong tendency to broaden its sphere still more, including unfoundedly into it any expressions of modeling, imitating, scenarizing or else projective treatment of reality, all altered states of consciousness, etc. etc. As a result, for the modern mind the contours of the virtual Border are extremely vague and lost in boundless expanse. The search for principles and criteria distinguishing it from other areals of the Border as well as similar and related phenomena is a topical problem.

The Border as a whole: relations of areals and hybrid topographies

The three topographies described by us exhaust Anthropological Border. It follows from the analysis of the constitutive energetic principles of these topographies. We have seen that the Border phenomena can be constituted either by the Source-Beyond-There, energy of which makes it possible to approach the Border, or, on the contrary, by the lack of energy necessary for the actualization of phenomena of present reality. Then the Source-Beyond-There can, in its turn, be “beyond-there” ontologically or just ontically. The situations listed correspond exactly to the areals of the ontological, ontical and virtual Border and it is evident that there are no other areals which the Border of Man may include.

It is also evident, however, that the description of the three areals taken separately is only a first step to the full-fledged anthropological model. One can draw here a parallel to the recent

deciphering of the human genom: what is found in both cases is just the set of basic elements and the knowledge of this set is still very far from the comprehension of the real process of existence of a living being. In the next stages we must study the relationships and interactions of these elements in order to see in the final stage the whole in its dynamics: to see energetic Man in all the complex of his changing relations to his Border and understand, why and how he comes to be in one or other areal, which factors bring about predominance of this or that areal or cause the change of the dominating areal, etc.

One of the most characteristic features of anthropological reality is its mixedness: nearly any of its phenomena involves many different motives, forces, constitutional levels, etc. Even old essentialist anthropology could not ignore this feature, describing Man as a being of mixed composition, *corpus permixtum*. In the discourse of energy it stands out still more vividly and, in particular, it had inevitably to manifest itself in the Border phenomena. In the experience of Man we easily find mixed extreme manifestations, in which properties of different areals of the Border are combined. For example, there are well-known schools and currents in sufism, which preserve general goals and attitudes of the paradigm of spiritual practice, but at the same time exploit intensely mechanisms dependent on the unconscious and based on the activization of lower levels of the consciousness and switching-off higher ones (hypnotizing actions, subconscious coding, physical and neurophysiologic means of inducing trance states, etc.). It means that the areals of the Border may superimpose upon each other and form overlapping areas. A priori our three areals may possess three such areas, corresponding to the following combinations:

- (1) spiritual practices and patterns of the unconscious;
- (2) spiritual practices and virtual practices;
- (3) patterns of the unconscious and virtual practices.

A posteriori we find that all these areas are really present in the spectrum of man's extreme manifestations. We shall call them *hybrid topographies*.

In order to understand the genesis and nature of hybrid topographies, one should note that the areals of the Border can be considered as ordered hierarchically by their energetic regimes. Spiritual practices, being oriented to the different horizon of being and having the constitution determined by energies of the ontological Other, have energetic regimes of maximal form-creating and transfiguring power. Next there follow the patterns of the unconscious: they are also fed by outer energies, but the energies of the ontical Other, dominating chiefly lower levels of the consciousness, induce regimes of lesser form-creating power. Still, due to the presence of outer energies, regimes of these both areals represent higher energetic types with respect to ordinary, non-Border strategies. Finally, virtual practices are characterized by "energetic defect" and their form-creating potential is lower than that of non-Border strategies, and the lowest among all types of human activity.

Now, taking into account that *mistake* and *failure* are immanent and important elements in all human activities, we can see the origin of hybrid topographies. There are not infrequent situations, when a man embarks on the strategy of spiritual practice, but in some stage he fails in its realization. There can be very different failures (ascetical schools perform most detailed analysis of them); in particular, the case is quite typical, when some or other elements, "blocks" of the practice in question are substituted by patterns from another areal, of lower energetic type, and hence the telos of the practice cannot be reached. Obviously, different variants of the substitution are thinkable. If the substituting patterns belong to the virtual areal, there appear phenomena of the Second hybrid topography, in which spiritual practice and virtual practice are mixed together. Since distinctions between the patterns of these areals are cardinal, in this case the man cannot think that he follows faithfully the paradigm of spiritual practice and hence he is aware that what he does is just some semblance of the latter. Being in the virtual topography, the man does with spiritual practice the same thing that he does with phenomena of ordinary reality: he "makes a trip" to spiritual practice, "stages" it, imitates it in his imagination... – all these are typical psychological

stereotypes of *homo virtualis*. But, unlike virtual imitations of phenomena and strategies of ordinary reality, virtualizations of spiritual practices usually need some special means and in most cases they are produced with the help of narcotics, psychedelics and so on. Hence the Second hybrid topography can be called the *psychedelic* topography.

Alternatively, the substituting patterns can belong to phenomena of the unconscious, which case corresponds to the First hybrid topography. Due to the presence of some outer energies in these patterns, the distinctions of the resulting hybrid process from genuine spiritual practice can be in this case less pronounced, though such process surely cannot correspond to the paradigm of spiritual practice and advance to any meta-anthropological telos (see the discussion at the end of this section). Within certain limits, these distinctions may be unnoticed and unrecognized by the man himself so that he thinks that he follows faithfully the steps of the practice and advances to its telos. In other words, he has an illusion of being in the process of the practice and advancing to its telos. In the hesychast terminology, the man is here in the state of “fascination” or “seducement” (*πλάνησις*) so that the First hybrid topography can be called the topography of (*self-*)*seducement*. The phenomena of this topography have two varieties, very different in their psychological aspects. The deviations from the genuine strategy of spiritual practice can be completely unintentional and creep and stay unnoticed. Such phenomena of the *unintentional seducement* are widespread in ascetical practices (because it is generally typical for the patterns of the unconscious to be unnoticed and unrecognized by their owner, cf. below) and mystico-ascetical literature of many traditions abounds in the discussions of ways and means of their identification and removal. But there are also phenomena, in which a man changes intentionally traditional procedures of spiritual practices, thinking that with these changes the ascending process of the practice will take place as before or still more efficiently, and the telos of the practice can be successively reached. Such phenomena that are *sui generis* improvisations and variations on the theme of spiritual practice became extremely popular in our times. Typically, one looks here for some automatic and guaranteed methods to achieve the radical transformations of the consciousness and the whole man, which correspond to the higher steps of some or other spiritual practice and to which this practice in its genuine form leads by a long and difficult way with no guaranties of success. Sometimes such invented or concocted methods do trigger energetic mechanisms that produce some spontaneous transformations, but in all cases they rely on lower levels of the consciousness, suppressing some or other higher levels and functions; so that the transformations achieved are surely induced by energies of the unconscious. These phenomena of the *intentional (self-)seducement* include many modern psychotechniques, such as the methods by Stanislav Grof and Carlos Castaneda.

As for the Third hybrid topography, it is evident that its phenomena include dreams. The most intimate connection of the contents of dreams with patterns of the unconscious is one of principal subjects of psychoanalysis, while, on the other hand, the reality of a dream can be considered with good reason as incompletely actualized in comparison with reality of present being; in fact, it is one of model and most striking examples of virtual reality. Besides this, our description of the Second hybrid topography shows that there are strategies and stereotypes for goings-out to virtual reality that produce virtualizations (i.e. under-actualized versions) of not only phenomena of present being, but spiritual practices as well. It is easy to see that these imitational or mimetic stereotypes, like “trips”, “tryings-on”, “stagings”, “performances” etc. etc. are perfectly applicable to the phenomena of madness, and many such applications are actively practiced nowadays. “Under-actualized madness” includes a wide spectrum of phenomena, differing from each other in the degree of self-awareness, emotional complexion and so on: here we find many kinds of imitated, simulated or staged feeble-mindedness, foolishness, dottiness, craziness, eccentricity, idiocy... The last term can be used as a collective one for all the variety of these phenomena so that this topography of the Border can be called the topography of *idiocy*. Virtual madness free of pains, and risks of the actual one becomes more and more popular. Mechanisms of this popularity are excellently displayed in the recent film “Idiots” by Lars von Trier. It is also very popular in the latest trends in art and one

can even find affirmations in the modern art-criticism that strategies of idiocy represent the mainstream of today's culture.

Some important peculiarities of the inter-areal relations are caused by the specific character of the phenomena of the unconscious; namely, by the fact that these phenomena are not "strategies" of Man, because the consciousness does not control their generation and development. They emerge without any volition of a man and can stay unnoticed and unrecognized for a long time. This uncontrollable presence of patterns of the unconscious may affect the repertory of possible man's strategies, for it cannot be expected, of course, that any strategy is compatible with any such patterns; a priori their presence may also change or distort the structure of some strategies. Looking concretely, we find that patterns of the unconscious are compatible with virtual practices (maniacs and neurotics are perfectly capable to be the Web adepts at the same time: this illustration is primitive, but conclusive). Therefore one can say that besides the phenomena of the topography of idiocy, in which the patterns of the unconscious are subject to virtualization, the regimes of human activity are also possible, in which these patterns exist unchanged, in their usual forms, parallel to some or other virtual practice.

However, the relation between patterns of the unconscious and spiritual practices turns out to be polar opposite: it has the character of the outright incompatibility. There are several ways to see this, but the most well-founded is probably the ontological demonstration. Spiritual practice is an anthropological practice performed in the horizon of human existence and having as its final goal (telos) the ontological transcension, i.e. the actual transformation of a certain ontological horizon, that of being-there. It is evident that this practice can achieve its telos only if the horizon of human existence is a full-fledged ontological horizon or, in other words, if the human existence is ontologically "representative" or "plenipotentiary", capable to represent essent as such. On the other hand, patterns of the unconscious form the ontical Border of the horizon of human existence, i.e. the Border, which is within the sphere of essent: it is an area of essent, inaccessible for the consciousness and, *ergo*, for the horizon of human existence. Hence the conclusion needed is drawn: when the phenomena of the ontical Border are present, the horizon of human existence is not a *bona fide* ontological horizon, man is not ontologically plenipotentiary and the telos of spiritual practice, ontological transcension, is surely unachievable. In other words, the necessary condition of realizability of the paradigm of spiritual practice consists in the absence or removal of the ontical Border of Man, i.e. patterns of the unconscious.

This conclusion, obtained by philosophical deduction, formulates one of fundamental facts of religious life, that has been discovered experientially in all not underdeveloped religions and spiritual traditions. In ascetical practice, the phenomena of the unconscious are easily seen to be exactly those phenomena that are called here the *passions*: although the ascetical discourse is profoundly different from the psychoanalytical one, but in both cases it deals about the class of phenomena characterized by the same set of basic structural features, such as unintentional and unnoticed generation, stable and cyclic character, etc. Due to this, in the language of ascesis our conclusion means nothing but the famous thesis about the necessity of the eradication of passions, or the "invisible battle" for spiritual ascent. But the look at the ascetical discourse from the angle of the topography of the Border leads us to even more profound problems. If phenomena of the unconscious correspond to passions in the ascesis, then this correspondence naturally extends further, to the level of the sources of phenomena involved: as well as in the analytic of the Border (and in psychoanalysis) these phenomena make one to infer the presence the Source-Beyond-There behind them, in the same way in the asceticism (and more generally, in religious life) the phenomenon of passions draws one to the same inference. However, the constitution of the Source in the discourse of religious practice goes in a very different way. In our description of the ontological Border we have seen that the relationship of Man with the Supra-Source-Beyond-There responsible for the constitution of this Border is thematized in the personalistic and dialogical paradigm. This paradigm is natural and attractive for both the Christian mind and mythological consciousness so that there appears the unavoidable tendency to thematize the relationship with the

Sub-Source-Beyond-There in the same paradigm. As a result, the passions, or the “figures of the unconscious”, appear as figures of daemons, and behind these small figures the Figure of a “Father of Passions” is guessed. This is all the more natural, that the Sub-Source, as shown above, stands indeed in opposition to the (represented in personalistic paradigm) Supra-Source, making the entering into communion with it impossible. – That is how the unconscious and its patterns provide the preconditions for the generation of the Satan and daemons; and then the mythological consciousness completes the work. In this completion of the constitution of the Satan the witnesses of the experience, both ascetical and philosophical, are often relegated to the background, which say that the Sub-Source is only the ontical, but not ontological Other of Man and that it is just a dynamic formation, which does not admit of any hypostatization and exists in its patterns only – so that the removal of these patterns (quite achievable, according to both ascesis and psychoanalysis, though by laborious procedures) amounts to its own removal as well.

Conclusion: scenarios of evolution of the Border

Clearly, Anthropological Border needs description and analysis both in the synchronic and diachronic discourse: not only in its logic and structure, but also in its history. The diachronic approach takes one out to manifold problems of philosophy of history that obtain a new positing in our context. Here the anthropologization of the historical discourse takes place: history stands out, in the first place, as history of the relation of Man to his Border and so becomes an aspect of anthropology.

Let us trace down, how such anthropologization is performed on the example of the notion of border. In history it is used for periods and epochs, and both epochs and their borders are conceived topologically, the latter as breaks (interruptions, singularities) of smoothness (continuity, connectedness) of historical fabric, and the former as relatively smooth stretches of this fabric. Smoothness and its breaks are defined with respect to some or other set of characteristics of the historical fabric, including both external, empiric characteristics (events and facts) and their interpretations in terms of some inner, structural or noumenal characteristics. Inevitably, in any conception of history the choice of the elements of this set, facts as well as interpretations, -- and hence the resulting structuring of the historical process, the decision to consider such and such places of the historical fabric as “borders” -- include a certain dose of arbitrariness and conventionality. In our case, we decide that in the set mentioned the leading role should be given to anthropological characteristics, describing Man’s relation to his Border. Then “epochs” will be the stretches of the historical fabric characterized by a relative stability in this relation, while “borders of epochs” will be the places of this fabric, corresponding to sharp changes in the latter. Now we shall neither develop this approach to history nor try to prove its fecundity, applying it to past epochs. We give only a fluent scenario of present times, concentrating on a single characteristic: *the dominating topography of the Border*.

Throughout all cultural history this characteristic had no dynamics at all, being perfectly stable: openly, the dominating role in human existence belonged to the relationship with the ontological Other. Forms of this relationship changed to the greatest extent, but its dominance was indubitable. In many aspects it dominated not only the other Border topographies, but also the non-limiting strategies of ordinary existence, serving as the integrating and centering principle for the whole horizon of human existence. The first changes to this situation have been brought about in modern times by the process of secularization of Christian society: in our context, the meaning of this process was in the getting of autonomy by ordinary non-limiting anthropological strategies; they stopped to be subordinate to the strategies of the ontological Border and the latter lost their integrating and centering role. Further significant changes took place already in our times: the topography of spiritual practice started to lose its predominance with respect to the other areals of the Border as well. As stressed in our Introduction, for the modern man the relations to his Border

do not become less important; quite the opposite, they gain more place and weight, intensity and activity (which is in itself one of symptoms of the border of historical epochs). However this *sui generis* “advancement of the Border to the centre” of the experience of Man is accompanied by cardinal changes in the character and structure of the extreme experience; and one of the principal moments in these changes is exactly the change of the prevalent topography. With the regard for the “vertical” ordering of the Border topographies by the type of their energetic regimes (see above), this change means that *Man started to slide down his Border*.

The fact of the change is obvious. The repertory of extreme manifestations is today rich and diverse as never before, including a lot of new phenomena. Spiritual practices most certainly do not occupy a predominant place in this repertory (although interest in them has increased greatly, nowadays it favours chiefly hybrid strategies, in which spiritual practices are modified, distorted and substituted). But what phenomena do occupy this place? Freud has said: “In our times neurosis is a replacement for the monastery”, and it should be agreed that the role of the phenomena of the unconscious has increased drastically. One may note several factors, which have contributed to this increase. To begin, the mass popularity of psychoanalysis is not just the evidence, but also one of the reasons for the extremely wide spreading of the “phenomena of madness”. In a certain sense, psychoanalytical practice is ambiguous: it may be both the therapy and cultivation of these phenomena. Before an analyst removes the patterns of the unconscious, he must first bring them out into the open and demonstrate their presence to a patient; and these actions may very well be, in fact, their implantation or instilling. As pointed out by many, the existence of the big and powerful professional community of analysts is in itself a questionable factor, contributing to the growth of the number of patients. Practices of transgression are another sphere of the phenomena of madness, not a new one, but today considerably expanded. Such practices are fed by the striving after extreme experience, when this striving takes the form of a violent burst, possession, acute thirst, demanding immediate satisfaction... Such impulses are sympathetic to the modernist esthetics, and so in modernist art madness and transgression are frequent companions of artistic practice; the list of famous names involved, from Nietzsche and Vrubel to Antonin Artaud, would be many pages long. A certain modification of this possession by the Border is the, so to speak, “Border-itch”, the urge to try all the kinds and forms of extreme experience. As Gilles Deleuze recommends, one should be a little of an alcoholic, a little of a madman, a little of a suicide, a little of a partisan terrorist⁹. The conclusion of his biography proves that this appeal is not merely a philosophical thesis, but also the fruit of the profound personal experience of man’s situation.

However, since Freud there has appeared a new kind of Border phenomenon, and it is this kind that dominates today, developing with striking rapidity. The victorious progress of virtual practices already forces us to foresee the prospects of the total virtualization of human existence, when these practices will dominate the other areals of the Border as well the sphere of ordinary non-extreme anthropological strategies. “In our times the virtual positively starts to prevail over the actual”¹⁰, -- stated a prominent expert in virtual studies. There are many weighty reasons for these victories of virtualization. Virtual practices satisfy man’s striving after the Border, but at the same time they are the most accessible: unlike spiritual practices, they do not demand extreme efforts, or a strict school and discipline; unlike patterns of madness, they do not have alarming associations with illness, dangers and high risks. They have inertia and a drawing-in force; compared with them, regimes of actual reality are more arduous and exacting, and *homo virtualis* tends to prolongate his stay in virtual reality, coming back to the actual reluctantly. Like in the phenomena of madness, there is an affinity between the virtual phenomena and a certain kind of artistic practice: if the topography of madness can be associated with the creative and behavioral patterns in modernist artists, the virtual topography has a similar affinity, or *Wahlverwandschaft* with postmodernist and trans-avantgarde art.

⁹ G. Deleuze. *The Logic of Meaning*. Moscow 1995, p.190 (in Russian).

¹⁰ N.A.Nosov. *Virtual civilization // Virtual realities in psychology and psychopractices*. Ed. by N.A.Nosov, O.I. Genisaretsky. Moscow 1995, p.109.

Hence there is indeed an evolution of the Border of Man, and the course of this evolution corresponds to the change of the predominant topography: from the ontological Border to the ontical and then to the virtual one; in other words, the sliding of Man down his Border takes place. The concluding phases of this sliding-down bring about the increasingly thorough virtualization of human existence, with virtual practices dominating other Border topographies as well as ordinary reality of being-there. It is easy to see that the unrestricted progress of such a process is a scenario of the *euthanasia of mankind*. Indeed, the return of Man from virtual reality back to actual reality will be accomplished with more and more difficulty and reluctance, and this will lead inevitably to the degeneration of actual reality. The essence of this degeneration is the convergence of actual and virtual reality: the progressive decrease in form-creating and life-building energy, the loss of all ties and gradual prevalence of disintegration and discoordination processes. Due to the characteristic properties of virtual regimes of consciousness, this fading-out and withering of Man will be mild and unnoticeable, since in these regimes the abilities of self-awareness, self-control and distinguishing between actual reality and its imitations are distorted or blocked out. "Hence the end of the world will be absolutely safe: for he, who could be in danger, disappears. The end of the world will be but a telecast"¹¹.

To this prospect one thing only should be added: the sliding of Man down his Border is not predetermined at all. The infinite virtualization of Man, which is equivalent to euthanasia, is just one possible scenario out of any amount. Having discovered this sliding-down, we established that a certain process is taking place, but we did not discover any law, by virtue of which this process is ineluctable and irreversible. What is more, such a law is impossible in principle. Man always preserves his inalienable freedom, and the nature of his relation to his Border may change again: radically and at any moment.

¹¹ V.O.Pelevin. Generation "IT". Moscow 2000, p.144-145 (in Russian).