

ESSAYS

YOUTH BETWEEN DISCIPLINE AND RITUAL

Samira Cîrlig²⁴¹

Alin Bulumac²⁴²

ABSTRACT

This essay highlights the importance of discipline for young people today. Discipline plays a crucial role in the formation of young people as it reduces their inflated egos. When we talk about an egocentric generation, we are automatically talking about a generation whose discipline is lacking or has been seriously damaged. Lack of discipline has serious effects, from the mental (slowing down of cognitive skills) to the physical (childhood obesity is the ideal example). The undisciplined generation has been significantly affected by the presence of the 'online' in their lives, which occupies almost all their time. Mircea Eliade argues that the solution to this problem is for young people to rediscover the sacred. It is therefore the sacred that both clarifies and disciplines young people and protects them from the dangers of an overdeveloped ego.

Keywords: piety, ego, discipline, ritual.

PIETY: TAMING OF THE YOUTH'S EGO

Piety, sociologically speaking, is a continuous manifestation of the will. On the other hand, the Holy Fathers place piety above fasting and prayer, because without obedience man can fall prey to the sin of pride, which, as we know, is the greatest of all and which “goes before the fall”²⁴³.

“Self-delight”, vain glory, or pride represents “a thinner, more diabolical form of selfishness, of detachment from the connection with God, and with fellow men as sources of love and therefore of life”²⁴⁴.

²⁴¹ Ph.D. in Sociology, University of Bucharest, Romania; E-mail contact: oana.samira.cirlig@gmail.com.

²⁴² M.A. in Sociology (University of Bucharest), M.A. in Urban Studies (“Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urban Planning); Scientific researcher at the Romanian Academy; E-mail contact: alin.bulumac@gmail.com.

²⁴³ Cuviosul Siluan Athonitul, *Între iadul deznădejdiei și iadul smereniei*, Editura Deisis, 1996, p. 126.

²⁴⁴ “(..) încântarea omului de sine însuși, slava deșartă, mândria, hula, sunt o altă formă mai subțire, mai diavolească a egoismului, a desprinderii din legătura cu Dumnezeu și cu semenii ca izvoare ale iubirii și deci ale vieții”, in ***, *Filocalia*, Vol. 9, p. 9.

WHAT IS PIETY?

But what exactly is piety? It is a “voluntary release of selfishness”²⁴⁵. If selfishness is the one that generates fear in the case of young people, then obedience is the best “weapon” against it, because the one who obeys, believes. The one who has faith has no reason to be afraid because fear comes from the devil, and he who obeys “is like a white paper. It has nothing written on it to be taken by the devil”²⁴⁶.

THE WAR OF MAN WITH HIMSELF

The lack of piety generates a war with the Other, but one even greater, with the self. This is why St. John Climacus argues that:

“the proud need not be tempted by the devil, for he has become to himself both devil and enemy”²⁴⁷.

This double “rupture” with the mentor as well as with oneself generates an overwhelming feeling of loneliness, especially for young people. Best known as the “typical identity crisis during adolescence”, such an alienation feeling leads to isolation, and isolation eventually leads to depression²⁴⁸.

A study conducted in the late 1990`s²⁴⁹ in US showed that there are also other causes that generate such a feeling (of abandonment, loneliness) and which should be taken into account:

- the experience of parental divorce (almost half of young people with such an experience),
- the absence of parents due to overworked programs (63% of young people lived in families where no parents worked from home),
- the weakening of the relationship with the mother (only 25% of young people said that their mothers are at home when they return from school),
- “the TV mirage” (98% of young people say they spend more than 11 hours a week watching TV).

²⁴⁵ Maria Burlă, “Ascultarea este eliberare de egoism de bunăvoie”, s.a., Available at: <https://sfintititreierarhi.mmb.ro/ascultarea-este-eliberare-de-egoism-de-bunavoie>, Accessed on March 10, 2021.

²⁴⁶ “Cel ce face ascultare e ca o hârtie albă. Nu are nimic scris pe ea care să fie luat de diavol.”, Mărturie Athonită, “Despre ascultarea de părintele duhovnicesc”, 2018, Available at: <https://marturie.athonita.ro/despre-ascultarea-de-parintele-duhovnicesc/amp/>, Accessed on March 10, 2021.

²⁴⁷ “cel mândru nu are nevoie să fie ispitit de diavol, pentru că a devenit pentru el însuși și diavol și dușman”, in Noemi Noah, “Păcatul Mândriei în Viziunea Sfinților Părinți”, p. 2, Available at: <https://ro.scribd.com/document/409545057/Pacatul-Mandriei-in-Viziunea-Sfintilor-Parinti>, Accessed on March 21, 2022.

²⁴⁸ Josh McDowell, *Generația înstrăinată: Un pod peste prăpastia dintre generații*, Oradea, Editura Scriptum, 2005, p. 26.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

THE TELEVISION – A NEW WAY OF GENERATING LONELINESS

Virgil Gheorghe talks about the mirage of television in his book “The revival of the world or why we don't want to break away from television”²⁵⁰. According to his theory:

“the effect of audio-video media is a magical one, given that after only two minutes of installation in front of the TV, the emission of alpha waves, passivity, semi-hypnotic state, etc. increase fantastically. The beta activities of the cortex decrease to zero, the selective faculty ceases to manifest, axiological functions are suddenly suspended, the island is deprived of any psycho-moral initiative (...) Exposure to television induces mental states that we can classify in the family of states of alteration of consciousness (hypnosis, hallucinations, etc.). A man who spends about 3-6 hours in front of the TV (...) is enchanted, mentally confiscated”²⁵¹.

From this point of view, television was the first step in the process of modern human alienation, followed by the mirage of the Internet, which only deepened the distance and implicitly weakened the human interactions. In the absence of these interactions, which make possible the existence of man as a social being, the individual loses control, because the idea of authority is diluted. Piety becomes from this point of view an increasingly distant desideratum, while the ego grows almost directly proportional to the time spent in front of the TV or online.

Another study released by Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh showed that the more time people spend on the Internet, the more stressed, lonely, and depressed they become²⁵². A study conducted by Starcom, in 2019, showed that young people in Romania spend an average of 6 hours on the internet daily²⁵³. Looking at these figures, one can only glimpse the high level of loneliness that young people face.

SEDENTARISM – THE HIDDEN PART OF THE ONLINE

Therefore, piety also means discipline, which is increasingly lacking in young people as their main concern becomes “online”. From this point of view, “hiding behind a screen” (which offers the illusion of anonymity) does nothing but

²⁵⁰ Virgiliu Gheorghe, *Revrăjirea lumii sau de ce nu mai vrem să ne desprindem de televizor*, București, Editura Prodromos, 2006.

²⁵¹ “Efectul mediei audio-video este unul de tip magic dat fiind faptul că după numai două minute de la instalarea în fața televizorului crește fantastic emisia undelor alfa, ale pasivității, stării semi-hipnotice, reveriei și teledependenței, etc. Activitățile de tip beta ale cortexului se diminuează spre pragul zero, facultatea selectivă încetează să se mai manifeste, funcțiile axiologice sunt brusc suspendate, insul este deposedat de orice inițiativă psihomorală, (...) Expunerea la televizor induce stări psihice pe care le putem încadra în familia stărilor alterate de conștiință (stările de natură hipnotică, visele, halucinațiile etc.). Un ins care petrece circa 3–6 ore în fața televizorului (...) este vrăjit, confiscat mental (...)”, *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁵² Josh McDowell, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–19.

²⁵³ Revista Biz, “Cât timp petrec tinerii români pe internet?”, 2019, Available at: <https://www.revistabiz.ro/cat-timp-petrec-tinerii-romani-pe-internet/>. Accessed on June 12, 2021.

fuel the idea of disobedience on the one hand, and on the other hand “feed” the biggest enemy of young people, the ego.

A 2020 UNICEF study found that 1.5 billion children and young people worldwide have been affected by school closures around the world. “*The coronavirus pandemic has caused an unprecedented increase in screen time*” said Howard Taylor, chief executive of the Global Partnership to Stop Violence Against Children²⁵⁴. In other words, the pandemic has accentuated the loneliness of young people. On the other hand, the former Romanian Minister of Justice, Raluca Prună, stated that the level of online crime increased during the pandemic²⁵⁵. This means that not only the degree of loneliness increased during the pandemic but also the degree of disobedience (its expression in the online environment can be bullying, for instance).

At the same time, discipline is the way in which the ego can be shaken. An example of introducing the idea of discipline among young people is sports. Starting from the idea that a healthy mind is possible only in a healthy body (which is not possible in its absence), sports can be a sure way to reconnect the young person with oneself but also with the other. The absence of this type of discipline is reflected in the number of young people who have weight problems. The latest statistics in this regard ranked Romania second in Europe in terms of childhood obesity²⁵⁶. The World Obesity Federation estimates that, in the absence of drastic prevention and treatment measures, by 2030, in our country, almost 500,000 children aged 5 to 19 will suffer from obesity, according to a statement from the Smart Nutrition clinic. In the last four decades, the global rate of childhood obesity has increased tenfold, with the number of children diagnosed with obesity reaching about 124 million worldwide, according to a WHO study²⁵⁷.

For Romania, the absence of official statistics makes childhood obesity a silent killer. The only official study contains data from 2015 and shows that in all age groups studied – 7, 8 and 9 years, the share of children with weight problems (overweight or obese) is over 25%, according to INS data. Specifically, 1 in 4 children in the study groups had weight problems²⁵⁸.

²⁵⁴ UNICEF, “UNICEF: Copiii sunt expuși unui risc crescut în mediul online în timpul pandemiei de COVID-19”, 2020, Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/romania/ro/comunicate-de-pres%C4%83/unicef-copiii-sunt-expu%C8%99i-unui-risc-crescut-%C3%AEn-mediul-online-%C3%AEn-timpul>, Accessed on June 12, 2021.

²⁵⁵ Raluca Prună, “Nivelul de infracționalitate online a crescut în timpul pandemiei”, 2020, in *G4Media*, Available at: <https://www.g4media.ro/raluca-pruna-nivelul-de-infracionalitate-online-a-crescut-in-timpul-pandemiei-cum-raspunde-comisia-europeana-noilor-provocari-aparute-in-lupta-impotriva-spalarii-banilor.html>, Accessed on June 12, 2021.

²⁵⁶ Ziarul Bursa, “Ocupăm locul doi în Europa la obezitate infantile”, 2019, Available at: <https://www.bursa.ro/semnal-de-alarma-ocupam-locul-doi-in-europa-la-obezi-tate-infantila-07067730>, Accessed on April 2, 2021.

²⁵⁷ Green Report, “Numărul copiilor afectați de obezitate, în România, va crește la aproape 500.000 până în 2030 studiu”, Available at: <https://green-report.ro/numarul-copiilor-afectati-de-obezi-tate-in-romania-va-creste-la-aproape-500-000-pana-in-2030studiu/>, Accessed on February 13, 2021.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

THE STATE'S CONTRIBUTION TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S LONELINESS

The Covid-19 pandemic provided the pretext for measures that have eliminated and still eliminate freedom of any kind (of choice by imposing the vaccines, of movement, by introducing social distance, of restrictions on movement, of expression, by reducing to silence by coercion, threats and finally sanctions of people who do not agree with the imposed measures, socialization and direct interaction by eliminating physical contact: hugs, handshakes, etc., religious manifestation, by closing places of worship, introducing boundaries etc.). All these measures have increased the degree of loneliness.

THE DISCIPLINE BETWEEN EGO AND THE OTHER

On the other hand, discipline is the way in which the self can be strung, but it gives the individual a direction: to himself (ego) or to the other (sacrifice, sharing, etc.).

The distinction between the two types of orientation (in time and space) is made by Mircea Eliade in the book "The Sacred and the Profane". Starting from the idea that "the sacred means both reality, permanence and efficiency"²⁵⁹, Eliade states that both space and sacred time differ from ordinary time and space.

SPACE AND TIME AS A BENCHMARK

Regarding the sacred space, what distinguishes it from the other places, it is the set of qualities and its different structure:

"So there is a sacred space, so 'strong', significant, and other spaces, unconsecrated, therefore lacking in structure and consistency, in other words amorphous"²⁶⁰.

As for the sacred time, it differs from the profane time in the sense that it is loaded with meanings and is reversible, repeatable.

"There are intervals of Sacred Time, such as the time of the holidays and on the other hand, the profane Time, the usual temporal duration, in which the documents without religious significance are inscribed. There is, of course, a „rupture” between these two kinds of time, but, through the mediation of rites, the religious man can easily pass from the usual temporal duration to the Sacred Time"²⁶¹.

²⁵⁹ "Puterea sacră înseamnă deopotrivă: realitate, perenitate și eficiență.", Mircea Eliade, *Sacru și Profanul*, București, Editura Humanitas, 2013, p. 14.

²⁶⁰ "Există așadar un spațiu sacru, deci "puternic", semnificativ, și alte spații, neconsacrate, lipsite prin urmare de structură și de consistență, cu alte cuvinte amorfe.", *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁶¹ "Există intervale de Timp sacru, ca de pildă timpul sărbătorilor (în cea mai mare parte periodice) și, pe de altă parte, Timpul profan, durata temporală obișnuită, în care se înscriu actele lipsite de semnificație religioasă. Între aceste două feluri de timp există, bineînțeles, o ruptură; dar, prin mijlocirea riturilor, omul religios poate "trece" cu ușurință de la durata temporală obișnuită la Timpul sacru.", *Ibid.*, p. 54.

THE RITUAL – AS A DETACHMENT

The term *rupture* introduced by Eliade refers to the idea that man can pass from one time to another, through what is known as ritual, and through this passage, specifically, the individual ‘breaks’ from profane time for to integrate in the sacred one:

“By its nature, sacred time is reversible, in the sense that it is in fact a primordial mythical Time brought back to the present. Any religious holiday, any liturgical time means the re-actualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past ‘at the beginning of the beginnings’. Religious participation in a holiday involves stepping out of the “ordinary” time frame and reintegrating into the mythical Time updated by that holiday”²⁶².

In other words, for the religious man, the profane temporal duration can be ‘stopped’ and ‘resumed’ by introducing, with the help of rites, a sacred, non-historical Time (in the sense that it does not belong to the historical present).

Another idea is to relate to the ‘finality’ of time, which is perceived differently. For a religious man, time:

“knows ‘sacred’ intervals, which do not integrate into the temporal duration that precedes and follows them, which have a different structure and a different „origin”, because it represents a primordial Time, sanctified by the gods and now can be brought back through the holiday”²⁶³.

All while for the non-religious man:

“time can be neither a rupture nor a mystery: it constitutes the deepest existential dimension of man and is linked to his own existence, thus having a beginning and an end, namely death, the disappearance of existence”²⁶⁴.

SHORT CONCLUSION

It can be said that discipline restrains and shapes the ego and it can be found even in the idea of ritual, at its very core, which helps to organize the individual around its own axis, without consuming himself. At the same time, in addition to discipline, the element that makes the difference between the sense of orientation

²⁶² “prin natura sa, Timpul sacru este reversibil, în sensul că este de fapt un Timp mitic primordial readus în prezent. Orice sărbătoare religioasă, orice Timp liturgic înseamnă reactualizarea unui eveniment sacru care a avut loc într-un trecut mitic, "la începutul începuturilor". Participarea religioasă la o sărbătoare implică ieșirea din durata temporală "obișnuită" și reintegrarea în Timpul mitic actualizat de acea sărbătoare.”, *Ibid.*

²⁶³ “cunoaște intervale “sacre”, care nu se intergrează în durata temporală ce le precedă și le urmează, care au o altă structură și o altă "origine" pentru că reprezintă un Timp primordial, sanctificat de zei și putând fi adus în prezent prin sărbătoare.”, *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁶⁴ “Timpul nu poate reprezenta nici ruptură, nici “mister”: el alcătuiește dimensiunea existențială cea mai profundă a omului și este legat de propria sa existență, având așadar un început și un sfârșit, și anume moartea, dispariția existenței.”, *Ibid.*

of the individual axis, is faith, because it places in the center of the particular cosmos, *the other* and not *the self*. Thus, the more the idea of traditions or ritual (passing, renewal, initiation, etc.) is diluted, the more the individual orients himself towards his own ego, and vice versa, the more present the ritual and tradition are in the life of the individual, discipline directs man to *the other*. On the other hand, the orientation of an individual is given not only by the presence but also by the frequency of the ritual in his life. A man who considers the fact that space and time is not uniform and homogeneous, disciplined we could say, will report accordingly, depending on the space or time in which he is.

The difference between a religious man and a non-religious one is given by the way of reporting and the direction of the self: the religious man directs his own self towards the Sacred, implicitly towards the other through care, sacrifice, almsgiving, etc. while the non-religious man has oriented his self to himself, case in which the emphasis is being put on his own person, thus becoming lonely.

REFERENCES

- Burlă Maria, "Ascultarea este eliberare de egoism de bunăvoie", s.a., Available at: <https://sfintiitreierarhi.mmb.ro/ascultarea-este-eliberare-de-egoism-de-bunavoie>, Accessed on March 10, 2021.
- Cuviosul Siluan Athonitul, Între iadul deznădejdiei și iadul smereniei, Editura Deisis, 1996.
- Eliade Mircea, Sacrul și Profanul, București, Editura Humanitas, 2013.
- ***, Filocalia, Vol. 9.
- Green Report, "Numărul copiilor afectați de obezitate, în România, va crește la aproape 500.000 până în 2030 studiu", Available at: <https://green-report.ro/numarul-copiilor-afectati-de-obezi-tate-in-romania-va-creste-la-aproape-500-000-pana-in-2030-studiu/>, Accessed on February 13, 2021.
- Mărturie Athonită, "Despre ascultarea de părintele duhovnicesc", 2018, Available at: <https://marturieathonita.ro/despre-ascultarea-de-parintele-duhovnicesc/amp/>, Accessed on March 10, 2021.
- McDowell Josh, Generația înstrăinată: Un pod peste prăpastia dintre generații, Oradea, Editura Scriptum, 2005.
- Noah Noemi, "Păcatul Mândriei în Viziunea Sfinților Părinți", Available at: <https://ro.scribd.com/document/409545057/Pacatul-Mandriei-in-Viziunea-Sfintilor-Parinti>, Accessed on March 21, 2022.
- Prună Raluca, "Nivelul de infracționalitate online a crescut în timpul pandemiei", 2020, in G4Media, Available at: <https://www.g4media.ro/raluca-pruna-nivelul-de-infracionalitate-online-a-crescut-in-timpul-pandemiei-cum-raspunde-comisia-europeana-noilor-provocari-aparute-in-lupta-impotriva-spalarii-banilor.html>, Accessed on June 12, 2021.
- Revista Biz, "Cât timp petrec tinerii români pe internet?", 2019, Available at: <https://www.revistabiz.ro/cat-timp-petrec-tinerii-romani-pe-internet/>, Accessed on June 12, 2021.
- UNICEF, "UNICEF: Copiii sunt expuși unui risc crescut în mediul online în timpul pandemiei de COVID-19", 2020, Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/romania/ro/comunicate-de-pres%C4%83/unicef-copiii-sunt-expu%C8%99i-unui-risc-crescut-%C3%AEn-mediul-online-%C3%AEn-timpul>, Accessed on June 12, 2021.
- Virgiliu Gheorghe, Revrăjirea lumii sau de ce nu mai vrem să ne desprindem de televizor, București, Editura Prodromos, 2006.
- Ziarul Bursa, "Ocupăm locul doi în Europa la obezitate infantile", 2019, Available at: <https://www.bursa.ro/semnal-de-alarma-ocupam-locul-doi-in-europa-la-obezi-tate-infantila-07067730>, Accessed on April 2, 2021.

